

“**W**ith Bantetsugu Roshi, a disciple of Harada Roshi, I attended winter-long retreats at his temple in the harsh environment of northern Japan. He was particularly scathing about my learning and studying at university. When I left him, he told me to go and teach in America. I complained that I did not know English. He said, ‘Do you think Zen is taught with words? Why worry about words?’”

–Chan Master Sheng Yen  
from *Illuminating Silence*

# Chan Magazine

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# From The Editor

When I was eleven or so, my parents came to me with a serious proposition: I could have a bar mitzvah, as some of the family friends' sons had already had, in which case I would have to begin Hebrew school forthwith; or I could opt out of the traditional coming-of-age ritual, in which case the considerable funds thus liberated would be put toward an encyclopedia.

Judaism, in my family, was not a religion. It was a cultural context in which my father's atheism and my mother's social activism were as comfortable as Chanukah and Passover.

I went for the encyclopedia, without hesitation, and greatly appreciated my parents for having given me the option of rejecting a tradition that had no meaning for me. What I didn't appreciate, until much later, was how deeply, traditionally Jewish the gift of the encyclopedia had been...which memories arose at a wedding yesterday, the wedding of Chiho Nishida and Jimmy Yu, formerly Guo Gu Shi, the Buddhist monk and disciple of Chan Master Sheng Yen who, ten years earlier, had taught me the method called "silent illumination."

Guo Gu Shi subsequently went off to the University of Kansas to take an advanced degree in Buddhist studies and while there decided to leave the order—something of a blow to me at first. He had been my teacher. Well, his teacher, our teacher, Master Sheng Yen, was my Dharma teacher, my Refuge and Precept master, but Guo Gu Shi, now just Guo Gu—a charismatic, intelligent, compassionate and *English-speaking* monk—had helped me and

a lot of the western students move closer to what were foreign and difficult teachings. He'd been the bridge, linguistically, but more than that emotionally, because he'd seemed comfortable in both Chinese and American cultures in an environment in which most of us were firmly stuck in one or the other.

I had never known him as Jimmy—I still have trouble calling him Jimmy—but there were lots of guests at the wedding who had. Apart from the childhood friends toasting his skateboarding days, there were quite a few old-time "zennists" there, twenty- and thirty-year veterans of practice who had watched him grow up from their cushions, including Paul, Jimmy's stepfather, who had been Master Sheng Yen's first monastic disciple in America, until he had left the order to marry Jimmy's mother. All of which I learned, by the way, in conversation with Guo Chou, formerly Guo Chou Shi, who'd been Guo Gu Shi's fellow monk until, while working on his theology degree at Harvard, he too had decided to return to lay life.

So there I was, sitting with one ex-monk waiting for the wedding of another while hearing the story of yet another when these thoughts arose of my family's ex-Judaism...and the ceremony began: Jimmy, wearing neither his Buddhist robes nor his Princeton mufti, but in traditional Japanese garb, followed by a bridesmaid and then Chiho, radiant, escorted by her father. The bride and groom prostrate three times, during which the bridesmaid takes entirely for granted that she must keep the bride's hem out from under her shoes, and then they invite Guo Yuan Fa Shi, the

Buddhist monk (still a monk) who will perform the ceremony, into the hall. We rise and bow, which I think we were prompted to do but so many of us have done together so often it's no more than a collective breath, the couple prostrates to Guo Yuan Fa Shi, which he bids them do only once, and then to the parents. Chiho's father blesses the union in Japanese, and offers his haiku; Paul does the same in his New York-accented English, without the haiku. They exchange vows, and rings, and there's no pronouncement—they were formally married some weeks ago in

Japan. The whole ceremony seems to have taken only a few minutes, and has been very zen, small “z”, in the American sense, which is much like the original sense—not formal and cryptic like tea ceremony, but simple and direct, like the instructions Jimmy, then Guo Gu Shi, had given me for sitting meditation.

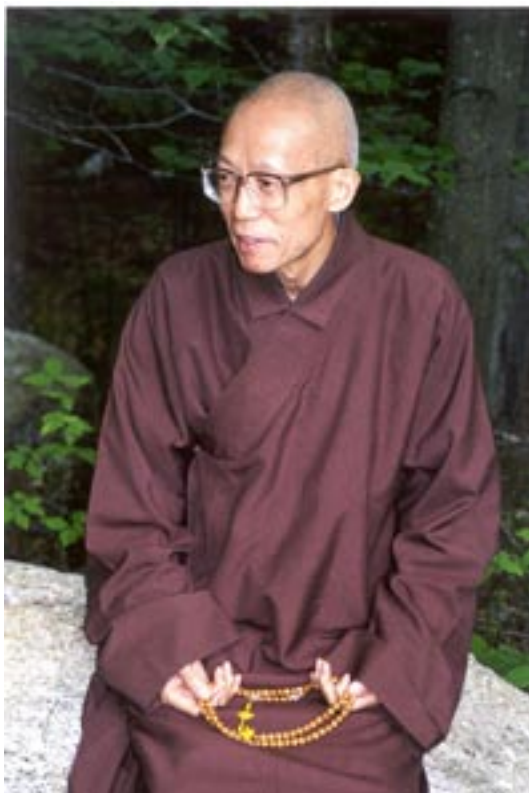
Then we party.

May Jimmy and Chiho give each other great, great happiness for a long, long time.



# The Four Proper Exertions: Part Four

*This is the fourth in a series of four talks on the Four Proper Exertions, given by Chan Master Sheng Yen between October 31 and November 21, 1999, at the Chan Meditation Center, NY. Rebecca Li translated live, and transcribed the talks from tape. The final text was edited by Ernest Heau, with assistance from Rebecca Li.*



This talk will conclude our discussion of the Four Proper Exertions.

To recall the Four Proper Exertions, they are:

To avoid unwholesome states not yet arisen;  
To stop unwholesome states already arisen;  
To arouse wholesome states not yet arisen;  
To continue wholesome states already arisen.

The Four Proper Exertions can be summarized by two questions you can ask yourself. First, “Am I engaging in unwholesome acts, words, and thoughts?” Second, “Am I engaging in wholesome acts, words, and thoughts?”

Basically the Four Proper Exertions are pretty simple. They are attitudes we should have in daily life, as well as in practicing the Dharma; they tell us not to do what we should not do, and to do what we should do. While most people will agree with this statement, the usual tendency is to recognize the good that we do, but not the bad. We think that because we are good people, we only do good things. However, we are all born with negative energies that propel our actions, following us from birth to death. Some of us are less aware of these habitual tendencies than others.

## Know Your Own Negative Habits

I know this woman who talks very loudly, even when speaking to one person. When talking to two or more people she is even louder, to the extent that nobody else can be heard. One day I told her that she talked too loudly. Her response was, "I can't help it. I was born with this voice." I asked her if anyone else told her that she talked loudly. She said, "Yes, but that's their problem! If they want to, they can talk loud too." She didn't see her habit as a problem, even when it bothers people around her. Some people are aware when they are being difficult, while others are not only unaware, but when told, feel that it is somebody else's problem. So I ask you, if someone tells you, "You have such and such a habit that makes me uncomfortable," would you tell them it's their problem?

In Taiwan, our Dharma Drum Mountain organization put an ad in the paper to hire someone, and this man applied for the job. His resume showed that on average, he changed jobs about every two months. We asked him why he changed jobs so frequently. He said, "This is a dog-eat-dog world. Wherever I work people are mean to me, so I always have to leave after two months." I said, "Why would you want to work here if you might leave before you even learn the job?" He said, "Oh, this is different. It is a mean world out there, but here you people are compassionate." I told him, "We will give you a chance, but we are just ordinary people. You will have to understand what's causing you to change jobs so frequently. It's up to you to do something about it." So we gave him a probation period to see if he could adapt to our environment. The people in the organization were not mean to him, nor did they reject him, but after two

months he left. He just couldn't adapt. Before he left I told him, "You know, it is not true that everybody is mean to you. It is really a negative attitude that makes you see everybody you as mean, as taking advantage of you. As long as you have this attitude you will see the world that way." After our talk, he said "Thanks. Maybe I will find a better place somewhere else." I feel very sorry for people like this, who suffer a great deal all the time.

