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CHAN MAGAZINE

SUMMER 2018





Dear Reader, please see an important message on the inside back cover.

*Precept*

**W**HETHER IT BE THE BUDDHIST PRECEPTS for the monks or for lay people, for shravakas or for bodhisattvas – not only should we make a great effort to clarify their meanings, but also to revise and adapt them for the modern world and current society. Otherwise, it would be like holding onto dead prescriptions to help cure changing diseases. That would be merely emphasizing the vinaya that lacked the actual function of purifying society and human minds.



CHAN MASTER SHENG YEN  
*A Journey of Learning and Insight, 2012*

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## From the Editor

NEXT YEAR MARKS THE SEVENTIETH anniversary of *Humanity* magazine, founded by our Grandmaster, Venerable Dong Chu. In commemoration of this upcoming milestone, a Global Buddhist Village Symposium gathered in Taipei to discuss the importance of Buddhist publishing in responding to societal needs. This issue presents a summary of that symposium, and also a chapter from Shifu's (Master Sheng Yen's) book *A Journey of Learning and Insight* where he talks about his own work on *Humanity* magazine.

The written word was very important to our Shifu as a means of spreading the Dharma. He was a most prolific writer. He published more than one hundred and thirty books in Chinese (this in addition to countless articles in various magazines). Around twenty-five of them have been published in English, and the Complete Works project is steadily translating the rest. Many of his books have been, and continue to be, translated into other languages as well.

When our Shifu came to America, in quick succession, he taught us Western disciples how to meditate, led us on our first intensive retreats, and then had us establish the *Chan Magazine* you are reading now.

Often at the end of a Dharma talk on retreat, Shifu would say something along the lines of, "My words are only weeds and vines. Now forget all about them and just do your method." He made it clear that the words could never be the "thing." But he also

made it very clear that we need both, the practice AND the words. Neither one was enough without the other. We need practice to cultivate wisdom and experience, in order to understand the words. We need the words to understand what we are doing when we practice.

In those very first years with Shifu, I loved to practice hard and especially to be on retreat. I didn't care so much about studying the Dharma. I can't recall the context, but I remember Shifu looking as if he didn't know what to do with me, and saying "You need to read more books about the Dharma." And I remember my silent, internal response: "No way!" Reading about the Dharma put me to sleep. My notebooks from those early hours-long Dharma classes with Shifu are filled with doodles and poems and notes to my seatmates. What I LOVED reading about, in those days, were the personal experiences of practitioners. There weren't many books about people who travelled overseas to Zen monasteries to study, but what few there were, I devoured. In Philip Kapleau's book *Three Pillars of Zen*, the personal enlightenment stories were the first things I read.

Most of my fellow Western practitioners were the same way. Today there is a phrase to describe accounts of intense meditation experiences: "enlightenment porn," and the internet is full of stuff like that. In those early days, most of my fellow Western practitioners also loved reading books like those of Carlos Casteneda, and craved mystical

psychedelic experiences. This interest is what led many people of my generation to Zen meditation.

Shifu's first book in English, *Getting the Buddha Mind*, included several personal accounts from students who had been on his first American retreats. Over my thirteen years as retreat coordinator at the Dharma Drum Retreat Center, I have met more than one person who told me they came to our center *because* of reading those personal reports in *Getting the Buddha Mind*. In each case, they mentioned one report in particular (the one reprinted in this current issue) and said that account resonated with them because it mentions LSD. It seems, for many Westerners, the thrill of "altered states" is the lure that brings them to Chan. Which can be okay, so long as sincere and correct practice eventually shows them that the experience of true nature is better than any drug one might ingest.

But what about the Dharma? How do you get people who begin with an interest in the mind-altering affects of practice, to study the theory of Dharma? In my own case it has been a long, slow process.

In the late nineties, when our Shifu called on his Western disciples to train as teachers, I jumped at the chance and eagerly became one of the first to be certified as a meditation instructor. Next I began the Dharma teacher training. I was excited to learn the basic building blocks (i.e. four noble truths, eightfold path, dharma seals, twelve-linked chain, etc.) which gave me an inkling that an understanding of the whole was attainable. But I dropped out before completing the course. I felt the academics were beyond me, and I was terribly insecure about writing and presenting my own Dharma talks.

Yet a hunger for the Dharma had awoken in me. I began to listen to my Shifu's talks with a new intensity, as if by sheer will I could force knowledge to enter my brain. During one retreat talk, after

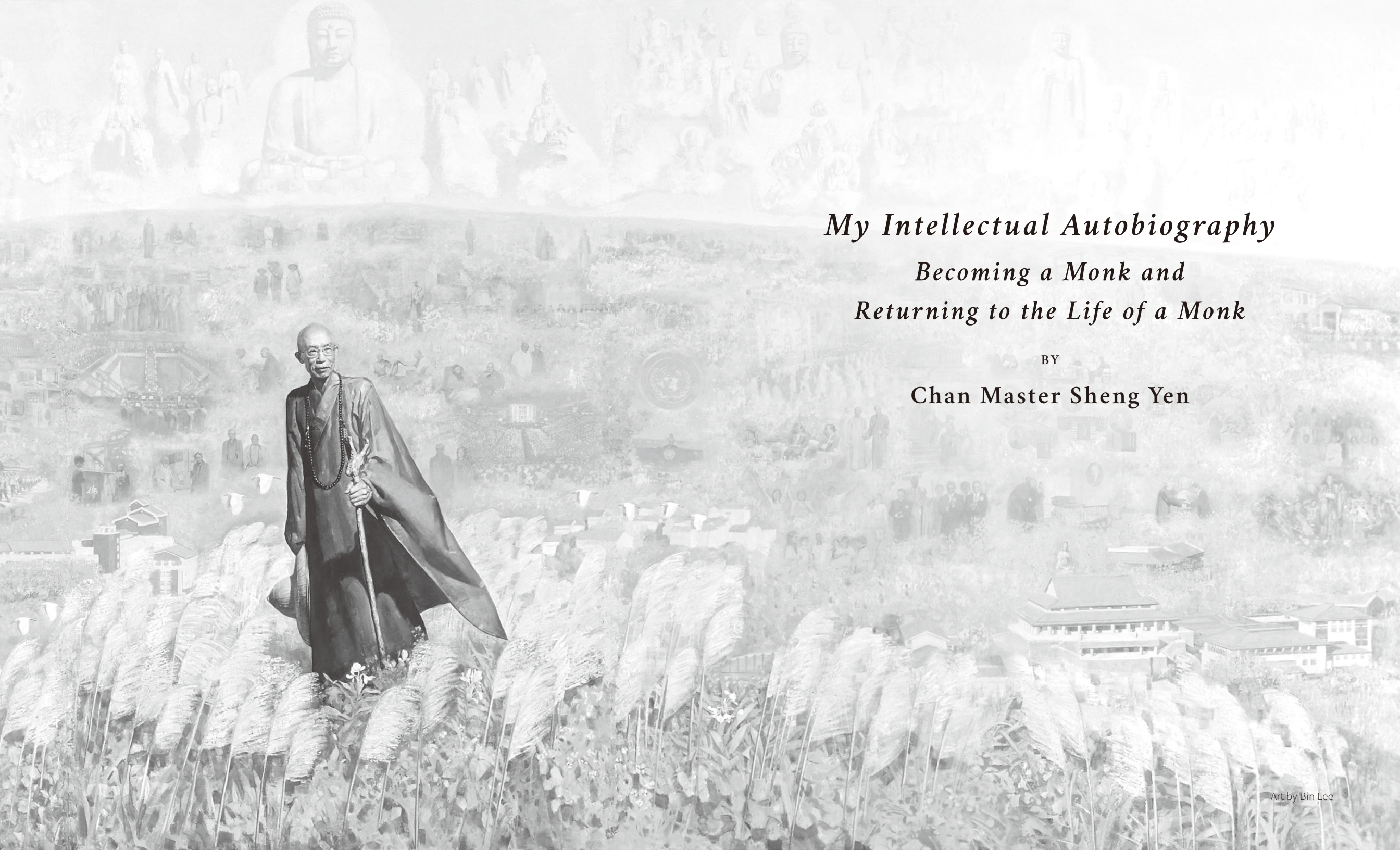
presenting a Dharma concept, Shifu asked the room in general, "Do you understand?" I nodded yes and he asked me personally, "Buffe, do you understand?" I answered fervently, "I hope so, Shifu." He mocked me in a slightly incredulous tone "You HOPE so?" As his talk went on, he would pause now and then, as if suddenly remembering what I'd said, and turn to me shaking his head and saying "You HOPE so," as if he still couldn't believe such a stupid statement had been uttered.

I didn't mind his sarcasm. I was happy for the personal attention. And I was utterly sincere in my hope that I COULD understand the teaching. But I did not understand, not fully. At times his words would ring me like a bell and I would glow with "Dharma joy." But afterwards, though I felt a warmth of knowledge and conviction, I could not articulate the concepts to express them to someone else.

Today I am much more confident in my understanding of the Dharma, and pursuing the study has become a joy. A few years back I attended a retreat which presented Shifu's recorded Dharma talks on DVD. I remembered being present at the original retreat where the talks were recorded, and how I had struggled to comprehend what was being said. But now, listening to the recordings, I was amazed at how much clearer the concepts were to me. My knowledge has been expanded by working on this magazine, transcribing and editing Dharma talks - dealing with the same concepts, over and over again, but presented from different points of view.

I felt a solidarity with my Shifu when I read about his efforts as chief editor of *Humanity* magazine. I keep in mind his instruction to us editors on how to select material to publish: "Ask, is it useful?" I know now how useful it is to me. I humbly hope it may be of use to others. ☺

by *Buffe Maggie Laffey*  
Editor-in-Chief



*My Intellectual Autobiography*

*Becoming a Monk and  
Returning to the Life of a Monk*

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.

