

Chan 禪 Magazine

Autumn 2009



Chan Meditation Center

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“Holding on to the awareness that you are practicing while the practice continues without a break—this is practicing Chan. As simple as this may sound, not all can do it. People who don’t know how to meditate make a great physical and mental effort to control themselves, but this is misguided and ineffective.”

From Attaining the Way: A Guide to the Practice of Chan Buddhism
by Chan Master Sheng Yen
Shambhala, 2006

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Founder/Teacher

Chan Master Ven. Dr. Sheng Yen

Editor-in-chief

David Berman

Associate Editor

Buffe Laffey

Coordinator

Virginia Tan

Photography

John Feng, Jerry Roach, Kaifen Hu

Contributing editors

Ernie Heau, Kevin Mathewson, Virginia Tan, Wei Tan, Guogu

Contributors

Rikki Asher, Tina Kacandes, Rebecca Li, Mike Morical, Bruce Rickenbacker, Ayn Steele, Chang Ji Fa Shi, Chang Wen Fa Shi

Administrator

Chang Hwa Fa Shi



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From the Editor	4
The Seven Factors of Enlightenment <i>The first of three articles by Chan Master Sheng Yen</i>	6
Dharma and Science <i>by Max Kälin</i>	19
The Past <i>News from the Chan Meditation Center and DDMBA</i>	26
The Future <i>Retreats, classes and other upcoming events</i>	32
Chan Center Affiliates	34

Cover photo: Ernie Heau

From the Editor

“Plus ça change, plus c’est la même chose.” The more things change, the more they stay the same. Or perhaps it’s that the more things change in one direction, the more they change in the other, which has the additive effect of leaving things the same.

That certainly seems to be what happens in our politics. We have, on the one hand, elected the first non-white president in our history—which would seem to have been in itself a tremendous step forward for equanimity—and who is moreover a centrist, a man whose abiding interest is in bridging divides and bringing people together. On the other hand, we find ourselves in the midst of the most rhetorically rancorous, partisan, uncivil debate, replete with accusations of nazism, socialism and death panels, and not about inherently divisive issues like terrorism, torture or third trimester abortion, but about the provision of healthcare, which everybody wants and nobody considers evil. What is going on?

I understand that any attempt at major change challenges a large and well-entrenched status quo that has interests to protect, which explains why there would be forces arrayed against the healthcare reform effort, but it doesn’t explain why ordinary Americans—and journalists, who are supposed to have some obligation to data—are behaving as if Barack Obama had shot their dogs.

So I want to use my quarterly opportunity to address the the one thousandth of one percent of the nation that might read this col-

umn to tone down the rhetoric, by beginning with that on which we can agree. Can we agree that, as far as we know, the president hasn’t shot anybody’s dog? Excellent; we’ll go from there.

Can we agree that the United States has the worst healthcare system in the industrialized world? No? Oh dear. This is going to be harder than I thought. OK—what do I mean by “worst?” First, I mean most expensive. We spend between double and triple per person what any other Western democracy spends. (We spend only about 70% more as a percentage of GDP, but our GDP is bigger than everyone else’s. We may be the worst, but we’re still the richest.) Second, I mean effective: We die younger; we die more regularly from medical error; we have a higher infant mortality rate, most of which is entirely preventable. Third, I mean just. All other Western democracies cover ALL their citizens; only we leave a full 15% of our population with no health insurance at all. That’s about 46 million people. Oh, wait. That changes the calculation of how much we’re spending per person. We spent about \$8000 per person in 2007, but that’s really more than \$9000 per covered person. Oops.

OK—I’ve just re-read the above and I see that it’s beginning to look like a left-wing screed. No such thing. I have no intention of advocating the House plan, or the Senate plan, or any other plan. I honestly have no idea whether the “public option” would increase or reduce competition, and whether in either case competition would improve or further degrade healthcare, all of those possibilities

being matters of economic prediction, and economics being a science that, as events have recently shown, has absolutely no ability to predict. I also have no particular preference as to whether those who administer the eventual healthcare plan are public or private employees, as long as, one way or another, they can be prevented from wasting or stealing all the money that's going to have to be collected and then distributed to pay for the healthcare. In other words, I will refrain from endorsing a single-payer system, despite the fact that that's how most of those other countries do so much better, with so much less money, than we. I'm going to admit, as I think most other Americans should, that this is a complicated problem that I don't actually know how to solve.

But I know this. We have, according to the simple, factual, numerical information in front of us, the worst healthcare system in the industrialized world. It is causing an inordinate amount of suffering—it is breaking us, and it is killing us, and if it does not change we're going to end up a nation of dead people with no money. We need a new system, and whatever it is, it needs to look strikingly different from the disaster we have now. So please, I implore all of you who care about your fellow beings, not to yell at anyone, nor to disrupt their town hall meetings, nor to call anyone a nazi, but please do get in touch with your congressperson and senators and ask them, as nicely as possible, to pass meaningful healthcare reform this fall.



Photo: Kaifen Hu

The Seven Factors of Enlightenment

Part One

by

Chan Master Sheng Yen

Between May, 1999 and November, 2003, on Sunday afternoons when he was in New York, Master Sheng Yen gave a series of lectures on the bodhipakshika (Sanskrit), literally, “things pertaining to bodhi,” also known as the “thirty-seven aids to enlightenment.” The 37 aids consist of seven groups of practices expounded by the Buddha. They are: the Four Foundations of Mindfulness, the Four Proper Exertions, the Four Steps to Magical Powers, the Five Roots, the Five Powers, the Seven Factors of Enlightenment, and the Eightfold Noble Path. This is the first of three lectures Master Sheng Yen gave on the Seven Factors of Enlightenment. The remaining two lectures will be featured in subsequent issues of Chan Magazine. The lectures were translated concurrently by Dr. Rebecca Li, transcribed by Sheila Sussman, and edited by Ernest Heau. The entire series will be published as Things Pertaining to Bodhi.

As a topic the Seven Factors of Enlightenment would be foreign to most people, yet a lot of people have come here to hear me talk about it. It seems that the more exotic the topic the more interest there is in it. This probably has to do with the word “enlightenment,” which is always very enticing to people. Actually, it is possible to attain enlightenment. That is in fact what happened to Shakyamuni Buddha. If enlightenment were not possible, what would be the point of teaching the Dharma?

The Arya-Sarvastivada school of early Buddhism considered the Thirty-Seven Aids to

Enlightenment to be the gist of the practice towards liberation. Having completed the Thirty-Seven Aids, one would become an arhat. However, when I discuss the Thirty-Seven Aids, I also talk about how they are practiced in the Mahayana tradition. My perspective on how they are practiced in the Chan tradition will also differ somewhat from other traditions.

Since most Chan masters teach sudden enlightenment they do not talk much about the Thirty-Seven Aids, which are considered gradual methods. However, I do teach grad-



ual methods as the foundation for practice towards sudden enlightenment. For those capable of realizing sudden enlightenment, that is wonderful and they can dispense with the gradual methods. However, those for whom sudden enlightenment is not that feasible can practice gradual methods as a foundation for the sudden methods.

Therefore, when I speak of the Thirty-Seven Aids it is in the context of both the Hinayana path of the shravaka and the Mahayana path of the bodhisattva. The difference between the two paths is basically one of attitude and emphasis. In the Hinyana, liberation means attaining arhatship; in the Mahayana, liberation means attaining buddhahood.

At first glance the seven groups in the Thirty-Seven Aids may not seem related but they are in fact sequential. We often associate Chan with sudden enlightenment but Chan practice does indeed progress in stages. However, one does not take each stage as an ultimate goal. Therefore, even though Chan speaks of sudden enlightenment, it also embraces the gradualism implied in the Thirty-Seven Aids. In fact, Chan believes in practicing the Five Methods of Stilling the Mind in preparation for the Four Foundations. Despite its emphasis on sudden enlightenment, Chan considers the gradual cultivation of the Thirty-Seven Aids as very important.

Prior to the Four Foundations we practice the Five Methods of Stilling the Mind to collect the scattered mind into one that is stable and unified. To remind you, the five methods are: contemplating the breath, contemplating impurity, contemplating loving kindness, contemplating causes and conditions, and contemplating mindfulness of the buddhas and

bodhisattvas. After the Five Methods, one is ready to practice the Four Foundations. As we sequence through the Thirty-Seven Aids we are continuously cultivating towards liberation. By the time we get to the Seven Factors of Enlightenment, we should be quite far along the path, though not yet liberated.

It is important to understand that within each group the practices can also be seen as sequential. For example, in the Four Foundations, mindfulness of body precedes mindfulness of sensation, and from there we practice mindfulness of mind, ending with mindfulness of dharmas. Similarly, the Seven Factors of Enlightenment are also sequential.

The Sanskrit term for the Seven Factors of Enlightenment is *sapta bodhyanga*, where *sapta* means seven, *bodhi* means enlightenment, and *anga* means factor, or item. Each group in the Thirty-Seven Aids has a distinct name, but in fact all thirty-seven aids can be called *bodhyanga* since they are all factors towards enlightenment. The Seven Factors of Enlightenment are called that because after completing cultivating them, one should be enlightened. In Chinese translations of the sutras, *sapta bodhyanga* is rendered in various ways. I will not dwell on this except to make you aware that there are differences in how the term is translated in Chinese.

