

“We say the mind is a ‘mind monkey’ or ‘thought horse’ because, like monkeys and wild horses, the mind is very difficult to tame and control. Enlightenment is not possible in a state of scattered mind. Only when you collect your attention again and again from wandering and achieve a peaceful and focused state will you have a chance of attaining enlightenment. This is taming the ‘mind monkey’ and reining in the ‘thought horse.’”

From Attaining the Way
by Chan Master Sheng Yen,
Shambala Publications, 2006

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Chan 禪 Magazine

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Cover photo by Kaifen Hu

From The Editor

Buddhism and political action seem always to be slightly strained bedfellows. On the one hand, Buddhism teaches us to look for the cause of suffering in our own minds, and not in the actions of our perceived enemies, as it teaches us to interact harmoniously with others, rather than to engage in conflict or opposition, all of which would seem to put the protest march and the partisan debate out of bounds by definition. On the other hand, Buddhism has found itself, repeatedly — in China, Tibet, Vietnam, Cambodia, Sri Lanka, Myanmar — in the unenviable position of being the most important social institution in a country afflicted by some form of political nightmare. Buddhist monks have been moved to violate the first precept by committing suicide rather than submitting to the Chinese Revolution, by self-immolation in protest against the Vietnam war, by going so far as to take up arms against the Tamil nationalists in Sri Lanka. (In this extreme variant of the Dharma they might have been encouraged by the experience of their Cambodian brethren, who had been virtually wiped out, without resistance, by the radical nationalism of Pol Pot.)

Just since the last issue of Chan Magazine two of these long-simmering political caldrons, with Buddhism in the stew, have boiled over and made international headlines. The March 10 anniversary of the 1959 uprising in Tibet brought monks out in protest, and anticipation of the March 24 Olympic torchlighting ceremony brought Chinese troops out in response. By the time flame was put to torch the death toll was over 100, including an unknown number of monastics, and there

were local reports that monasteries were being surrounded and starved by Chinese paramilitaries. Meanwhile, protest among Tibetan-in-exile communities followed the Olympic torch from capital to capital around the world, dividing political leaders and the IOC over how to respond. Should heads of state boycott opening ceremonies? Would athletes be permitted freedom of speech, and how and when? Would not any action that cost the Chinese face only cause the Tibetan people more suffering?

But before those headlines were dry, Cyclone Nargis hit the Irrawaddy delta in Myanmar. As I write, ten days after the storm, there is still no official death toll, there being no foreign journalists allowed in by the military junta, but today's estimates range from 13,000 to 34,000, with the expectation that it will surpass 100,000. Of greater concern is the fact that the government will not allow foreign relief workers into the country, which is placing perhaps two million more people in immediate danger. Of course, the political nightmare in Myanmar didn't begin with the cyclone — the military took power 46 years ago, Aung San Suu Ky was first arrested during the uprising of '89, Buddhist monks led mass protests in September of last year that were brutally, if predictably suppressed...none of which has inspired any effective action by the international community. The junta is financed by its trade with Thailand, China, Korea, India, Singapore, and Malaysia, all of whom trade in turn with the West. In the words of one exiled Myanmar journalist, "We needed the world's help long before the cyclone."

And indeed they did, as did the Tibetan people long before the Olympics became an issue, but they haven't gotten it. The US gave up trying to influence Chinese behavior long ago, and the US and EU sanctions against Myanmar are just for show. France has gone so far as to "refuse to rule out an Olympic boycott," and to suggest that aid be delivered to the Burmese people over their government's objections, to which the Chinese Ambassador to the US, Zhou Wenzhong, responded, "How could you, you know, do something regardless of the sovereign state's position?"

Well, you could, you know, do something because state sovereignty is simply less important than the lives of human beings, that's how.

I am not advocating that we invade Myanmar with truckloads of food and medicine — according to professionals on the ground such a thing would be impractical in the extreme. Nor am I advocating a boycott of the Olympics — I'm inclined to accept the Dalai Lama's view that just trying to make the Chinese look bad does the Tibetan people no good. What I am advocating is a simple, unenlightened view of the first great vow, the vow to deliver innumerable sentient beings. I think that vow requires us to respond to the imminent unnecessary deaths of millions with more than a shrug and a return to the method, more than a pious upturned nose at the vexatious world of politics. The Buddha said, "Compassion is that which makes the heart of the good move at the pain of others." I'm saying that if the heart moves but the feet don't, the vow remains tragically unfulfilled.

And I'm saying it at this particular moment because from what I can tell the feet of Amer-

ican Buddhists haven't moved much. I just spent the last two hours googling "olympic protest," "myanmar relief," "buddhist blog" and other such phrases, and I've read posts about animal liberation and the culture of Chinese students and reducing one's carbon footprint and the biological benefits of incense, and found virtually no evidence of any effort among English-speaking Buddhists to even address the plight of the Burmese or Tibetan people, much less that of the millions of non-Buddhists who are every day being made the victims of their fellow human beings.

Buddhism offers practice as the long-term solution to the intractable, inevitable problems of aging, sickness and death, and we who consider ourselves serious Buddhists put a lot of time and effort into that practice. Why do we put so little time and effort into addressing the suffering that is not inevitable, but is rather the result of the unspeakable behavior of some of us, and the unconscionable apathy of the rest of us? If the Pure Land on Earth that Master Sheng Yen advocates requires that we put an end to our vexations, surely it also requires that we put an end to genocide and tyranny and warfare as the world's dominant forms of conflict resolution. Politics is mean, and petty, and worthy of our disdain, but it is the way in which large groups of people live together and share the planet. It is what makes the difference between good government and bad; it is what starts wars and what ends them. It is what gets the food and medicine to the people, and what keeps it from them, and though it seems perilous to get involved in its conflicts and controversies, it is much more perilous to disdain it, especially for those less politically fortunate than we.

Living and Dying with Dignity

by

Chan Master Sheng Yen

The following talk by Master Sheng Yen was translated orally by Ming Yee Wang, transcribed by Eugenie Phan, and edited for publication by Ernest Heau.