SINCE JOINING THE ARMY in May, 1949, until my discharge in January, 1960, this journey of my life exceeded the number of years I was a monk in my youth. Throughout this time, my identity was that of a soldier but in my mind, I was always a monk. So, when I left the service I naturally returned to the Buddhist sangha. To me this was not becoming a monk again, but simply returning to the life of a monk.

I have already described how I first became a monk at Wolf Mountain in Mainland China.\* And in my autobiography, *The Journey Home*, I described my state of mind and feelings about returning to the life of a monk: “When I was fourteen years old, I wove a beautiful dream about becoming a monk – that the world of Wolf Mountain was as magnificent as a painting, as marvelous as a poem. Because I held to this dream of paintings and poems, when I went to Wolf Mountain, the dream became a gap between being a monk and practicing the Dharma. As a result, due to conditions, I was not able to keep the identity of a monk. Now, I see that the dream may have been mistaken, but the road I took was correct; so after wandering around in a very big circle, I have finally found my way home.”

My ten years in the army were not a waste of my life. I contributed my share of serving the country, and I also found many ways to improve myself. It was a painful process of growth, worth remembering and cherishing. In terms of studies, I was no longer the Ah Meng of the Wu Dynasty (referring to General Lu Meng in the Three Kingdoms Era

[220 BCE–280 BCE], a model of diligent self-improvement). As for practice, I also had some breakthroughs, especially in my twenty-eighth year, when I was able to enter the “gate of Chan.” This occurred through compassionate guidance from Master Lingyuan Hongmiao (1902–1988), a disciple of the contemporary master, Xuyun (1840–1959). That experience had a deep impact on my life, and it allowed me to jump out from the web of ensnaring myself. Since then, my life no longer belonged to me. Not to say that I dedicated my life to contributing to our world and all sentient beings, but that I was determined to find ways to work and study for humanity's needs and Buddhism.

I returned to the life of a monk by taking refuge under Tonsure Master Dongchu, who then gave me the Dharma name, Huikong Shengyen. A student of Master Taixu, Master Dongchu was abbot of the famous Caodong monastery, Jiaoshan Dinghui, in Zhenjiang, Jiangsu Province. He was a 50<sup>th</sup>-generation Dharma heir in the Caodong school of Dongshan Liangjie (806–869). He also studied in the school of Linji Yixuan (d. 866) at Changzhou Tianning Monastery, first becoming a monk in the Linji monastery at Putuo Shan. Therefore, he received transmission in both the Linji and Caodong lineages. Being a disciple of Master Dongchu, I also inherited Dharma transmission in both lineages. This may appear complicated for a monk; however, this was actually quite remarkable – the Dharma originally being one, to divide it into branches is not what a wise man would do.

At this point, I must make another description to retrace the past and account for the future. Besides receiving Dharma transmission in two lineages from Master Dongchu in 1976, in the spring of 1958, while still in the army, I had already established Dharma affiliation with Master Lingyuan. Then, 20 years later, I encountered Master Lingyuan again, and at 2 PM on December 5, 1978, he formally gave me the Dharma name Zhigang Weirou. He also gave me a book of the Dharma lineage chart, *The Record of Illuminating Stars*. This resulted in my establishing Dharma connections with Gushan Yongquan Monastery, and becoming the 57<sup>th</sup>-generation Dharma heir in the tradition of Linji.

## Editing and Writing

As of January 1, 1960, I was discharged from the army and received the formal Order of Retirement. The date for exchanging my uniform for a robe and having my head shaved for the second time was December 30, 1959. Since I retired from the army for health reasons, I was hoping to recover my body and mind after returning to the sangha. I was also hoping to take time to repent for my recklessness and carelessness in the army over the past ten years, to shake off the winds and dust of the army life, and to delve into and fully enjoy Master Dongchu's collection of Buddhist texts.

At the time, only the Central Library of Taiwan kept a set of *Qishazang*, the only complete set of Buddhist texts in Taiwan, and only the Chung-Hwa



Master Sheng Yen in his army officer uniform DDM Archive Photo

Institute of Buddhist Culture was conducting cultural works and publishing books, such as printing the *Taisho Tripitaka*, which was compiled in Japan during the Emperor Taisho era (1911–1925). With the first and second edition, this came to a total set of 100 volumes. In 1959 the Institute completed printing 500 of these Tripitaka sets, it also completed the printing of the *Zengaku Taisei*, a compilation of Japanese translations of fifty-nine classics of Chan literature.

Master Dongchu himself was a scholar of Buddhist history and before he passed away he completed: the *History of Communication between Indian and Chinese Buddhism*, the *History of Communication between Japanese and Chinese Buddhism*, and the *Contemporary History of Chinese Buddhism*. In Taiwan at that time, it was not easy to find a Buddhist monastery with that large a collection of books as the Chung-Hwa Institute of Buddhist Culture.

Master Dongchu continued the will of Master Taixu to spread the Dharma through the use of words, and advocated what Master Taixu called Humanistic Buddhism. Commencing May 1949, Master Dongchu gathered several Buddhist youths with similar goals and began a monthly magazine, *Humanity*. It has survived since then through the efforts of more than ten editors, and when I sought refuge under Master Dongchu, it was just as the chief editor resigned. As a result, I moved from being a writer to *Humanity's* chief editor. Before I went into solitary retreat in the mountains in southern Taiwan, I had served as editor for two years.

During this time my physical health was never well; I experienced weakness, dizziness, tightness,

feeble arms, cold feet, low appetite, and stomach problems. It is said that before Shakyamuni Buddha attained perfect enlightenment under the Bodhi Tree, he encountered obstacles from many demonic states, so these small problems that I had were really nothing. Luckily, an elder master referred me to a Chinese doctor for diagnosis, who prescribed two sets of medicine for me. After I took the medicines for six months, my body gradually recovered from barely functioning.

During that time, not many articles were being submitted to *Humanity* by the Buddhist community, and since there was no remuneration for the writers, acquiring articles was very difficult. I really respected the previous editors for being able to publish the magazine every month on time, an amazing feat. Therefore, I asked Master Dongchu to tell me the secret. His reply was, "What secret? If nobody wrote anything, then do it yourself! If you wrote one article a day, you would have thirty articles each month. Give a different penname for each article and it would be done. The Dharma is so vast and deep, yet the problems of humanity are so many and complicated. You could find great topics everywhere, from what

you heard, read, felt, touched, and thought everyday, and there would be an endless supply of articles." So I asked him to submit some articles, and his reply was even cleverer: "For those editors of *Humanity* who couldn't write, I had no choice but to write for them. Now that you have become really good at writing, and since I'm getting old, of course it would be your turn to write."

And so it was that I had to work hard, from the editorial section to the afterword. Fortunately, there were two lay Buddhists who had been submitting articles to *Humanity* on a long-term basis, which helped to share some of the burden. Their articles were long, but they were full of philosophical insight and depth. However, these articles may have been too difficult for ordinary readers. Luckily, the number printed each issue was only around a thousand, and there were always one or two articles that were worth reading. Especially, when occasionally, Master Dongchu gave oral teachings, and I recorded and published them as editorials. These often turned out to be the "heavyweight" pieces in a given issue.

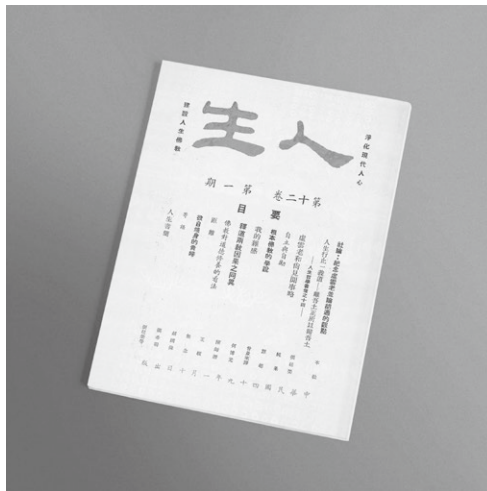
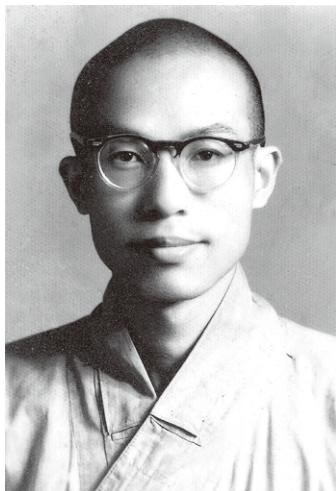
I was inviting people to write, asking and begging for articles. Several magazines inside and outside the Buddhist community were also pressing for the articles that I owed them. Thus, I had to write, edit, and compile articles for *Humanity* as well as deal with pressure from the outside. With such poor health, writing was a painful task. The spaces for editing, publishing, and funding the magazine were all in my office, and the staff, if you add the others, would still be just me. I often went in person from the Old Beitou train station to the small printing factory in Wanhua, to deal with the typesetters – just for altering the layout, adding news, or even correcting one or two words. When it was time to publish, even though their attitude was quite nice, I had to go to the printer up to five or six times. That was not so much fun. As far as I knew, the cultural groups within

or outside the Buddhist community were mostly in the same boat, and books were still being published one by one, and then sent to the hands of the readers. Therefore, those who are in the circle of this kind of cultural work must have this kind of devotion.

During that period, besides editing, writing, and seeing the doctor, I also used the time to read some larger sutras and shastras, (commentaries, usually on sutras). I finished reading all eighty chapters of the *Flower Ornament (Avatamsaka) Sutra*, all forty chapters of the *Mahaparinirvana Sutra*, and twenty of the one hundred chapters of the *Shastra on the Maha-prajnaparamita Sutra*. Every day, aside from morning service, evening service, and meditation, I also did the Great Compassion Repentance for the length of time to burn one stick of incense.