The seven factors are: First, mindfulness in both mental and physical activities; the second is discernment between dharmas [as real or illusory]; the third is diligence, or perseverance; the fourth is joy-and-delight; the fifth is lightness-and-ease, or tranquility; the sixth is concentration; and the seventh is equanimity, meaning freedom from discrimination.

Mindfulness

In cultivating mindfulness we are essentially practicing the Four Foundations of Mindfulness. We should also remember at this point that the purpose of practicing the Four Foundations is to cultivate wisdom. Mindfulness of the body has three aspects: mindfulness of the inner body, mindfulness of the outer body, and mindfulness of the inner-and-outer body.

The inner body refers to the internal organs — heart, liver, bodily fluids, and so on. The outer body refers to the sense organs — eye, ear, nose, tongue, and touch; specifically, how the body responds to the environment. The inner-and-outer body refers to the integration of the inner and outer body. In practicing mindfulness of the body, we pay attention to all three aspects.

We cultivate mindfulness of the body to see it as it really is, to not be so attached to it. We often fret and worry about every little thing that happens to our body. Some people love their body, some hate it, but both attitudes reveal over-attachment to the body as a source of vexations. Being mindful of the body, we understand that it is constantly undergoing change and that things will happen to it. This helps us let go of over-attachment to the body and thus not create so much vexation.

Mindfulness of sensation means being aware of one's sensory perceptions, whether they are pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral. For example, when comfortable we are aware of a pleasant feeling; when uncomfortable we are aware of an unpleasant feeling, and when we are neither comfortable nor uncomfortable, we are aware of that. In other words, mindfulness of sensation means being aware of your sensations at the very moment you experience them.

For example, right now, are your sensations pleasant, unpleasant, or neither pleasant nor unpleasant?

Mindfulness of mind is being aware of how we mentally react to sensations. When we feel pleasure we crave for more or fear that we will lose it; when we feel discomfort we resent it and want to get rid of it. We are excited about a happy experience but get frustrated when we encounter misfortune. We thus have greed on the one hand and aversion on

the other. And when our experience is neither pleasant nor unpleasant, we get bored or lethargic. With all these vexations, it is easy to be confused about what we really want in life. So, mindfulness of mind means to be aware of how we react to our experiences.

Mindfulness of dharmas is being attentive to whether our mental objects — ideas, concepts,

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symbols, language, feelings — are wholesome or unwholesome, beneficial or harmful. Just as we need to be mindful of the body, of sensations, and of our mental reactions to sensations, we need to be very clear about how our mental processes create wholesome as well as unwholesome results.

When we think of our body we are usually concerned with issues like comfort or discomfort, health or sickness, whether we are attractive or ugly, and so on. Preoccupied by such thoughts, we rarely see our body objectively; instead, we usually see the body as “mine,” and having this or that state or quality: “I’m good-looking” or “I’m ugly.” When we can look at the body more objectively, we will be practicing mindfulness of the body.

Recently a lady said to me, “Shifu, I have to have surgery and I’m really scared.”

“What are you afraid of?” I asked.

“First I’m afraid of the pain, second I’m afraid I’ll die from the surgery.”

I told her, “The more afraid you are of the pain, the more pain you’re going to feel. Tell yourself that your body is being treated by your doctor and you are just witnessing it.”

Later she told me because she was under local anesthesia she could observe the surgery and was not afraid. She said, “What I saw was just the doctor performing surgery on a body.” This lady was practicing mindfulness of the body.

I recently had a procedure where the doctor put an endoscope into my stomach and I observed the examination on a screen. As I was

enjoying looking at the inside of my stomach, the doctor told me he found a small cyst. He asked me if I wanted it removed.

I said, “Sure, why not?”

I watched him remove the cyst with an instrument. There was some discomfort, but the whole time I wasn’t thinking of it as my stomach. I was just observing this stomach undergoing treatment. Mindfulness of body means contemplating the body just as a body, instead of thinking, “Oh, this is my body and they are operating on my stomach. How can they do that?” Doing that, you will become very tense and possibly affect the process. Of course there may be pain, but being tense and afraid will not help.

Bruce, how’s your [injured] finger?

Bruce: Oh, much better.

Sheng Yen: Is it your finger? [Laughter] If you succeed in contemplating the body, you will also be very clear about your sensations. If you succeed in contemplating sensations, you will be very clear about your mental activities. And if you can do that, you will be able to contemplate dharmas very clearly, seeing what’s going on clearly. And this is how we cultivate the Four Foundations of Mindfulness.

Discernment

Discernment means distinguishing real from illusory dharmas. It also means understanding the difference between the wholesome and the unwholesome. If one understands the difference, one will move towards wholesomeness and begin to depart from vexations.

And once we depart from vexations we also move towards wisdom, away from hatred and towards compassion. With the cultivation of discrimination, we move forward on the path of liberation, which is to say, of wisdom and compassion.

What then, is real as opposed to illusory? Without practicing the Four Foundations of Mindfulness, it can be difficult to understand the distinction. For example, if one sees the body as existing independently, that is to say real, that would be illusory and unwholesome. Similarly, when we contemplate sensations we understand that whether pleasant or unpleasant, they are relative, not absolute. In a good mood even a minor thing can seem pleasant, whereas in a bad mood something supposedly pleasant can seem unpleasant. Through contemplation we can thus see that sensations do not have absolute and inherent qualities.

There was this youth who was attracted to a young woman who completely ignored him. One time he approached her and was perhaps a little too fresh and she slapped him in the face. Upon being slapped the young man was overjoyed. Can you relate to this? What was going on?

Student: She ignored him before but when she slapped him, she was finally paying attention. So that made him happy.

Sheng Yen: That's right. This story shows the relative nature of sensations. Being slapped in the face in this case was a pleasant sensation to this young man.

Similarly, when we contemplate the mind we can see that its contents have no absolute

quality but are relative to events and transient. When we contemplate mental dharmas we see that they are empty of self. We will see therefore that being mindful of body, sensation, mind, and dharmas is wholesome, and discriminating the real from the illusory is wisdom. Through contemplating the four kinds of mindfulness, we realize that all phenomena are impermanent and therefore empty. This wisdom allows one to know absolute truth and relative truth. Absolute truth refers to the emptiness of dharmas and the law of causes and conditions, while relative truth refers to the transient phenomena of daily life. With discrimination, we will know the difference between wisdom and vexation.

Diligence

Without acquiring some wisdom and knowing true from false Dharma, trying to practice with great diligence may be like a blind person riding a blind horse. Two dangers of practicing blindly like this is that first, one may fall into the error of believing incorrect Dharma and second, one may practice incorrect methods. Therefore, to truly practice with diligence one should be guided by a teacher who has the correct understanding of Dharma and who practices the proper methods. Otherwise, without a qualified teacher one would not know how to deal with unusual physical or mental states one might encounter.

How do you know if the teacher is teaching the proper Dharma? First, consider whether the teacher has a correct understanding of the key concepts of Buddhism. This means the teacher should exhibit a clear understanding and acceptance of the law of cause and effect. This teacher would not use his or her position for self-benefit and would not do unwhole-

some deeds because he or she would know that there would be retribution through karma. He or she would know very clearly that to receive wholesome results, one ought to engage in wholesome deeds.

A good teacher of Buddhism also needs to understand the law of conditioned arising, which states that all things exist as a coming together of myriad causes and conditions, and therefore everything is impermanent, without an inherent self. Understanding phenomena in this manner means that one possesses basic Buddhist wisdom. A student can thus use his or her own understanding of karma and the law of causes and conditions to evaluate whether the teacher or method is in accordance with correct Dharma. A teacher who truly practices according to these laws is a good teacher; if a method encompasses these two ideas, it is a good method.

To practice with diligence we therefore need to distinguish between proper Dharma and erroneous views and we need teachers who know the difference. What is the proper Dharma? The Thirty-Seven Aids to Enlightenment are the proper Dharma and the proper methods of practice. Understanding these proper methods, one can then practice diligently. What is diligent practice? It is to practice the Four Proper Exertions. If it seems like we are going back to the Four Proper Exertions again, that is correct. This time, however, we are talking about the Four Proper Exertions in the context of the Seven Factors of Enlightenment.

Here is how to understand this process. To review, the first five groups are the Four Foundations of Mindfulness, the Four Proper Exertions, the Four Steps to Magical Powers, the Five Roots, and the Five Powers. These five

groups are really about cultivating samadhi power as you make progress. When we begin to practice, our samadhi power is relatively weak, so we need to build on a solid foundation. Then, as our samadhi power deepens we move to the next stage, but we also go back to the foundation methods to improve our contemplation. Over time, this process will allow us to advance our power of samadhi. In other words, making progress is not a simple linear process; as you make progress you also revisit the foundation methods.

