

May 7, 2004

Dear disciples of the beloved Roshi Philip Kapleau:

I just received the sad news of Roshi Kapleau's death and would like to send my condolences. He is a very dear friend of mine. Years ago he visited me at my Center in Taiwan. He also kindly invited me to visit his Center in Rochester, and wrote the preface for my book Complete Enlightenment. We shared a deep relationship between us, and I am deeply saddened upon hearing the news of his passing. At present, I am in Switzerland leading a seven-day Chan retreat. We will transfer all merits created at this retreat to Roshi Kapleau. May he return to teach us again based on the power of his vows.

Sincerely yours,

Master Sheng Yen
Founder, Chan Meditation Center

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From The Editor

I have been trying to avoid writing about this—it's unpleasant at best, inflammatory at worst—but I'm not sure that I should...avoid it. After all, Buddhism is, first and foremost, a response to the problem of suffering. And torture is not simply suffering, it is the purposive and purposeful causing of suffering, it is the art and science of maximizing and extenuating suffering...it is the Anti-Buddha. If good, in Buddhism, is that which ameliorates suffering, and evil that which causes it, then in Buddhist terms torture is the purest of evil.

And it's not only Buddhists who think so. Concomitant with the rise of constitutional democracy in the last two centuries, beginning perhaps with the American Constitution's prohibition against "cruel and unusual punishments", there has gradually arisen a worldwide consensus that torture be considered a crime beyond all possible justification. It is now prohibited by international treaty and by the laws of every legitimate government, including ours, and its practice is

commonly considered a hallmark of the behavior of despots and psychopaths.

But as bad a thing as torture demonstrably is, condemnation of the behavior of others is not part of the path of practice, so how can I respond, as both a practitioner and a citizen, when my country is found to be practicing torture?

Or does that question contain two contradictory questions? As a citizen of a democracy, I take up my share of responsibility for the behavior of the government constituted of me, by me and for me, but the practitioner immediately recognizes the complex of attachments to illusory entities that "my responsibility" implies. As a practitioner, I observe the vexation that arises upon seeing the photos from Abu Ghraib, and I put the vexation down, only to be chastened by the citizen for the ease with which I have ameliorated my own suffering without having done anything

for the suffering of the victims of my country's torture, and perhaps more realistically, without having done anything to ensure that my country doesn't torture anyone else.

Is it the case then that the responsibilities of a citizen and the vows of

a practitioner are so different as to be incompatible? Or is it simply that torture works—that it defeats the equanimity of the witness just as it does the self-possession of the victim—that my Buddhism, like the wills of those hooded, naked Iraqi men, has been broken by torture?



Preparation

by

Chan Master Sheng Yen

This article is based on selections from talks given by Master Sheng Yen at four retreats: at Nongchan Monastery, Taiwan, January 1991, and at the Chan Meditation Center, Queens, in June, November, and December of 1992. The Chinese transcript of the Nongchan retreat was edited by Lin Ch'ih-sien and Kuo Hui-hsin. J. C. Cleary translated into English the Nongchan transcript as well as the tapes of the Queens retreats. The English translations were selected and edited for publication by Ernest Heau.

*The talks reproduced here will be part of a forthcoming book, **Attaining the Way**, a compilation of teachings on Chan/Zen practice by Chan Masters Jiexian (?-?), Boshan (1368-1644), Xuyun (1839-1959), and Sheng Yen (b. 1930).*

The talks in Master Sheng Yen's section of the book are arranged not by retreat but thematically, under headings including Preparation, Practice, Buddhadharma, Perspectives, and Returning to Daily Life.

This article consists of the talks under the heading of Preparation. The sub-heading for each article includes a subscript that indicates the source of the talk: NC for Nongchan, CMC1/92, for Chan Meditation Center January, 1992, and so on.

Give Your Body to the Cushion (CMC11/92)

This is the first morning of a seven-day intensive Chan meditation retreat. In Japanese Zen this is called sesshin, which comes from the Chinese hsueh-shin, meaning 'to collect one's mind [into a continuous meditative stream].' Very simply, that's what we're here to do. Some of you are attending retreat for the first time. For some this is an unfamiliar

place. The noises of New York City never stop. Therefore, it is normal to feel nervous or anxious. My best advice is to just relax.

For seven days you will also have your body to contend with. Most of you will suffer from leg and back pains. You may get tired or sleepy. Again, relax. Your body and your mind will adjust quickly if you do not resist. Make a firm commitment to focus, to leave thoughts of past and future outside these doors. You



can and certainly will return to your issues after the retreat, but right now thoughts about them will hinder your practice.

At all times keep your mind on your method of practice. When wandering thoughts appear, do not follow them; simply recognize them and return to the method. Know that once you identify a wandering thought for what it is, you are no longer on that thought. If you can do this, I guarantee you will have no anxiety over wandering thoughts.

Decide now not to be concerned with concepts or physical sensations, both real and imagined. Just focus on the method. That is easier

said than done, but if you can do it, time will fly. On the other hand, preoccupation with your thoughts and your body will cause the time to drag, and you'll experience a lot of discomfort.

Do not expect to gain anything. Forget any expectations you may have about practice. The practice itself is your goal, and by being here you have already achieved that. Continue to make it a reality. How effective would a worker be if the only thing he thought about was the check at the end of the month? So do not think about what you'll get by being here, or where you'll be after the retreat. Just focus on your purpose, which is to meditate.

So, this first day's theme is to relax your body and your mind. Take to heart the saying, "Give your body to the cushion and your mind to the method." If you do that, the rest will take care of itself.

What is Your Bodhimandala?

(CMC6/92)

I hope during this retreat that you will refrain from using your ears except to hear my instructions; to refrain from speaking except during interviews; to refrain from looking around except when walking or working. At all times, keep your eyes as you would while meditating, and that is to keep clear and wakeful, not to satisfy curiosity.

To cultivators of Chan, I give three guiding principles. First, relax your body and mind. Second, settle upon a practice method as soon as possible. Third, do not concern yourself with how well you are doing. If you follow these guidelines, your practice will be smooth and fruitful.

When you sit in meditation, relax your body from your head to your belly, and to your legs. Your mind must not be tense or hurried, and always keep a patient attitude. If you sink into torpor, become scattered, or if your method is not going smoothly, just relax your body and your mind. Tensing will only add to your afflictions and waste time. Remember though, the purpose of relaxing is to further your practice, not to take it easy.