## The Record of Asking for Ordination

In September 1961, I went to receive the Threefold Ordination (shramanera, bhikshu, bodhisattva) of the Great Precepts of the Thousand Buddhas under Master Daoyuan Nengxin (1900–1988). This was to take place at the Haihui Temple in Badu, Keelung. Buddhism refers to the monastery where one receives the precepts as the repentance hall, also called the ordination hall. I was originally hoping that I would be able to study the precepts diligently, and do repentance and prostrations to the Buddha. However, on the first day I entered the ordination hall, I was selected to be the head of the shramaneras, which is equivalent to the student leader in an ordinary school. I was to provide services to all the new applicants for receiving the precepts. Furthermore, the secretary of the ordination hall, Master Zhenhua, wanted to promote me for my talents, so he compassionately recommended me to Master Daoyuan to be in charge of the writing of the *Diary of the Ordination Platform*.



Master Sheng Yen returned to the life of a monk and began to serve as the *Humanity's* chief editor in 1960. Left is the first photo he took after returning to the life of a monk. Right is the cover of his first issue as the chief editor.  
DDM Archive Photos



Master Sheng Yen (front row center) receives the Threefold Ordination at Haihui Temple in 1961. Haihui Temple Archive Photo

Their reasons were, first, that I had been a monk since I was young, and should be able to serve the new applicants for receiving the precepts in accordance with the Dharma. Secondly, I had already begun writing, and had been a writer and editor in the Buddhist community, so I was deemed to be the best choice for writing the diary, to keep a true record of the process of the ceremony of ordination.

As a result, I was put in a position to work busily, running around in circles. I had to attend all classes and activities, take care of the whole place, mindful of the whole process, and be the first to arrive and the last to leave. I had to get up early in the morning, sleep late at night, with no break time for resting

during the day. For every class, I could not be lazy or fall asleep like some other Dharma brothers; otherwise, the precepts masters would scold me and the Dharma brothers would blame me. Just like the saying, “the rafters that stick out get worn down first,” I felt like I was being pointed at and seen by everyone, and under the public eye there was nowhere to hide.

However, these two roles and duties trained my physique, faith, and the ability to deal with people and things. At the same time, it enhanced my need to improve my studies. After forty days of training, at the time the ordination ceremony was completed, I was probably the one who gained the most among

the hundred or more applicants for receiving the precepts. Not only did I memorize all the rules of the ordination hall and the schedule of activities, I also wrote them down in the diary. And I recorded the lectures given by every precepts master, as well as their explanations for the precepts. For example, I summarized the contents of *The Essence of the Vinaya Manual*, *Dharmagupta Bhikshunipratimoksha*, and the *Brahma Net Sutra’s Bodhisattva Precepts*. In the end, I completed the *Diary of the Ordination Platform* in nearly 130,000 words, and handed it to Haihui Temple for publishing as the enduring reference and memory for the people related to the ordination ceremony. Even today, when I read that diary, I still feel new and refreshed.

Before we walked out of the ordination hall and left the mountain, our training master, Venerable Baisheng, knew that during the ordination ceremony, I worked very hard yet was unable to take care of everything, so I still received some criticisms and complaints. He consoled me with these lines in front of the public: “Don’t be the head of the shramaneras when receiving ordination. Living and movements are restricted and not free. Once hated by the Dharma brothers and scolded by the precepts master, one can only turn the flowing of tears inwards.”

I was very grateful to the Venerable for being compassionate and caring to me. However, I was not very satisfied with what I heard and saw in the ordination hall. Because the precepts masters mostly recited what was written in the books, they simply repeated what people in ancient times had said or done; what the students did not understand, the precepts masters probably didn’t either. Especially the terms in the teachings of the sila and vinaya were often transliterated from Sanskrit; there were no such things or events in Chinese culture, so they could not be properly explained in Chinese. In addition, the ancient Chinese often used indirect

ways to explain the various problems in the teaching of sila and vinaya.

Modern people who lack the academic foundation and cultural background of ancient scholars would not be able to understand these issues of the precepts. In the ordination hall, the new applicants for receiving the precepts did not ask. They simply listened to the precepts masters, and when they heard parts they didn’t understand, or that didn’t make sense, they thought it should be that way. I often found it inconvenient to ask questions in class, and would ask the precepts masters after class. Only Master Daoyuan said to the group more than once: “The sila and vinaya are very hard to understand, so it is very difficult to teach the vinaya. I hope all of you will be inspired to read the original vinaya texts yourself, study them further, and spread the teaching.” I discovered at the time – whether it be the Buddhist precepts for the monks or for lay people, for shravakas or for bodhisattvas – not only should we make a great effort to clarify their meanings, but also to revise and adapt them for the modern world and current society. Otherwise, it would be like holding onto dead prescriptions to help cure changing diseases. That would be merely emphasizing the vinaya that lacked the actual function of purifying society and human minds. This was the reason why after receiving the ordination, I earnestly worked on memorizing and reciting the *Dharmagupta Bhikshupratimoksha* and *Brahma Net Sutra’s Bodhisattva Precepts*. It also became my motivation for studying the vinaya shortly afterwards. I hoped to understand the precepts myself first, and then let others be able to understand them. Also, to use them on myself first and then let others use them. ☸

\* Chan Master Sheng Yen, “My Intellectual Autobiography – Childhood and Youth,” *Chan Magazine*, Volume 36, Number 1, Winter 2016, 4.

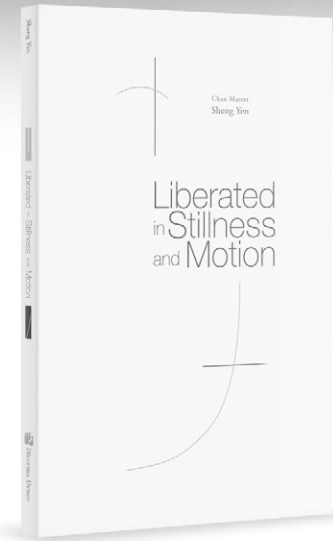


## Liberated in Stillness and Motion

Chan Master Sheng Yen

“Correct Chan does not use miracles or the summoning of spirits as its appeal, nor does it emphasize other-worldly phenomena. Chan takes simple normal living as its basis, lessening afflictions as its purpose, being relaxed and at ease. One does not regret the past; rather, one actively prepares for the future, moving steadily ahead while being fully in the present. Although I introduce Chan in contemporary language and words, my perspective does not deviate from the teachings of the Buddha and the lineage masters. I avoid the ‘wild-fox Chan’ of some who talk of going beyond the Buddha and the lineage masters, who say outrageous things, scolding as if they were ancient buddhas from the past.”

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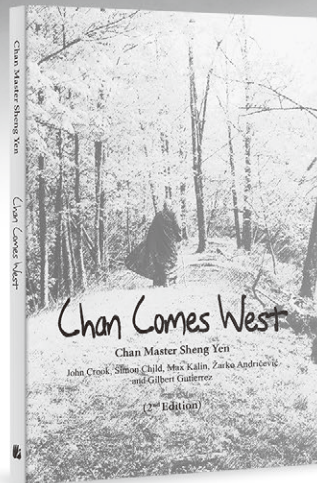
## Chan Comes West (2nd Edition)

Chan Master Sheng Yen

John Crook, Simon Child, Max Kälin,  
Žarko Andričević, and Gilbert Gutierrez

In this book Chan Master Sheng Yen shares his experience in the practice and his views on Dharma transmission. His five lay Dharma heirs share their stories on the path, including how they came to the practice, their inner struggles along the path, and what receiving Dharma transmission has meant for them. The Master has sown the Dharma seeds, and it is now the task of these Dharma heirs to cultivate the field so that Chan will flourish in the West and benefit people for generations to come. It is hoped that readers will find these stories inspiring and be encouraged to make great vows in their practice.

*Dharma Drum Publications* • ISBN 1-890684-04-x



## Common Questions in the Practice of Buddhism

Chan Master Sheng Yen

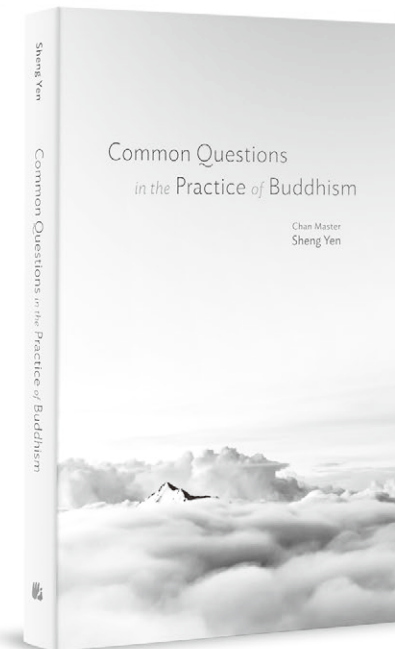
*If someone believes in and practices Buddhism,  
should they also take refuge in the Three Jewels?*