It is not correct to think that you must go through all the Thirty-Seven Aids to attain liberation. Indeed, if one has very sharp virtuous roots, one can attain liberation just by practicing the Four Foundations of Mindfulness. And if that is just not quite enough to get one there, one can add the next step, the Four Proper Exertions. And if that's still not enough, then one can practice the Four Steps to Magical Powers, and that can be enough for some. And if one is not able to attain liberation by practicing those three groups, one can cultivate the Five Roots and Five Powers. And if that still does not do it, one will need to cultivate the Seven Factors of Enlightenment. In fact, the Seven Factors of Enlightenment are themselves adequate to attain liberation, because they are seven methods for cultivating bodhi. If the cultivation of the Seven Factors of Enlightenment is still not enough for liberation, then one ends up with the Noble Eightfold Path as well.

Getting enlightened is not like weightlifting where you keep lifting heavier and heavier weights. Some people can only lift ten pounds while others can lift several hundred pounds. It is kind of the opposite with the Path. Those who have the most virtuous roots need to

take fewer steps and to hear less Dharma to attain liberation. If you need to practice all seven groups to be liberated, that is because you don't have quite adequate virtuous roots under your belt. So if you have heard all the previous lectures and are still here listening to this talk about the Seven Factors of Enlightenment, you must come back for the lectures on the Noble Eightfold Path. [Laughter]

Whether you are already enlightened or have poor virtuous roots, it is still useful to hear the Thirty-Seven Aids explained. The more one hears the Dharma, the more virtuous roots one will develop. Even if one did not practice before hearing the Dharma, afterwards one will think more of the need for practice. So it is still beneficial for you to listen to Dharma and still useful for me to teach it.

To repeat, diligence actually refers to the Four Proper Exertions. This means first, avoiding new unwholesome practices; second, cutting off existing unwholesome practices; third, beginning new wholesome practices; and fourth, continuing existing wholesome practices. This is what diligence means.

For example, one has vowed to practice the Dharma, and one has also vowed to cut off unwholesome behavior and unwholesome speech. Although that is good, one may not

yet be able to avoid unwholesome thoughts. So, the practice of exertion is to also vow to cut off unwholesome thoughts. That's the practice of the Four Exertions.

To take this practice to a deeper level, you not only vow to avoid unwholesome behavior, you also vow to engage in new wholesome behavior. We are usually happy to be recognized and rewarded when we do good things,

but that is not good enough because the expectation of praise or reward is itself a vexation. So one goes further and makes this vow, "From now on, I will not expect any reward from wholesome behavior." That would be a deeper level of practicing diligence.

On the path to enlightenment, exertion means practicing with great perseverance and great patience, and being continuously engaged. Some

may misunderstand this to mean going full force and forgetting about daily life. Far from being proper exertion, that is more like a demonic kind of practice. Rather, proper exertion is like a small stream flowing without pause — not too tense and not too lax. When you are too tense, it is possible to fall into a demonic state where you generate unwholesome thoughts and attitudes. When you are too lax, you will not be really engaged; you will be like a deflated balloon, not able to generate any power. Proper exertion, there-

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fore, is being ceaselessly engaged in the practice — not too tense, not too lax, with great perseverance and patience.

This morning I asked my attendant to cook some millet for me. The millet that she uses sometimes still has husks that get stuck between my teeth. So I asked her to remove the grains with husks before cooking the millet. She said, “Shifu, it’s very hard to find the ones with husks.” I started showing her how to do it, and I would pick one out and say, “See, this is one with a husk.” I picked up another one, then another one, one by one. I was just doing this in a very concentrated manner, until my attendant said, “Shifu, it’s almost time for your lecture!” And then I realized that an hour-and-a-half had passed! It was very joyful for me to do this and I did not see it as a chore. As far as I was concerned, I was picking out pearls.

Dharma Joy

The key to diligence is great patience, without any sense of great like or dislike about what one is doing, without thinking of gain and loss. If you practice this way, inevitably, Dharma joy will arise. First, there is joy from hearing the Dharma. Before encountering the Dharma, we have a lot of erroneous views; we are at war with ourselves, experiencing struggle, conflict, and contradiction; we also have external conflicts. After hearing the Dharma, we understand the law of cause and effect, or karma. We also understand the law of causes and conditions, which says that things happen according to the myriad underlying conditions that exist at any given time. Because of this conditioned co-arising, everything is in flux, everything is impermanent, empty,

and without inherent self. Upon hearing such a teaching, one should feel joy.

Confucius said that if we hear a good teaching in the morning, we should be ready to die in the evening. Hearing the Dharma is like the thrill you feel when you hear something that brings you to full alertness; you feel the lifting of a heavy burden that you have been carrying for a long time. “Before this, I was so vexed because I was looking at things the wrong way, but now I see the world with a different attitude. I can finally let go of this burden.” Do you experience joy when you hear the Dharma? You must to some extent; otherwise, why would you be foolish enough to come here on a Sunday to hear me talk? [Laughter]

In addition to the joy of hearing the Dharma, there is the joy of practicing meditation. When we cultivate dhyana, we attain stability, peacefulness, and calmness of mind and we feel Dharma joy. This kind of Dharma joy is not some kind of excitement but a deeper feeling of inner calm that is not affected by the environment: “I’m just here enjoying this moment of peace and quiet.” I believe many of you at least to some degree have experienced this Dharma joy. If you have not and you still come to my retreats, then that is pretty foolish.

As we practice Buddhism, we give rise to fewer vexations and we avoid the pitfalls of suffering and vexation. But if we go further and practice the Seven Factors of Enlightenment, we will experience Dharma joy. Several Tibetan lamas live in exile at our Dharma Drum Mountain temple in Taiwan. Even though they have lost their country, the lamas are always joyful. Many lay practitioners at the

temple don't understand this. They ask the lamas, "How is it that you are always so happy after losing your country?" The lamas say, "The loss of our country has been painful, but because we still have the Buddhadharmā, we are happy." These lamas are joyful because they are always with the Dharma, living it and teaching it. It is precisely because they live in accordance with the Dharma that monks and nuns are happy. I, myself, always feel Dharma joy. I hope that you will apply the Seven Factors of Enlightenment in your own life and be immersed in Dharma joy as well.

Lightness-and-Ease

After the experience of joy, lightness-and-ease, or tranquility, will arise as well. This means being free of the passions of body and mind. Lightness-and-ease is a deeper and subtler realization than Dharma joy, which can be coarse or fine. With Dharma joy there is still much movement of the mind. "Oh, this is so joyful!" That would be a coarser kind of Dharma joy. At a finer level, there is quietude in Dharma joy and one feels lightness in the body but still lacks the mental pliancy of lightness-and-ease. With mental pliancy body and mind are unified and one no longer worries about either; one is no longer preoccupied with the body and its sensations, whether it feels light or heavy, even whether it's there, and one is not aware of having any vexations of the mind.

While practicing, some people become aware that they no longer feel sensations, but then, they become excited about this: "My body has disappeared; I no longer feel it. That is amazing." This means that one is experiencing lightness of the body, but since the mind

still takes note of it, some coarseness is still there. In real mental pliancy, even though the body feels weightless, one has no thought of whether the body or the mind is there. When true mental pliancy happens, everything is very easy, smooth, and comfortable. One is sitting there and the wind blows but one has no notion that they and the wind are separate. The sounds of the environment, my talking, they are all the same. Everything is very harmonious — body, mind, and universe are one. But please do not mistake mental pliancy as just being extremely relaxed and having no vexations. That is a good stage where grosser thoughts and sensations are absent, but it is only when one has unified mind, body, and the environment that one has arrived at lightness-and-ease. At this point one is ready to practice the sixth factor of enlightenment — concentration, or samadhi.

Concentration

The sixth factor of enlightenment is concentration, or samadhi. In Buddhist practice, there are nine levels of samadhi — the first eight constitute worldly samadhi, while the ninth is called non-worldly samadhi. The first samadhi level is the stage of lightness-and-ease. This is also equivalent to the first dhyana level. One proceeds by stages to the fourth dhyana level, and further on until one reaches the deepest level of worldly samadhi, the eighth. Non-worldly samadhi, the ninth samadhi stage, is referred to in Chan as "sudden enlightenment." It is so called because at the moment of realization, one's worldview is suddenly transformed from one that is upside-down, one that is ruled by suffering and vexation, to one in which one's bondage to vexation and suffering is released.

The sutras define samadhi as the state where the mind becomes single-pointed and is totally present in that situation. It may sound arduous to start with the first factor of mindfulness and diligently work all the way to the sixth factor of concentration. In reality, all it takes is for one's attitude to change, and it is possible in an instant to experience lightness-and-ease. And if the experience is deep your mind would become very stable and very peaceful. That would be samadhi. On the other hand, as you hear this lecture, if your mind was totally in the present moment, focused on hearing the Dharma, with no thoughts of good or bad, right or wrong, free of wandering thoughts — that too would be samadhi.