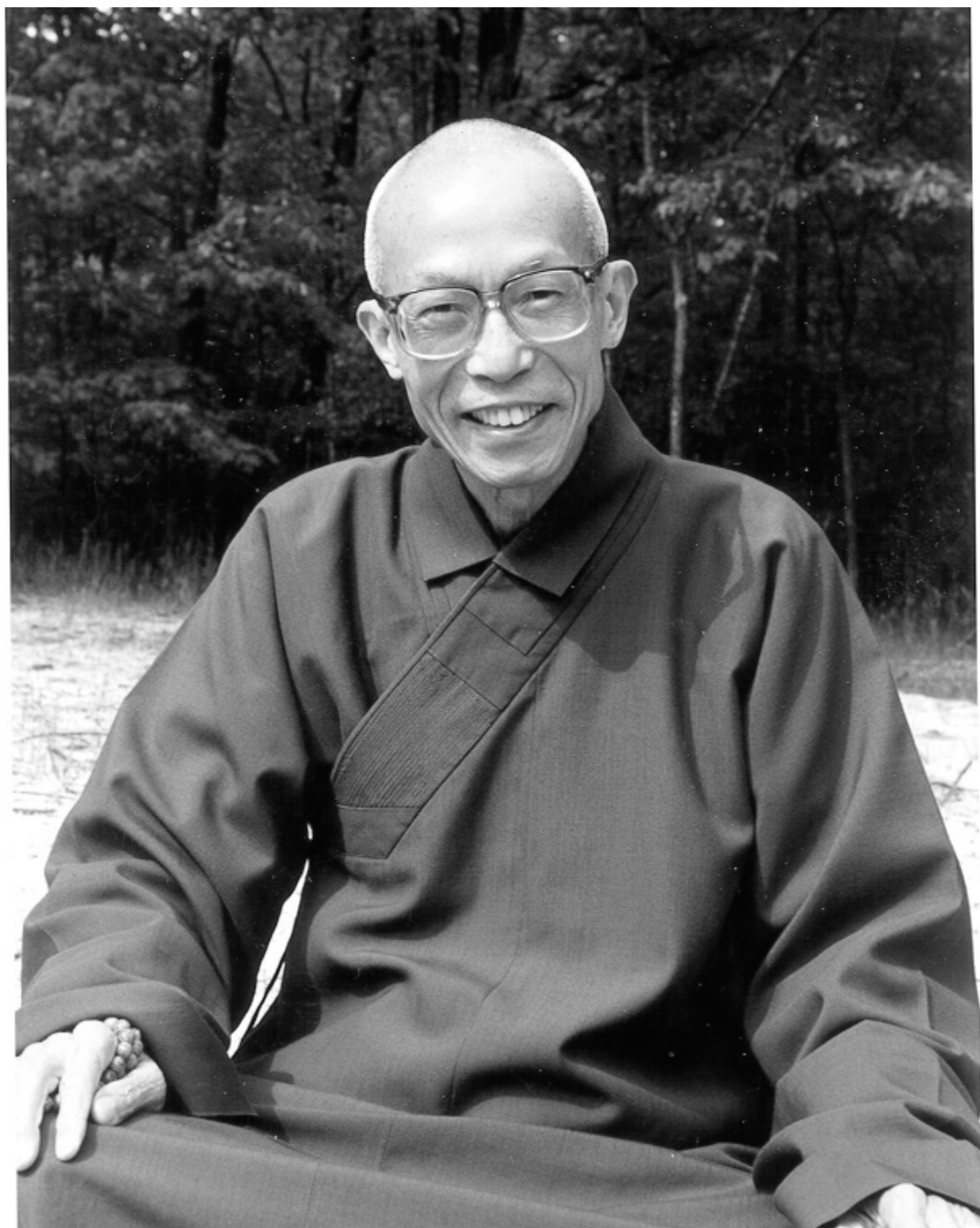
How can we live and die with dignity? This question can be asked from the perspectives of philosophy, religion, science, psychology, and medicine. I am not an expert in those disciplines but I would like to make some observations on living and dying with dignity based on my understanding of Buddhist Dharma.

Transforming Our Perception of Life and Death

Ordinarily, people cannot control their life situations or make things happen according to their wishes. Too often, people feel that they have no one to rely on, nowhere to find security, nowhere to turn in life. These are the feelings and situations in which most ordinary sentient beings find themselves. But it *is* possible to change this perception to one that contains a sense of beauty and love while affirming that life is meaningful. In this process, one can also grow and mature. This is the typical and appropriate attitude towards life from the Buddhist point of view.

Having said that, I should point out that many Buddhists feel that life is basically suffering — a burden to bear, especially with regard to the body. What they fail to understand is that attaining enlightenment, that is to say, living a life based on wisdom, is possible only if one has a human form. Without a body to practice with it would be impossible to attain liberation and buddhahood. There is a Buddhist saying that a human form is very difficult to attain, but having it is a great opportunity to hear the Dharma. Therefore, attaining wisdom begins with having a human form. In this sense, Buddhists who hold a negative attitude towards life misconstrue the Dharma. With an appropriate understanding of the Dharma, one would treat life as something very, very valuable.

From another perspective, some Buddhists may think that the best way to attain buddhahood is to be reborn in the Pure Land, the Western Paradise of Amitabha Buddha. But while the Pure Land is a spiritual realm of bliss, one cannot attain buddhahood if one re-



mains there. To attain buddhahood one must acquire a human form to be able to generate the vows to practice the bodhisattva path. So, the whole process, from becoming an ordinary sentient being to coursing the bodhisattva path and eventually attaining buddhahood, is accomplished in the human realm.

Life and Death Are Not Separate

If we can see that living and dying are intimately related processes, we can accept that the two are inseparable — if we are born, we will die: the one is intimately connected to the other. In this sense being born may not be seen as such a joyful thing but it need not be such a hazard. Likewise, death need not be seen as either sad or joyful. It all depends on one's attitude. If you do not appreciate the beauty of life, then living can be viewed as pitiable. Some people find life joyful but if there is no dignity, what is there to be happy about? If you do not know the true meaning of death, then it will be sad and depressing when it comes. But once you understand that life and death are innate parts of the same process, you will be able to find dignity in life as well as in death.

How can we find dignity in our life? One way to answer this question is to look at life from three perspectives: the *meaning* of life, the *value* of life, and the *goal* of life. If you can experience these, you will find dignity in your life. When I speak of the meaning of life I refer to the reason why we continue living. From the Buddhist point of view the significance of attaining life is that we have an opportunity to repay our karmic debts from our past lives. Karma says that the things we do are *causes* that will create *consequences*. With this life we can receive and accept appropriate karmic

retribution from our actions in previous lives. In any present or future life, we must accept a certain amount of retribution from past karma. We can also use this life to fulfill the vows of practice that we have made in previous lifetimes. In a previous life if we made certain promises and vows, this also becomes part of our karma. Then in this lifetime we have an obligation, as well as an opportunity, to fulfill those previous promises. So, from the Buddhist perspective the meaning of life is to receive karmic retribution as well as to fulfill our previous vows.

The value of your life is not assigned by someone who examines your life and makes a judgment; it rests solely on your intentions and actions in fulfilling your responsibilities, and to offer yourself to sentient beings. It is the effort, within your limits of time and energy, to be of use to others. Whether they know of or understand your dedication, the value of your life is simply in this effort to offer yourself. In society we play roles — to be a mother you accept the responsibilities of motherhood. Likewise for any other role you play. Responsibility means doing your best in that role without expecting a reward. We can also offer ourselves to the benefit of the natural environment. All these activities belong to the realm of benefiting oneself as well as others — in other words, practicing the bodhisattva path.

Having goals means establishing a long-term direction for your life, including sharing it with sentient beings. It means continuing to make and fulfill vows. If we set these goals not just for this life but for future lives as well, whether our life is short or long, we live with dignity. As it is with value, the dignity that is conferred on you by others is not nec-

essarily reliable or genuine. The only reliable dignity is that which you give yourself by the way you conduct your life.

Life and Death Are Two Sides of the Same Coin

It is useful to understand life and death as two sides of the same coin, as aspects of an unlimited process in space and time. Seeing it this way, there is no reason to be so attached to life or so afraid of death. Life and death are, on the one hand, our right, and on the other hand, our responsibility. When alive, accept life and make good use of it; when dying, accept and welcome it. I have told people on their deathbed: "Do not just wait for death nor fear it. So long as you have one more minute, one more second, use that time to practice." We should not be averse to life nor wish for death, but when it is time to go, clinging to life will not work. Of course, this is very difficult to do!

From a fairly early age children should learn that just as there is life there is death. To teach them to be aware of death is better than shielding them from that fact, not to frighten them, but to help them understand that to all living things, death will eventually come. Knowing that life and death are part of the same process provides for a healthier, more wholesome view of life. To be mentally prepared for the eventual coming of death is beneficial for the growth of wisdom. Before he became an enlightened buddha Siddhartha Gautama witnessed first-hand the processes of life: birth, old age, sickness, and death. That knowledge inspired him to devote his life to finding a way to help people relieve their suffering and attain liberation. So, the Bud-

dhist path began with Shakyamuni Buddha facing the realities of birth, old age, sickness, and death. His life shows that if we treasure life as an opportunity to grow in wisdom and offer oneself to others there is no need to fear death.

The Origin and Destination of Life

Religions and philosophies have views about where life comes from and where we go after death. Some people even try to use supernatural powers to look into previous and future lifetimes. While wanting to look into the past and future are typical human strivings, the results are not so reliable. Confucius had a saying that life and death depend on fate but he was not so clear on just what fate was. Though not a Buddhist, Master Laozi said that as soon as one is born, the causes for one's death are already in motion. He also said, "Out of birth, into death." As a philosophy this is quite good. The idea that life was created by God and we die because God wants us to return to Him is also good in that one can feel that someone is taking care of the process. One difference is that most religions do not believe in past and future lives. As a Buddhist, however, I believe that the origin of my life extends back to my previous lives without limit, and my future lives will follow until I attain buddhahood. That is the Buddhist view as to the origin and destination of life.