Not everyone is like these two. Those who are more aware of their negative habits try to correct them, but find them difficult to eliminate entirely. The bad habits keep coming back. What can we do? We can practice the Four Proper Exertions. The Four Proper Exertions have been emphasized in many important sutras ranging from the most ancient, to the later Mahayana sutras. In the *Sutra of Forty-Two Chapters*, which has four chapters on the Four Proper Exertions, it is said that, "Constantly observing the 250 precepts, [practitioners] enter and abide in purity. By practicing the four true paths, they will attain the stage of arhats!." Spoken to home-leavers, this sutra says that only by diligently observing the precepts, always abiding in purity, and practicing the Four Noble Truths,<sup>2</sup> will they attain liberation as arhats.

## Diligence is a Daily Habit

Some rare practitioners can become arhats in one lifetime after hearing the Dharma; most take much longer. Even to accomplish it in several lifetimes requires great diligence. Without diligence, it will probably never happen. Not being diligent means practicing sometimes, sometimes not, one day feeling, "I will practice today," and another day, "I think I'll skip it." Real diligence means prac-

ticing continuously, without cessation. And what is the practice? It is to not let one's mind become lazy or idle.

Some may think that the need for constant diligence applies only to monks and nuns, but it applies to lay people as well. Remind yourself every day what you should do, and then do it. Develop the daily habit of doing what you should do, and not doing what you should not do. When you do what you should not do, tell yourself to stop it; when you do what you should do, tell yourself to continue it. If your mind is vexed, give yourself time and effort to quiet it. To quiet your mind, make it a habit to put aside some time every morning to meditate, prostrate, or recite a sutra. All day, from moment to moment, tell yourself not to allow unwholesome thoughts to arise, and if they do, vow not to give rise to it again. If unwholesome thoughts get stronger, practice your meditation method. If you don't deal with them early, very strong unwholesome thoughts may manifest as unwholesome actions.

## Dealing with Negativity

What methods can you use when strong negative thoughts come up? You can practice repentance; you can prostrate before a Buddha image. Another good method is to reflect on your behavior or thoughts, which in turn will encourage repentance and prostration. As you use these methods over time, unwholesome mental habits will arise less and less. Do not expect soon to experience absolutely no unwholesome states. If your mind were totally pure, you would already be an arhat. But with diligence you will continue to reduce the occurrence of unwholesome states.

The *Sutra of Forty-Two Chapters* also says that followers who are not deluded by desire, who are not bothered by countless devious things, and who vigorously cultivate the unconditioned, will attain the Way. Diligence—vigorous cultivation—here means precisely that one should not allow oneself to be confused by feelings of desire, or misled by devious ideas. If you can do this ceaselessly, you will attain liberation from suffering and vexation.

What are desires we are talking about? For home-leavers, they include any kind sexual desire; for lay people, they refer to sexual misconduct outside of marriage. For example, if you already have a partner, desiring another will result in suffering for oneself and others. Unlike animals, humans are driven by more than biological needs; they are also driven by psychological needs for more sex and more partners.

I know a married man who has so many girlfriends you can't count them. He fights with his wife all the time, and says he is ready for a divorce. He says, "Who cares if I get divorced, I still have all these girlfriends." I asked him, "If you get a divorce and marry one of your girlfriends, wouldn't you fight with her as well?" He said, "It doesn't matter. I'll get divorced again."

Another man complained to me that marriage was too much trouble." I asked him, "Do you have girlfriends?" He said, "Yes, quite a few." I said, "So, isn't it great to have girlfriends without getting married?" And he said, "No, that's a lot of trouble too. They all want to me to give them a lot of attention, a lot of love. Each of them wants my heart." And I asked, "But, isn't that what love is about, giving



your heart?" He said, "But I only have one heart to give!"

These people are ruled by desire. At first glance, they seem to get a lot of happiness from having many partners. However, they also suffer. Think about it. Do they actually have more happiness or more suffering? So, practitioners of Buddhadharma should simply say "no" to improper sexual desires. I don't mean saying "no" to others; I mean saying "no" to yourself.

The myriad devious things that the sutra talks about refer not only to acts, but thoughts as well. For example, it is devious to expect to get a lot of money without working hard for it, to believe that all it takes is some smart ideas.

While this is sometimes possible, if making money means using dishonest means that hurt people, this is not only devious, but also immoral.

There was a group of youngsters in Taiwan who would break into homes and steal everything. After several times, they got caught. A Buddhist monk went to the jail to teach them some Dharma. The youngsters said, "Buddhists are bad people. We don't want to hear anything you have to say." After an exchange along these lines, this master said, "Why don't you get jobs instead of robbing people?" Their reply was, "We have jobs. Our job is being thieves. It's hard work. We have to do a lot of research and planning before

we do a job. This time we were unlucky and got caught. Next time, we'll do a better job." The master said, "People work hard to buy the things in their houses. Just going in and robbing them is not very fair." The youngsters said, "Everybody has their own way to make their living. Some people cheat and steal, others take by force. We are just using our own methods." I won't tell you the rest of the story, but I wanted to illustrate a kind of devious thinking—that some people think everybody else is dishonest, and that harming others is right and reasonable.

When I was young a lot of people, upon learning I was vegetarian, tried to induce me to eat meat. Some argued that animals are meant for us to eat, and if we didn't eat them they would multiply, and

eventually there wouldn't be any space for us humans. This is another example of devious thinking. My answer was, "That doesn't make any sense. If we didn't raise pigs for food, there wouldn't be so many of them."

### **Practice Like a Fine Stream**

Before entering nirvana the Buddha told his followers, "Be diligent in your practice. If you are diligent, there is nothing you cannot accomplish." Think of your practice as a stream. As time goes the by, the flowing water will wear down the rocks in its path. Even drops of water falling on a rock, if this persists long enough, will make a hole in the rock.

To use another analogy, being lazy in practice is like rubbing one stick of wood with another to start a fire, but quitting before the sticks are even warm. You may have the intention to start a fire, and you may know how to start a fire, but if you don't apply diligence, you won't get the sticks hot enough to catch on fire.

So diligent practice is like wearing down rocks with water, or making a fire by rubbing twigs. It means ceaselessly taking care of your mind, your speech, and your actions for a very long time. Otherwise you will be just like the camper who wants to start a fire by rubbing sticks, but is too lazy to persevere. Some hear that Buddhism can give them a lot of benefits, so they come and practice sitting meditation a few times, and then stop if they don't see quick results. All they get is pain in the legs, they're not allowed to talk, they can't do this and can't do that, and they feel like they're in jail. They don't see any immediate benefits, so they just quit. They want to enjoy the benefits of the practice, but they are impatient and don't want to put in the time. How can they get the fire started if the wood isn't even warm?