To relax and know that you are relaxed—this is the first step in cultivating practice. Relaxing starts with taking the correct posture, then sitting peacefully as if you have no concerns at all. So, if you discover that you are tense, first check your posture then relax your mind.

The practice methods we commonly use are breath counting, reciting a buddha's name, investigating gong'an (Japanese: koan) or huatou (Japanese: wato), and silent illumination (shikantaza). If you have been practicing a specific method, whether for a short time or many years, try to stay with it. Do not be casual about switching.

The third guideline is not to gauge your own progress. If your practice goes well, don't be elated. If it is not going well, don't get discouraged. Just be sure that you are practicing in accordance with the Dharma.

Starting this morning, before you sit, bow to your cushion and ask, "What is my bodhimandala, my place of practice, my site of enlightenment?" After sitting, adjust your posture so that your whole body is comfortable, as it should be. It is not necessary to sit in full-lotus. The main thing is to be stable.

After your posture is correct, do not pay any more attention to your body; just keep your mind on your method.

If you do all these things you will be practicing Chan.

Principles for Cultivating Practice (CMC11/92)

On retreat, we need to observe the Chan principles for living, which are orderliness, cleanliness, tranquility, and harmony.

Always maintain a sense of proper order and purity, whether in the Chan Hall, the dormitory, the dining hall, or the bathroom. Being orderly means being aware of the correctness of your environment: your personal space, your sleeping quarters, the dining room, and your meditation cushion. If you do this, when you return home, you will surely have a more heightened awareness of order. Without being aware of yourself and your surroundings, how can you be aware of others?

In the Chan Hall, place personal articles between your mat and your neighbor's, not in front of or behind your mat. At the end of the sitting, properly fold your lap towel and place it squarely on the cushion, which in turn is placed squarely on the mat. As you pass through an area, pick up and dispose of any trash.

At the dining table, eat in silence and with full attention. Afterwards, rinse your cup and bowl with a small amount of water, then drink the water, leaving behind no food particles. Place your drinking cup in your rice bowl, and any fruit peelings or napkins into

the cup; utensils go to the right of the cup. Use your napkin to wipe the table where you are sitting, leaving the tabletop spotless, as if it had not been used. Only then can we say that the meal has been finished. This mindfulness to eating is intimately related to Chan life and Chan practice—after all, if we eat in a disorderly way, and leave a mess, what can be said of our minds?

If you are aware of the orderliness and cleanliness of your surroundings, you can be more aware of your inner mind. To purify your mind is no small task, but when your awareness functions in orderly surroundings, your mind can reflect that and become more tranquil. Tranquility also means being silent and smooth in your motions. No matter what you are doing, be calm, careful, peaceful, and quiet. This way, even with a lot of people moving in a confined space, there will be order and tranquility.

Do not harbor contradictions or antagonisms in your mind. If you cannot harmonize your inner mind, neither can you harmonize with those around you. If you resent your environment and find fault with others, your mind will surely lose its inner balance. Thus, an ancient worthy said: “Be ever mindful of your own faults as you sit quietly, and when you are talking freely do not speak of the faults of others.” Enmity and strife are not the way to harmonize: tolerance, persuasion, and explanation are better.

Chan practitioners must first do a good job on themselves. If there are no internal contradictions, then you will certainly be able to harmonize with yourself and with others.

The Twin Pillars of Concepts and Methods (CMC12/92)

Chan relies on the twin pillars of concepts and methods. Unless both are firmly in place and working together, your practice will lack a firm foundation. Without cultivating practice, studying Buddhist concepts is just an intellectual exercise; on the other hand, practicing the methods without understanding the concepts can lead you astray. Empowerment comes with clearly grasping the concepts and methods and using them to cultivate practice. So please attend to the Chan master’s instructions, correct your concepts, and practice your method.

One basic concept is to offer your body and mind to the life of practice. This overcomes self-centeredness, and all its consequences. However hard you practice, cultivating from a self-centered stance can only result in more afflictions for yourself and others. Practice requires three kinds of ‘putting aside.’ First, putting aside the self, second, putting aside thoughts about goals, and third, putting aside past and future.

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The self refers to the notion of 'I' that we have as a result of possessing a body and a mind. 'Goals' refers to the benefits of Chan practice, especially enlightenment. The past and future refer to our mental projections of things that no longer exist, and things that do not yet exist. These three attitudes—belief in a self, desire for benefits, and being hostage to past and future, comprise the central core of the personality, and the essential elements of self worth. They are the roots of misfortune, bringing with them affliction and bondage. Not putting them aside means that the most important result of Chan practice—enlightenment—will be beyond reach. To experience the benefits of Chan, you have to put these attitudes aside, at least temporarily.

Methods are the tools you use to correct yourself, to regulate your conduct, your speech, and your mind. Basically, we rely on the Five Precepts and the Noble Eightfold Path to correct our physical, mental, and verbal conduct. On retreat we also use sitting and walking meditation, prostration, and work to regulate bodily conduct. We restrict speech and chant scriptures to regulate our verbal conduct. We practice concentration, recite the Buddha's name, and investigate huatou to regulate our mind.

The mind is the most difficult to regulate—for this we use correct knowledge, correct mindfulness, correct concentration, and correct energetic progress. Day after day, we monitor ourselves. From moment to moment we need to be aware of thoughts coming and going. Whether or not they are delusions, we must be aware of them. If a thought arises in a crude, careless way, after it disappears we must alert ourselves: what was I just think-

ing? If we can persevere, we will enjoy correct mindfulness all the time.

There are many methods to keep the mind correct. During everyday life you should practice like this: Where is my body? Where is my mind? What are my hands doing? Does my mind know what my hands are doing? What is my mouth saying? Does my mind know what my mouth is saying? An essential principle of Chan practice is not to let the activities of body, mouth, and mind to become separated.

An Island of Time and Space

(NC)

When practicing on retreat, isolate yourself. First, drop everything from the past and everything related to the future. Create an island of time that separates you from before and after these seven days. Refrain from reading, writing, talking, and making phone calls. So far as the outside world is concerned, you did not exist before and you will not exist afterwards. You are living on a virgin island with no knowledge of anything outside.

Unless you think like this you will be dragging along a huge tail, carrying a lot of baggage and it will be very painful. You will have come not to meditate, but to indulge in false thinking. If any outside thoughts occur, tell yourself, "I was born on this virgin island. These outside thoughts have nothing to do with me."