Earlier I said that there are two ways of experiencing samadhi. One comes from changing one's attitude, where a turn of thought suddenly allows one to experience samadhi. The other kind comes from the step-by-step cultivation through the four dhyanas and eight levels of samadhi. The second way of samadhi is the deeper way. To put it in mundane terms, the first can be likened to being knocked unconscious, and then waking up not realizing what happened to you. The second is like falling into a very deep sleep without dreams, and then waking up a few hours later not realizing you had even been asleep.

You may wonder, "Why should I work so hard cultivating samadhi? I may as well get hit on the head or just go to sleep." The difference is that after regaining consciousness or waking from sleep, one would not experience lightness-and-ease. You would probably be just as prone to irritation as before, and you would probably be subject to the same seductions and distractions. Your character would probably be the same. By contrast, after deep sa-

madhi, one will feel great peace of mind and joy. Afterwards, one would be less likely to respond to negative stimuli as before.

Equanimity

The seventh factor of enlightenment is equanimity, with the Sanskrit *upeksha*, literally meaning "not taking notice." We saw that the fifth factor, lightness-and-ease, was a very enjoyable and comfortable feeling — the body is relaxed, without tension, and the mind is settled, without any vexations. But there is always a temptation to become attached to this feeling, to want to remain in it forever because it is so blissful. If one does this, one is like a rock soaking in a pool of water, not doing anything useful. Therefore, one needs to practice equanimity, not taking notice.

As we said, experiencing deep samadhi is very joyful. The fourth factor of joy-and-delight, the fifth factor of lightness-and-ease, and the sixth factor of samadhi are blissful experiences that can emerge from practice. That is why they are called Dharma joy. But attaching to such experiences is not proper Buddhist practice. We practice Buddhism to alleviate suffering, but it is also important to be free from attachments to joy as well. The correct practice is to be liberated from suffering as well as from joy-and-delight.

Letting go of joy does not mean that we do not welcome happiness but that we do not crave it, and when we experience it we do not cling to it. Through this practice we will know that there is not one single experience that is permanent, that all things are transitory and thus impermanent and empty. Letting go is cultivating the wisdom of emptiness, an essential condition for liberation.

Dharma and Science: Prophecy vs. Prediction

by Max Kälin / Chuan Zong Jing Chan

Max Kälin, a Dharma heir of Chan Master Sheng Yen, is a scientist and physician living and practicing in Zurich, Switzerland. As a scientist, he has studied the problem of climatic change due to human activity, particularly that of those whose wealth permits them to consume the planet's resources. As a physician, he has an office, the Notfallklinik, in the inner city oriented toward primary care and emergency medicine. He became Master Sheng Yen's student in 1991, received the Bodhisattva Precepts from him in 1997, and received yin-ke (confirmation of having seen self-nature) during the Master's 49-day retreat in May-June of 2000. Dr. Kälin became a Dharma heir of Master Sheng Yen in December of that year.

- Summary
- Impermanence: Root Hypothesis of the Universe
- Dharma and Science
- The Dim View of Buddhism: From True Dharma to Decay
- The Dim View of Science: First Warm then Cold
- Eschatology and Prognosis
- Warnings and What to Do
- Acknowledgements

Summary

Buddha-Dharma and Science examine the universe from the standpoint of the self, Dharma pointing from the self to the within that self and Science to the without. Common to both is the insight that impermanence is a fundamental property of the universe. From a scientific view impermanence is the root hypothesis of everything that is. The Dharma Ending Age is a prophecy about the development of Dharma practice: From True Dharma

to Outward Semblance to Decay. This view has a companion in Science, a prediction: The present interglacial period, going through a warming due to the burning of fossil fuels, will be followed by an ice age. A prudent mankind would turn to frugality, map the resources of the earth crust and leave them in place for the generations to come. Likely, greed and ignorance will prevent this. Thus, Buddhist prophecy and scientific analysis point to difficulties of enormous extent.

Impermanence: Root Hypothesis of the Universe

The sutras (*sutta* in Pali) of the Buddha-Dharma are considered the closest likeness to the teaching of Buddha Shakyamuni. Furthermore, the Dharma is passed on by teachers through commentary and poem, ritual and rule, sound and silence, and other skillful means to encourage study and practice. The terms used to express this teaching are familiar or strange terms, but certainly terms of the world we live in, the world we are familiar with. Whatever world is referred to by the Dharma, hidden or not hidden, the process of its transmission belongs to this world. In the Loka Sutta¹ a monk asks what the word “world” applies to: “Insofar as it disintegrates, it is called the ‘world’.” Loka, the world, stands here for the universe. Here we find the original reference to impermanence (*annica* in Pali, *anitya* in Sanskrit). The sutra explains further:

“Insofar as it disintegrates, monk, it is called the ‘world’. Now what disintegrates? The eye disintegrates. Forms disintegrate. Consciousness at the eye disintegrates. Contact at the eye disintegrates. And whatever there is that arises in dependence on contact at the eye — experienced as pleasure, pain or neither-pleasure-nor-pain — that too disintegrates.

“The ear disintegrates. Sounds disintegrate... The nose disintegrates... The tongue disintegrates...

“The intellect disintegrates. Ideas disintegrate. Consciousness at the intellect disintegrates. Contact at the intellect disintegrates. And whatever there is that arises in dependence on contact at the intellect — experienced

as pleasure, pain or neither-pleasure-nor-pain — that too disintegrates.”

Thus, the universe and everything in it, and that includes us and our thoughts about the universe, is subject to change. Science is in agreement with this. Everything Science² has been able to discover in its history of more than 4000 years is that nothing is permanent. Whether material or immaterial, nothing is permanent. No mathematical description of any law about nature demonstrates permanence. Everything flows. To say that what is permanent is impermanence itself is incorrect. The permanence of impermanence would depend on time to be permanent. But time in itself is not permanent. Thus, we may call impermanence the root hypothesis of the universe.

Dharma and Science

Dharma and Science have common ground. Both start with an observer and an observation. The Dharma practitioner looks primarily at the world within, say looking at the self, and the Science practitioner at the world without, say looking at a star. Then both communicate their experience to others. This is in both cases difficult.

Science developed a precise language, culminating in mathematics. The first to put the basic elements of Science in place were the Sumerians: More than 4000 years ago they developed a view of self and other (the observer and the observed), invented the cuneiform writing and the sexagesimal number system³. In the case of the Dharma the Buddha found it very difficult to communicate his experience. In contradistinction to science, which starts with facts, he first taught a view and a

method, the Four Noble Truths and the Noble Eightfold Path⁴, with the idea that taking that view and that path would lead to experiences equivalent to the ones he had had himself. Only later did he reveal some details of those experiences. The difference seems substantial — whereas the Dharma teacher points at the moon, emphasizing that pointing at is not experiencing the moon, the scientist can measure the distance to the moon and teach a student how to repeat the measurement.

Verification in Science means an observation is documented and this documentation is examined by at least one other person familiar with the scientific method. Observation covers anything from a simple fact, like whether there is sunshine, to the most sophisticated measurement probing the universe⁵. Thus, something is known about an object if that knowledge is agreed upon by different observers. Because of impermanence, of which Science is in support without exception, scientific knowledge is considered impossible to complete.

Verification in Dharma means an insight is directly compared to the sutras or put in some form and presented to a Dharma master who will confirm or deny the validity of that insight. This poses two problems. Firstly, the risk of delusion of a first kind: “Such-and-such sutra is in agreement with my insight, thus I am enlightened”. Secondly, the risk of delusion of a second kind: “Such-and-such Dharma master validated my insight, thus I am enlightened”. The validity of insight is either tied to the validity of a sutra or of a Dharma master. In the first case this includes belief in the precision of the oral Dharma transmission of the initial some 500 years (the Pali Canon was put in writing in the

first century AD) and in the second case in the validity of the transmission from Dharma master to Dharma master all the way back to Mahakashyapa (Mahakassapa in Pali). There the chain is tied to the root link, the very first transmission, between Buddha and Mahakashyapa. But this link is legend. This does not put in question that people of extraordinary insight existed and continue to exist, an insight equivalent to the one of the Buddha. Yet a mystery remains because the ultimate is not insight but freedom from existence, freedom from the cycle of birth and death.

Teachers of Dharma and of Science do something similar. The former points to the moon hoping the student finds out who does the looking (what is the subject by nature) and the latter points to the moon hoping the student finds out what is looked at (what is the object by nature). Also the underlying motivation is similar, if not the same. Dharma and Science are taught to free from delusion. However, then Buddha-Dharma makes one further statement: Freedom from delusion ultimately frees from existence and thus from suffering. Science does not have and cannot make such a claim.

Thus, Science always entails the “as-far-as-is-known” and Dharma the “valid-if-the-transmission-is-valid”.⁶ Thus, both have an ultimate grain of doubt in common and the burden that comes with that doubt.