Buddhists believe that life comes from a past without beginning. So, if we just look at this lifetime, the moment of our birth is not the beginning of the process and the moment of our death is not the end of this process — our current life is but one segment out of an unbounded life process. Let's use the analogy of

a tourist. Today he is in New York; tomorrow he is not in New York because he has gone to Washington DC. The day after, he disappears from Washington because he has gone to Chicago. So, in any specific city (one lifetime in our analogy), that person appears for a period of time and then moves on. But if you look at his total itinerary, it is all one journey. So, what you may perceive as the end of this period of life actually signifies the eventual beginning of yet a different period of life — for me, for you, for everyone. So when you see life as part of an unlimited and continuous process, there is no need to feel too disappointed in this one life, however it turns out.

Conditioned Arising

The phenomena of life and death can be described in a more general way as *the arising and perishing of causes and conditions*. The Buddhist term for this process is “conditioned arising.” This refers to the fact that all phenomena consist of effects due to a myriad of changing causes and conditions acting together. The result of causes and conditions arising and perishing are all the phenomena we experience, including our own lives. From the perspective of conditioned arising, we can speak of three kinds of birth and death.

The first kind of birth and death is *the arising and perishing of the moment*. In other words, in every instant of time, there are changes in our mental processes and changes in our bodily processes. Normally we do not take notice of such minute changes in us, and therefore we do not think of them as “births” and “deaths.” In this kind of arising and perishing, it is only the physical body that appears to be constant from instant to instant. But the cells of the body are also constantly

undergoing these processes of arising and perishing — our cells continually generate and die. So, in the mind as well as in the body, in every instant, there are constant occasions of births (arising) and deaths (perishing).

The second kind of birth and death is more easily identifiable: *the birth and death of one lifespan*. In other words, the human lifespan arises at the moment of conception and perishes when we die. Needless to say, all living creatures experience the same arising and perishing of its lifespan, but right now we are talking in the human context.

The third kind of birth and death consists of *our lives in the three times of our past, present, and future*. Our previous lives are countless in number; our future lives can also be countless in number until we attain buddhahood. When we look at our lifespan this way, it does not just comprise the moment we are born until the moment we die, but extends over the three times. This gives us some hope and consolation that, having once attained life, we will continue to live because we have future lives to come. So, if one is unhappy and contemplates suicide thinking that the next life will be better, is that a good thing? No, because when one commits suicide, one is being irresponsible to one’s previous lifetimes, not doing justice to one’s present life, and creating karmic disturbances for one’s future life.

A single lifespan can be likened to the daily arising of the sun, and then its disappearance over the horizon in the evening. After the sun goes down you do not see it, but it is still there and will rise again in the morning. It does not come into being anew every morning. A lifespan is like that. When it ends, it

eventually gives rise to another lifespan, like the sun rising again. But this observation only applies to the physical manifestation of a single lifespan, for there is this pure buddha nature in every one of us that is ever-present throughout the three times. Like the sun, the physical body may go through the process of appearing and disappearing, but that has nothing to do with our pure buddha nature, which is there even when we don't perceive it.

So, as sentient beings we experience arising and perishing within the three times of past, present, and future. Each lifespan can be thought of as a segment followed by another segment within the endless process of arising and perishing. If one remains at this level, in the long run one has not benefited from having all those precious lives. In order to elevate or sublimate the quality and the meaning of life in the three times, we have to go beyond segmented birth and death and achieve *transformational birth and death*, namely, sagehood. That means practicing Buddhadharma.

Transformational birth and death refers to the maturing of merit and virtue in a practitioner whose compassion and wisdom continue to grow life after life. Such a person can be called a sage, that is to say, a bodhisattva or an arhat. This process of transformation

continues over the three times. At this level, a sage can still have a physical body or may have transcended the physical body and be basically using pure spiritual energy to cultivate the path. Buddhahood is the ultimate end of this process of transformation. It is the level at which one has transcended samsara — the cycle of birth and death — and has attained the great nirvana. Such a buddha can

still appear in time and space to help sentient beings, as did Shakyamuni. While a buddha can manifest in human form and therefore experience arising and perishing, for this buddha there is no attachment to birth and death and none of the vexations associated with birth and death.

Until we become sages or buddhas how can we find dignity in living and dying? First, we should fully accept this rare and precious

life that we now have. Then, when death is imminent we should accept it if not with joy at least with equanimity. As you should be grateful to the reality of life you should also be grateful to the reality of death. We do not control when we will be born and most times we do not control when we will die. From the perspective of Buddhist awareness most people live without clarity, and when death is near, their minds become even more clouded. For such a person life is confusing and delusional. There is a Chinese saying that we

“IF YOU CAN MAINTAIN A CLEAR MIND AS DEATH APPROACHES, YOU CAN THEN VERY COURAGEOUSLY ACCEPT IT WITH JOY. WHATEVER YOU HAVE DONE... BE GRATEFUL FOR HAVING RECEIVED THE GIFT OF LIFE. AT THE MOMENT OF YOUR DEATH THERE SHOULD BE NO RESENTMENT, NO REGRET, NO ANGER AND NO PRIDE. GONE IS GONE”

live and die as if in a dream. At a higher level are those who accept life, make the best of it and when death comes, greet it with courage and without clinging. At the highest level is the enlightened practitioner who “cannot find either life or death,” meaning that for such a person there is really no such thing as life and death.

Until we die, we cannot know which of these categories we belong to, but as long as we are alive we should try to elevate the quality of our life and to clarify our minds. We should also be grateful that when death comes, we are released from the responsibilities attached to that life. Even better, after we die we can use the merit and virtue that we have accumulated to move forward into our next life which should be full of joy and illumination.

Meeting Death With a Clear Mind

If you can maintain a clear mind as death approaches, you can then very courageously accept it with joy. Whatever you have done during your life, virtuous or not, good karma or bad, be grateful for having received the gift of life. At the moment of your death, there should be no resentment, no regret, no anger, and no pride. Gone is gone. Think forward to a beautiful future. For this reason, the mental state of a dying person is most important. Some people about to die think about the things they have done that they regret, and all the suffering they have caused. That kind of thinking is good for a living person but not so good for a dying one. However, if you approach death while holding no resentment, no regret, no anger, no pride, and just strive forward to accept a bright and illuminating future, it is more likely to happen. Whether you are reborn in the heavenly realms or in

the human realm, you can again continue to practice, and that is a bright and illuminating future.

When a dying person's condition is such that clarity of mind is not possible, or when they are unconscious or in a coma, friends and relatives should help the dying person with great devotion and concentration, chanting the Buddha's name, reciting mantras, or meditating, in a calming environment. Through such practices, we use the power of meditation and the power of faith to guide the dying person's mind away from fear and towards assurance, to move towards illumination. This would definitely be helpful. So, for those who on their deathbed cannot maintain clarity of mind, it is important that relatives and friends help such a person with their practice. And definitely it is useful. I myself have had a clear experience of this.

What Determines One's Future Life?

There are three factors that will determine what kind of rebirth you may have. The first is *karma* — the good as well as the bad karma that you have accumulated in your current and past lives. The better your karma the better will be your chances of a good rebirth. The second are the *causes and conditions* surrounding your current and past lives that are most ripe for maturing upon your next rebirth. You may have all kinds of karma but specific conditions can be closest to maturing at this point. If this is the case, they will be the conditions that will determine your next life. The third factor is your *mental state* when you die: What thoughts are in your mind as you approach death? Do you accept your death

with joy and gratitude? What aspirations for a next life do you have? Thoughts like these will influence what kind of rebirth you will have. For example, if throughout your life you have made vows, as you approach death you may repeat these vows. However, if you have never had such aspirations, it would be hard to have them on your deathbed. So, practitioners should strive to have good aspirations on their minds as they approach death. If our future lives were dependent on only karma and conditions, then we would be in a less reliable situation.