Second, isolate yourself from others. Within this island of time, create an island of space, which only you inhabit. There is only one per-

son on your cushion—you. Give your body to the cushion and your mind to the method.

If people walk by you, or sit beside you, this has nothing to do with you. If someone behaves strangely, if someone runs in and does cartwheels, if there is a fire in the kitchen, or your back itches, you still respond the same way: “This has nothing to do with me!” There is a saying, “Fundamentally, there is nothing in the world to be concerned about, but people make trouble for themselves.” If the outside world does not influence your mind, nothing can disturb you.

Third, isolate yourself from your previous thought and from your succeeding thought. Good or bad, do not be concerned with them. Just take the present thought and tie it to the meditation method—that is what’s most important. The past is gone, the present is dying, and the future is not yet. Regret, dissatisfaction, worries, expectations—these are all delusions; do not waste a second on them.

Practicing in a Group (CMC12/92)

The advantage of practicing Chan on your own is that it is very free; it can be adjusted and arranged according to your mental and physical condition, and your particular needs. The drawback is that for people who lack the ability to cultivate themselves and the mental power of self-control, it can be easy to lose track of the guidelines.

Practicing Chan in a group can be with or without a teacher, but both require guidelines for collective practice. The teacher has three functions. First, the teacher explains the concepts and methods of Chan to the group as a

whole. Second, based on the correct knowledge of the Buddhadharma and experience of Chan, the teacher gives specific meditation instructions and corrections to the group. Third, the teacher accepts requests from the group to handle problems and works with them individually or collectively to resolve difficulties.

Some practitioners become aware of problems they are having and bring them to the attention of the teacher for help. In cases where students do not recognize their own problems, the teacher needs to recognize the student’s problems, bring them to light, and provide help and correction.

Everyone on retreat has a unique physical and mental condition. If the teacher’s instruction is the same all the time, it might be of help to some, but that is almost like listening to a tape. There will be no way to address people’s individual problems, or prescribe the right ‘medicine’ for them. For all these reasons, receiving proper instruction is a necessary part of the retreat process.

Relax Your Body, Calm Your Mind (NC)

In the course of the seven-day retreat, I may teach several meditation methods, but with just two goals in mind: the first is to help you relax your bodies and minds; the second is to help you pacify and stabilize your bodies and minds. In reality, these two goals are aspects of the same thing. If you can relax, you will be stable and at peace, and if you are stable and at peace, you will relax. But the place to start is relaxing. You could say that peace and stability are the result of relaxing. If you can relax your body and mind, your vexations

are sure to be reduced, your pressures and burdens will be lightened, and your capacity for wisdom enhanced. With mind and body relaxed, your attention will be concentrated, your body functions will be balanced, and your mind will be calm and peaceful.

People sometimes recite the Buddha's name and transfer the merit to others, in order to create good karma for sentient beings. While this is useful, its effect is indirect. However, if we can relax our bodies and our minds, and as a result, change our words, actions, and

disposition, this will be more directly useful to ourselves and to others.

Strenuously seeking good things and avoiding bad things will create a lot of tension. So avoiding both of these extremes can go a long way to relaxing our bodies and minds in daily life. There is a karmic reason for every occurrence in our life. Therefore, as you encounter each one, deal with it calmly and serenely. Thus, it is easier to be relaxed. This is an example of practice and daily living exemplifying Chan.



NOW AND THEN

He paints himself
alone in a public garden.
Faces fray.

He casts a shadow:
yesterday's pastels darken
Tulip Hill.

A wrong turn
leads to Camphor Alley.
Sinuses clear.

That overcoat
blocking the subway door,
the phantom between us.

He shells peas
through karaoke memories.
Echoes decay.

—Mike Morical

Fighting and Preventing Terrorism through Education and Parenting

The following address was prepared by Chan Master Sheng Yen for presentation to the global conference on “Fighting and Preventing Terrorism: Education and Parenting for Peace and Global Ethics” at the United Nations Dag Hammarskjold Auditorium on February 12, 2004.

Organized by the World Council of Religious Leaders, Millennium World Peace Summit Ethics Initiatives, Touro College, the Global Ethics Resource Center, and UNICEF, the conference was hosted by the Permanent Mission of Bosnia and Herzegovina to the United Nations under the patronage of Her Majesty Queen Rania al Abdullah.

Unable to attend the conference in person, Master Sheng Yen made a video of his speech for broadcast during the meeting.

Establishing Global Ethics Through Education

The escalating threat of terrorist acts has given rise to this conference and our recognition of the need for a Global Ethic to address terrorism. But terrorism is not the only reason a Global Ethic is needed. Establishing a global ethical standard to guide human interaction is a proactive intervention aimed at the protection of every individual from the harm we cause each other. The goal of such an ethical standard is that every human being on this planet should be free from the destructive impact that comes from suspicion, misunderstanding, discrimination, prejudice, ostracism and attack, and instead be empowered to respect, forgive, tolerate, learn from and help each other. Only in this way will we have universal and everlasting peace in this world of ours.

The reasons for the recent emergence of terrorism are complex and over-determined. They involve a myriad of ethnic, religious, political, economic, cultural and historical factors. These varying factors create differing worldviews among different groups. Problems emerge when these natural differences in perspective are perceived as adversarial and/or dangerous to another group. When a particular group seeks to protect its own interests and to ensure its own security, it then becomes difficult to also care for the interests and security of other groups with a mind of equanimity. Groups who experience themselves as threatened, humiliated and/or victimized are particularly prone to the use of violence as a means of retaliation, and to go so far as to perceive terrorism as a legitimate means for achieving justice.

Because every group has its own perspectives and criteria when defining the term “justice”, each group believes that it stands on the side of justice and that its opponents stand on the side of injustice. This is the relative nature of ethical values. It is for this reason that we need to establish a globally shared ethical standard. Rather than insisting on the justice based on one’s own understanding, we must seek to tolerate other people’s flaws, extend the hand of friendship to every person so that we can live in peace together and grow together.

What is the cornerstone of such a standardized, Global Ethic? Simply put, it is to respect all life. It is the recognition that everyone (and everything) has the right to live and that we all share the responsibility to love and protect others. A Global Ethic such as this cannot condone protecting one’s group by causing harm to any persons from another group. When everyone in the world can see every life on this planet as one’s own brothers and sisters and work hard to foster mutual respect and tolerance, the argument over who is just or unjust will no longer be relevant.

