



“I hear stories about the questionable behavior of some meditation masters in the West. If these stories are indeed true, then these teachers are not true masters. Nonetheless, they have still served a good purpose in bringing the teachings of Buddhism to the West and given many an opportunity they never would have had. The masters’ personal lives are their own problems, but people should be grateful to them for their contributions.

Indian mythology speaks of a special swan that can swallow the pure, nourishing cream from a mixture of milk and water, without drinking any of the water. American Buddhists should adopt a similar attitude toward questionable teachers. Study Buddhadharma with them, absorb as much good teaching as possible, and leave the bad karma where you find it.

I hope that you accept and practice the things that you find good and beneficial in my teachings. The parts you do not like, you can just ignore.”

— Chan Master Sheng Yen  
“The Sword of Wisdom”

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# Settling the Mind

by

*Chan Master Sheng Yen*

This article is an excerpt from a lecture given by Master Sheng Yen to the Meditation Group at Nung Chan Monastery, Taiwan, on April 8, 1984. Antonio Hsieh translated the Chinese transcript, with bilingual editing by Chiacheng Chang and Robert Dougherty, English editing by Ernest Heau.

## Settling the Mind in Everyday Life

We face all kinds of issues in daily life—livelihood, family, safety and security, and most importantly, how to attain liberation from the cycle of birth and death. With these issues lingering in the mind from moment to moment, it's almost impossible to live day to day with peace of mind. For practitioners this creates obstructions. So they have to eliminate their view of self, their attachment to the body, and to life itself. In today's society, everyone is forever competing in pursuit of material desires such that ethics have deteriorated, and familial affection has waned; there's no security in the family structure, and the divorce rate is rising. Even as a couple is preparing to get married, they're making prenuptial agreements in case they get divorced. They even start to worry about the issue of raising children, and who gets the kids if they do divorce. Husband and wife aren't prepared in their minds to remain faithful "until death do us part." In many families, parents are busy all day with their careers and socializing, and thus neglect to discipline their children. This creates many problem children who can make problems

for society. To save the families, we must start with each individual; everyone must fulfill their respective duties as a member of the family. That way a harmonious state can be achieved with "loving parents, filial children, harmonious couples, genial older siblings and respectful younger siblings."

Death is humankind's biggest fear. In primeval times when people still lived as savages, human lives were exposed to many threats. People had to defend themselves against catastrophes and wild beasts, struggle with the natural environment, and strive to survive. Then came civilized society, but due to severely conflicting interests, people slaughtered each other, with frequent disputes and protracted wars pitting clan against clan, tribe against tribe, race against race, and nation against nation. For any individual, from cradle to grave, there are no absolute guarantees for every minute and every second of life. We may fall ill or die of accidental causes. "Human life is fragile, and can change at any moment in between breaths." So we must accept this fact. If we can accept it calmly, we don't need to worry about whether we'll be safe. But until we die, we have to find a way to survive. If

Photo by Taylor Mitchell

you commit suicide, you would violate the Buddhist law of karma. Then again, if we're afraid of death, we can also change our past karma and prolong our life by practicing diligently. True practitioners, though, are not afraid of death.

In short, the future is unknowable, and we can only try our best to protect our safety. Furthermore, as long as we're alive we can never be absolutely safe. We don't need to worry about the safety issue, but we should strive to reduce danger to a minimum, neither creating danger ourselves, nor giving other people opportunities to create danger. Even so, this is only relatively safer, because humans are all mortal, and life itself is the source of insecurity. We have to take this perspective so that we can calm our mind in an environment that is insecure.

## Settling the Mind in the Process of Practice

Before we start to practice Buddhism, we rarely openly face our own mental tendencies. Only when we begin to practice do we discover that our mind can be chaotic, dirty, ugly, unstable, impure, and agitated.

Those who have a practice method, whether it be sitting meditation, reciting the Buddha's name,

reciting sutras, or chanting mantras, can all discover that their mind is not yet concentrated. That shows they have made some progress in spiritual practice. If you have attained at least this level, it is better not to pay attention to disturbances in the mind, but just return to the method. Ignore deluded or wandering thoughts, and they will naturally decrease, leaving only the method. Finally, even the method will disappear, for the method itself is also a deluded thought.

So when you notice wandering thoughts during your practice, ignore them. Don't despise them, but you must not follow them either. When you notice wandering thoughts, leave them alone and go back to the method. That's the best way. Stay with the method. Then your mind will naturally settle down.

Nevertheless, if you feel that you are already free of wandering thoughts, it does not necessarily mean that your mind is calm and stable. A Buddhist nun said to me: "Over the past six months, I've often felt that after sitting meditation, there are no distinctions between me and other sentient beings, people, or things. It seems like I'm the same as them. In those circumstances, I don't care whether I, or they, exist. Is that liberation?"