Editor's Note

When Master Sheng Yen speaks of “vows” in this lecture, he is referring to vows in the context of Buddhist practice. The most basic vows that Buddhists take are vows to uphold the five basic precepts: not to kill, not to steal, not to engage in sexual misconduct, not to lie, and not to indulge in intoxicants. In addition, monks and nuns are required to take as many as 250-plus precepts before being fully ordained.

Also, in the Mahayana tradition, there are the Four Great Vows of the bodhisattva:

I vow to deliver innumerable sentient beings;
I vow to cut off endless vexations;
I vow to master limitless approaches to Dharma;
I vow to attain supreme buddhahood.

These bodhisattva vows are sequential in the sense that in order of fulfillment, for example, the vow to help others (“save sentient beings”) comes before the vow to “attain buddhahood.” On the other hand they are simultaneous in that as one progresses on

the path, one fulfills all the vows at the same time. There are other vows one may take in the course of one’s life, but as Buddhist practitioners in the Mahayana tradition these Four Great Vows are the most important. The most important thing to understand is that these vows speak of ongoing aspiration, intent and motivation; they are not necessarily promises to accomplish them in one lifetime.



Recuerdo Dulce

by

Nancy Bonardi

2008 marks the thirtieth anniversary of the Chan Meditation Center; meditation teacher and Dharma lecturer Nancy Bonardi has been a member of the Center for all of those thirty years.

Some months ago, I went into a Latino bakery on Corona Avenue in Elmhurst, Queens. I bought pastries I had no interest in eating. What did interest me was the chance to look around the place and overlay as much memory as I could. There by the glass wall and Formica counter, I could remember the name tags adhered to the wall in front of the square and round cushions and the folded towels for each retreat participant. There in the back kitchen where the open door revealed the tools and bustle of the chef, I could remember a tidy interview room where Shifu sat on his raised platform holding his stick with three rings, prompting the exit and entry of the participants to be questioned and guided. The waitress filled my order at a shiny display case that had not stood there 29 years ago, yet I remembered the shiny tiles of a linoleum floor covered by a large blue carpet, rolled or unrolled depending on whether for retreats or open-house lectures. I waited in that bakery seemingly a customer hungry for sweets; in fact, I was hungry to linger and feel the place of the Chan Meditation Center's younger years.

The first time I had stepped inside, I had known Shifu for about a year and a half. In 1978 he had traveled from the Bronx to E.

42 Street to take some English classes, and I was one of the teachers there. He encouraged his classmates and some of the staff to learn meditation from him, and I followed up by reversing the ride — from Manhattan to the Bronx on Saturday mornings. Shifu taught in the same manner the monastics and teachers-in-training are instructing the classes nowadays — the postures, the proper time and conditions for practice, the counting-the-breath method, the seven stages of the mind. I recall Shifu standing at a chalk board and illustrating the stability of the circles made by the arms, hands and legs. The classes were translated by Guo Ren (Paul Kennedy), and I believe that what hooked the students were the lectures afterward and the tea talks and Shifu's sincerity. A few of us ventured into Shifu's enthusiasm by attending the periodic retreats he organized. He was the timekeeper, the leader for the morning and evening services. He sat at the head of the table at each of the meals, many times giving an impromptu lecture. He walked around monitoring — sometimes fierce, but mostly observant and patient. On the fifth day, always on the fifth day, he held up his incense stick, shaped like a sword, and asked, "What is it?" We were lined up, facing him. "What is it?" A shrug. A feeble answer. An attempt at proving diligence

and effort. “Work hard,” we were cautioned as we returned to our cushions. In countless ways he brought us back and back and back to the present. He likened himself to a workman on the street, who tore things up to make deep repairs in the layers below. Afterwards, Shifu applied the balm of gratitude and vows made manifest. As time passed, that fierceness gave way to “Relax. It’s like you’re on Chan vacation.” The first time I heard that, I was stunned. Yet, it was a principle we had been hearing — keep the body and mind relaxed and natural and clear.

When I stepped inside 90-30 Corona Avenue for that first time, it was New Year’s Day, 1980. My husband and I had walked over from Jackson Heights with our infant daughter. I had baked a cake to welcome our new neighbors and to look around at the three-room apartment and meditation room. It became the Chan Meditation Center with its classes and Sunday open house and confining retreats. The photos from the early days show Shifu standing in the middle of a half dozen people. Then as more of the apartments were available and when finally the building was bought, it accommodated more seekers, more students on the path, and the photos filled up.

Those very pictures are now mounted on the wall at 90-56 Corona Avenue, the current Chan Meditation Center. They have been enlarged and arranged in the order of the journey. All of us and Shifu are clearly younger, clearly robust and ready. The later pictures are just as bright as they record the end of retreats, the rotation of monastics who have been the Center’s foundation, the generous smiles of the volunteers in their aprons and matching ties, the children who have sung and danced

and fundraised along with the adults. Looking up, looking down, the photos represent the years. The last one shows a recent picture of Shifu holding his calligraphy brush. His eyes are focused, looking down, making a stroke. He is intense and soft.

And while it’s true that we celebrate and that the memories abound and bring a smile and a wishful recall, they record the actions of Dharma practice, of vows and service, and they have seeded the present and carry on today.



Nancy Bonardi at the Chan Center; photo by Kaifen Hu



Photo by Kaifen Hu



across parks worldwide
is it the hunting instinct?
- small kids chase pigeons

tabby cat strolls cool
into the dry caravan
then sleeps regally

around Kernow's rocks
two seals play roiling the sea
whilst black shark fins prowls

the long dream
in the blink of an eye
stretching mirrored tracks
changing bodies and faces
zipping myriad reflections
of no mind
taken to be realities
through, over and out
of our infinity promenade
- Indra's supernal net
without beginning or end
- zip zap zowie
zwooshingz
all beings fully one empty flashing
bright joy and peace
om
there we go
so oh so
awaking

- frank crazy cloud

Women Being the Dharma in the 21st Century

by Venerable Chang Wu

On March 8, 2008, Venerable Chang Wu represented the Chan Meditation Center at the 3rd Buddhist Women's Conference organized by the Buddhist Council of the Midwest and DePaul University. The following is the text of her address to the plenary session.

Venerable Chang Wu is a member of the resident Sangha at the Chan Meditation Center. She has been responsible for the Center's financial accounting since 2003, and is the business manager of Chan Magazine. She wishes to thank Master Sheng Yen, whose teachings on compassion she presents in this talk.



I am very happy to be here and would like to thank the organizers of this event, the Buddhist Council of the Midwest, for having this conference and for inviting me to participate.

I do believe that the most important thing that women, or anyone, can do in the 21st century is to cultivate the mind of compassion and act in compassion. Compassion is what we need most in this world. Compassion can be an effective solution to dissolve the hatred, fear, distrust, despair and suffering that exist today.

In the past few decades, women's roles and responsibilities in the family, workplace and society have greatly changed. In addition to being wives and mothers, women have been contributing to their societies in other active ways. Many women have made admirable achievements in academics, education, business, the arts, science, politics, charity and humanitarian work. Today, in the 21st century, the equality of men and women has already become the consensus of the civilized world. This evolution came as a result of the overall awareness that women are entitled to equal opportunities to pursue their goals in life, and that women are capable of expanding beyond traditionally defined roles.

How can women find a balance in life between the responsibilities of family, work and community activities, and face the challenges and difficulties without losing strength or hope? How can women prevent themselves from falling into despair when encountering disaster or losing our loved ones? Will women be able to be free themselves from hatred and resentment towards people who have caused them harm or who have treated them unfairly? How can women cultivate peace of mind

and not be carried away by emotions and negative thoughts? How can women live happily and joyfully?