The key to practicing the Four Proper Exertions is diligence. Keep in mind the analogies I gave you to understand diligence. Be like the mother who is always mindful of her child, the hen who patiently sits on her eggs, and the hungry child who is always wants to nurse. Being diligent does not mean killing yourself practicing. It should be gentle, like a stream flowing ceaselessly over rocks for a very long time. It should not be like a torrent of water pouring for a very short time, and then stopping. That can be very harmful to you, possibly to others around you, and you will not realize

the benefits of the practice. It is much better to practice like a small stream, continuously flowing for a long time. It should be like this when you practice the Way. That will give you the greatest benefits of the practice. Thank you for your coming and for your attention. You are so kind. [Applause]



*“In one’s daily life, in order to be content, happy, and spiritually uplifted, one should utilize these three principles in one’s practice:*

## 和 Harmony

*“First, one should cultivate harmony within one’s own mind. This is the most essential point, as the practice flows from a sense of balance and well-being within one’s self. One should then harmonize with others. Crucial to this is practicing harmonious speech, which is communication that nourishes healthy and stable relationships with others.*

## 喜 Joy

*“Joy refers to Dharma Joy, which is contentment and happiness that one develops by constantly practicing the Buddhadharma. Eating, sleeping, washing up, cooking, working, talking—these are all ways to practice the Dharma. By maintaining a relaxed body and mind amidst all these activities, one practices the Dharma and lives joyfully.*

## 自在 Freedom

*“Freedom is the practice of freeing oneself from afflictions—anger, greed, and confusion. With this practice, one first recognizes vexations, and deeply understands what these afflictions are like: “Why am I vexed? How does it feel?” Then one employs the method of practice, and ceases the creation of vexations.*

*One may encounter a lot of obstacles in one’s daily life, in relationships at home, or in the workplace, but regardless of the situation, whenever one feels uneasy or irritated, one should practice harmony and joy, and thereby one will be naturally free.”*

*—Chan Master Sheng Yen*

# Like a Sound Absorbing Board - Methods of Practice Using the Ears

By *Chan Master Sheng Yen*

Translation by *Ocean Cloud*

(From “*Master Sheng Yen Teaches Guan Yin’s Methods of Practice*”)

*Ocean Cloud* is a group of practitioners, students of Chan Master Sheng Yen, who endeavor to bring the classics of Chinese Buddhism to the English-speaking community in the spirit of *dana-paramita*. They are: Chang Wen (David Kabacinsky) from New York, Guo Shan (Jeff Larko) from Ohio, and Guo Jue (Wei Tan) from Maryland.

The *Surangama Sutra* introduces the practice of the “complete penetrative *Dharma* gate based on the faculty of hearing.” It is through this method that *Guan Yin*, *Bodhi-sattva Avalokitesvara*, attained the realization of the *Buddhas’* wisdom and the essence of wondrous awakening. How do we use this method in our own practice? “Complete penetration based on the faculty of hearing” is a very profound and lofty method of cultivation. Before we can practice at a deep level, we must prepare ourselves with more basic training using the ears. These basic trainings based on sounds and hearing will enable us to bring our minds to a state of tranquility and stability.

## Basic Training Using the Ears

First, what kind of sound should we use? Let’s take the sound of birds. When we wake up in the morning we can go to a park or a wooded area, breathing the fresh air and listening to all sorts of birds singing and chirping. It is easy to become joyful and peaceful

doing this. If you live in the city and do not have the opportunity to listen to birds in a natural setting, you can use an audio CD or cassette instead.

However, the sounds of birds are choppy; they rise and fall very frequently. While such a sound can bring a feeling of peace, openness, and clarity, it is difficult to enter into *samadhi* with it.

Well, let’s listen to the sound of rain! Choose not the rain in a great storm, or a sudden torrential downpour from the clouds. Rather, listen to the light rain that falls steadily, together with the mild wind that blows it into fine strands of dancing strings, giving an impression that they are falling on bananas leaves, on the trees in the forest, peaceful and steady. Listening to rain whose rhythm is regular, continuous, and unified makes it easier to calm ourselves compared to listening to the sounds of birds. However, if the rain is driven by strong wind and comes to us irregularly, sometimes strong, sometimes mild, sometimes fast, sometimes slow, some-

times heavy, sometimes mild, a beginner can easily follow the fast changing quality and become agitated instead.

Let's try using the flow of water then. Find a river nearby, not a large river, but a small stream. Sit at the bank or on a bridge spanning the stream. Close your eyes and let your ears take over. Listen to the flow of the stream, water splashing and dancing, stable and steady, with a seemingly eternal rhythm and melody. Listening to it for one day, you may feel that the sound stays the same for that whole day; listening to it overnight, the sound may appear to be unchanging for the whole night. The water flows on, continuous and steady. Immerse yourself in the sound and lose yourself in it, forgetting the environment, to the point that the sound itself is dropped. Then the mind will slowly merge with the sound of the water, enter into a state of unification, calm and quiescent both inwardly and outwardly. It is possible to enter into samadhi this way.

Master Han Shan of the late Ming Dynasty described such an experience in his autobiography. He was listening to the sound of water on a bridge. Immersing himself in the sound, he lost track of time, forgetting all about the environment, dropping his body, mind, the world, and all phenomena. When he came out from samadhi, many hours had gone by. He thought to himself, "That was strange, I thought I had just sat down. Why has such a long time elapsed?"

Let's learn from Master Han Shan and listen to the flow of water as a practice. But you must take heed. When you are highly concentrated in the practice, you may end up falling

into the water. If you enter samadhi outdoor and the weather changes, if rain falls suddenly, driven by wind, it could be dangerous if there is nobody around to look after you – unless you are sitting in a house by the river.

These are the simple methods of sounds that one can use to bring one's mind into a state of peace and tranquility. Each of us can experiment with them, explore them, and come up with a variation that is most suitable for ourselves, based on our own experiences.

These methods of training using the ears are static, in the sense that one chooses a conducive environment of practice according to one's liking. However, in our daily lives, when we find ourselves in an environment full of din and clamor, of which we have no choice, how do we use sounds as a method of practice to calm our minds?

### **Make Our Ears a Sound-Absorbing Board**

When you find yourself agitated, vexed, feeling the sorrow or the pain of affliction, here's a method you can use. Regardless of your posture, whether you are lying down, standing or sitting, simply use your ears to "enjoy" the sounds. Our living environment is a soundscape with an infinitely rich spectrum. Simply listen with no intention whatsoever, without straining to listen to anything in particular. To "enjoy" the sounds, simply let them come of their own accord. Whatever sounds reach your ears you simply accept them completely. Do not actively seek for any sound, rather, listen passively, like a sound absorbing board – whatever comes into contact with it dissolves right away. It doesn't keep anything or

store anything, with no reflection or reaction, for if it reflects the sounds, it will be a reflector, not an absorber.

Let's train ourselves so that our ears become like a sound absorbing board. Simply listen, listen, and listen... If the sound is loud, do not give rise to any resistance; if the sound is weak, do not strain yourself to listen to it. All you're doing is just listening, accepting everything without any discrimination. Most importantly, do not give the sounds a name. You may hear a girl screaming, a boy cursing, a dog barking around the corner, or a cat meowing on the roof. It could also be that the sounds of birds, chicken, cows, or even sounds of cars, horns honking, televisions, radios, motorcycles, air-conditioners, all present themselves to you at once. Even then, you listen without naming them, without making any discrimination or distinction of the spectrum. Merely play your role as a sound absorbing board, without seeking or following anything, without echoing anything that rings in your ears.

A sound absorbing board is quiet and soundless itself. When sounds touch it, they will naturally be dissolved and cease to exist. How? Well, they dissolve because the listener does not give rise to a second thought, or a reaction, thinking, "What sound is that? How should I respond to it?" If people curse you, you do not react, because you are merely a sound absorbing board; if people praise you with sweet words, you also do not react to it because again you are merely a sound absorbing board!

Just stay very clear of what you hear; merely "know" that they are sweet words of praise,

or profane curse words, or lies of deception. Merely be aware of what the sound is without giving rise to any reaction. That way, you will be a practitioner who practices well by truly putting the method into good use.

In addition, practice so that the din and clamor of the surrounding environment, the sounds that are full of "toxins" and unhealthy elements, can no longer taint you, stimulate you, arouse you, or tempt you. That way, at all times, you will be a person who is very free and at ease. That is why I call it an enjoyment.