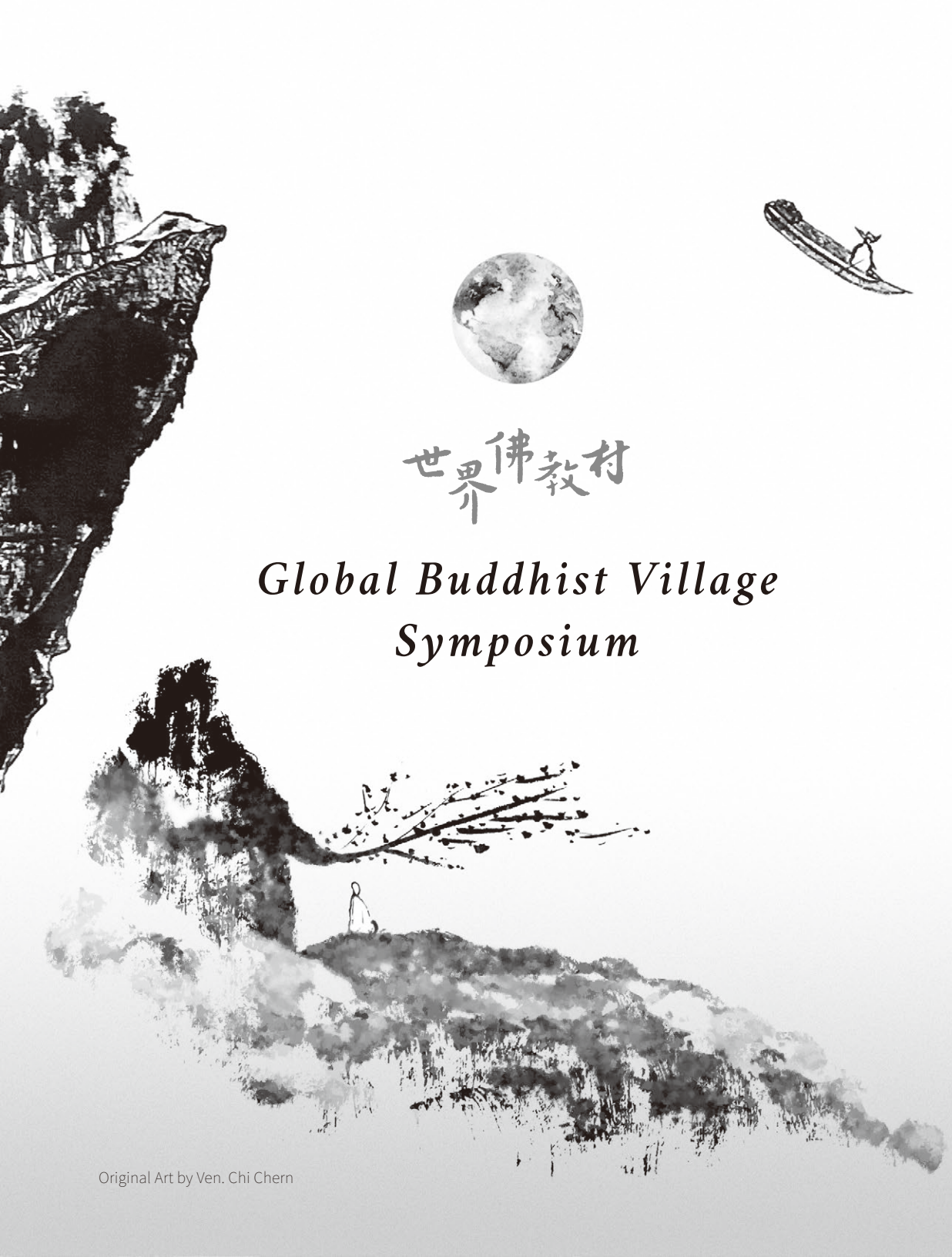
*Is special knowledge and advanced learning required to  
practice Buddhism?*

*Are there any taboos concerning practicing Buddhism at home?*

In *Common Questions in the Practice of Buddhism*, Chan Master Sheng Yen addresses these and many other spiritual and worldly problems in a simple question-and-answer format. He clarifies common areas of confusion about Buddhist beliefs and practices and gives practical advice on leading a life that is “full of wisdom, kindness, radiance, comfort, freshness, and coolness” in the contemporary world.

*Sheng Yen Education Foundation* • ISBN 978-986-6443-92-3





世界佛教村

## Global Buddhist Village Symposium

Original Art by Ven. Chi Chern



Photo by Tong-Yang Lee

**H**umanity Magazine, published in Taiwan, was founded in 1949 by Chan Master Dong Chu, the teacher of Chan Master Sheng Yen. To mark the magazine's upcoming seventieth anniversary, a Global Buddhist Village Symposium gathered in Taipei on June 27, 2018. This diverse group met to discuss how Dharma brings peace of mind, and how Buddhist culture provides guidance to life's direction, and to address these questions: In the age of multi-media and rapid changes, how does Buddhist publishing, as one important sector of Buddhist culture, proactively respond to society's needs? As the number of readers diminishes, how does Buddhist publishing expand and deepen Buddhist cultural endeavors? Here are the responses from international Chan/Zen masters, authors, academics, and specialized Buddhist publishers of the east and west. This article was originally published in *Dharma Drum Monthly*. Reporting by Meijuan Chen and the DDM Editorial Team, translation by Cheng-Yu Chang, Chia-Cheng Chang, Amanda Chen, Elenda Huang, Wenren Liu, John Wu, and Shu-Jen Yeh.

IN A FAST-CHANGING WORLD, how can societies in the west and east invite collective insight by drawing on Buddhist wisdom, to map out a blueprint for Buddhist practice in the global community? To mark the imminent seventieth anniversary of *Humanity Magazine* and commemorate the upcoming tenth anniversary of Master Sheng Yen's passing in 2019, *Humanity Magazine*, the Dharma Drum Corporation, the DDM Public Buddhist Education Center, and the Sheng Yen Education Foundation co-organized a Global Buddhist Village Symposium at the GIS NTU Convention Center on June 27, 2018. The symposium invited delegates from Buddhist sanghas, Buddhist publishers, and scholars across the globe to have a dialogue. Over six hundred people attended the meeting.

"In response to the radically changing era, the first thing Ven. Dong Chu did was to launch *Humanity Magazine*," DDM abbot president Ven. Guo Dong said in his opening remarks. The magazine started in 1949, an era when Taiwan was in turmoil and faced many changes. Now, modern

technology and convenient communications may have facilitated the forming of a global Buddhist village, but there is also some confusion regarding its possible direction of development. The abbot president quoted Master Sheng Yen as addressing the future of Buddhism, hoping that people can use a macro perspective to approach Shakyamuni Buddha's teaching as a whole, its diversity and singularity in terms of historical development and doctrinal essence, so as to return to the Buddha's original intention and reinvent the prospect of a global Buddhist village.

The symposium had two sessions, on the themes of "Buddhism in Times of Radical Changes" and "Multi-dimensional Development of Buddhist Cultures," with Jakusho Kwong-roshi, founder of the Sonoma Mountain Zen Center, and Ven. Chi Chern, leader of practice at the Young Buddhist Association of Malaysia, as the key-note speakers. Already in his eighties, Jakusho Kwong-roshi was the first Zen master in the US to invite Master Sheng Yen to travel to California to share the Dharma in



DDM abbot president Venerable Guo Dong Photo by Tong-Yang Lee

the west. When discussing late Master Sheng Yen's ideal of "building a pure land on earth," he expressed that the pure land is originally there, and it is our task to discover it. In addition, sitting in meditation is not for the mere purpose of seeking calm and peace, it also requires the practitioners to further contemplate and realize the truth that "our mind is originally in a state of calm and peace." By saying that, he encouraged people to face the ever-changing world with a clear and luminous mind.

"Buddhism is not only a way of life, but more of a path to life," said Ven. Chi Chern, who stressed that birth and death are important parts of life. What the Buddha taught is all about the path to liberation from the cycle of birth and death. Whether by using mindful breathing, playing music spiritually, practicing Buddha-name recitation, or even incorporating psychology, there are no fixed forms of the Dharma that leads us to liberation from samsara. The venerable blessed everyone present, and

encouraged all to learn from their Dharma teachers their most beneficial method to calm the mind and find the path to a life of genuine happiness.

The first session of the symposium featured Jakusho Kwong-roshi, head abbot of Sonoma Mountain Zen Center, Rev. Master Meian Elbert, abbess of Shasta Abbey Buddhist Monastery, Ven. Phap Kham, executive director of the Plum Village Foundation Hong Kong, and Ven. Guo Huei, vice abbot-president of Dharma Drum Mountain, sharing their views in terms of their respective Buddhist traditions. In the second session, Ven. Chi Chern, Ven. Guo Shyan, director and editor-in-chief of Dharma Drum Corporation, Daniel Aitken, CEO of Wisdom Publications, Sam Mowe, associate publisher of *Tricycle*, Prof. Chien-Huang Chen, director of the Center for the Study of Humanistic Buddhism, Chinese University of Hong Kong, discussed how Buddhist publishers should address and deal with challenges from the rapidly changing world.



Photo by Tong-Yang Lee

Hui-Chi Yan, a participant from Hsinchu, said that the forum had opened up her perspective in accessing Buddhism. Thanks to the speakers' sharing, she gained a further understanding of the traditions and features of various Buddhist groups around the world. Ming-Xuan Liao, who made a special effort to travel from Yunlin County, was particularly moved by the charisma of Jakusho Kwong-roshi as a Zen teacher, who, embodying a traditional teaching and always maintaining a stable composure, indeed inspired people with his calming power.

## Viewing the Changing World with a Calm Mind

*Jakusho Kwong-roshi*

Jakusho Kwong-roshi, a third-generation Chinese American, began studying Zen with Shunryu Suzuki-roshi in 1959 and later became a successor to his lineage of the Soto Zen School in Japan. Kwong-roshi has taught Zen in the US and Europe for more than forty years. He also founded the Sonoma Mountain Zen Center in northern California, the Kannon Zen Center in Warsaw, Poland and the Nátthagi Zen Center in Reykjavik, Iceland.

Kwong-roshi mentioned that he is from a very traditional Zen lineage, following traditional ways of practice. Upon seeing the topic of this keynote speech, "Buddhism in Times of Radical Changes," one may feel that the world is constantly changing, which, in fact, reflects that one is confused and deluded by the phenomenon without knowing it.