In most cultures, the female symbolizes compassion, or unconditional love. Mothers in Chinese society are always portrayed as compassionate. In Buddhism, the Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara is perceived as the embodiment of compassion; therefore, Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara usually takes on the form of a female. Women in general have a loving and caring nature. Many of us here have received profound love from our mothers, grandmothers or aunts. These women exemplified compassion towards us as we grew up.

Compassion, or unconditional love, has different scopes and different levels. Compassion on a small scale represents ordinary love, the love for ourselves, our immediate family, relatives, friends and our immediate community. When we love these people unconditionally, without expecting to receive anything from them, then this is compassion. If we expect to receive something in exchange for our love, if for example two adults love each other because they want the other to love them back, then this is not compassion. This is an investment. One invests because one hopes to get a return. Compassion at the first level is the unconditional love for those around us.

Compassion of the second level is the love one has for all people in the world. This type of unconditional love for all beings is often expressed by great religious or political leaders who are able to extend their compassion to others regardless of their nationality, ethnicity, race, or faith. There are also leaders who only love those within their own group — this is not compassion of the second level.

At the third level or highest level of compassion, one has no object toward which to direct one's love, nor any purpose or goal to be carried out. In one's mind, there is no notion of compassion, nor any specific person that needs to be loved and helped. One offers help, wherever and whenever there is a need. One does one's best, within one's ability, to help the person in need. When the need is fulfilled, there is no trace left in one's mind. This is likened to a boat traveling through a body of water, or a bird flying through the sky — there is no mark left after the wake of the boat, nor any trail left behind by the bird. Thus, one realizing compassion at this level has no notion of the giver, receiver or compassionate deed. Yet, this compassion is eternal and infinite.

We, women born with a nature of motherly love, may find the practice of compassionate mind somewhat familiar and natural.



To cultivate compassion, one begins by loving oneself in a proper and wholesome way, and loving oneself begins with understanding oneself. One looks inward deeply to know one's feelings, emotions and thoughts, and one starts to know who one really is and why one acts in certain ways with certain people. Through this journey of self-understanding, one learns how to nurture oneself with proper care and love. This is a long process and comes along gradually.

Similarly, with deep looking and deep listening, we open our hearts and minds to understand other people and accept them as who they are. Understanding others and their suffering brings compassion. Practicing continuously this way, our minds become more open, and our care and love for others become broader and deeper.

When engaging in the practice of cultivating compassion, we begin to manifest hope and harmonizing energy in our families and communities. With collective compassionate minds, great hope and equanimity is generated, touching everyone around us. In this way, we are contributing to the betterment of our families, communities, societies, and the world. By cultivating a compassionate mind, not only do we fulfill our desire for spiritual pursuits and become happier, we are also bringing joy and peace to others.

Deep looking and deep listening bring understanding. Understanding the suffering of other people brings compassion. As I said at the beginning, compassion is what is needed most in this world. Compassion can be an effective solution to dissolve hatred, fear, distrust, despair and suffering in the world. Let women lead the way to this understanding.

The Past

News from the Chan Meditation Center and the DDMBA Worldwide

DDM Relief Team To Aid Myanmar

Cyclone Nargis hit Myanmar on 3 May, 2008. Tens of thousands of people have lost their lives and hundreds of thousands are now left homeless. It is the worst natural disaster to hit the country since the 2004 tsunami. International humanitarian relief organizations are ready to head to Myanmar to provide basic living necessities to those affected by this devastating cyclone.

Dharma Drum Social Welfare and Charity Foundation was quick to react and has organized a relief team to go to the cyclone-affected regions on 11 May. Extending Buddhist compassion for the world, the Foundation will donate approximately two tons of basic necessities including blankets, drinking water, medication, raincoats, lights and tents.

Aid to Blizzard-Ravaged Mainland

In early January parts of central and southern China were devastated by some of the most severe blizzards ever recorded. "These are the biggest snowstorms in our history," one local official said. The snow caused many deaths and widespread destruction, particularly in isolated rural areas.

According to China's Xinhua News service, damage is estimated at 111.1 billion yuan

(approximately US\$15.4 billion). Sugarcane, bamboo and firewood cultivation have been disrupted and farmer's livelihoods are expected to be disrupted for several years.

By late February, DDM Social Welfare and Charity Foundation dispatched a relief team to Guangxi Province to provide some 42 tons of material relief. Team members included Huang Guan-Yu, Chen Jian-Hsin, Sheu Feng-Zhi, Shang Zhi-Gang and Wu Sheng. They left Taiwan on February 25 for a 10-day humanitarian relief mission, reaching approximately 1,640 households in the remote districts of Guilin and Liuzhou in Guangxi Province, each receiving 20 kilos of rice, 5 kilos of noodles, 5 kilos of cooking oil, and a heavy cotton quilt as part of the relief effort.

Below is an account of their mission to the southern provinces of China by one of the team members:

"With a deep bow and joined palms we conveyed blessings on behalf of Venerable Master Sheng Yen and Venerable Guo Dong to victims of the snowstorms. We handed out bags of relief supplies worth approximately RMB\$100, as part of our demonstration of empathy.

"On our arrival in the disaster zone, we were warmly received by the local representatives

involved in the relief effort. When we visited Tongxin Village, where communication and transportation to the outside world were cut off for almost two months, a wise elderly man greeted us with a humble demeanor. He shed tears because he was unable to welcome us with the meat and rice wine he would normally prepare in accordance with tradition. We were humbled by his gesture and said prayers to wish him good health and happiness. We also asked his forgiveness and understanding for our belated arrival to his devastated village. The old man replied, 'You are like Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva since time immemorial and have brought us aid from across the Taiwan Strait.' His words touched our hearts.

"The scene was dispiriting when we visited the Lungtang Elementary School in Lungtang village. The principal told us that the roof of the school building was damaged and leaking badly, and students were forced to study in a temporary building. 'Now we are trying to rebuild the campus so they can study in a safe place soon,' he added.

"On the day of our visit, students sat in small classrooms with plastic bags stretched across gaping broken windows to keep out the cold wind. Students complained of the harsh cold especially on rainy days. We were invited to have lunch with the students and teachers in the classroom and were treated to the delicacy 'oil tea camellia,' a popular dish in Guangxi, although each student was restricted to one bowl of rice, except for Friday, because of food shortages. To express our gratitude for the reception and to dispense our relief supplies allocated for the visit, we gave each student a 20 kg bag of cooking rice and a quilt.

"During our brief 10-day visit, we were able to provide relief to over ten thousand people, mostly living in the autonomous cities of Guilin and Liuzhou in Guangxi Province. The main items in each aid package were rice, cooking oil, and a quilt. Bags of seeds were also distributed.

"We would like to thank the local government officials of Guilin and Liuzhou, the local business associations and volunteers for their valuable and timely assistance. Without their support and co-operation, our humanitarian efforts would have been difficult to carry out on such a large scale.

"This relief mission demonstrated that compassionate deeds have no boundary and so we have responded to the urgent needs of our brothers living across the Taiwan Strait. During the relief effort, everyone was deeply touched by the victims' honesty and benevolence in helping each other for the greater good of whole communities.

"The 10-day mission provided many incidents and stories. We are proud to have put into practice the ethos of DDM as expounded by our Founder Venerable Master Sheng Yen. His vision to build a pure land on earth inspires our efforts for the betterment of all sentient beings."

Aid to Flood-Stricken Bangladesh

A member of DDM's flood-relief mission to Bangladesh last November offers this personal account of the expedition:

"The Ganges-Brahmaputra river system in Bangladesh is the largest river delta in the world, and most of the country has been

formed over the river system's sediment plain. This unique geographic feature is prone to regular flooding, making life, especially for poor people, susceptible to the effects of natural disasters.

"In mid-November 2007, nearly two thousand lives were lost and over six million people were affected by such a disaster when southern Bangladesh was struck by Cyclone Sidr, resulting in widespread and devastating flooding.

"I was soon advised by the Dharma Drum Social Welfare and Charity Foundation to team up with Hao-Tsao Lee and Chin-Hsiung Chung to provide assistance to those people affected in Bangladesh. Our mission was to distribute 3,000 relief bags to benefit more than 5,000 people, and to provide spiritual counseling to the poor of southern Bangladesh, in the period between 12 and 21 December 2007.