People all desire to immerse themselves in pleasing and beautiful sounds – sounds that are enjoyable to them. By listening, they derive a sense of pleasure and joy. But with this method of training, the essence is to simply use your ears to listen attentively, without giving rise to any emotional reaction – pain and afflictions, sorrow and sadness, elation and excitement, not even a sense of joy. But to be sure, the state of no reaction is actually a very tranquil and quiescent kind of contentment and happiness.

So please remember this! If you can be a sound absorbing board, even amidst the din and clamor of the world, you will live very well, with no stress or pressure, free and at ease.

These are basic methods of training through the use of sounds. They will enable you to enter into shallow states of samadhi and to alleviate vexations in your lives. However, they will not open your mind to wisdom, or bring you the attainment of complete penetration.

# Traveling with Shifu to Jerusalem

## December 8–16, 2003

*by Rebecca Li*



In December 2003, I traveled with Master Sheng Yen, as his interpreter, to Jerusalem to attend a religious leaders' meeting. We met with Jewish rabbis, Christian priests, and the Palestinian Prime Minister, among others. The purpose of the visit was to learn about the different perspectives on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. I saw quickly that though

everybody expressed a keen desire for peace, each side held onto its own perspective of the situation, and I soon felt that those perspectives were so incompatible it seemed almost impossible to resolve their differences. I was quite discouraged—until something happened on the bus on our way back from Bethlehem that gave me hope.

All the religious leaders and their assistants traveled in a tour bus because we had to pass through a check-point. The line leaving Bethlehem moved very slowly. I saw Israeli soldiers checking each vehicle in front of us, and thought, "This is what Palestinians have to go through every day! And how nerve-wracking for these soldiers..." Out of the corner of my eye I saw a child about eight years of age approaching the bus with merchandise in his hands, and before I knew it, four or five peddlers were knocking on our windows, trying to sell us all sorts of souvenirs.

One of the staff members was interested in buying some rosaries—there was bargaining, and after much commotion, an agreement seemed to have been reached. When NIS bills changed hands, however, the seller said it came up short. A loud argument followed, both sides trying to retrace the agreement to no avail, and apparently the seller said something insulting. The staff member doing the bargaining refused to purchase the rosaries altogether. A Greek Orthodox Father was traveling with us as our tour guide and the seller complained to him about the situation. He told the seller firmly but respectfully to leave us alone, and that there had been no need to insult people over a sale. The Father said to the Palestinian peddler, "You have to respect yourself in order to be respected." What happened next felt like a beautiful miracle. A seemingly unsolvable conflict was resolved in front of my very eyes.

I saw the Palestinian peddler give rise to a sense of humility and shame upon hearing these words from the Father. He apologized to the Father, and then offered the rosaries as a gift to the staff member. The gift was refused

but reconciliatory words were exchanged. The seller apologized, explaining that he had been out of work for two years and was desperate. The staff member paid what the Palestinian peddler had asked, and the transaction was completed in peace. I was greatly moved by what I had witnessed. If a street peddler were capable of changing his attitude and offering his goods for free, which he clearly could not afford, there was hope that the Israelis and Palestinians could find a way to resolve their conflicts.

On several occasions, Master Sheng Yen had given an analogy to help the Israelis and Palestinians understand how even their conflict, so entangled with both material interests and ideological differences, could be resolved. The analogy went like this: two people on opposite shores need to cross a river with a bridge made of a single log, passable only by one person at a time. Shifu likened the impasse in the Middle East to the two people being stuck in the middle of the bridge. Neither can cross without the other turning back first. If both sides insist on crossing first, both will end up in the water. The wiser side will therefore turn back to allow the other to cross the bridge first. This way, both sides get what they want.

It takes wisdom and courage to be the one to turn back first because it means being able to put down the ego. Putting down the ego is precisely what Chan practice is about. Witnessing that Palestinian peddler putting his ego down gave me great hope that everybody has the potential to attain buddhahood, and reminded me that in every moment it is up to us to apply our minds to do the right thing.



# Everything is OK, just RELAX!

*A Silent Illumination Retreat Report by C. M.*

## The Background

I had my doubts that a seven-day Chan retreat could transform a person. How could that be possible just by sitting and doing nothing? And only for seven days? It sounded too good to be true.

It was early in 1996 when I managed to try a seven-day retreat for the first time. In those seven days, all I was asked to do was to keep silent and observe my reactions to my environment in every waking moment.

The day after the retreat, I returned to work and the manager was surprised that he could no longer read my thoughts from my facial expressions when he was talking to me. His feedback made me realize that when people had talked to me before the retreat, instead of focusing on listening, my mind had been busy thinking about how to solve their problems and how to convince them to adopt my point of view. Like magic, after having spent only seven days in the retreat, I was now able to listen in a focused manner to different opinions effortlessly.

One year after the retreat, a colleague told me that I had become more relaxed and easygoing in the past year. She didn't know that I had attended the Chan retreat. It was the most effective and comprehensive program for self-development that I had ever attended.

It took only seven days to transform me into a less self-centered and more understanding person.

I have continued to follow Shifu to retreats in NY since our move to Toronto. Unlike the programs in Taiwan, which apply the method of counting breaths, the programs in NY use either the huatou or silent illumination method. I attended the silent illumination retreat because it was convenient for me: my schedule gives me time off during the Christmas-New Year holiday season. It was also a perfect time to reward myself for all the hard work I had done over the year, and spending my birthday in the retreat was the perfect gift to myself.

The 2001 year-end retreat was my fourth, and my second silent illumination retreat. I did not seek enlightenment or to cut off all vexations. All I was looking for was the opportunity to practice Chan cultivation methods and to listen to Shifu's Dharma talks.

## The Program

A Chan retreat is a very well-organized program to help Chan practitioners cultivate themselves in a safe environment. Every day is filled with a fixed routine.

During each day, there are numerous forty-minute long sitting meditation sessions sepa-

rated by exercises and walking meditations. To guide the practice, Shifu gives Dharma talks in the morning and evening. In addition to those, every practitioner has the opportunity to seek guidance from Shifu or one of his disciples in a personal interview

Every morning and evening before meals there are chanting services, and after each meal everyone is assigned some minor chores to do. Three delicious vegetarian meals are prepared every day by volunteers.

## **The Practice**

In a silent illumination retreat, people practice letting go of their wandering thoughts (silence) so that they can observe everything as it is (illumination) without the interference of their egos or emotions. In order to practice correctly, it is important that one be clear about three essential things, namely, the method, Chan attitude and Chan concepts.

## **The Method**

A correct sitting posture is particularly important to make the practice easier in an intensive retreat. In my case, even though I had attended three retreats previously, it was not until this retreat that I realized I had been sitting with my back too straight, tightening my abdominal muscles. Although I had been able to breathe smoothly while sitting, the tightened muscles blocked the natural flow of the qi; the interference was so minor that it was only noticeable during extended sitting. I suspect that it was the accumulation of the blocked qi that had contributed to the qi movement problems I experienced in my first retreat.

We were taught silent illumination with a three-step method. The first and most fundamental step is relaxing the body and mind. I found it very helpful that GuoYuan Fa Shi guided the group through each step of the body relaxation procedure at the beginning of the day's first sitting session. Not only did I learn to relax my abdomen by adjusting the sitting posture, I also learned to relax my eyes by letting go of wandering thoughts.

Once the body and mind are relaxed, the next step is observing the inhalation and exhalation of the breath. Breathe naturally. The mind simply follows the breath. In order to avoid falling into the trap of controlling the breath while observing it, one has to keep alert. Many of us ended up controlling our breathing rhythms after having observed the breath for a while. In such cases, Shifu suggested we move on to the third step of knowing the self is sitting.