The Dim View of Buddhism: From True Dharma to Decay

According to the Loka Sutta, the Buddha-Dharma and the world within which it manifests changes. From an ordinary view it could

change for better or for worse. Clearly, Mahayana Buddhism takes the dim view⁷ assuming a first period of True Dharma of 500 years, followed by a period of Outward Semblance of Dharma of 1000 years, followed by a period of Decay of the Dharma of 10,000 years. How should that be interpreted? Consider that Mahakashyapa practised hard and became awakened, and thus liberated, when Buddha held up a flower⁸. Does this mean he would have to practise extra hard today? There are two problems. Firstly, the flower story is a myth, and secondly, how do we find out whether liberation happens today, and under what circumstances, as a flower might not do? And is it really the same kind of liberation as experienced by the Buddha? Let's treat this for the moment as speculation and take a scientific view.

The Dim View of Science⁹: First Warm Then Cold.

Science has enabled man to transfer energy in many ways, like burning chemical energy stored in mineral oil into heat, and transform heat into movement¹⁰, make tools, mine minerals, and make new things. Because this capacity leads in general to a comfortable life and because most humans want one, it seems that we will not just burn most fossil fuels that are in the earth crust but also consume much of whatever is inside and on top of the crust. This all comes at a cost, a significant global warming and tremendous suffering to most animals, including the human animal. Either we consume animals directly or we destroy the habitat they depend on. The warming will shift climatic borders such that places where it once was comfortable to live and easy to produce things will be barren. Other places,

now too barren for most life forms, may become temperate but may lack the necessary soils because of the long duration soil formation takes. Some nations will be favoured by these shifts and some will be disfavoured. The self-like behaviour of the nations, if not adjusted, will make matters worse.

We will have to move and we will have to squeeze. In short the outlook is a tough life on a warm and impoverished planet Earth. Let me call this squeeze due to warming rooted in human consumption Squeeze I. Squeeze because we will have to pack more and more into less and less space. Succeed in getting in and you live, fail and you perish. The ones in the box will experience the squeeze and thus the stress of being squeezed. This scenario will mature within about 10 human generations.

Geology and astronomy teach that we live presently in an interglacial period. Within about 100 generations there will be a new ice age. Let me call this Squeeze II. The first squeeze is governed by "flee the heat" and the second by "flee the cold."

Our way will likely be between a continuation of the present wastefulness and a prudent frugality. Awareness of the plight of future generations and a sense of responsibility for their well-being would make us tighten the belt. We would map the fossil fuels and mineral resources of the earth as well as possible and leave most of them in the ground. We would reduce consumption of energy and materials massively. This is not likely, given the collective drive toward a comfortable life, consumption for the sake of consumption and the observation that very few humans live frugally by choice. There will be reduction,

but most likely not enough to significantly soften Squeeze I. And by the time Squeeze II sets in, the non-renewable resources will most likely be gone.

Eschatology and Prognosis

Dharma Ending Age as such is an eschatology, a prophecy about the final history or destiny of man. All major religions have eschatologies and some are similar. For instance, the Dharma Ending Age is terminated by the coming of Buddha Maitreya ¹¹ (Mettaya in Pali), presently residing in Tushita-heaven, and Orthodox Judaism believes in the coming of the Messiah (the 12th of the 13 principles of faith of Maimonides ([1135-1138]-1204). Maitreya and Messiah are world teachers expected to set things right in a fundamental way. They both correspond to a deep hope that there is light at the end of the tunnel.

Prognosis is not prophecy. Prognosis is based on evidence and process observed in the past and projected into the future. It is always prone to error, but it is not speculation. In emergency medicine, my forte, it works like that. A person is in distress and often much is unknown about how this came about. Starting from worst case scenarios and guided by broad physiological assumptions some action (including no action) is taken. Before that, the prognosis is that stability of the patient will increase and distress decrease. After the action this usually takes place and makes room for improved diagnosis. As a consequence the experience strengthens the physician's confidence into the validity of what was just done. In some areas of science prognosis is sharp (think of the precision needed to land a spacecraft on mars) and in others vague (think of the prognosis whether a killer will kill again

after a jail term), but it is in principle always guided by the scientific method.

Eschatologically Dharma and Science point in a similar direction and give even comparable orders of magnitude for the difficulties. Coincidence or not, this deserves careful examination because the results of this examination could significantly influence man's behaviour individually and collectively.

Warnings and What to Do

Dharma and Science give warnings: Both see rough riding ahead. Study and practice of Dharma and Science both need favourable settings for ordinary beings, at least initially, like monasteries, universities, libraries, a world-wide-web and conditions like some peace and quiet. Saints can practice in concentration camps, and are known to have done so, but ordinary beings find misery simply miserable. Imagine an ice age with continental glaciations and a habitat for humans like the one Neandertal man had to brave until he died out about 30,000 years ago. Neandertal man was a strong and robust hunter. Although little can be deduced about his mind, a reconstruction of the conditions under which he lived suggests that for most of us practicing Dharma or Science would not be possible. Before the first urbanisation by the Sumerians there is no evidence for Science.

Thus we should be thankful for the conditions presently existing and for the possibility of having teachers of Dharma and Science. We should practice frugality and lead humble lives, reducing the weight under which the earth and its beings are moaning. Visit the market, examine the things and decide what you need and what not. Visit slaughterhouses

to look in the eyes of the tortured creatures, to smell their fear and to listen to their cries. Adopt in your mind a medical rat, imagine it being born, nursed by its mother, experimented on and thrown into the garbage. Imagine you being that rat. Know what it is like to be an animal enslaved by humans. Visit graveyards and know that this will be your place also. You may taste the best, own the most wonderful or you may toil day in and out. Comes the touch of death no physician, however great, will save you. This may sound like the drop of water on the hot stone — but what is the alternative?

Let me close with an advice by Chan Master Sheng-yen

Our needs are little
Our wants are great
Pursue only what we really need
What we want is unimportant

and a warning from the Chan liturgy¹²

This day has passed
Our lives, too, are closing
Like fish with little water
Joy will not last
Let us work with pure effort
Work as we would were our heads aflame
Be mindful of impermanence
Be careful of idleness

Acknowledgements

For inspiration and help I thank Agetsu Kudo Wydler Haduch and Tan Wei Wu.

Endnotes

1. Buddha Shakyamuni. Loka Sutta – The World. Translated from Pali by Thanissaro Bhikkhu. <http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn35/sn35.082.than.html> (9 nov 2008).
2. Science is capitalized because it is custom to capitalize Dharma (Dharma (upper case) as teaching, dharma (lower case) as phenomenon). Science and Dharma are two sides of the same coin and thus of the same category.
3. van der Waerden, Bartel Leendert. 1954. Science Awakening. English translation by Arnold Dresden. P. Noordhoff, Groningen. 306 p.
4. Buddha Shakyamuni. Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta – Setting the Wheel of Dhamma in Motion. Translated from Pali by Thanissaro Bhikkhu. <http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn56/sn56.011.than.html> (14 nov 2008). Thanissaro Bhikkhu translates here dukkha (dukkha in Pali) as stress. However, dukkha is more than stress. It is also more than suffering, the other common translation. Dukkha is a property of all sentient beings. Sentient means to be subject to dukkha. Beyond what we clearly experience as suffering it includes all discomfort. Imagine every thing arranged such that you feel in perfect comfort, from about the baby at home to the computer at work. Turn around and all these have changed. You may still be in comfort, but less perfect than before.
5. An example is CERN, <http://public.web.cern.ch/public/en/Science/Science-en.html> (23 nov 2008). There some 2500 people of the most diverse fields cooperate in searching at present for the Higgs boson. Their claim of discovery would immediately start the scrutiny of that claim by other scientists.
6. In 2000 I had a dialogue on this with Shifu Sheng Yen. Guo Yuan, helping, translated Shifu as saying „... as far as Shifu knows“, and not „... Shifu knows“.
7. Stewart, Harald. Three Ages of the Dharma. <http://www.nembutsu.info/hsr3ages.htm> (9 nov 2008).
8. According to legend, this took place during one of Buddha's discourses on Vulture Peak (Gridhakuta). It is considered the root event of the „special transmission outside the orthodox teaching“ that ties Chan, and later

Zen, back to Buddha Shakyamuni. There is no evidence for this to be other than a myth. Vulture Peak, a place of buddhist veneration near Rajgir in the Indian State Bihar, was mentioned already by the Chinese Buddhist pilgrims Fa Xian (337? – 422?) and Xuanzang (602? – 664). According to tradition the Buddha transmitted there much of his Mahayana teachings (like the Lotus Sutra).

9. This section is nearly without references because I refer only to knowledge generally accepted by the scientific community and because I am a scientist myself (for my short curriculum vitae see <http://www.chan.ch>). I have pondered these topics since about 1960. Then, for the first time, I encountered a graph of oil production versus oil consumption predicting a shortage.

10. The astronomer Fritz Zwicky (1898-1974) invented for the task of finding all energy transformations applicable to propulsion in space the morphological matrix, the „Zwicky box“, a matrix that helps find all transformation types. In „Discovery, Invention, Research through

the Morphological Approach“ (1969, MacMillan, 276 p.) he writes „... within the final and true world image everything is related to everything, and nothing can be excluded a priori as being unimportant.“ This statement about the universe from a scientist, and Fritz Zwicky was an outstanding one, might as well stem from a buddhist and shows how much common ground Science and Dharma have.