How should we go about creating this Global Ethic? Its principle will be to replace confrontation with tolerance, violence with respect and love, and retaliatory hatred with meth-

ods of healing pain. If, in the sacred texts or ancient teachings of any peoples, there are tenets that go against the principle of peaceful coexistence for all humanity, then these texts should be reinterpreted in the light of the Global Ethic. This is because the world of the 21st century will develop as an open and diverse environment of mutual interdependence. It will also be an environment of mutual respect and learning. To quote an ancient

Chinese saying, it is a world of “seeking commonality while preserving diversity.”

“WHAT IS THE CORNERSTONE OF A GLOBAL ETHIC? SIMPLY PUT, IT IS TO RESPECT ALL LIFE. IT IS THE RECOGNITION THAT EVERYONE AND EVERYTHING HAS THE RIGHT TO LIVE AND THAT WE ALL SHARE THE RESPONSIBILITY TO LOVE AND PROTECT ONE ANOTHER.”

Once this Ethic is stated, we will promote it universally and persistently through the multi-level institutions of education such as schools, community organizations, religious institutions and families. The focus will be on the respect for life and the recognition that everyone has a right

to live. It will stress our common responsibility to tolerate those different from ourselves and protect the peace and happiness of human society. How can this be implemented? I suggest that UNESCO adopt the development of the statement of this Global Ethic and the pedagogy for its implementation and execution as its primary project for this century. We, the World Council of Religious Leaders, will of course wholeheartedly support and encourage leaders at all levels of all religions around the world to share in this duty.

The topic of today's discussion is to strengthen the guidance for Global Ethics through formal school education and family education. We all know that formal school education today tends to emphasize the transmission of knowledge and skills, often neglecting areas that facilitate the development of a sense of security and healthy personality within students. Family education also faces many problems around the world. Its domain ought to include parental education, child-rearing education, marital education, family financial planning, and education for regulating daily life, etc. Global Ethics, however, can be used as the organizing principle for comprehensive family education. Education within the context of this Global Ethic involves everyone respecting every person and fulfilling one's

responsibilities to enhance personal growth while helping others. The promotion of this Global Ethic in school education will depend on the education policies established by each country's government and education experts. Parents are crucial in family education as they shoulder the responsibility for teaching their children to develop a heart that respects as they protect their tender spirits from the seeds of hatred, terror and violence. Parents need to be empowered to guide their children in developing a tolerant and forgiving heart. For instance, throughout my childhood, I would often hear my parents reminding me to interact with family members harmoniously and also to show hospitality to strangers from afar. So in my life, I have met only friends, and have not known enemies.

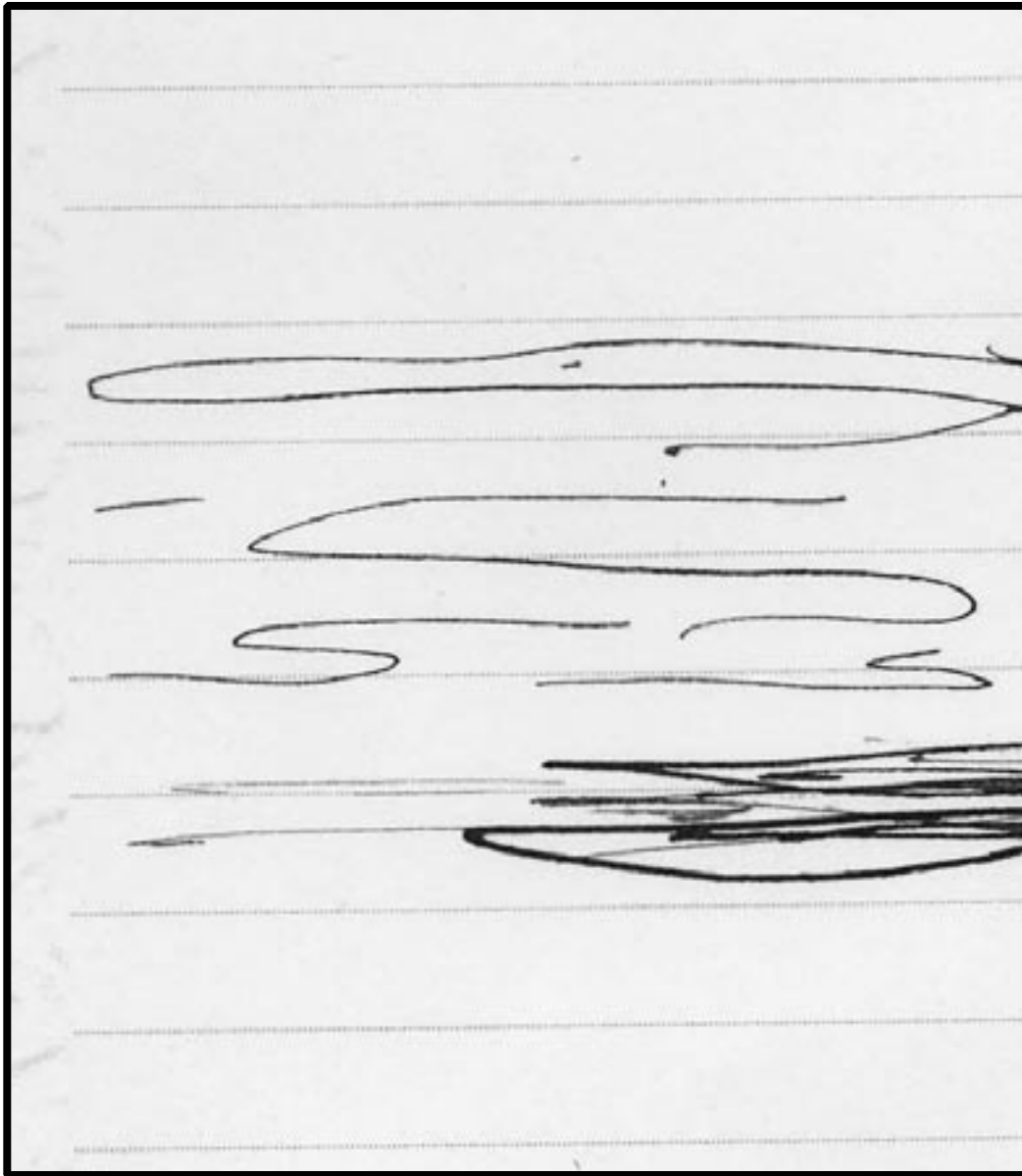


Photo: Sally Kao

Untitled

All these years
of wanting both her
and Buddhahood...
Thinking I had to choose
caused many problems.