"There is something that doesn't change. This is really important!" He quoted from the sixth patriarch Hui Neng: "originally there was nothing," and reminded the audience that our mind is already calm, there is no need to "become" calm; we will realize calmness through our practice. In fact, "Practice is



*Jakusho Kwong-roshi* Photo by Tong-Yang Lee

very simple and it needs to be done in a repeated way, a relentless way."

Kwong-roshi shared that Master Sheng Yen often mentioned the ideal of "building a pure land on earth," but, if we do not understand that the pure land is already there in our mind, how could we actually build a pure land out of nothing? The pure land could be seen simply because "it" already exists and is complete in itself.

According to Kwong-roshi, each of us already has our own illumination. He indicated that it is the nature of the entire universe, namely, at every current moment everything is created by the mind alone.

"We're all jewels connecting, shining, and creating each other in Indra's net." Taking an example from daily life he said, when riding on a bus, if we find people around us to not be lovely at all, just laugh at our own stupidity and conditionality. The light of the jewel illumines itself and the whole universe, and at

the same time the boundless world is also manifested in each and every pearl. It is the expression of emptiness, infinite space, said Kwong-roshi.

"A Japanese Zen master once said that when the horizontal and the vertical intersect, so it is when there is this, there is that; when there is not this, there is not that; when there is no longer this, no longer that, it is freedom from karma." This is basically "dependent origination," meaning the law of cause and effect.

Kwong-roshi emphasized that all the teachings from those eminent masters are about how to view this changing world with a calm mind; this is our work and practice for ourselves.

## Finding Unity among Differences, Opening for Collaboration

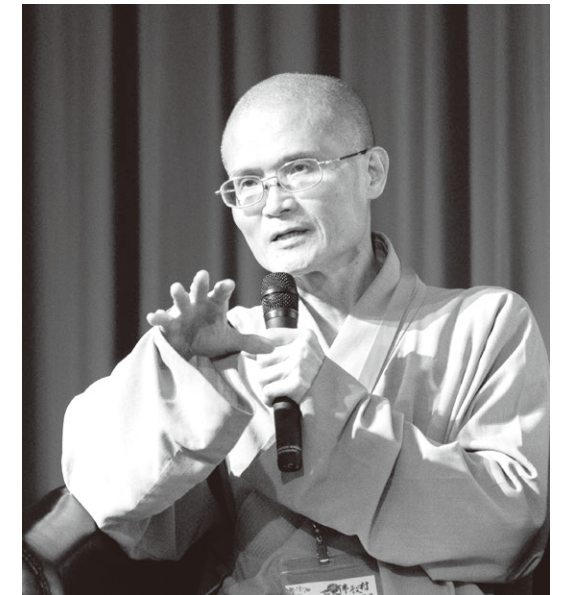
*Venerable Guo Huei*

According to Ven. Guo Huei, newly elected sixth abbot president of Dharma Drum Mountain, DDM comes from the tradition of Chinese Chan Buddhism. Its core ideal is to protect the spiritual environment, and its approach to altruism is "Great Compassionate Mind Arising," while its approach to self-elevation is "having vexations dissolved through returning to one's own mind."

The venerable commented that, as we face many challenges in the age of artificial intelligence, technology in itself is neutral. It can be used to do evil, but it can also be used to spread the Dharma. Use of the internet to deliver online Buddhism courses is a good example of holding Buddhadharma in the core while utilizing technology as the means. The venerable recommended use of "observing the present and now" derived from Chinese Chan Buddhism, in the face of the modern day challenges of information overflow and constant demand of

instantaneous response. "Observing the present and now" is to maintain clear awareness anytime and anywhere, that is, "wherever the body is, the mind follows."

Many Buddhist methods have been widely adopted in western societies, where many religious and Buddhist traditions coexist. Individuals have diverse choices of religious identification or paths of exploration. Regarding this, Ven. Guo Huei quoted Master Sheng Yen: "We offer the wisdom and compassion of Buddhadharma to others, but we don't intend to change their religions." Different religions and different Buddhist traditions each have their own historical paths of evolution, and there are many opportunities for dialogue and learning from each other. Through emphasizing commonality and common goals rather than focusing on differences, we could find unity among differences, and find more grounds for collaboration to make greater contributions internationally.



*Venerable Guo Huei* Photo by Tong-Yang Lee

## Returning to the Present Moment and Regressing to Totality

*Reverend Meian Elbert*

Rev. Meian Elbert, the abess of Shasta Abbey in northern California, said that the fundamental problem in the human spirit is nothing but vexations generated from greed, hatred, and ignorance. The reverend believes that while living in an era dominated by economy and technology and of momentous, sudden changes, it is best to lead a life based on practicing precepts, meditative concentration, and compassion. This way, one could be free from the invisible constraints of material life and navigate the mind to purity and compassion.

Nonetheless, modern people are confronted with overwhelming input yet have to make timely decisions. Even if one managed to settle his own



*Reverend Meian Elbert* Photo by Tong-Yang Lee

mind, still there would be conflicts between the individual and the organization. In this regard, how to keep practicing in daily life? Rev. Meian suggested that the best way is to “be present for your life.” That is, to just take care of the problem at the present moment, nothing else. In fact, no matter what position one is at, the significance of the individual is far less than imagined. Rather, one could try to consider the self as part of the whole, instead of as an entity independent from the organization, so as to live with others in harmony. When one keeps trying to help others instead of grasping firmly onto one’s desires, one could become softened and the self could dissolve.

For human kind, it’s most important to nurture compassion and virtues. The reverend reminded us not to lose faith in the basic goodness of human beings. Keep on trying your best, and never give up!

## Breathing, Smiling, Being Mindful and Aware, Moment by Moment

*Venerable Phap Kham*

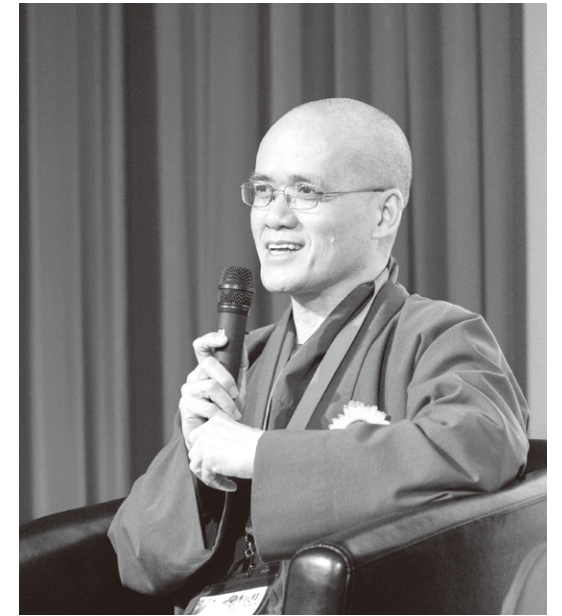
In an era of dramatic shifts, Ven. Phap Kham, executive director of Plum Village Foundation Hong Kong, believes that technology has significantly changed human lives and brought great convenience, yet it can not fulfill the connections among human minds, neither will it replace the function and work of human minds. For example, even if, with bio-technology, Master Thich Nhat Hanh could be duplicated physically and physiologically in perfection, such technology wouldn’t be able to recreate the same Master Thich Nhat Hanh, from the background of Vietnamese War.

The venerable also believes that humans are still the most intelligent in this world, and there is no

need to worry about being replaced by technology. It is more important for one to better understand impermanence, suffering, emptiness, and selflessness than to worry about the impacts the external world might bring to human beings. As to facing the various challenges in contemporary society, the best approach is to apply mindfulness in daily life. The venerable recommends that everyone try to be aware of one’s own breathing, moment by moment. When losing mindfulness, just keep returning to the awareness of breathing.

If one has the chance to meditate, one would realize that what is really important is not pursuing satisfaction in the external, material world but instead returning to the original integration internally. The venerable suggested living every step in the present moment, just like flowing water without existence of “self,” yet being aware of all the phenomena produced by encounters between sensory organs and objects.

To conclude, the venerable delivered the joy of awareness of breathing and smiling to the audience,

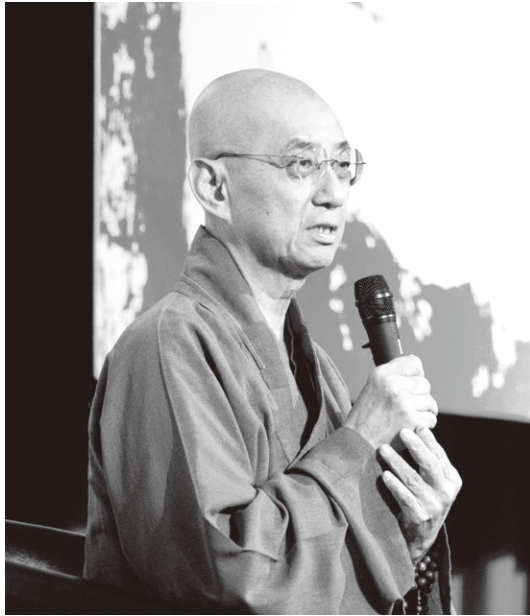


*Venerable Phap Kham* Photo by Tong-Yang Lee

by singing wisdom words such as “I am free!” and “I have arrived home.”



Photo by Tong-Yang Lee



Venerable Chi Chern Photo by Tong-Yang Lee

## Not Just a Culture, Buddhism Is the Way for Life

*Venerable Chi Chern*

Popular culture often regards Buddhism as a life style, not a religion. Even Islam and Christianity raise similar notions. It seems that the element of faith has been extruded from all religions, so that they become fashions of life style. It is as if the word “religion” is automatically associated with superstition; on the other hand, if a religion is associated with art, then it is upgraded.