11. The Buddha of universal love. For the prophesy see: Buddha Shakyamuni. Cakkavatti Sutta – The Wheel-turning Emperor. (Excerpt), translated from Pali by Thanissaro Bhikkhu.

<http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/dn/dn.26.0.than.html> (16 nov 2008)

12. Anonymus. Ca. 1990. Ch'an Meditation Center Liturgy. Ch'an Meditation Center, 90-56 Corona Avenue, Elmhurst, New York 11373. 86 p. This warning, part of the evening liturgy, is chanted every evening during a Chan-retreat.



Photo: Kaifen Hu

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A Dharma Heir of the late Chan Master Sheng Yen

Dec 26, 2009–Jan 3, 2010



Gilbert Gutierrez has over thirty-nine years of meditation experience. In 2002, he received Dharma Transmission from Master Sheng Yen, making him the only western lineage holder currently residing in the United States. He regularly conducts retreats and lectures throughout North America. Gilbert teaches in a classical Chan style which inspires his students to investigate Chan through diligent practice. In this retreat, Gilbert will lead everyone in the practice of Silent Illumination, starting with the basics of relaxation, and lead into the method of no-method.

This is an advanced retreat; participants are required to have previous intensive retreat experience before being accepted.

For more information and to register:
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The Past

News from the Chan Meditation Center and the DDMBA Worldwide

In Memoriam: Jeffrey Kung 1937-2009

By Virginia Tan

After battling a long illness, two hours after Guo Xing Fashi had come to bid him goodbye, and amid continuous prayers at the hospice where he stayed, Jeffrey Kung succumbed to cancer on June 2, 2009, surrounded by his family and his beloved friends from DDMBA.



Born in China in 1939, Jeffrey had spent early years in India, Hong Kong and Taiwan. He grew up and was educated in Taiwan, then moved to New York in 1963 to pursue his master's degree in electrical engineering. He is survived by Lily, his wife of 46 years, two daughters, three grandchildren, and three brothers.

A devoted disciple of Master Sheng Yen since 1988, Jeffrey was actively engaged, becoming an indomitable and invaluable member of the Dharma Drum Mountain Buddhist Association and the Chan Meditation Center. His contributions were numerous, most notably as a full-time DDMBA volunteer. In 1996, while living and working in Florida, Jeffrey and his wife Lily were both diagnosed with cancers in a span of one week. Realizing life's fragility and impermanence, Jeffrey took early retirement from the engineering firm Harris Corp. He and Lily returned to New York and both started volunteer work at CMC where Jeffrey was the jack-of-all-trades, greatly lifting the burden on the resident sangha.

Jeffrey was instrumental in organizing DDMBA chapters in the U.S. into a cohesive group, planning regular conferences and activities where members from various states got to know and work with each other—no small feat. He also assisted in planning and organizing the Wisdom Teachings—a dia-

logue between the Dalai Lama and Master Sheng Yen in 1998. Jeffrey was also a regular contributor to Chan Magazine. Yet despite all he had done, shortly before his passing he regretted not having contributed sufficiently to DDMBA, and Jeffrey and Lily revised their wills to include DDMBA as a beneficiary to help propagate Shifu's teachings.

A community activist in Long Island's Nassau County, Jeffrey was appointed the Commissioner of Human Rights 1988-1989; he started, along with a group of Chinese-Americans, the Organization of Chinese-Americans, Long Island Chapter (OCA-LI), with the goal of achieving better Chinese-American representation in local communities. He held various posts at OCA-LI including President, Chairperson of the board, and Vice President for the National OCA's Chapter Development.

Guo Ru Fashi Comes to America

by **Bufe Laffey**

Venerable Guo Ru Fashi, a Dharma Heir of Master Sheng Yen's and one of his earliest monastic disciples, led his first retreats and gave his first lectures in America this summer at DDRC. He led a five-day Buddha Recitation Retreat, followed by a ten-day Intensive Huatou Retreat. Both retreats and lectures were very well attended.

Guo Ru Fashi stayed for a time at DDRC in Pine Bush, NY, where the residents greatly enjoyed his company. He was generous with his time, giving informal talks that sometimes started in the afternoon and continued after dinner until evening sitting practice, when he joined the residents in sitting.

Guo Ru Fashi has carried on the style of Chan training that Shifu utilized in his early days of teaching, making use of methods that are specifically characteristic to huatou practice, such as shouting, hitting, and pressing students in a dynamic and spontaneous manner. In this way, he helps practitioners to suddenly put a stop to the mind's grasping consciousness, thus opening the mind to the reality of life, and the experience of freedom and ease. Long-time practitioners who attended Shifu's earliest retreats in America were pleased to be able to experience this type of training once again, while some newer practitioners were surprised by the difference between this and the more relaxed style of retreat that had become the norm in more recent years. But all participants were very positive about their experiences during the sharing ceremony at the conclusion of the Huatou Retreat.



Interestingly, Guo Ru Fashi also employed these stricter methods in the Buddha Name Recitation Retreat. The lovely sounds of chanting coming from the open windows of the Chan Hall were punctuated from time to time by dramatic shouts of “STOP!” and the crack of the incense stick. This produced a noticeable difference in the quality of the event. As with the Huatou retreat, some retreatants were surprised to experience this difference in style. But most reported that the methods helped them to stay more continuously focused on their practice, which in turn generated a deep feeling of calm and peace. As the chanting progressed over five days this atmosphere of peace and calm was discernable even to those who were not participating in the retreat. A local contractor (not a Buddhist practitioner) spent the five days doing construction work on the DDRC tool shed, just across the road from the Chan Hall. His normal habit was to play a radio while he worked, but for these days he left the radio off, and by the end of the retreat he could be heard chanting along with the melody, even though he did not know the words. He said, “It just makes you feel good. You can’t help but sing along.”

New Monastic at DDRC

by **Buffe Laffey**

A new monk has come to join the staff at Dharma Drum Retreat Center. Chang Chi Fashi is a native of Taiwan who studied law, and also studied the Dharma. He saw how much the Dharma helped him and his family (even though they weren’t Buddhist). So, vowing to help himself and all sentient beings, he became a monk instead of a lawyer. He was ordained in 2000. At Dharma Drum Mountain

he has served as Secretary to the Abbot President, and also as a teacher and a counselor at the Dharma Drum Sangha College. Most recently, he was one of Master Sheng Yen’s attendants, taking care of our Shifu right up until the time of his death.

At DDRC Chang Chi Fashi will be supporting Chan practice activities and overseeing the kitchen volunteers. He is quite capable of managing a kitchen; he used to prepare meals for Shifu. As a chef he is self-taught. He learned by watching Shifu’s other attendants, and by following recipes. The residents and staff of DDRC are already enjoying his dishes, which are simple, nutritious and tasty.

Chang Chi Fashi came to America following in Shifu’s footsteps to bring the Dharma to the West. Having already seen how beneficial Shifu’s teachings are in his own country, he feels they must be helpful to Westerners as well. But he can see how the differences in language and culture can create difficulties in passing on the teachings. He says that he has already learned much about this in the short time he has been here, but he feels there is much more to see and hear and learn about this, and he is very interested in doing so.



Typhoon Morakot Leaves Thousands Homeless

On August 9th Typhoon Morakot, the worst storm ever to strike Taiwan in recorded history, slammed into the island, dumping more than 100 inches of rain over the course of 3 days. Raging floods and mudslides killed more than 500 people, isolating entire towns and leaving many thousands homeless, as the storm smashed 34 bridges and cut 253 stretches of road. Vast undersea mudslides unleashed by Morakot severed 3 submarine internet cables, causing extensive disruption to internet service in the region. Economic impact, including catastrophic damage to agriculture and tourism, has been estimated at \$50 billion New Taiwan Dollars (roughly US\$1.5 billion).

As this goes to press, more information is awaited both on damages and the status of relief efforts. However, according to available reports, action began immediately in the teeth of the storm as DDM's Social Welfare and Charity Foundation (SWCF) mobilized to provide victims with drinking water, food, sleeping bags, flashlights and other necessities. In the wake of the tempest, these efforts were followed by massive involvement in huge cleanup operations. SWCF's Vice Secretary General Chang Fa noted that the outfit's growing experience in emergency aid efforts in recent years has been a crucial asset in expediting the delivery of help.

SWCF Returns to Earthquake Site

On June 1, in a return to the scene of earlier relief work following Sichuan's shattering earthquake in May of 2008, Deputy Abbot

Venerable Guo Pin led a team of volunteers from SWCF to Xiushi Township.

The date coincided with celebrations of Children's Day in mainland China, as was reflected in a get-together with young quake survivors at Minxin High School, which had served as the original field headquarters for DDM's initial relief efforts. Addressing the students, Guo Pin urged them to say good words and do good things each day with compassion, humility and gratitude, in the understanding that helping others in need is the best road to happiness and inner peace.

Just a few weeks later at the end of July, he was back in northern Sichuan to sign agreements with the county governments of Anxian and Beichuan for the construction of a kindergarten, an elementary school dormitory and a two-storey outpatient medical facility. These initiatives are expected to restore education for quake-affected children and extend medical services to remote villages.