—Karma Tenzing Wangchuk
(Dennis Dutton)



Gone, gone gone beyond, gone a
Ink drawing by



altogether beyond, Bodhisvaha.

by Rikki Asher

Unopened Buds

Retreat Report by N. J.

I came to the retreat thinking about how quickly life goes. Focusing on death and dying, layoffs and terminations, closings, endings...I saw that what was before was no longer present. I was saddened by this realization. During one of the lunch breaks, lying on the bench under the peach tree on the patio, I noticed a procession of ants hurriedly climbing the tree, then falling off all around me. I looked at the tree and saw that it was dying. The leaves had a cancerous growth on them. I couldn't bear to look at it.

I went to the other side of the house and saw masses of beautiful roses in full bloom, so lovely, with droplets on their petals from the early morning rain. The contrast between the perfection of the roses and the dying peach tree was difficult for me to understand. I asked myself what it all meant – I couldn't seem to come up with an answer.

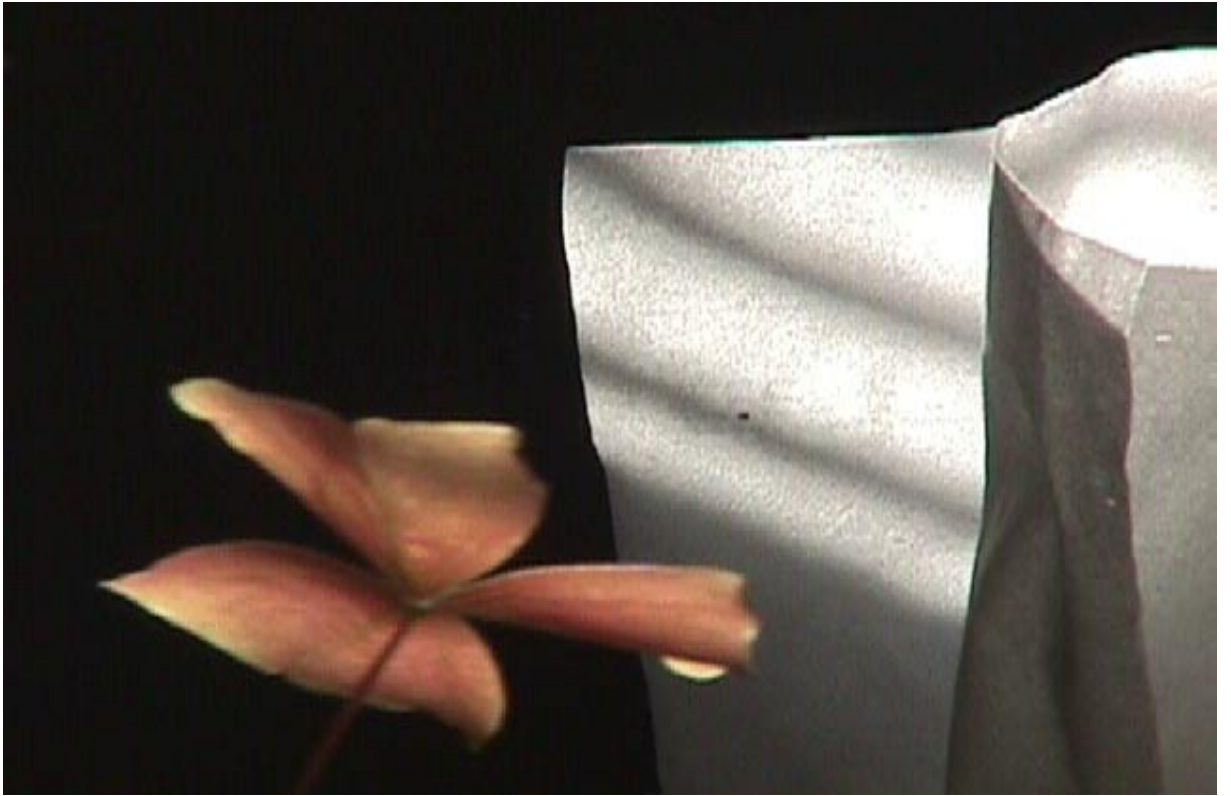
I went to an interview with Shifu, and all I could say was, "The peach tree is dying and the roses are in full bloom. What is the meaning?" Later I saw Guo Yuan Fa Shi and told him the peach tree was dying. He said yes, it was sick. Somehow his matter-of-fact answer helped me to understand: with every breath there is an inhale and an exhale, a beginning and an ending. I was focused on the ending;

somehow, I shifted to the beginning. I no longer saw death and dying but the beginning, the newness of each breath.

A few days later I looked at the rosebush and the petals were dropping off – they too were past their prime. But I was no longer upset because at the same time I saw that there were buds that had not yet opened. I had begun to see the birth of each new moment, rather than its death.

I am very thankful for the experience of the retreat. It doesn't seem possible that I completed it so easily. Only when I'm on a retreat can I relax and go with the flow. I'm very grateful for the experience. I wouldn't change anything. Shifu's talks were perfectly clear and so helpful in moving me through each day. I feel that I have been given an abundance of precious jewels.

Twelve days have passed since the end of the retreat; I feel that I have gotten caught in a new whirlwind of activities and demands. It's only now as I write this report that I feel I have come back to myself, back to where I was in meditation. How easy it is to get blown away, and how wonderful to come back to a place where I can be in the moment. Nothing seems more important than this.



"Tissue Flower"
Photo by Chang Wen Shi

The Past

News from the Chan Meditation Center and the DDMBA Worldwide

Master Sheng Yen Attends World Youth Peace Summit

"Religious Faiths Should Not Advocate War or Conflict"

Master Sheng Yen, leading a seven-person delegation of youth elites, arrived in Bangkok from Taiwan on February 24 for the three-day World Youth Peace Summit (WYPS)-Asia Pacific regional preparatory conference. The master, a member of the board of the World Council of Religious Leaders (WCRL), was accorded a grand reception by local government dignitaries upon arrival and was escorted to the Imperial Queen's Park Hotel where delegates to the conference were staying.

During the reception dinner the same evening at Sathira-Dhammasathan, a community for peace and harmony in Bangkok founded by Mae-Chee Sansanee, Master Sheng Yen was invited to light the candle and pass it on to attending youth leaders symbolizing the illumination of wisdom and peace that shall prevail.