“Judging from its attributes, Buddhism is a religion,” said Ven. Chi Chern, “In fact, departing from its religious aspects, everything is downgraded.” This is because the levels that are unreachable in worldly life can only be reached through the element of religion. Religion will always exist, and always be

respected, because it “transcends the reality of time and space. It is the manifestation of humanity’s ultimate wisdom.”

Ven. Chi Chern started out with the thesis that religion is not just a way of living, but more importantly “the way for life.” This is the essence of Buddhism. If all our efforts are just for subsistence and life’s enjoyment, then we miss the whole point of Buddha’s wisdom of liberation from life and death. In subsistence, we must live out wisdom and compassion, and we must work for the peace and harmony of mankind. This is the true Buddhist faith, the essence of Buddhist culture.

“Buddhism is like a sphere. Within this sphere, there are various religions and cultures.” The venerable explained that Buddhism does not exist without humankind; only through human beings is the enlightened wisdom exhibited. Buddhism is the dharma of no dharma, the gateless gate. It encompasses all methods; it is emptiness as such, certainly, and always. “When Buddhism is united with worldly cultures and arts, people find commonality and develop in all directions, so that everybody can find somewhere in life the right method to settle the body and mind, to begin practice, and to attain liberation.”

## Promoting Orthodox Buddhism: Sharing Answers to Life’s Questions

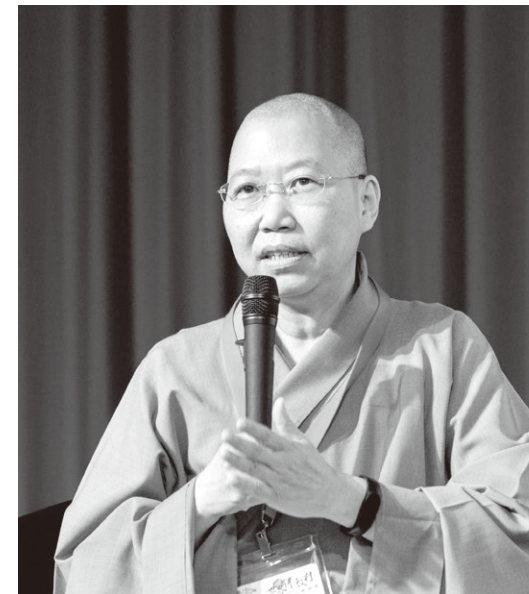
*Venerable Guo Shyan*

Ven. Guo Shyan, managing director of Dharma Drum Cultural Center, has dedicated twenty-three years to Buddhist cultural publication, and personally experienced its progress not only in the quality of the printed books, but also its evolution to the use of diversified media such as audio-visual films, daily necessities, cultural products etc. As the

publication unit of DDM, the unwavering principles of publication have a foothold on Chinese Chan Buddhism, adhering to the concept of “protecting the spiritual environment” in the promotion of orthodox Buddhism and right view.

Although it has been a multi-media era, Ven. Guo Shyan emphasized that the only difference is in the medium, while the content remains the primary essence. Given the difficulties of preserving knowledge, DDM has already entered the digital information era, striving to pass on the wisdom of Buddha and our ancestor masters.

Master Sheng Yen once said, “There is no best or worst era,” even though the world today seems to be in turmoil and its people in unrest. The venerable explained that this phenomenon is already the “consequences,” and we should focus on changing the “causes.” She has been searching for the answers to life’s questions since her youth. One day, she incidentally came across Master Sheng Yen’s *The Life*



Venerable Guo Shyan Photo by Tong-Yang Lee

of *Chan* in a bookshop, and in that moment felt that the questions in life have been answered. It was the turning point of her life, finding this wise teacher on the path of Buddhism. As for *Humanity Magazine*, it was based on Master Tai Xu’s philosophy of “human life Buddhism,” aspiring to resolve the dilemmas of birth, aging, sickness and death through the wisdom of the Dharma.!

## Reflections on the Active Functioning of Humanistic Buddhism in Society

*Professor Chien-Huang Chen*

Prof. Chien-Huang Chen, director of the Center for the Study of Humanistic Buddhism, Chinese University of Hong Kong, addressed that the center has been on a mission of promoting Buddhist education, in the face of prevailing and instantaneous multimedia networking. Since 2015 in his chairmanship, he has conducted more than sixty academic symposiums on a large scale and more than two hundred lectures. The objective is for Buddhism to become part of life in the general public, in the same way as humanistic Buddhism is for daily practice. The center is launching a project in the next five years which will focus on potential management models. It is proposed that Buddhist wisdom could be elicited and explored for application to management or administration.

In its globalization development, Hong Kong, like many other cities, also offers a platform of multi-cultural interactions. Prof. Chen pointed out that it is significant to reflect upon the active functioning of humanistic Buddhism in modern society. The propagation could be extended to the domains of art, literature, and the like. *Humanity Magazine* is an excellent demonstration



Prof. Chien-Huang Chen Photo by Tong-Yang Lee

in this regard. Published in Taiwan, the magazine represents a facet of the delicate and advanced Buddhist culture cultivated within Taiwan. This is a worthy example to be followed by other cities and countries worldwide.

Prof. Chen also commented on the phenomenon of insufficient reading among modern people. He remarked humorously that scholarly publication in Buddhism has ever remained a small market. However, publication must continue even though the market is very limited, for the sake of deepening Buddhist studies as well as fulfilling the mission of Buddhist scholars.

### Propagating Orthodox Buddhism, Uplifting Human Spirituality

*Daniel Aitken*

Daniel Aitken, a PhD in Buddhist Philosophy, is well-informed in Sanskrit and Tibetan languages. He shared that even today, in the Dege Parkhang Sutra-Printing House of Tibet, the monks still carve Buddhist sutras on wood in a traditional way and proofread carefully before printing, all for the purpose of preserving and passing on the heritage of Buddha’s teachings. He thinks that this is the essence of Buddhist publication, that they do not easily alter their traditions as a result of environmental impact – they are still publishing in the same traditional way. When he learned that Ven. Dong Chu’s initial intention to establish *Humanity Magazine* was to share genuine Buddhism, he was filled with admiration for this aspiration.

In the convenience of online bookstores, when one keys in “Buddhism” for an internet search, numerous results pop up. He shared that his teacher, Geshe Ngawang Samten, once told him that one must not devour the Buddha’s teachings like a yak eating



Daniel Aitken Photo by Tong-Yang Lee

grass, reading randomly and indiscriminately. In this era, the role of a Buddhist publishing company is to continue sharing orthodox Buddhism and ensuring its quality, while accumulated experience and reputation are reassurances to the readers that they can pick out the right teaching materials from a sea of books, and also ensure that Wisdom Publications will increase its sales of these good books.

Daniel pointed out that the collapse of the economy, the educational system and the environment are caused by greed, anger, and ignorance. He used automobile repair as an analogy: while many people come into contact with the Dharma in the hope of acquiring instant knowledge and techniques that may quickly improve their careers and lives, this is like merely polishing the exterior of a car, but the deep wisdom is the engine that marks the performance of the car. So the primary objective of Wisdom Publications is still to give rise to the aspiration to uplift the human spirituality of our society through Dharma wisdom.

### The Role as an Open Platform for the Sects

*Sam Mowe*

Sam Mowe, an associate publisher from the US magazine *Tricycle: the Buddhist Review*, is a younger generation Buddhist with a commerce background. He says that Buddhist magazines are offering timely topics as well, giving the Buddhist take on many of the social issues. He discovered that when the Dharma is introduced into discussions on topics of environmental protection, gender equality, climate change etc., enthusiastic responses are received from both Buddhist and non-Buddhist readers. Evidence of the yearning for Dharma knowledge and wisdom indicate the need in an American society longing



Sam Mowe Photo by Tong-Yang Lee

for answers to the current environmental change.

“If you open our magazine, you can see the different points of view from each Buddhist lineage.” Sam explained that “tricycle” not only denotes Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, it also represents the Theravada, Tibetan and Chinese Buddhism lineages. This boundless policy helps the different Buddhist sects learn from each other’s teaching methods. This is not to create homogeneity, but, on the contrary, to deepen the self-cultivation of one’s own heritage, and to facilitate communication and understanding, enabling people to recognize and embrace each other’s differences.

Today, when more and more Americans are claiming to be “spiritual but not religious,” *Tricycle* emphasizes the application of the Dharma in worldly affairs, appealing to them, and committed to guiding them through the gates of the Dharma with the printed magazine or articles on the internet. ☺

# Causing-Conditions for Publishing

BY

Chan Master Sheng Yen

**G**etting the Buddha Mind: On the Practice of Chan Retreat, published in 1982 by Dharma Drum Publications, is Master Sheng Yen's first book in English. What follows is the author's preface to that book, in which Master Sheng Yen outlines the causes and conditions resulting in the book's production. In his explanation of how Chan uses language as a bridge to describe the ineffable, Master Sheng Yen allows us a glimpse of the motivation behind his life's work as a scholar-monk and a prolific author.

I ARRIVED IN AMERICA in the winter of 1975 to present the teaching and the experience of Chan Buddhism. Though I have written in both Chinese and Japanese I cannot express myself as well in English. In this respect, I may have failed to fulfill some expectations that people have of me.

Fortunately, among my American disciples and students, are several who have good command of both English and Chinese. Thus, when I speak on Chan teaching and practice, my remarks are translated immediately into English. On formal occasions, such as retreats, lectures, and seminars, these remarks are also taped. Many of these talks, after transcription, organization, and editing, are published in two of our publications: *Chan Magazine*, and *Chan Newsletter*. Many readers have expressed interest in and appreciation for these articles, thus providing the first causing-condition for publishing this book.