"I am pleased to report that our mission was successful due to the simple spirit of co-operation to spread the compassion of DDM and Venerable Master Sheng Yen.

"Before our departure, I knew that the challenges we faced would be greater than any other humanitarian task that I had been through in the past. In Bangladesh, 90 percent of the population are followers of the Islamic faith, with cultural norms far from my experience and understanding. While I was there, I observed that the nation is still struggling with low literacy, poor public facilities, poor public hygiene, and inequities between the rich and the poor. These factors, compounded by the severe impact of the cyclone and flooding, made this mission challenging but ultimately most rewarding in furthering the blessings of

the Dharma, Venerable Master Sheng Yen and Venerable Guo Dong (the Abbot President).

"We arrived in Dhaka, the capital of Bangladesh, around midnight on 12 December 2007. Our first task was to organize the procurement, packing and transporting of 3,000 relief materials to cyclone-hit victims as soon as possible. We lodged at the apartment of Jeff Yang (Yao-Jie Yang), a senior member of the DDM Dharma Sustainer Society in Taiwan, who has been managing a textiles factory in Dhaka for almost 18 years.

"The logistics of procuring, packing and transporting relief materials went smoothly, thanks mainly to Taiwan's representative in Dhaka, Wen-Yan Chen, and GK, one of Bangladesh's humanitarian institutions.

"Thanks to Jeff's and Chen's assistance and advice, we punctually boarded a southbound ferry to reach the heart of the devastation, instead of driving on the small and congested bumpy roads, overtaxed with traffic.

"Following 18 hours of sailing on the river system, we finally arrived at Taltali, one of the villages in the south hit by the cyclone. Taltali has approximately 2,000 inhabitants whose ancestors originally emigrated from Myanmar. We found the Taltali locals, who are mainly Buddhists, amiable and pure in nature and we were thankful for their warm hospitality upon our arrival.

"During our two-day visit, I was impressed by the people of Taltali's long-term dedication to preserve their unique culture and Buddhist heritage amidst Islamic surroundings. However, the community leader Mr. Maung Khain Hla advised us that it is a crucial time for the

community, which is facing systemic persecution and discrimination by the authorities. Mr Hla expressed the community's anxiety that they may some day be forced to leave this area and that their way of life and culture may be extinguished.

"Because of GK's effort, 500 relief bags, including 12 kilos of cooking rice, 1 kilo of table salt and 1 kilo of lithnel grain, arrived on time and were stored at the community center of Taltali, after nearly 14 hours of transportation by river from Dhaka.

"On December 18th the distribution of the relief materials at Taltal was completed smoothly. Most people came to the center barefoot, some having walked with children for over two hours from nearby communities. Although they were joyful and expressed their gratitude with joined palms, I asked how they would survive when the relief materials had been exhausted. The people gave no answer to this question, with only anxiety and hopelessness appearing on their faces.

"On December 19th we came to the second station, Balitali, an impoverished district consisting of Islamic communities approximately a half day's road trip from Taltal. Our task here after surveying the remote and rural areas with local humanitarian volunteers was to distribute 1,800 bags for the Balitali, Noltona, Badorkhali and Dhalua communities.

"Returning to Taipei on December 21st, I could not wait to take a hot bath, yet my mind was not at peace as I recalled those poor victims of the flooding in southern Bangladesh. There is no doubt that the poor face huge challenges in Bangladesh. I observed remote

river islands that are home to several million of the poorest people who can be forced to relocate their homes five times in a generation due to erosion, and who remain constantly threatened by ongoing climate change.

"In summary, I believe 'the world isn't flat' in terms of economic development and we too easily forget the great inequities that exist among people. In fact, our mission to Bangladesh stressed to me that this is a world that requires every one of us to truly pay attention to global issues such as poverty, AIDS, climate warming, pollution and human rights. We must continue to live our lives with the understanding that compassion within us can help our fellow beings find the best way."

DDM Hosts Asia-Africa Spiritual Summit

As political and economic ties between Africa and Asia grow, religious leaders from the two continents have found a growing need to collaborate, to share experiences of humanitarian projects, and to ponder inter-faith opportunities and challenges.

In furtherance of this new engagement, DDM hosted the 2007 Asia-Africa Spiritual Summit last October at the World Center for Buddhist Education in Taiwan. 33 prominent religious leaders and sages from South Africa, Japan, Cambodia, Vietnam, Thailand, Sri Lanka, India, Senegal, Lebanon and Nigeria attended the three-day event to explore the notion of global compassion.

Venerable Master Sheng Yen presided over the opening ceremony offering a warm welcome

to the guests. He pointed out that some of today's gravest challenges involve the constant war and violent confrontations between ethnic and religious groups.

This violence produces only poverty, sickness, starvation and pain to people, grievously disrupting people's daily life and happiness. "If every one of us bears compassion in mind and truly practices compassion in our daily life, the world can gradually create the positive energy to move towards peace," he said.

DDM Abbot Venerable Guo Dong said that although both Africa and Asia are experiencing rapid economic development, tensions and differences have made relations precarious. There are also challenges such as the wide gap between rich and poor, the conflict between religions and cultures, and environmental pollution. He hoped to see a move towards establishment of common ethics and values following the three-day discussion.

Mr. Rajiv Vora from India, chairman of Gandhian Center for Non-violence and Peace, noted that a spirit of compassion is useless if one treats foreign religions and cultures as a threat. "Compassion and peace can only be achieved and accomplished with a respectful attitude."

Dr. Kola Abimbola from Nigeria, lecturer at the University of Leicester in the United Kingdom and president of the International Society for African Philosophy and Studies, pointed out that "the nature of humanity is not violent, but given to peace and love. Religion should nurture this peaceful nature of humanity, and civilization is the manifestation of the peaceful interactions between people in the world."

Mr. Shiekh Saliou Mbacke from Senegal, coordinator of Interfaith Action for Peace in Africa, said that "people are fighting for natural resources, and Africa is an obvious example of this." But he said that everyone is born with the Holy Spirit in their heart. Therefore every religious leader in the world has the responsibility of awakening people's compassionate nature, and exploring common values with the aim of eliminating oppression and confrontation.

Other issues associated with the development of global compassion were also scheduled for discussion, including the roles of the elderly and feminists in globalization, methods of peace-making, ways of living in harmony with the environment, self-sustainability of rural communities, and the passing of knowledge and wisdom from one generation to the next.

Shifu's New Year's Vows for Peace

On February 6, 2008, some eight hundred Buddhists packed the Dharma Drum Mountain World Centre for Buddhist Education in Jinshan, Taipei, to celebrate the arrival of the Lunar New Year.

Despite cold wet weather, spirits were high as those in attendance counted down to midnight when six rings of DDM's Lotus Bell marked the arrival of the New Year.

Present at the ceremony were Venerable Master Sheng Yen, DDM Abbot Venerable Guo Dong, and other Sangha members. Honored guests included Kuomintang presidential candidate Ying-Jeou Ma and vice-presidential candidate Vincent Hsiew, the ruling Democratic Progressive Party's presidential candi-

date Frank Hsieh, Taipei County Magistrate Hsi-Wei Chou and many others.

After the ringing of the Lotus Bell, Venerable Master Sheng Yen was the first to wish everyone peace and happiness in the New Year, describing it as a year for “making good vows.” He said, “If everyone practices beneficial deeds and speaks positive words in their daily life then our world will be filled with more trust, harmony, peace and stability.”

Master Sheng Yen’s words explain the motivation behind DDM’s Good Vows Light Up the World Program. The Program is aimed at encouraging people to make vows of positive deeds. According to the Master, making positive vows bring about good effects, not only for those who make the vows, but for their families, country and community.