Following the opening ceremony of the WYPS on the morning of Feb. 25 at Buddhamonthon, Master Sheng Yen and eleven members of the WCRL sat as panelists to an open forum

in the afternoon. Discussions focused on issues of religion, peace, "jihad" (holy war), and faith. In discussing the meaning of "jihad," His Excellency Ayatollah Mahmoud Mohammadi Araghi, president of the Islamic Culture and Relationship Organization of the Islamic Republic of Iran, said, "'Jihad' means to practice diligently. Islam will seize every effort in promoting peace for humanity." Master Sheng Yen, acting as the concluding speaker, commended His Excellency Ayatollah Araghi for his response and stated firmly, "All religious faiths should not advocate war or conflict. Therefore, youth leaders of the 21st century should have proper comprehension and recognition of religion. Thus, war or conflict can be avoided."

The master, on behalf of the members of the WCRL, also presented H.R.H. Princess Ubol Ratna of Thailand with a crystal sculpture of Shakyamuni Buddha after her inaugural address at the opening ceremony.

700 Delegates From 39 Countries

Master Sheng Yen and the seven-person youth delegation returned to Taipei on February 28th from the four-day summit. The conference, which ran from Feb. 25-29 at the Buddhamonthon and the United Nations Conference Center in Bangkok, was a prelude to the Global Summit in Nairobi in October.

During the conference, the delegation participated in an open forum, several plenary sessions and thematic working sessions. Topics included human respect, civil and global conflicts, economic disparities and inequalities, sustaining

human and environmental resources, and culture and globalization. Master Sheng Yen, founder of Dharma Drum Mountain and member of the Board of the World Council of Religious Leaders, said that as members of the global village, we should shoulder the responsibilities for the happenings around the world, and work collectively for, as well as contribute to, the peace, joy and future of humanity. "To wish for peace, humanity must contribute towards its achievement. When there is contribution, there is no discontentment," the master said during a plenary session.

According to Bhikshu Chang Zhi, youth delegate from Dharma Drum Mountain to the conference, it was indeed encouraging to see more than 700 delegates from 39 countries of the Asia-Pacific region come together to participate and work in joint efforts for future world peace while setting aside their differences in ethnicity, nationality, culture, and individual opinions.

Ms. Ho Lichun, a youth delegate from the business sector, said that young people are responsible for contributing to the achievement of world peace, and that doing so brings pride and a sense of calling for the youth. The delegates encourage youth elites and leaders in Taiwan to advance actively onto the global platform, and cultivate broader, more expansive visions.

The World Youth Peace Summit (WYPS) is an initiative from the Millennium World Peace Summit, which hopes to convene and engage outstanding youth leaders of the world to unite and contribute to world peace. Other

WYPS regional preparatory conferences will be held in several cities around the world before the culmination of the Summit in Nairobi, Kenya, in October 2004, which is expected to draw 2000 youth leaders from every field.

In Taiwan, Dharma Drum Mountain will host a series of events for the selection of youth leaders to the WYPS. Leaders from fields including government, business, education, religion, science and technology will convene to participate in the selection of 10 youth leaders through nomination, working sessions, and trainings.

DDM To Raise Funds for Orphans of Bam

A four-person delegation from Dharma Drum Mountain returned from Iran on Jan 16th after a week-long visit to the country and the earthquake site in Bam. The delegation traveled to Iran to express care for the Islamic world on behalf of Master Sheng Yen in an effort to promote peace. The trip was arranged with the support of the World Council of Religious Leaders.

During the weeklong trip, the DDM delegation was escorted by a representative of the Islamic Culture & Relationship Organization of Iran. The delegation entered the earthquake site to extend their care to the victims as well as to get a better understanding of the kinds of help needed. The delegation also gained a better understanding of the organization of the Red Crescent of the Muslim Republic of

Iran (regional Red Cross) by accompanying them as they distributed daily supplies to the victims.

Due to regional cultural differences the most effective support for the relief effort would be monetary aid, which could be utilized by the Red Crescent in different ways to help victims in different areas.

Master Sheng Yen was especially concerned to hear the news that thousands of orphaned children from Bam had been relocated and settled in Tehran. He instructed DDM to raise and donate an additional US\$100,000 as educational funds for these orphaned children. Dharma Drum Mountain will conduct further discussions with the Islamic Culture & Relationship Organization of Iran as to how to best put these funds to use.

Master Sheng Yen Expresses His Appreciation

In February 2004, Master Sheng Yen underwent a routine health check-up due to minor discomfort in his eye. The doctor advised the master to be admitted to the hospital for rest and recuperation, and the hospitalization generated great public concern for the master.

Today, Master Sheng Yen wishes to express his sincere gratitude and appreciation for the public's concern for his health, and wishes especially to thank several government officials who visited him

in the hospital on February 11th: The Executive Yuan Premier Yu Shyi-kun; the Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) Chairman Lien Chan; the Legislative Yuan Speaker Wang Chin-ping; the President Chen Shui-bian; and the Presidential Office Secretary-General Chiou I-jen. Master Sheng Yen is extremely appreciative to all for taking time off of their busy schedules to visit him while he was ill. The master also gave blessings to all to be healthy.

One-Day Retreat at CMC

A one-day retreat was held at the Chan Meditation Center on March 20, 2004. Twenty retreatants attended in all, almost evenly split between men and women.

Chang Wu Shi, the morning timekeeper, opened the exercise at 9:00 AM in the Chan Hall, welcoming everyone warmly and wishing everyone a good practice. She reminded us to be mindful of all our movements—standing, walking, using the bathroom, bending down, picking something up, eating, sweeping, or washing dishes—and asked us keep our cushions and towels neat when not sitting.

Chang Wu Shi also went over the rules and guidelines for the retreat. There was to be silence the entire time—in the Chan Hall, during lunch, and during the work period. This rule of silence had the meaning of not talking to oneself as well as not talking to others. It also meant no reading, writing or taking notes.

Chang Wu Shi then guided practitioners through a total body relaxation, beginning with the scalp and moving gradually down to the toes. This was very helpful for establishing a deeply restful and solid posture in preparation for meditation practice.