Chan is the supreme realization of the original nature of mind. It neither affirms nor negates any conceptual point of view, hence does not need language for its expression. On the other hand, one can exhaust the resources of language, and still not express the ultimate Chan. This is because Chan transcends knowledge, symbols, and all the apparatus of language.

You may call Chan "emptiness," but it is not emptiness in the nihilistic sense of "there's nothing there." You may call it "existence," but it is not existence in the common sense of "I see it, so it must be there." It is existence which transcends the fictions of our sense impressions of the world, of sight, sound, smell, taste, touch, and form. Yet this Chan is never apart from, is all of a piece with, our everyday world. It is indwelling in all beings, everywhere, at all times.

This Chan is none other than our original self, which has been hidden from view since time



Calligraphy by Chan Master Sheng Yen

unremembered, by our egocentric delusions. In Chan Buddhism this self is called by various terms, such as the "pure mind of self-nature," or "buddha-nature." It is the self which has been liberated from egocentrism. As such it is coextensive with space and time, yet not limited by such concepts. It is pure wisdom; it is transcendent, absolute freedom.

The path by which the self is revealed and experienced is the path of Chan, and its methods of practice. Itself beyond description, Chan uses language as a bridge, until practitioners can themselves enter the door of Chan. This is the second causing-condition of this book.

Since being in America, I have spoken on many aspects of Chan practice, and many students have found these talks beneficial to their practice. Among these were talks in a special category, which some of my senior students felt should be collected into a book. These talks pertain to the practice of the

seven-day Chan retreat, and in fact, were mainly given on such retreats over the past five years. The distinctive mark of these talks is that they are guides to practice, and have only incidental interest in theory or doctrine.

The goal of the Chan retreat is the furtherance of practice, and (when the causes and conditions are right) the actual experience of Chan – of "seeing self-nature," or "getting the Buddha mind." In one way or another, all the talks point in the direction of guiding and helping students along the path of liberation. The retreats are occasions for energetically practicing together; the talks are signposts along the way. I hope that their publication can bring some insight and help to the growing number of Americans who find benefit in the study and practice of Buddhism. This is the third and final causing-condition for this book.

The preparation of this book has been a collaboration by several people, over a span of time, beginning with on-the-spot translations primarily by Ming-Yee Wang. Other translators include Bhikshu Guo-Jen (Paul Kennedy), and Sramanerika Guo-Hsien (Karen Swaine). Transcription, typing, and collection of the texts was done mostly by Sramanerika Guo-Hsien. Marina Heau proof read the manuscript. Nancy Makso coordinated the printing effort. Rick Hallstead proofread the printer's galleys. Organization and editing of the text was done by Ernest Heau, with the assistance of Harry Miller, and Dan Stevenson. Bringing the whole together as chief editor, Ernest Heau has dedicated the most energy of all. I hereby express my thanks to these individuals. ☸

Chan Master Sheng Yen  
Chan Meditation Center  
Elmhurst, New York  
July 15, 1982



# Retreat Report

BY

DW

This anonymous retreat report comes from an early retreat in America, circa 1978. It is one of several that were included in *Getting the Buddha Mind: On the Practice of Chan Retreat*, Master Sheng Yen's first book in English.

A FEW YEARS AGO a friend and I were listening to music, enjoying a spontaneous, energized conversation. We were tripping, having ingested a type of LSD known as windowpane, a dose that would last twelve hours. Suddenly my friend turned off the lights, because the overhead light was much too bright. I did not enjoy the darkened room, so I went into my own room to bring back a candle.

The moment I stepped into my own room my mind went "crazy;" nothing had a name. The candle was still there and I went about my business, but I wasn't there – there was no DW. This unnerved me so much that after lighting the candle and taking it into the other room I left and asked another friend, who was downstairs, to take a walk with me. I thought I was going crazy, that I was having a bad trip. I replayed the thoughts in my mind. They seemed illogical, and I concluded that I must be going insane. The walk helped tremendously, but the drug's effects were still going to last many hours. I felt paranoid, but all I could do was ride the trip out to the end.

Even after the drug was out of my body, the thoughts that there were no names and no DW were with me constantly. Actually, it wasn't that so much as my belief that I had gone crazy. For a year or so my mental condition was colored with intense fear and paranoia.

At this time I was aware of Buddhism and Chan and had read much on both subjects. However it would be over a year before meeting Shifu and becoming his student. That interim was marked with an unusually painful inward struggle.

Previously, whenever I remembered the above episode I would cringe. It was one of the worst experiences of my life, with deep repercussions. Now I think of it as a blessing in disguise; it forced me to abandon my lifestyle, my involvement with drugs and alcohol, and edged me into pursuing the Dharma.

After being a student of Shifu's for a while, I attended my first retreat. On that retreat three people got very good results. I on the other hand, came away with a great deal of disappointment. Not

until later did I see that I also got a great deal of benefit. What stands out in my mind from that retreat is Shifu telling me, in one of the daily interviews, that I was working hard, but that I had an obstruction. He said that in the past, a Chan master would send someone like me away for five years to do hard labor. Fortunately, only a year later, I was able to attend a second retreat.

On the first morning I awoke to a familiar sound: two wooden boards being banged together. My first coherent thoughts were, "Here we go again," and "Why am I here?" One bit of conversation echoed from the night before: in presenting the use of the incense board to the newer students, Shifu had mentioned that another student and I were the type who needed to be hit often. Recalling the last retreat, I decided if constantly being hit was the shape of things to come, I had better work hard.

One of my regrets from the last retreat was that I hadn't worked hard enough, hadn't really pushed myself. This time, I told myself, it would be different. I would try to meditate past the ten o'clock bedtime. Even so, I didn't succeed in staying up all night; most nights I slept two or three hours. Despite my efforts, most of the retreat I felt I wasn't working hard enough. Stray thoughts assailed me no matter what I was doing – sitting, walking, chanting, preparing a meal, or eating. However, throughout the retreat, Shifu consoled me and encouraged my efforts. At times I felt that he was just humoring me; that if he really wanted to help me he should be scolding me, instructing me to work harder. But he just asked about my health, and how I was coming along with my method.

Around the third day, I complain that I wasn't working hard enough, that I couldn't get myself to work harder, that I had stray thoughts of the past, plus the usual pain in my legs and back. Questions kept popping up like "Why am I here? What is all this for?"



Art by Chien-Chih Liu

Why am I going after some mysterious something I'm not supposed to think about? Am I doing the method correctly? Will I be a failure if I don't get something?" And on and on... Shifu asked, "Do you feel stronger than the last retreat?" I realized I did, that I was no longer the same person who had come to the retreat three days ago. If anything was the turning point, that was it. It gave me an added strength and self-confidence in the abilities I possessed, abilities which could definitely be used.

As I read back over what I've just written I think, "What a bunch of ego-inflated crap to lead the reader into believing that I was so fully aware of the situation, as if there was a blueprint I was able to

follow.” No such luck! Morning boards were sounded, I awoke and went about doing what had to be done just because it had to be done. I meditated – stray thoughts arose. I utilized my method and eventually fewer and fewer thoughts bubbled up. But there were certain things to which I attached varying degrees of importance (all very mundane stuff!) And in no manner was I able to view my efforts objectively. This is the importance of the master: to guide the student, to say what the student needs to hear and help them, whether it be scolding, kindness, or just leaving him alone.

A master is like a music teacher who sounds a particular musical chord which the student must attempt to perform. Without the master a student might endlessly search for the correct combination of notes. But just one clue from the master, “Put this finger here, this one here,” and the student and master strike the same chord in harmony. So the gratitude that I feel toward Shifu and the Three Jewels is inexpressible. Without Shifu’s guidance I would still be clutching at ideas and things, seeking answers, rather than practicing and letting the harvest come naturally.

The fifth night, at the start of the lecture, Shifu said that the Karen we saw before us was not the same

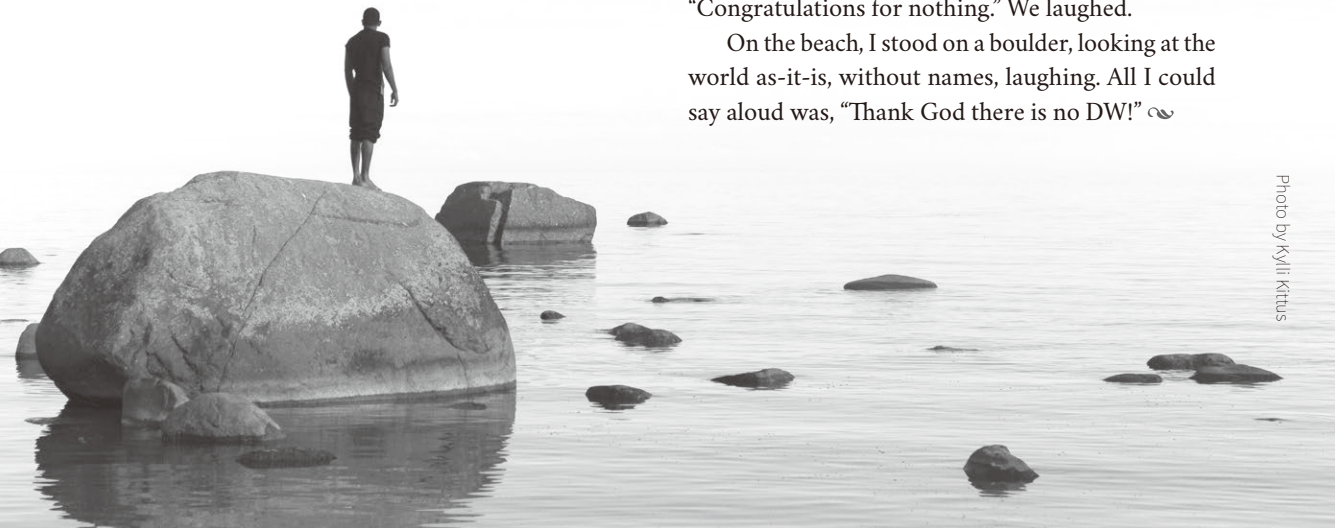
Karen as last night. A spasm of thoughts disturbed me: some form of disappointment, resentment, despair, past and future thoughts all rolled into one mass. Then another wave of thoughts: okay, Karen’s answered Shifu’s question to his satisfaction, I can too if I work hard enough. I just continued focusing my attention on the method. Both sides of the issue and all ensuing emotions were very real, begging me to acknowledge and attach to them. It would’ve been very comfortable to feel sorry for myself, but I knew that was a dead end.