Just sit and relax and know the self is sitting. Nothing more. Sounds easy? It does sound easy until you practice it. You'd be amazed how the mind refuses to just relax and let go.

Often, we found ourselves caught up in excruciating pain and wild wandering thoughts. No matter how many times the method was explained we just couldn't seem to apply it. The harder we tried to deal with the stress, the less likely we were to relax; eventually we became even more tense. As a result, our concentrating on successfully applying the method prevented us from actually using the method.

Shifu suggested an attitude for dealing with such a situation: like catching a feather with



a fan, one has to be patient and stay alert. On the one hand, we are supposed to relax; on the other hand, we have to keep alert and apply the method. If you simply can't use the method no matter how hard you try, you are like a fisherman running around, trying to catch a slippery eel. Instead of exhausting yourself working nonstop, take a short break. At the same time, stay alert and keep an eye on the eel so you know its whereabouts at all times.

### The Attitude

A proper Chan attitude is one of total acceptance of whatever comes. Thus, one feels content and joyful. The proper attitude is like what GuoYuan Fa Shi kept reminding the group: "Everything is fine. Everything is OK."

It was easy to feel content at the beginning of the sitting. However, when pain arose, a lot of us struggled with it and started to engage in a "bullfight" in our minds. All kinds of thoughts came up. *Why is it so painful? It's too much for me to take. Should I continue to sit or should I loosen my legs? Will I be able to sit till the end of the session? How many more minutes left? What will happen if I continue to sit?*

We became frustrated at not being able to apply what should have been an "easy" method, especially under stress. However, we realized that the disappointment, frustration, and anxiety created by the mind did nothing but make us suffer more.

I still remember how the leg pain made my chest tight and my face red, and how my body

trembled when I insisted on sitting during my first retreat. This time, after all the practice, I was finally able to simply sit and observe the coming and going of the pain and remain relaxed.

## **The Concepts**

The right method and attitude are important. With sufficient practice, one may be able to reach the state of samadhi. However, in order to go beyond, one has to have the right concept.

During the retreat, having seen us engaging in “bullfights” with pain and wandering thoughts, Shifu asked us observe their impermanent nature. This application of the impermanence concept helped a lot in alleviating the pain and the suffering.

Because of the impermanent nature of all things, we learn to treasure whatever we have and not feel despair when undesirable events occur. We know there is always hope as long as we continue to work toward our goals.

## **The End of The Retreat And The Start of The Real Life Practice**

Early one morning, when Shifu looked out of the window, he saw a woodpecker pecking on a tree trunk. The little woodpecker pecked for a while and then stopped pecking and turned its little head, looking around. After a while, it started to peck again. And then it rested. It continued to peck and rest for a long time. It didn't seem to worry too much about not getting a worm. It just paced itself and continued its work, pecking at ease. When it came time

for Shifu to leave, the little woodpecker was still pecking on the tree trunk.

Practicing Chan or practicing life is like the little woodpecker pecking on the tree trunk for the worm: we work diligently and not boldly. It takes practice and patience to turn knowledge into real understanding and to turn a concept into a reality.

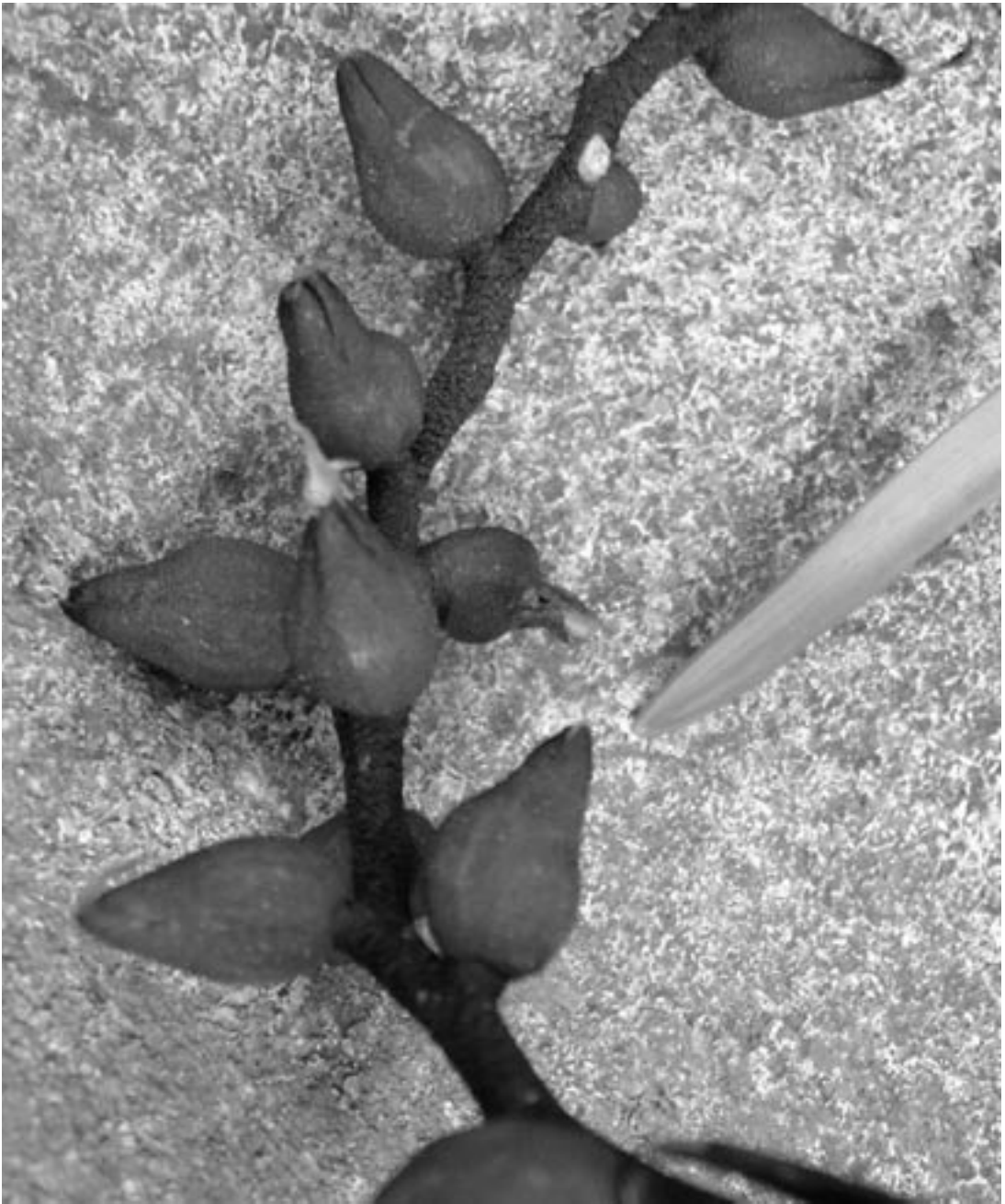
As one first-timer noted at the end of the retreat, what differentiates the seasoned Chan practitioners and the new practitioners is that the seasoned Chan practitioners don't seek to gain anything, they just practice.

From this retreat, I have gained a deeper realization of the impermanent nature of reality. This realization has helped me to be more at ease with pain and not to have it lead me through life.

At the end of my first retreat, Shifu told us that our practice had not ended; it was now time for us to start applying it to our daily lives.

Since then, I have been totally convinced that practicing Chan makes life a lot easier. As difficult as it seems to be, as long as we follow the instructions and practice appropriately, we gain more understanding of reality and lose some of our self-centeredness. By applying what I've learned from the retreat, life has been much easier to handle and I have created fewer problems for the people surrounding me.

I'm thankful for having been given the opportunity to practice and learn to be a better person.