Before the first sitting period, Guo Yuan Fa Shi gave a Dharma talk on maintaining concentration during meditation practice and letting intervening thoughts go. He talked about the kinds of thoughts that can arise during practice, from superficial wandering thoughts to deep-seated memories from long ago. Guo Yuan Fa Shi explained that as mental activity settles and lessens, a practitioner could sometimes be surprised by the sudden surfacing of a distant memory, perhaps of a traumatic experience from childhood. He instructed us to let all thoughts go—including this kind, if it should occur—and return to the method. If we do this each time such a memory recurs, eventually, over time, it will lose its strength and become like a wisp of smoke. He spoke about maintaining an upright posture to avoid drowsiness, but also said that if one were really tired one should simply rest and not try to concentrate for a period or two, as the struggle to remain wakeful would be a waste of energy and counterproductive.

After the first sitting period, Chang Wu Shi led a series of standing exercises in which she emphasized the importance of staying relaxed as one moved through them, even when stretching the arms upwards or when bending the knees. After lunch there was an hour's work period followed by the afternoon's sit-

ting. Sitting periods were interspersed with seated exercise and with walking meditation. At 4:30 PM there was a Q & A period led by Guo Yuan Fa Shi, during which he encouraged retreatants to speak about their observations and concerns, and offered advice.

Presenting ChanReaders

The first and second meetings of the new ChanReaders took place on two Sundays, March 28th and April 11th, in the second floor meditation room of the Chan Meditation Center at 3 pm.

They were both huge successes, each with an attendance of nearly twenty people. The groups were extremely diverse: members ranged in age from 15 to 64, represented countries as disparate as Hungary, Indonesia, Poland, Taiwan, Trinidad, and the United States, and came from various religious backgrounds, including Judaism, Christianity, and atheism.

The *Dhammapada*, the earliest recorded teachings of the Buddha, has been selected as the first book for discussion. It has inspired so much conversation in fact that the deadline for finishing it has been extended to accommodate members' desires to discuss it more deeply. During the meetings members divide into small groups to re-read the assigned chapters together, compare different translations of the text, discuss the important themes the reading presents, try to apply the lessons to their own lives, and clear up

any questions they might have had about the reading before the meeting.

Spirits were high at the second meeting as members eagerly awaited the opportunity to discuss the reading with their fellow practitioners. Most people brought their own copy of the *Dhammapada* with them; those who did not have their own used the copies of Narada's translation that had been kindly donated by the Great Enlightenment Temple. The majority of the group ended up favoring this version because of its extensive commentary and illustrative companion stories.

About half of the group continued to discuss the book after the meeting while drinking tea in the basement. No ideas for new discussion formats occurred to anyone, but everyone was delighted to have had the opportunity to make new friends, read and talk about a book with other people, clarify their understanding, and deepen their practice, and everyone is looking forward to the next meeting.

ChanReaders is a free social and educational activity open to people of all ages, religions, and nationalities. They invite everyone to attend the group meetings that are being held at the Center twice monthly on Sundays at 3pm. Please contact Tiffany Taulton (dhamma_study@yahoo.com) for more information or visit the group online at <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/ChanReaders>, or on the Chan Center's homepage (www.chancenter.org).

Dharma Gathering

On May 14 there was a Dharma gathering at the Chan Meditation Center. Having recently conducted a retreat in Switzerland, Master Sheng-yen gave a lecture to about 50 people on the role of doubt in Chan practice. He reminded the group that if a Chan practitioner has no doubt or questions in his or her mind, it is difficult for the practice to take hold and be focused. When one keeps probing and creates a burning sense of doubt, enlightenment comes naturally.

Shifu recounted the enlightenment experience of Dong Shan Liang Jie to illustrate this point. He also asked his translator Rebecca Li if she prefers herself now or at some time in the past, reminding everyone that this "Rebecca" will soon be gone. Shifu said that the self of every moment is you, but that is not who you are; enlightenment occurs when you experience yourself that way. He concluded with a huatou: What's that?

After the lecture the crowd, which included many new faces, had light snacks and chatted. Everyone was happy to see Shifu and each other.

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.

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
Fax: 718-592-0717

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.

Three-day Retreat (DDRC)

Friday, September 3, 8:30 pm –
Monday, September 6, 5:00 pm

Five-day Retreat in Mexico

Conducted by Guo Yuan Fa Shi

August 5 – 10

E-mail info@mardejade.com for details

Zen Camps at DDRC

Two-day College Camp

Friday, August 20, 9 pm –
Sunday, August 22, 4 pm.

Two-day Youth Camp

Friday, August 6, 9 pm –
Sunday, August 8, 4 pm

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' Meditation Classes

Saturdays, September 11 and 18,
9 am – 12 noon

Taijiquan Classes

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

Yoga

Saturday, 4 – 5:30 pm,
with instructor Rikki Asher.
Call CMC for dates.

Special Events

Earth Store Bodhisattva Recitation

Sunday, August 29, 9:30 am – 3:30 pm
Recitation of the Sutra of Bodhisattva
Ksitigarbha's Fundamental Vows, in Chinese.

One-day Chanting and Chan

Saturday, September 25,
9 am – 5 pm

Chan Master Sheng Yen on TV

"Zen and Inner Peace"
WNYE (25) every Saturday, 12 midnight

**Chan Magazine would like to hear from you,
its readers.**

How's your practice going?

How has it affected your daily life?

**Have your experiences inspired you to make any art, or
write any poetry?**

**Whatever it is, we'd like to see it, and possibly share it
with the rest of you by publishing it in the magazine.**

**Please attach your submissions to an e-mail and send it
to chanmagazine@yahoo.com.**

We look forward to hearing from you soon.

With our gratitude,

The editors.

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.

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132 Pennant Hills Road
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http://www.dharmaloka.org
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Ongoing program of study and practice, including courses in Buddhism and Chan meditation, meditation group meetings, and retreats.