In light of the upcoming Taiwanese election in March, Master Sheng Yen took the opportunity to encourage the presidential candidates of both parties to be good leaders for the benefit of Taiwan and its future generations. The Master said that he was looking forward to seeing all political activity truly serving the people and bringing about peaceful development.

Hundreds Take Refuge In the Three Jewels

On the morning of 20 April 2008, at Nung Chan Monastery in Taiwan, some fifteen hundred people, many accompanied by relatives and friends, received the Three Jewels from Venerable Master Sheng Yen, becoming Buddhist disciples.

In remarks afterwards, Master Sheng Yen pointed out that DDM’s paramount objective is to promote the Dharma in society, to enable people to attain peace of mind and to diminish general social unrest.

He noted with satisfaction that religious belief is diverse and thriving in Taiwan, and emphasized that DDM promotes tolerance of other religions; nevertheless, he encouraged the public to engage with Orthodox Chinese Buddhism.

The DDM Abbot, Venerable Guo Dong, gave his warmest blessing to the new followers, adding that he looked forward to seeing them develop into devout Buddhists.

At the conclusion of the ceremony, venerables of the DDM Sangha placed a small Buddha tag around the neck of each new follower, signifying their “enrollment” in Buddhism.

Shifu Blesses 622 New Couples

On the morning of January 6, Dharma Drum Mountain (DDM) hosted the 13th Buddhist Wedding at the DDM World Center for Buddhist Education in Taiwan.

622 new couples vowed to practice the Dharma in their daily life as part of their betrothal, with the blessings of relatives, Venerable Master Sheng Yen, DDM Abbot Venerable Guo Dong and other honored guests in the Grand Buddha Hall.

In his remarks, Venerable Master Sheng Yen said that the couple is the fundamental unit of the “Family Ethic,” one of the Six Ethics that he has been actively promoting for the peace and harmony of society. Interactions

between husband and wife are based on duty and respect, rather than a debate on equality.

“The couple’s love and selfless care for each other would be hampered if too much attention were given to how much the other has offered. On the other hand, the family will naturally be at peace if both focus on the service they render to each other without selfish excuses.”

Venerable Guo Dong urged all of the newlyweds to treat one another with care, understanding, respect and trust. “The family will certainly remain happy and at peace if these values are fully practiced.”

Taipei County Magistrate, His-Wei Chou also shared his experience that “only love and tolerance can make the other person happy and foster peace and harmony in the family.” He asked each partner to constantly reflect: “Have I shown my spouse enough love and tolerance?”

In keeping with the vision of “uplifting the character of humanity and building a pure land on earth,” DDM has been hosting Buddhist group weddings since 1994.

DDBC’s 1st Anniversary

On April 8, Dharma Drum Buddhist College (DDBC) marked its first anniversary celebration, with a major alliance with Taiwan’s National University of Science and Technology (NTUST), and the inauguration of a major collection of Tibetan research materials. The Signing Ceremony of the alliance between DDBC and NTUST heralds the start of a major collaboration between the two institutions.

At the ceremony, Master Sheng Yen expressed DDBC’s aim to cultivate future spiritual leaders by offering avenues to acquire qualifications, nurturing each individual’s character, and to broaden humanistic compassion, noting that the establishment of DDBC was possible as a result of long-term planning and the selfless efforts of a great many people.

Following the signing ceremony, DDBC President Venerable Hui Min announced that the curricula and programs of each institution will now be open to students from the other institution.

NTUST President Dr. Shui-Shuen Chen thanked Master Sheng Yen for his attendance and stressed that future exchanges would be undertaken in line with Buddhist compassion for social benefit.

In the day’s final event, Master Sheng Yen presided at a ceremony celebrating the conservation of priceless Tibetan historical documents. The documents have been recorded on some 57,000 reels of microfilm originally prepared by Professor Shunzo Onoda of Bukkyo University in Japan, and have now been stored at DDBC’s Library and Information Center. To honor Professor Shunzo Onoda’s effort, Lamas in DDM’s Sino-Tibetan Program were present at the ceremony. This marks an important milestone for DDBC as it becomes a center of academic research on Tibetan language, history and medicine.

10th Anniversary of CBETA

On February 16-17 Dharma Drum Buddhist College (DDBC) hosted a two-day international conference at the DDM World Center for Buddhist Education in Taiwan to celebrate

the 10th Anniversary of the Chinese Buddhist Text Association (CBETA), and its great achievements in the digitization of Buddhist scripture over the years.

Buddhist scholars from the United States, Japan, South Korea, Indonesia, Thailand, Australia, Nepal and Norway gathered for the event, which provided an excellent opportunity for exchanging information and discussing the future course of digitization of Buddhist scriptures.

In his welcoming remarks, Venerable Huimin, DDBC President and Director of CBETA, said that the program aims to deliver a digital collection of Chinese canonical scriptures that is comprehensive and easily accessible to scholars, researchers and general readers.

He affirmed that CBETA would continue to strive for improvement in the quality and accuracy of digitized content, as well as to develop robust user-friendly applications. The CBETA 2008 version CD-ROM has already been released.

Dr. Lewis Lancaster, a Professor at UC Berkeley, said, "The appearance of Buddhist canons in electronic media has transformed what was once merely theoretical and speculative into a practical and fundamental part of scholarly research. Digital text, dictionaries and tools available to users today provide the foundation for future developments and research."

Although CBETA has achieved some success in digitization research and development, there are still many challenges ahead. Venerable Bo-kwang Han from Dongguk University in South Korea said that one of the great difficulties facing digitization is how to deal

with the limited number of Chinese characters available in the Unicode format for publishing information on the internet. Venerable Bo-kwang Han has successfully carried out the pilot project for digitization of the Hanguk Bulgyo Chonso, a series of books compiling a wide variety of Korean Buddhist manuscripts since 1999.

Other challenges include the English-based User Interface, English-based keyword Search System and finding solutions to compatibility issues between character graphic files and the extended special fonts developed and loaded in various word processors such as MS Word.

DDM Malaysia in Chinese Book Fair

Dharma Drum Mountain Malaysia (DDM Malaysia) participated in The Ninth World Chinese Book Fair late last November at the MINES Convention and Exhibition Centre in Kuala Lumpur. The event followed a major fundraising drive, and marked the sixth time DDM Malaysia has taken part in the fair. Volunteers' diligent efforts were rewarded by brisk sales of Master Sheng Yen's publications in both Chinese and English.

Other recent DDM events in Malaysia have included the Foguanshan Spring Book Fair, the Buddhist Culture Festival and the International Avalokitesvara (Guanyin) Dharma Assembly, where the common aim has been to introduce Venerable Master Sheng Yen's ideas to the people of Malaysia, to "uplift the character of humanity and build a pure land on earth."



Photo by Kaifen Hu

The Future

*Retreats, classes and
other upcoming events.*

*To subscribe to our new e-bulletin of Chan
Center activities, please send an email to:
chanmeditation@gmail.com*

At Dharma Drum Retreat Center in Pine Bush, NY

Phone: (845) 744-8114

E-mail: ddrc@dharmadrumretreat.org

Website: www.dharmadrumretreat.org

Chan Retreats

*Intensive Chan retreats are opportunities
for serious practitioners to deepen their
practice and receive guidance from resi-
dent teachers.*

*Schedule is subject to change. Please check
the website for updated information.*