Ven. Guo Pin explained that SWCF will press forward with its work on behalf of quake victims to help them resume normal and peaceful lives. He noted also that the Kindergarten had been funded by donations from DDMBA in New York.

Tsunami Aftermath

July – 2009 SWCF recently finished construction of a girl's dormitory at the Children's House in Bumi Moro, Indonesia, as part of an ongoing series of relief efforts since the tsunami devastated the region in late 2004. The Foundation has mapped out a *Five-Year Relief Plan in Aceh*, to provide long-term assistance, including Dharma counseling. Over

the past four years, SWCF has been involved in numerous construction projects in the region, including a kindergarten, schools and a local library.

Venerable Guo Dong Re-elected

In June, as venerables from around the world returned to Taiwan for advanced Chan meditation, the DDM Sangha voted to extend the appointment of Venerable Guo Dong as head of Dharma Drum Mountain.

In keeping with DDM by-laws, a 7-member selection committee was formed, which unanimously nominated Ven. Guo Dong to continue in his post. After tallying all votes cast, the appointment was confirmed. The Abbot President expressed profound gratitude for the teachings of Master Sheng Yen and the vote of confidence accorded him by the community to continue with his work.

New Beginning for Zhaiming

On August 2, 2009, Zhaiming Monastery in Taoyuan County, Taiwan was re-inaugurated following four years of restoration.

Venerable Guo Dong, Abbot of Dharma Drum Mountain, presided at the inauguration ceremony. He expressed his special appreciation to the five technicians – Wen-Mi Liao, Qin-Hai Lai, Ming-He Hsu, Lung-Jin Tsai and Mu-Chuan Lin – whose experience and skill in repairing, painting and renovating Buddhist temples played a crucial role in the restoration.

Following years of erosion and exposure to inclement weather, (in addition to damage from the so-called “921” earthquake on Sep-

tember 21, 1999), roof tiles had deteriorated and cracked, causing leaks and staining of the walls. The wooden structure had also begun to rot, and the brick walls were unsteady.

In August of 1985, the monastery had been classified by the Ministry of Interior as a Grade 3 historic site requiring comprehensive restoration. In August of 2005, the government approved renovation plans under the Preservation of Cultural Property Law and restoration began.

The monastery was founded in 1840 by a monk from Fa Yu monastery on the island of Putuo, and has come under the authority of various lineages since then. During this time it has also undergone a number of major renovations prior to the current restoration which took shape when Venerable Master Sheng Yen assumed the duties of 7th Abbot in 1999, initiating a new beginning for the monastery.

Dharma Teachers-in-Training Go to Work

reported by Chang Jie

In 1999 Master Sheng Yen inaugurated a two-track training program, for beginning meditation instructors and for Dharma lecturers, in order to initiate the process of turning his longtime students into eventual Dharma teachers and retreat leaders. The seeds planted at that time are now bearing fruit, as a number of the Chan Center’s regular Sunday talks are now being given by alumnae of that program.

On Sunday, January 4, Dr. Peter Lin, a psychologist and a Dharma Teacher-in-Training, gave

a talk entitled “The Art of Helping: A Problem Management and Opportunity Approach to Helping.” Helping professionals like Dr. Lin are specially trained to help people, but most people seek help informally from friends and family, so Dr. Lin presented a simple three-stage process to help us help others.

On Sunday, February 1, Dr. Rebecca Li, Professor of Sociology and longtime translator for Master Sheng Yen, spoke about “Facing and Handling Desires in Daily Life.” Her talk was based on Shifu’s campaign to “Protect the Spiritual Environment,” in which he counseled us to distinguish between what we want and what we really need, and to pursue appropriate desires with wisdom, understanding causes and conditions.

On the 22nd of February Rebecca’s husband Dr. David Slaymaker took the helm and spoke on “The Six Paramitas and the Bodhisattva Path,” based on Venerable Yin-shun’s *The Way to Buddhahood* and on Master Sheng Yen’s booklet *The Six Paramitas*. “Paramita” is often translated as “perfection,” but David explained how these six practices can be useful to us imperfect sentient beings.



And on March 1 Harry Miller, Master Sheng Yen’s student for over 30 years, gave a talk entitled “Living the Heart Sutra: What’s An Ordinary Sentient Being To Do?” He based his talk on the Master’s book *There Is No Suffering*, in which he writes that the Heart Sutra should be considered a tool for practicing the bodhisattva path.

We thank the Dharma Teachers-In-Training for all their hard work over the years, and look forward to their sharing more of their wisdom with us.



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*

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

Phone: (845) 744-8114

E-mail: ddrc@dharmadrumretreat.org

Website: www.dharmadrumretreat.org

DDRC has introduced a greater variety of activities, ranging from weekly group practice to beginner's meditation classes, beginner's retreats and weekend retreats, through to intermediate and intensive Chan retreats. Novices and experienced practitioners from the local tri-state area and from around the world are all welcome to either begin the practice or deepen their cultivation.

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

Retreats

Western Zen Retreat

Friday, October 9 – Wednesday, October 14

One-Day Retreat

Saturday, October 17

Chan Retreat for Young People

November date to be announced

One-Day Retreat

Saturday, November 21

10-Day Huatou Retreat

Friday, November 27 – Sunday, December 6

1-Day Retreat

Saturday, December 19

9-Day Silent Illumination Retreat

Saturday, December 26 – Sunday, January 3

Regular Weekly Activities

Thursday Evening Meditation

7 – 9 pm; Sitting, walking, moving meditation and discussion.

Sunday Service

9 – 11 am; Sitting, walking and moving meditation; Dharma talk; chanting.

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 – 9:15 pm (On the last Monday of each month there is recitation of the Eighty-eight Buddhas' names and repentance.)

Tuesday Night Sitting Group

7 – 9:45 pm: Sitting, yoga exercises, walking meditation, Dharma discussions, recitation of the Heart Sutra.

Saturday Sitting Group

9 am – 3 pm

Sitting, yoga exercises, walking meditation

Sunday Open House

10 – 11 am: meditation

11 am – 12:30 pm: Dharma lectures

12:30 – 1 pm: lunch offerings

1 – 2 pm: vegetarian lunch

2 – 4 pm: Chanting

(Second Sunday of the month, chanting of the Great Compassion Dharani Sutra; last Sunday, renewal of the vows of the Bodhi-sattva Precepts.)

Classes

Beginners' Meditation

Part One, Saturday, October 24, 9:30 am – 12

Part Two, Saturday October 31, 9:30 am – 12

Intermediate Meditation

Saturday, November 7, 9:30 am – 3 pm.

One-Day Chan Retreat

Saturday, November 14

Beginners' Dharma Class

Part One, Saturday, December 5

Part Two, Saturday, December 12

Part Three, Saturday, December 19

All classes 9:30 – 11:30 am

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.

“Zen & Inner Peace”

Chan Master Sheng Yen's weekly television

program now on CTI Cable in NY, NJ and CT

Saturday, 12:30 – 1 pm (For local cable in your area please log on to chan1.org)



Photo: 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.

NORTH AMERICA

USA

USA Headquarters

Dharma Drum Mountain Buddhist Association (DDMBA); Dharma Drum Publications; Chan Meditation Center: 90-56 Corona Avenue
Elmhurst, NY 11373
Tel: (718) 592-6593
Fax: (718) 592-0717
Email: chancenter@gmail.com
<http://www.chancenter.org>
<http://www.ddmba.org>

Dharma Drum Retreat Center

184 Quannacut Road
Pine Bush, NY 12566
Tel: (845) 744-8114
Email: ddrc@dharmadrumretreat.org
<http://dharmadrumretreat.org>

California

Los Angeles

Contact: Ashley Chiang
Tel: (626) 350-4388
Email: ddmbala@gmail.com

Sacramento

Contact: Janice Tsai
Email: ddmbasacara@yahoo.com

San Francisco

Contact: Hogan Chang
Tel: (408) 469-0321
Email: ddmbasf@gmail.com

Connecticut

Contact: Ming-Mei Peng
Tel: (203) 972-3406
Email: contekalice@aol.com

District of Columbia

Washington D.C.