*Photo by Chang Wen (David Kabacinsky)*

# Why Yoga?

By Rikki Asher



With all the things there are to do in the course of a busy day, why bother to do yoga? There are many reasons; this article will discuss three. 1) Focused attention and breath awareness; 2) Cultivation of patience and balance; and 3) Relaxation and meditation. Over the past year I have taught yoga classes to beginners and intermediates at the Dharma Drum Mountain Retreat Center in Pine Bush and at the Chan Meditation Center in Elmhurst, New York. These classes have ranged from one hour to 90 minutes. The yoga *asanas* (Sanskrit: postures) I offer, combined with Tai Chi exercises and Shiatsu massage help train the mind and body and partner perfectly with sitting meditation.

## Focused Attention and Breath Awareness

Hatha yoga trains the mind and the body to concentrate on breathing, and to pay attention to joints and glands that are being stretched. It enables us to focus on the speed of the movements and the connection between breath and stretching. Focusing attention on the breath lessens the need to think about other things, and connects the mind to what the body is doing.

## Cultivates Patience and Balance

Yoga helps you to learn how to cultivate patience, to move ahead steadily and at your own pace. Most of us have jobs that require a lot of sitting, in which case balancing yoga

postures can both ground us and help to develop strength and flexibility in muscles that are not used very much.

## Relaxation and Meditation

I once read that Sakyamuni Buddha said, "The hardest thing to do is to sit". Anyone who practices Chan meditation knows this is true. Yoga helps stretch muscles and glands in the body and relaxes them in preparation for long periods of sitting. The back and legs are in better condition to sit with fewer problems of pain and distraction.

## Yoga Reflections

Students have claimed that yoga provides a way to help them pay attention to the body. Through slow breathing and movement, they have developed confidence, flexibility and balance. Here are some of their reflections:

*I enjoyed the yoga class very much. I liked pushing my limits. The relaxation at the end was the best for me. Yoga is really a good way for me to stretch my body and get more flexible.*

—Student: Age 17

*Some yoga exercises are very difficult for me to do. But the relaxation part is great. I fell asleep in the middle of it but woke up feeling refreshed!*

—Student: Age 16

*Joy can be simply experienced through movement. Just the butterfly wing leg movements brought joy.*

—Postulant: Age 35

*I found out parts of my body are quite tense, especially the upper body, above the shoulder area and neck. I do not practice daily, but plan to incorporate some of the exercises into my daily routine.*

—Scientist: Age 32

*I felt very relaxed. My body is not flexible enough to do a lot of the positions. Through yoga, I seem to have more energy to do daily work and have more confidence in my job!*

—Computer Consultant: Age 52

*I try to do what I can. I can do more than I thought I could. Yoga built up my confidence and ability to balance. It allows me to relax and strengthen certain muscles. I met nice people. I practice the standing poses every day. I appreciated the patience of the teacher.*

—Housewife: Age 78

*It's hard for me to do yoga on my own. The class helps me to remember more positions. My sister did a massage for me and told me that my shoulder is less tense than it was before I took yoga classes. I sleep better at night.*

—Seamstress: Age 41

*I've learned how to be more patient, and my life has been more peaceful.*

—Teacher: Age 46

*I learned how to relax and develop a sense of calmness and focusing the mind. I feel*

*healthier, lighter, lost weight. My thighs are stronger and I have more bounce in my legs.*

—Meter Reader: Age: 50

*The practice has taught me how to release tension and how I hold tension, how to breathe through pain and concentrate.*

—Writer: Age 41

*I learned that strength and relaxation is possible at the same time. Yoga has impacted on my becoming more mindful.*

—Printing company employee: Age 51

*I am a very nervous person with no patience, but after learning yoga for four weeks, I feel more relaxed in body and soul and can control myself better. My body is not as tense as it used to be. When I am tense, I inhale and exhale deeply and feel I can control my temper.*

—Bank pension manager: Age 34

Yoga is a Sanskrit term. Its' definition implies its purpose: to unite the mind, body, and spirit to improve health and to enhance the overall quality of life. Clearly this group of yoga students has benefited from their practice. As the students have expressed, yoga can increase energy and reduce stress, and develop a sense of calm and focus. It has been rewarding to teach this Yoga class and to see the courage, faith and diligence displayed by these students. Class members expressed how through yoga they effectively relieved stress, tension, bodily ills, and achieved a personal balance in their lives. It is my hope that they will continue to practice and that there may be an occasion where they can combine their yoga practice with sitting meditation and experience the benefits of both.

# The Past

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

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### Two Western Disciples Join the Sangha

On November 19<sup>th</sup>, 2003, at the Dharma Drum Retreat Center, Chan Master Sheng Yen (Shifu) and Guo Yuan Fa Shi formally gave the title of “postulant” to two western disciples, Chang Guan and Chang Wen. As postulants, the two will begin the path of “leaving home” to become monastic practitioners. This initial stage, where one contemplates the life

of a home-leaver and prepares to adjust to this lifestyle, is the period before becoming a novice monastic. At the formal ceremony, the postulants took the Shramanera (novice monk) precepts, which are the Five Precepts that one takes as a Buddhist with five additional guidelines: Do not kill; Do not steal; Do not lie; Do not engage in sexual misconduct; Do not take intoxicants; Do not sing, dance, or go to plays or shows; Do not wear perfumes or wear bodily adornments; Do not eat at improper times; Do not sleep on high or broad beds; do not handle money or other valuable objects. This ceremony marks their lifetime commitment to the practice of a balanced and wholesome lifestyle, of which they vow to share the benefits with others.

Chang Guan (secular name: Mirco Corrarino), at the age of 41, has come from Italy to join





the Sangha. His main profession was teaching Taijiquan at his private studio. This practice and philosophy led him to Buddhism, as both of his martial arts instructors were Buddhists. They put him in touch with various Buddhist organizations, two in particular: one led by Venerable Tae Hye Sunim of Italy, and the Dharma Realm Buddhist Association of California. It was Venerable Tae Hye who encouraged Chang Guan to attend retreats with Shifu, and after a retreat and interview with Shifu, Chang Guan confirmed his determination to leave home—giving his studio to a student and leaving behind his homeland to travel to the countryside of Pine Bush and live as a “work retreatant” at DDRC. He has been there since September and continues to diligently practice and provide much-needed services to the Retreat Center.

Chang Wen (secular name: David Kabacinski), 24 years old, from Long Island, recently joined the sangha as well. Prior to this, he had worked as a Horticultural Inspector and beach maintenance worker. For years, his interest in martial arts had led him to contact Buddhism, but not until his years at college in Syracuse had he become seriously interested in the practice and teachings. After searching for a solid teaching of meditation practice, and looking into various traditions of Mexican origin, he stumbled upon a book of Chan Master Xuyun’s teachings. Subsequently, he took a class in Buddhism and attended a Zen meditation center in Syracuse, New York. After graduating and returning home, he decided to find a Buddhist center close by and was advised by a friend to come to the Chan Meditation Center. At the same time, he was looking for a descendant of Master Xuyun and found Shifu after reading a copy of *Complete Enlightenment*, which noted Shifu’s

inheritance of the Linji lineage from the late Master. Thereafter, he became involved in the Center’s activities, doing volunteer work and participating in retreats. Since last June, he has lived and worked at the Center, becoming accustomed to the lifestyle and practice of a city-dwelling postulant.

We welcome them both to the Sangha and hope to see them grow in spirit and become bright lamps of Dharma. We also hope to see them share in the evolution of Chan Buddhism in the west and help everyone create peace, clarity, and compassion in their lives.

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### **Chan Master Sheng Yen Lectures in Tel Aviv**

On December 14, 2003 Chan Master Sheng Yen took up an invitation to lecture at Bhavana House in Tel Aviv during his trip to Israel with the World Council of Religious Leaders.