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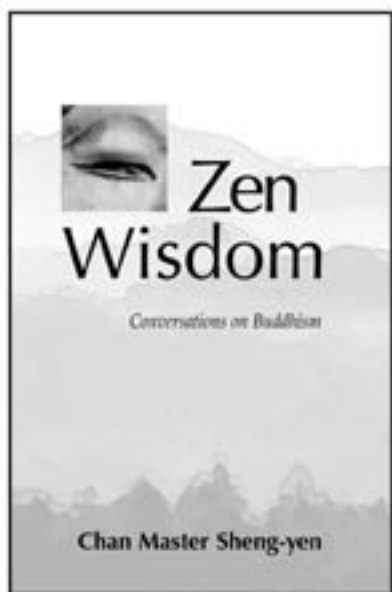
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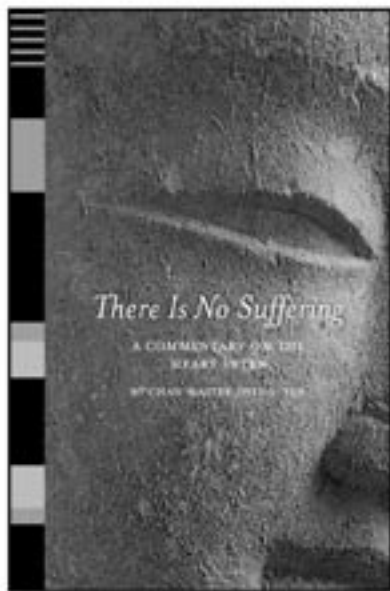


Zen Wisdom

In *Zen Wisdom*, Chan Master Sheng-yen answers questions from his students with clarity and depth. Collected over several years, these conversations focus on the simple yet seemingly elusive principles of Chan (Zen) practice. Combining wisdom with knowledge of the contemporary world, Master Sheng-yen shows us that Chan and Buddha's teachings are still fresh and relevant in the present day.

There Is No Suffering

There Is No Suffering is Chan Master Sheng-yen's commentary on the *Heart Sutra*. He speaks on the sutra from the Chan point of view, and presents it as a series of contemplation methods, encouraging readers to experience it directly through meditation and daily life. In this way, reading the *Heart Sutra* becomes more than just an intellectual exercise; it becomes a method of practice by which one can awaken to the fundamental wisdom inherent within each of us.



Published by Dharma Drum Publications and North Atlantic Books



Available wherever books are sold

Introducing the newest book from Chan Master Sheng Yen

Illuminating Silence

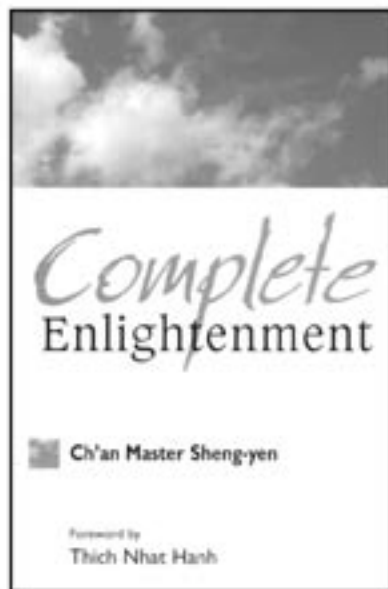
With introduction and commentaries by John Crook



This comprehensive work provides an unusual introduction to the practice of Chan by Master Sheng Yen based on talks given during two intensive retreats at the meditation centre of the Western Chan Fellowship in Wales. It provides a basic handbook for all concerned with an effective training in Zen for the West with especial reference to the little known practice of Silent Illumination. In his foreword Stephen Batchelor writes : “ The discourses are lucid and direct, drawn widely on the sources of Chinese Buddhism, and speak in a refreshingly modern idiom. Perhaps because the setting was relatively small and intimate, the gentleness, warmth and humour of Master Sheng Yen radiate throughout the text.”

From WATKINS BOOKS, 2002. 20 Bloomsbury St. London. Available from Watkins,

Phone: 0207 836 2182, or wherever books are sold. Price : £ 9.99. US\$ 14.95.



Complete Enlightenment

An authoritative translation and commentary on The Sutra of Complete Enlightenment, a text that shaped the development of East Asian Buddhism and Chan (Zen). Please enjoy this beautiful translation of the sutra and also the valuable commentaries and instructions offered by this great and rare teacher.

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Hoofprint of the Ox

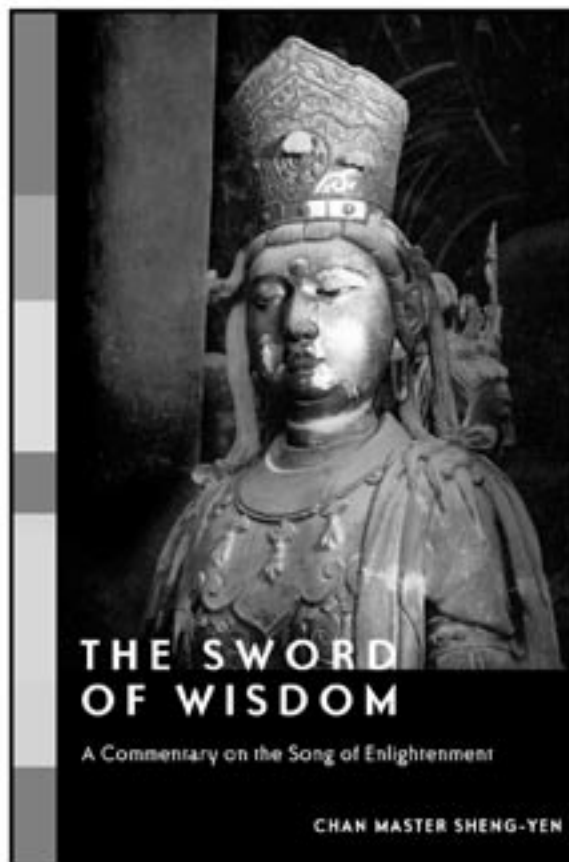
Revered by Buddhists in the United States and China, Master Sheng-yen shares his wisdom and teachings in this first comprehensive English primer of Chan, the Chinese tradition of Buddhism that inspired Japanese Zen. Often misunderstood as a system of mind games, the Chan path leads to enlightenment through apparent contradiction. While demanding the mental and physical discipline of traditional Buddhist doctrine, it asserts that wisdom (Buddha-nature) is innate and immediate in all living beings, and thus not to be achieved through devotion to the strictures of religious practice. You arrive without departing.



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Available wherever books are sold

Follow Master Sheng-yen through the Powerful World of Ch'an



The Sword of Wisdom

The Sword of Wisdom is a penetrating commentary on the Song of Enlightenment, a famous Chan text that speaks of proper methods and attitudes for practice. In this book, compiled from a series of lectures delivered during intensive meditation retreats, Master Sheng-yen gives valuable advice and guidance to those who are practicing Chan meditation. His lucid words offer fresh insight into a timeless philosophy that will be beneficial and inspiring to anyone who is interested in Buddhism.

Published by Dharma Drum Publications and North Atlantic Books



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