Contact: Jack Chang
Tel: (301) 982-2552
Email: chiehhsiungchang@yahoo.com

Florida

Gainesville

Contact: Lian Huey Chen
Tel: (352) 336-5301
Email: lianflorida@hotmail.com

Miami

Contact: May Lee
Tel: 954-432-8683

Orlando

Contact: Chih-Hui Chang
Tel: (407) 671-6250
Email: chihho2004@yahoo.com

Tampa

Contact: Nancy Kau
Tel: (727) 393-9588
Email: skau@tampabay.rr.com

Illinois

Chicago

Contact: Belinda Li
Tel: 773-907-9853
Email: Belindaliddmba@gmail.com

Kansas

Contact: Ching Hsin Wang
Tel: (913) 825-5204
Email: alicewang0618@hotmail.com

Massachusetts

Boston

Contact: Chen Zhang
Tel: (781) 558-1838
Email: ch_cherry@hotmail.com

Michigan

Contact: Li Hua Kong
Tel: (517) 332-0003
Email: lkong2006@gmail.com

Missouri

Contact: Tai-Ling Chin
Tel: 636-529-0085
Email: acren@aol.com

New Jersey

Contact: Chiu-Ling Wang
789 Jersey Ave
New Brunswick, NJ 08901
Tel: (732) 549-7134
Email: chiuwang@msn.com

New York

Long Island:

Contact: Hai Dee Lee
Email: Haideelee@yahoo.com

New York City

Contact: Chi-Liu Wu
Tel: (516) 674-0414
Email: ddmbaus@yahoo.com

Rochester:

Contact: Chi An Hong
Tel: (585) 249-0617
Email: chianhong@hotmail.com

Nevada

Las Vegas

Contact: Mabel Lin
Tel: (702) 896-4108
Email: mebaltan@go.com

North Carolina

Contact: Shirley Wang
Tel: (919) 852-4860
Email: tsuili2@yahoo.com

Pennsylvania

Contact: Kun-Chang Yu
Tel: (814) 867-9253
Email: ddm-bapa@gmail.com

Philadelphia

Contact: Thomas Chiang
Tel: (610) 254-5028
Email: tchiang2001@hotmail.com

Texas

Dallas

Contact: Patty Yee
Tel: (972) 660-5971, (817) 226-6888
Email: ddm-ba_patty@yahoo.com

Houston

Contact: Theresa Feng
Tel: (281) 589-0718
Email: power26v@aol.com

Tennessee

Memphis

Contact: Dan Tu
Tel: (732) 777-9618
Email: dan_tu@hotmail.com

Utah

Salt Lake City

Contact: Inge Fan
Tel: (801) 947-9019
Email: inge_fan@hotmail.com

Vermont

Contact: Jui-Chu Lee
Tel: (802) 658-3413
Email: juichulee@yahoo.com

Washington

Seattle

Contact: Christine Lin
Tel: (425) 957-4597
Email: christinelin00@hotmail.com

Canada

Toronto

DDMBA Ontario
154 Poyntz Avenue
Toronto, Ontario, Canada M2N 1J4
Email: ddm-ba.toronto@gmail.com
Web: www.ddm-ba-ontario.ca
Tel: 416-855-0531

Vancouver

DDMBA Vancouver Center
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Poland

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Związek Buddyistów Czan (Chan Buddhist Union):

Contact: Pawel Rosciszewski, Beata Kazimierska

Tel/Fax: (22) 7275663, GSM 0-601-205602

Tel/Fax: (22) 6208446, (22) 6498670,

GSM 0-601-205602

Switzerland

Zurich

Teacher: Max Kalin (Guo-yun)

Tel/fax: 411 382 1676

Mobile: 4179 416 8088

Email: MaxKailin@chan.ch

<http://www.chan.ch>

Bern

Hildi Thalmann

Haus Sein

Bruungasse 16

CH3011 Bern Switzerland

Email: hthalmann@gmx.net

www.chan-bern.ch

Tel: 31 352 2243

United Kingdom

London

18 Huson Close

London NW3 3JW, England

Tel: 44-171-586-6923

Western Ch'an Fellowship:

24 Woodgate Ave. Bury

Lancashire, BL9 7RU, U.K.

Contact: Simon Child, secretary

Email:

secretary@westernchanfellowship.org,

www.westernchanfellowship.org

ASIA

Hong Kong

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

**Dharma Drum Mountain
Buddhism Information Centre in
Malaysia:**

30 Jalan 16/6, 46350 Petaling Jaya,
Selangor DE, Malaysia

Tel: 603-79600841, 603-7319245

Fax: 603-7331413, 603-79600842

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Singapore

**Dharma Drum Mountain
(Singapore Liaison Office):**

No. 10 Second Avenue,

Singapore 266660

Contact: Ms. Yeh Yin Shia

Tel & Fax

(65) 6469 6565

Cell 9745 6565.

Email: ysyehsg@yahoo.com.tw

Taiwan

Nung Ch'an Monastery:

No. 89, Lane 65, Tayeh Road

Peitou, Taipei

Tel: 02-2893-3161

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No.14-5, Lin 7, Sanchieh Village,

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Tel: 02-2498-7171, 02-2498-7174

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**Dharma Drum International Medi-
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Contact: Antonio

Tel: 02-2893-4646 ext. 6504

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Saturdays, 2:00 – 5:00 pm at the

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Australia:

Melbourne

Contact: Laura Chan

Email: ddmlaura@hotmail.com

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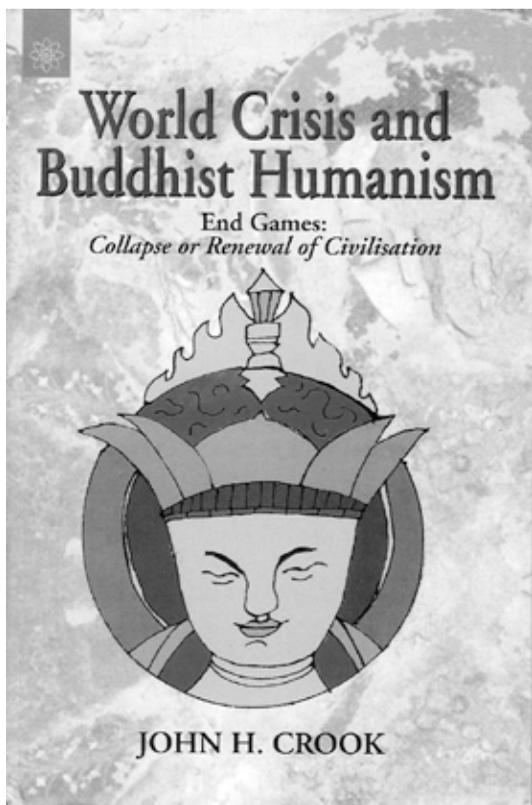
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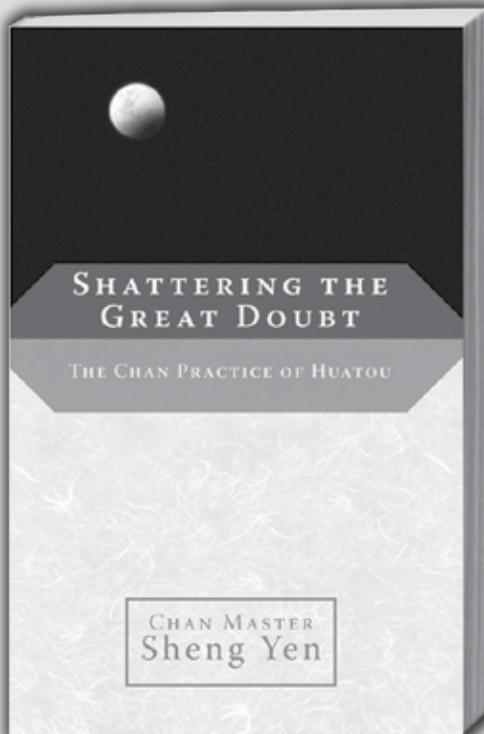
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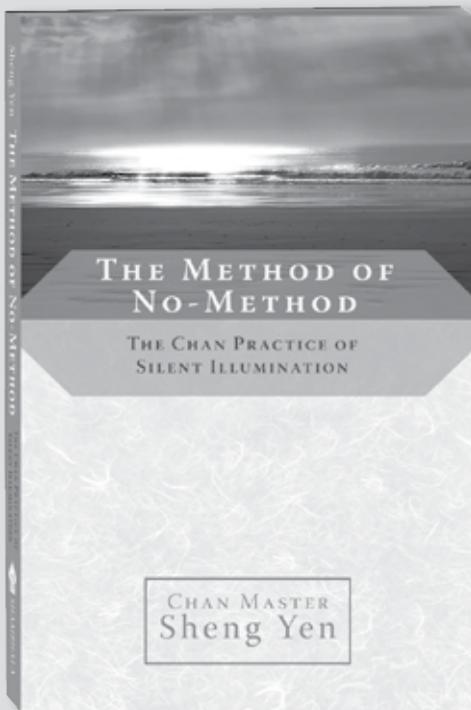
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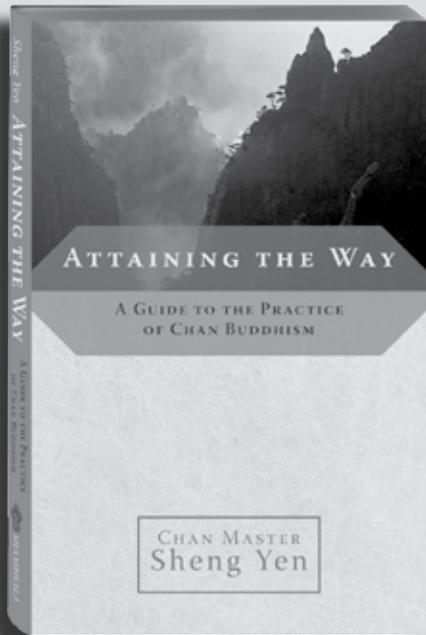


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