The Bhavana House (Bhavana means “with understanding” in Hebrew and “meditation” in Pali, the ancient Buddhist language) is a Buddhist center that opened a year ago in an apartment renovated by Ruth Gonen and Itamar Bashan, and is the weekly meeting place of a group affiliated with the Venerable Thich Nhat Hanh. The House is frequented by experienced practitioners many of whom have been meditating more than ten years, but is open to anyone who wants to meditate or attend its events. One of its members, Shlomo Shlomox, is a disciple of Master Sheng Yen’s, and when he heard the Master was coming to Tel Aviv, implored him to come and lecture at the center.

To a group of more than 30 practitioners, Master Sheng Yen spoke about the use of methods in meditation—the gongan, huatou, Vipassana, and Silent Illumination methods—and how they can be used to attain the unification of body and mind, of self and environment, of previous and following thoughts (what is called in the Chan literature “one thought for ten thousand years”), leading to the shattering of space and time, and finally the union of wisdom and compassion.

The lecture was followed by a series of complex questions from the sophisticated audience, many of whom expressed the desire to participate in meditation retreats led by Master Sheng Yen.

### ...and in Vancouver, B.C.

Chan Master Sheng Yen made a rare visit to Vancouver on December 19-21. His last visit was eight years ago in 1995 and this was a joyous event for the local Buddhist community. The master gave a public talk entitled “True Peace Stems from a Peaceful Mind” at Canada Place on December 20 to an audience of about 2200 people. The two-hour lecture focused on the use of the concepts and methods of Chan practice as guides for people to cultivate compassion and how to embrace uncertainty during difficult times. The master emphasized that peace and stability to society and the world can occur by practicing



*Chan Master Sheng Yen in Israel Photo by Chang Ji Shi*

the protection of one's spiritual environment, taking care of one's self and family, and being responsible for one's career and environment. The master's candid and simple explanation of the profound teachings of the Buddhadharma was well received by the audience, and, as the lecture concluded, about 250 people took refuge with Master Sheng Yen.

Master Sheng Yen also presided over the purification ceremony on the new site of the Dharma Drum Vancouver Affiliate Center on December 21 before returning to Taipei.

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### Chan Master Sheng Yen Visits Penn State

Chan Master Sheng Yen revisited Pennsylvania State University on November 22-23, 2003 to give a two-day lecture on "Selflessness and Fulfillment: the Chan Practice". Chan Master Sheng Yen based his lecture on the principles and methods expounded by the Surangama Sutra. The sutra teaches us about Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara's complete penetration of the Dharma based on the faculty of hearing. He explained that the ultimate aim of selflessness is to bring happiness to others, not just to one self and it is to know how to listen and understand the meaning of what others are saying. He also related that even those who have been severely afflicted physically and mentally, such as those who lost everything during the recent Taiwan earthquake, are capable of not only understanding other people's sufferings, but are also capable of gaining happiness by feeling at ease with themselves.

### Winter 2003-2004 Chan Retreats

The Dharma Drum Retreat Center and the Chan Meditation Center hosted two retreats this past winter. In November, immediately following Thanksgiving, from the 28<sup>th</sup> to December 7<sup>th</sup>, Chan Master Sheng Yen led a Silent Illumination retreat. Practitioners from all corners of the globe, five of whom were visiting monastics, came together to spend ten days in mindfulness and intensive meditation. Shifu usually gave three lectures per day on Silent Illumination practice and concepts, drawing on verses from Hongzhi Zhengjue's *Verse of Silent Illumination*, Chan Master Changlu Zongze's *Guide to Sitting Chan*, and the *Platform Sutra of the Sixth Patriarch*.

The Huatou retreat that followed from December 26<sup>th</sup> through January 2<sup>nd</sup>, was the 104<sup>th</sup> retreat under Shifu's guidance—yet, this was the first retreat in which Shifu was not physically present. Guo Yuan Fashi diligently led the program as well as gave interviews and provided guidance to the whole audience as needed. However, the majority of the teachings were Shifu's lectures recorded on digital audio at a previous retreat. In this way, Shifu's presence was fully there in the lectures and fundamental teachings on the Dharma and huatou practice. The talks consisted of teachings mainly from the *Platform Sutra*, in which Shifu clearly noted the ideas behind the "unmoving mind" of a realized enlightened being, and how to apply this in practice.

Many thanks to Shifu, all the residents, and volunteers of DDRC & CMC for working

unceasingly to prepare for and to provide a safe and comfortable environment for intensive Chan practice.

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### **A New Policy for Retreat Scholarship Application**

The Retreat Scholarship Fund was founded in late 2000 to provide funds for our overseas practitioners who were otherwise unable to attend retreats due to economic hardship. In the past three years we have received a substantial number of applications from participants both in the U.S. and abroad.

The Scholarship Fund is a private endeavor. The fund comes mainly from individual donors. Due to current economic environment it's increasingly difficult to solicit funds. In light of this a new policy has been established for dispensing funds and will be implemented beginning this year.

There are four intensive retreats annually. An amount will be set aside for each retreat. Candidates include overseas practitioners and DDMBA/CMC active volunteers. Other applicants will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

All applications, using the official form only, must be received a month prior to the retreat and on a first-come basis. Late applications will be disqualified. The amount dispensed ranges from full to a third of the registration fee depending on the applicant's qualifications and economic hardship.

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### **The Nanrei Kobori-Roshi Retreat Travel Fund**

The Nanrei Kobori-Roshi Retreat Travel Fund has been established through the generosity of an anonymous donor to provide transportation expenses for qualified Chan practitioners attending the DDRC intensive retreats. The candidate must be a leader in his/her practice area, has previously attended at least a 7-day retreat with Chan Master Sheng Yen either in the U.S. or abroad, and is in good physical and mental health. Candidates from abroad are welcome to apply. If you think you are eligible please send a letter describing your practice and leadership.

To Apply: Please specify which fund you're applying for and request a copy of the appropriate application form. Return the completed form via mail, e-mail or fax to:

Chan Meditation Center  
Attn: Virginia Tan  
90-56 Corona Avenue  
Elmhurst, NY 11373  
USA  
E-mail: [ddmbaus@yahoo.com](mailto:ddmbaus@yahoo.com)  
Fax: 718-592-0717

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### **Fidelity Investments' Gift to Dharma Drum**

The Lotus Charitable Foundation of the Fidelity Investments Charitable Gift Fund made a generous donation to the Dharma Drum Mountain Buddhist Association. The Gift Fund, drawing on the resources of Fidelity In-

vestments, is a donor-advised fund that provides support to charitable organizations and community services—from art and education, to medical research and disaster relief. It is one of America's leading public charities and the number one grant maker. They wished to direct the gift towards the construction of the new facilities at the Dharma Drum Retreat Center in upstate New York. We sincerely thank them for their contribution and we all look forward to the continued development of the Retreat Center, as it becomes a "field of practice" of wisdom and compassion.

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### **DDRC Fundraising Event**

After several postponements, the Dharma Drum Retreat Center fundraising event finally took place on November 15, 2003 at Long Island's Zen Palate restaurant that was attended by 350 supporters including 50 volunteers. The event raised \$160,000 for DDRC's much-needed building funds.

DDMBA/CMC practitioners, their families and friends donated all the merchandise. The items were grouped into various categories, many Buddhist related. The highlight of the day was the auctioning of Chan Master Sheng Yen's string of prayer beads of 30 years. He was there to lend his support by giving a speech discussing the DDRC mission and the need for its constructions.

We take this opportunity to thank the supporters and volunteers to make this event a success.