Ten-day Intensive Silent Illumination Re- treat with Zarko Andricevic

Friday, May 23, 5 pm to

Sunday, June 1, 10 am

Beginner's Mind Retreat with Guo Gu

Friday, June 6, 5 pm to

Tuesday, June 10, 10 am

Seven-day Recitation Retreat: Chanting and Chan practice with Guo Min Fashi

Saturday, June 28, 6:00 pm to

Saturday, July 5, 10:00 am

Ten-day Intensive Huatou Retreat with Rev. Chi Chern Fashi

Friday, July 18, 5:00 pm to

Sunday, July 27, 10:00 am

Western Zen Retreat with Simon Child and Hillary Richards

Friday, October 17, 6 pm to

Wednesday, October 22, 10 am

Ten-day Intensive Huatou Retreat with Guo Xing Fashi and Chang Wen Fashi

Friday, December 26, 5 pm to

Sunday, January 4, 2009, 10 am

Summer Chan Camps at DDRC

Three-day Family Chan Camp with Guo Chian Fashi

Thursday, July 10 to

Sunday, July 13

E-mail: ddmbaus@yahoo.com

Web: www.chancenter.org or www.ddmba.org

Three-day College Chan Camp with Chang Wu Fashi

Wednesday, August 13, 7:00 pm to

Saturday, August 16, 3:00 pm

E-mail: wemeditate@gmail.com

Web: www.ddyp.org

Three-day College Chan Retreat with Chang Wu Fashi

Saturday, August 16, 7:00 pm to

Tuesday, August 19, 3:00 pm

E-mail: wemeditate@gmail.com

Web: www.ddyp.org

Special Event

DDMBA US Members Reunion at DDRC

Friday, August 29 to Monday, September 1

Regular Activity

Thursday Night meditation

7:00-9:00 pm, led by experienced teachers
Includes sitting/walking meditation, stretching exercises, Dharma discussion, and chanting of the Heart Sutra

At Chan Meditation Center in Elmhurst, Queens, NY

Phone: (718) 592-6593
E-mail: ddmbaus@yahoo.com
Website: www.chancenter.org or
www.ddmba.org

Weekly Activities

Monday Night Chanting

7:00 – 9:15 pm Last Monday of the month:
Recitation of the Eighty-eight Buddhas' names and repentance

Tuesday Night Sitting Group

7:00 – 9:45 pm: Sitting, yoga exercises, walking meditation, Dharma discussions, recitation of the Heart Sutra and social hour

Saturday Sitting Group

9:00 am – 3:00 pm: Sitting, yoga exercises, walking meditation

Sunday Open House

10:00 - 11:00 am: meditation
11:00 am - 12:30 pm: Dharma lectures
12:30 - 1:00 pm: lunch offerings
1:00 - 2:00 pm: lunch

2:00 - 3:00 pm: Chanting (the second Sunday of the month devoted to the chanting of The Great Compassion Dharani Sutra, 2:00 – 4:00)

Taijiquan with Instructor David Ngo

Thursdays, 7:30-9:00 pm, ongoing
\$25 per month, \$80 for 16 classes
First Thursday of the month is free for newcomers

Yoga Classes

Yoga instructor Rikki Asher is on sabbatical leave; classes will resume upon her return.

Special Events

Three-day Recitation of the Sutra of Earth Store Bodhisattva's Fundamental Vows

Sunday, August 10, 9:30 am – 3:30 pm

“Zen & Inner Peace”

Chan Master Sheng Yen's weekly television program, Sunday, 7:00 a.m., WNYE (Channel 25)



Photo by Kaifen Hu

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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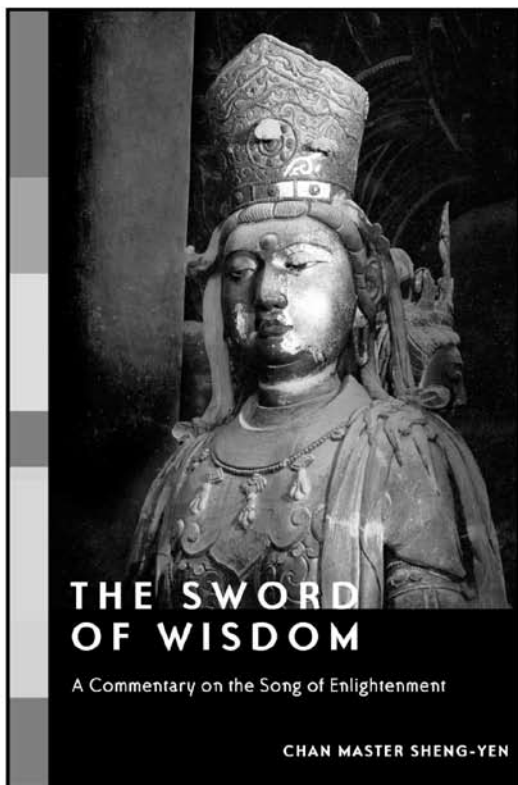
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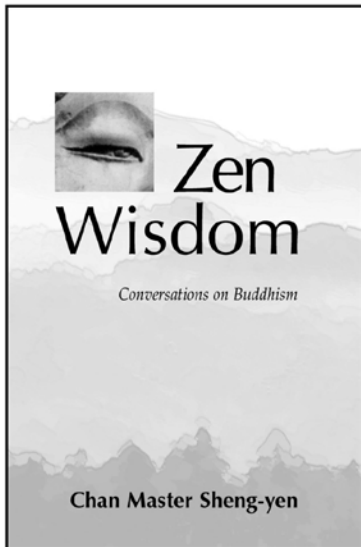
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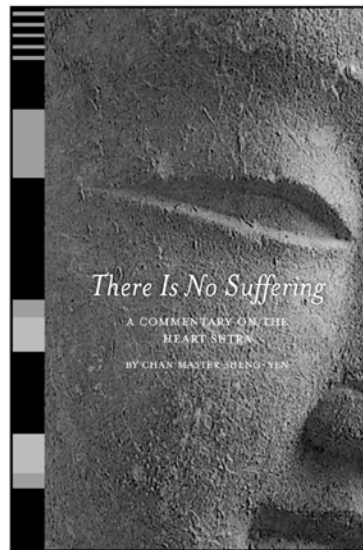


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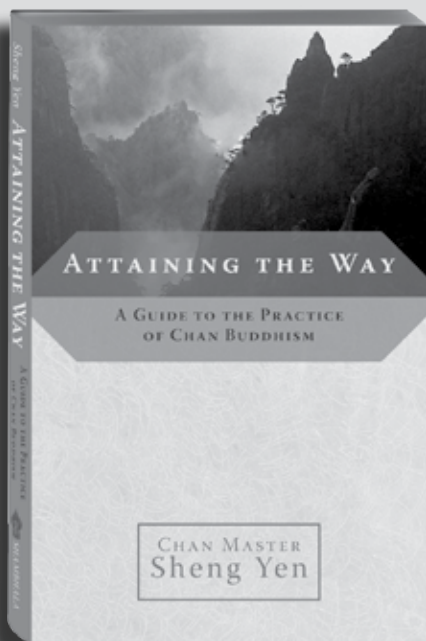
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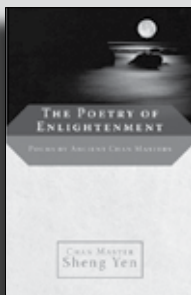


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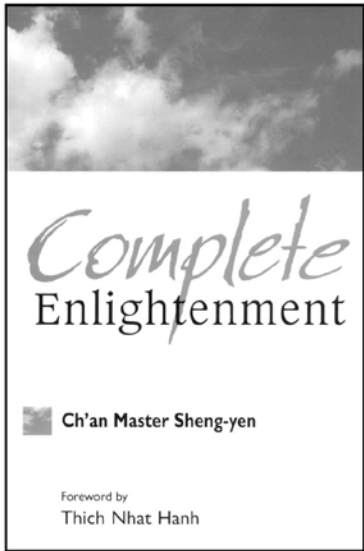
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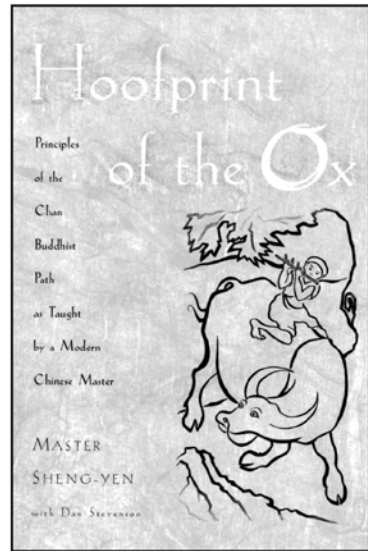
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