At the end of the lecture Shifu talked about names. Turning to me he said, “What is your name?” After I was unable to answer, he waved his hands in an up-and-down motion about his body saying, “No name, just this... Just this!” pointing to himself. This ended the lecture. In five minutes it would be time to sit again. I went to the bathroom, concentrating on my method. I thought, “No name, just this.” I looked in the mirror and there was no DW. I walked downstairs to sit in meditation. Passing through the kitchen I saw that everything was still there, it had disappeared but it no longer presented a problem.

I sat for a while, and when I thought I was ready I stood up and asked Shifu to go to the interview room. After prostrations I presented my realization. Shifu offered, “Congratulations.” And I replied, “Congratulations for nothing.” We laughed.

On the beach, I stood on a boulder, looking at the world as-it-is, without names, laughing. All I could say aloud was, “Thank God there is no DW!”

Photo by Kylli Kittus



## Entering the Gateless

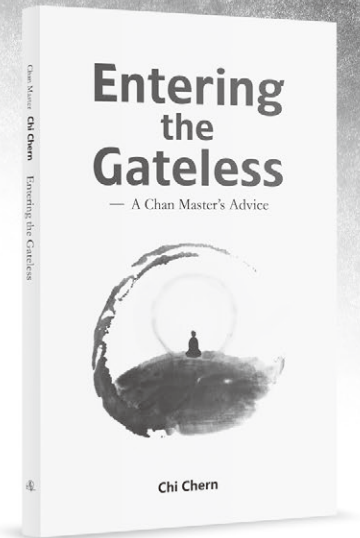
*A Chan Master’s Advice*

Chan Master Chi Chern

If you have read or heard about Chan (Zen) retreats, and you are curious about what a silent meditation retreat might be like, this little book of introduction will walk you through a landscape of the meditation world where, eventually, you will find nothing except that your original self is immaculate.

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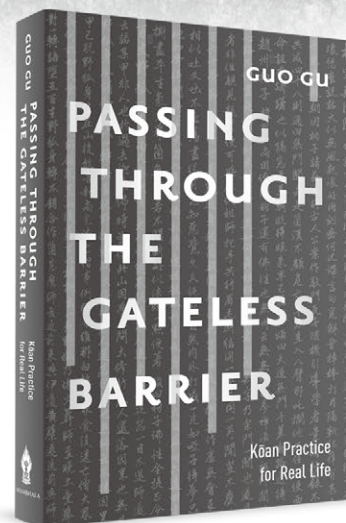
## Passing Through the Gateless Barrier

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# Retreat Experience at Pure Mind Center

BY

Katy Leigh

I RECENTLY PARTICIPATED IN A short retreat at the Pure Mind Center in St. Louis, MO, led by Venerable Guo Yuan, Abbot of the Dharma Drum Retreat Center in New York, and I wanted to take this time to share my experience of the event. I have been practicing Chan Buddhism for two and a half years. This retreat was only the third in which I had participated and my knowledge of the Chan practice is very much on the surface. The retreat included two Dharma talks (Thursday and Friday nights), one day class on relaxation techniques (Saturday), and one day meditation retreat (Sunday). I was present at the two Dharma talks and the one-day retreat on Sunday. I gained new insight which has benefited my meditation practice as well as the ways in which I incorporate the teachings into daily life.

The Dharma talks provided opportunity for us to learn more about the foundational aspects of practice and ask questions about the ways in which we could improve upon our practice in daily life. Each talk met a need I was unaware of until Ven. Guo Yuan spoke of it and brought it to my awareness. For example, I had been noticing that I was struggling to detach myself from thoughts of music when I was practicing meditation (walking

and sitting). At both talks the venerable spoke to the use of the sense of hearing and the distinction between hearing and listening. He then had us listen to the sound of the singing bowl. At that moment I realized the difficulty I had with attachment to music and sound was a vexation that prevented me from truly hearing in the present moment. This counters what I had been taught as a counselor. In our education we are taught to listen and attach to the words of the client in order to retell it later on. However, just as in attachment during meditation, listening to the words of others prevents me from truly witnessing the present and letting go of what is not mine to own, the experience of other. I left the Dharma talks knowing that I needed to be intentional about spending time without artificial sounds (television, music, and videos) in order to help clear my mind and eliminate the prescripts that often arise when I practice meditation.

In addition to this new awareness, I also experienced the Dharma talks as providing a path to discover new questions that will provide benefit to both me and other sentient beings. For instance, I asked at least one question during each talk. Even though the origin of the questions came from



Photo by Graciela Zepa

“self”, Ven. Guo Yuan’s responses were universal to the essence of the Chan practice, and yet did not dismiss my experience. I was not made to feel naïve even though my ignorance on Chan practice is great, nor was their judgement of the diversity of questions asked by the audience. These actions by the venerable were subtle yet some of the most difficult to practice because they counter Western educational thought and social tendencies (i.e. to ask the right question; to prove understanding to others). Overall, the Dharma talks generated new awareness into the ways I unconsciously worked against Buddhadharma, and opened a window of understanding into the ways to further improve upon practice.

The one-day meditation retreat on Sunday provided opportunity to apply what I had learned during the Dharma talks while also gaining more insight into specific aspects of meditation that attend to physical needs, to allow for greater intention on practicing with no mind. For instance, during the eight form movements to prepare for sitting meditation, Ven. Guo Yuan demonstrated proper form which allowed for deeper stretching and also slowed us down so the practice was

intentional, not just working muscle memory. He also provided us with the knowledge of proper eidetic and form when prostrating to the Buddha which further centered my practice by providing it with a foundation. It’s important to be reminded of the origins and formal practices of Chan to keep us from becoming misguided in practice. I also found mindfulness practice during lunch to be beneficial because I again realized how much attention I give to distractions, false stimulus such as watching television or preoccupation while eating, when attention needed to just remain on the experience of eating. As a child my family ate at the dinner table in silence, but as I grew older I attached to more distractions as if to capitalize on the time that is always fleeting. Having experienced the retreat, I’m now intentional about experiencing the “here and now” of the present moment instead of filling it with vexations.

I am very grateful to have participated in the retreat at Pure Mind Center, led by Ven. Guo Yuan. I left with a greater awareness and understanding of Chan practice that I can incorporate within my daily life. Thank you for the opportunity to share my experience. ☺

# Chan Meditation Retreats

## 7-Night **Investigating Koans Retreat**

Led by **Simon Child**

December 1 – 8, 2018

Maenllwyd Retreat Centre · Wales, UK

**CONTACT** [admin@westernchanfellowship.org](mailto:admin@westernchanfellowship.org)  
[www.westernchanfellowship.org](http://www.westernchanfellowship.org)

## 2-Day **Reflection Retreat**

Led by **Ven. Chang Hwa &  
Ven. Chang Zhai**

Dec 22 – 23, 2018

Chan Meditation Center · Elmhurst, NY, USA

**CONTACT** [chancenter@gmail.com](mailto:chancenter@gmail.com)  
[www.chancenter.org](http://www.chancenter.org)

## 5-Day **Begin Anew Retreat**

Led by **David Listen**

December 28, 2018 – January 1, 2019

DDM Vancouver Center · Richmond, BC, Canada

**CONTACT** [info@ddmba.ca](mailto:info@ddmba.ca)  
[www.ddmba.ca](http://www.ddmba.ca)

## **Meditation Workshop & Dharma Talk**

Led by **Rebecca Li**

Jan 28, 2019

DDMBA–NJ Chapter · Edison, NJ, USA

**CONTACT** [enews@ddmba-nj.org](mailto:enews@ddmba-nj.org)  
[www.ddmbanj.org/en](http://www.ddmbanj.org/en)

## **Huatou Intensive Retreat**

Led by **Abbot Guo Yuan**

November 24 – December 2, 2018

## **Weekend Meditation Class**

Led by **Abbot Guo Yuan**

December 14 – 16, 2018

Dharma Drum Retreat Center · Pine Bush, NY, USA

## **Intensive Chan Retreat**

Led by **Abbot Guo Yuan**

December 25, 2018 – January 1, 2019

## 14-Day **Silent Illumination Retreat**

Using **Master Sheng Yen's DVDs**

March 8 – 24, 2019

**CONTACT** [apply@dharmadrumretreat.org](mailto:apply@dharmadrumretreat.org)  
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## Digital Edition of Chan Magazine and Survey for the Demand of Print Edition

Dear all, Amitabha Buddha!

In order to implement the concept of environmental protection, save energy and reduce carbon emissions, *Chan Magazine* will launch a survey of the demand for the print edition of *Chan Magazine* from March to December 2018, to maximize the benefits of each issue.

If you are already a recipient of *Chan Magazine* and still wish to continue receiving hard copies, please complete the renewal process by **December 31, 2018** as described below.

By **December 31, 2018**, if any current subscribers of the print edition have not chosen to renew, this will be assumed to be a cancellation, and we will stop sending hard copies as of **January 2019**. If you still need the print edition in the future, feel free to subscribe again at any time.

Thank you all for your love and support of *Chan Magazine*!

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