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# The Future

*Retreats, classes and other upcoming events.*

## **Chan Retreats**

*Chan retreats are opportunities for serious practitioners to deepen their practice and receive guidance from resident teachers. Retreats are held either at the Chan Meditation Center in Queens (CMC) or at the Dharma Drum Retreat Center (DDRC) in Pine Ridge, New York.*

### **One-day Chan Retreat**

Saturday, March 20, 9 am – 5 pm

### **Three-day Chan College Retreat (DDRC)**

Thursday, June 10, 8:30 pm –  
Sunday, June 13, 5:00 pm

### **Five-day Western Zen Retreat (DDRC)**

**Conducted by Dr. John Crook & Dr. Simon Child**

Friday, April 16, 6:00 pm –  
Wednesday, April 21, 10:00 am

### **Seven-day Retreat & Lectures (Switzerland)**

April 29 – May 8

E-mail Fred Von Allmen:

[fvallmen@bluewin.ch](mailto:fvallmen@bluewin.ch) for further information

### **Ten-day Huatou Retreat (DDRC)**

Thursday, May 27, 6:00 pm  
Sunday, June 6, 10:00 am

## **Ten-day Silent Illumination Retreat(DDRC)**

Thursday, June 24, 6:00 pm

Sunday, July 4, 10:00 am

## **Chan Practice**

### **Monday Night Chanting**

Every Monday, 7:30 – 9:00 pm. Devotional chanting of Amitabha Buddha.

### **Tuesday Night Sitting Group**

Every Tuesday, 7:00 – 9:45 pm. Periods of sitting meditation alternating with yoga, walking meditation, readings, discussion, and chanting the Heart Sutra.

### **Saturday Sitting Group**

Every Saturday, 9:00 am – 3:00 pm. Half-hour periods of sitting meditation alternating with yoga or walking meditation.

### **Sunday Open House**

Every Sunday (except April 25)

10:00 am – 11:00 am Group Meditation

11:00 am – 1:00 pm Dharma Talk

1:00 pm – 1:45 pm Vegetarian Lunch

1:45 pm – 2:45 pm Chanting

1:45 pm – 2:30 pm “Ask the Abbot”, a question and answer session on Dharma topics with Abbot Guo Yuan Fa Shi.

### **NEW: Sunday Night Sitting Group**

Please call 718-592-6593 for details.

### **Wednesday Night Sitting Group at DDRC**

Please call 845-744-8114 for details.

## **Classes at CMC**

### **Beginners' Dharma Classes**

Fridays, March 12, 19, 26, 7 – 9 pm

### **Taijiquan Classes**

Thursday, 7:30 – 9:00 pm, with instructor David Ngo, on-going

### **Yoga**

Saturday, 4 – 5:30 pm, with instructor Rikki Asher. March 6, 13, 20, 27, April 24, May 1, 8, 15

## **Special Events**

### **Public Lecture by Chan Master Sheng Yen**

At the Chan Meditation Center

Sunday, May 16, 11 am – 12:30 pm

"Noble Eightfold Path"

### **Earth Store Bodhisattva Recitation**

Sunday, April 4, 9:30 am – 3:30 pm

Recitation of the Sutra of Bodhisattva Ksitigarbha's Fundamental Vows, in Chinese.

### **Dharma Gathering**

Friday, May 14, 6:30 – 9:30 pm

Welcoming Chan Master Sheng Yen on his return from Taiwan. Please RSVP by May 7.

### **Buddha's Birthday Celebration**

Sunday, May 23, 10 am – 3 pm

Dharma talks by Master Jen Chun and Chan Master Sheng Yen, bathing of the baby Buddha, chanting, vegetarian feast.

### **Chan Master Sheng Yen on TV**

"Zen and Inner Peace"

WNYE (25) every Saturday, 12 midnight

# Chan Center Affiliates

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

## Asia:

### Hong Kong

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

### Malaysia

*Dharma Drum Mountain Buddhism  
Information Centre in Malaysia:*  
30 Jalan 16/6, 46350 Petaling Jaya,  
Selangor DE, Malaysia  
Tel: 603-79600841, 603-7319245  
Fax: 603-7331413, 603-79600842  
Email: kahon@pc.jaring.my  
<http://www.media.com.my/zen>

### Singapore

*Dharma Drum Mountain (Singapore  
Liaison Office):*  
No. 10 Second Avenue,  
Singapore 266660  
Contact: Ms. Yeh Yin Shia  
Tel & Fax  
(65) 6469 6565  
Cell 9745 6565.  
Email: [ysyehsg@yahoo.com.tw](mailto:ysyehsg@yahoo.com.tw)

### Taiwan

*Nung Ch'an Monastery:*  
No. 89, Lane 65, Tayeh Road  
Peitou, Taipei  
Tel: 02-2893-3161  
Fax: 02-2895-8969

### *Dharma Drum Mountain:*

No.14-5, Lin 7, Sanchieh Village,  
Chinshan, Taipei  
Tel: 02-2498-7171, 02-2498-7174  
Fax: 02-2498-9029  
Email: [webmaster@ddm.org.tw](mailto:webmaster@ddm.org.tw)  
<http://www.ddm.org.tw>  
*Dharma Drum International Meditation  
Group:*

Contact: Guo Chii Shi  
Tel: 886-02-2778-5007~9  
Fax: 886-02-2778-0807  
Email: [gchiis@ddm.org.tw](mailto:gchiis@ddm.org.tw)  
Saturday, 8:30-11:30 am, meditation and  
discussion in English at An Her Branch  
Monastery

## Australia:

### Melbourne

326 Church Road, Templestowe VIC 3106  
Australia  
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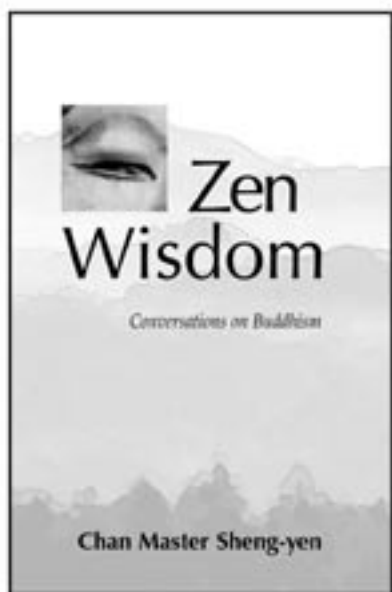
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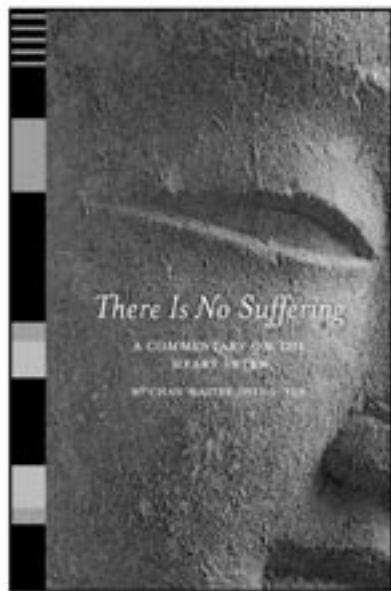


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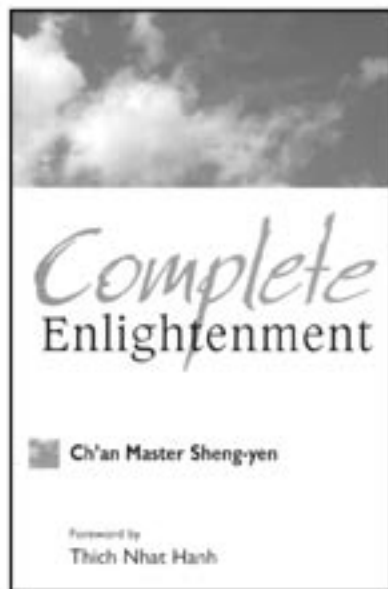
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