I told her, "No, it isn't!" Why? Because in fact, this "I" that she perceived as "no-self" and the external "people" both exist, and are clearly in opposition. Although there are no coarse, heavy afflictions such as craving, hatred, joy, or anger, for her, the idea or perception of "unity" and "you, I, and they are the same" still exists.

She then continued: "Was I in a state of dhyana?"

I told her, "No, you weren't!" In dhyana, in its true sense, there is no "you," no "they," and no "I," and there is no space or time. Dhyana means the

mind has come to rest on a single thought, and is not situated in time or space. So dhyana is achieved only when the boundary between before and after is broken, and the mental actions perish. That means dhyana requires that there are no past or future thoughts, and there is no inside or outside of the body, mind, or environment. Having heard my explanation, she was very disappointed.

She asked me, "Then at that time, where was I?"

I said, "You were in an illusory, deluded state. However, while in that state, at least you weren't afraid. For practitioners, that's a good thing."

So that nun was disappointed again. Having practiced for so long, she naturally thought that was a very good state. Instead, I explained it as an illusory state. We should know that all states that have a physical or mental form are illusory. Physical forms involve the physical body and the environment in which the body dwells. In other words, all bodily sensations and mental perceptions are simply illusory states. Although the selflessness she felt made her feel she had already attained liberation from afflictions, it can only be said to be a process of cultivation. Still not free from her perceptions of no-self and liberation, she was actually still in an illusory state. At that time her mind might be able to be at peace relatively speaking, but it wasn't true, absolute peace. It was still at the level where mind exists and can be pacified, while the truly calm mind means having no mind to be pacified.

What the early patriarchs such as Bodhidharma, Huike, Sengchou, and Daoxin called a mind at peace is to have no mind to be pacified or used. That's the meaning of: "I searched for my mind but cannot find it" and "To not pacify anything is called true pacification of mind."

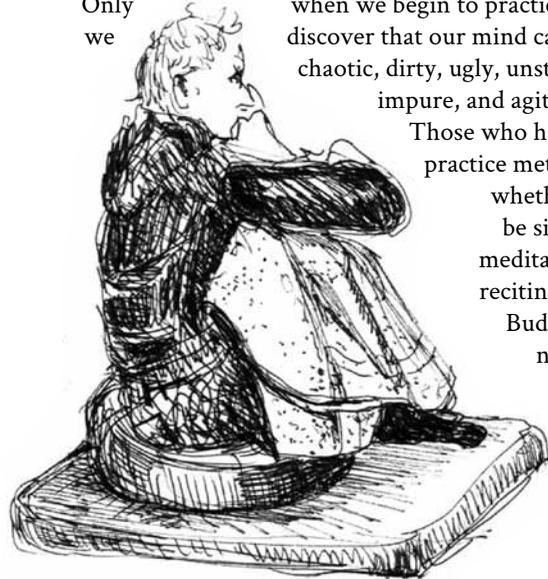
## There is no Mind to be Pacified

Having no mind to be pacified doesn't mean abiding in some ethereal state. If mind abides in existence, mind exists; if mind abides in emptiness, it still exists. I have a disciple who, during a seven-day Chan retreat, swept the courtyard early in the morning. While sweeping, she picked up the azaleas that fell on the ground, one by one, and put them on the cherry trees. At that time the cherry trees had neither leaves nor blossoms. She did this with great, intense interest. So I asked her, "What are you doing?" She said, "The world is so lovely! The trees are alive, and the flowers that fall are still alive, so

I put them on the trees. Once I put them on the trees, the azaleas are cherry blossoms. What's the difference? They can fall from the azalea trees, and grow on cherry trees."

She felt that the world was so vivacious, harmonious, and lovely. Such a mindset might seem endearing, but actually she was still in the "lesser self" state of emotional attachment. In appreciating the world, she projected herself onto

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AND THE MENTAL ACTIONS  
PERISH.



Drawing by Rikki Asher

the things around her. Although not a coarse and heavy affliction, that kind of joy still isn't free from the afflicted mind. When some people achieve a better state through their sitting meditation, their body and mind do not exist, and they feel extremely relaxed, peaceful, comfortable, and free, and very joyful. Many people do sitting meditation merely to attain a sense of that kind of happiness, taking that as the experience of having attained liberation. But actually that state is not yet liberation, for it's just a pause in the burdens of affliction. When they return to their normal, everyday state of mind they won't feel liberated, for their burdensome body is still there, and endless afflictions are back.

So if we get a little joy from practicing contemplation, or gain a sense of unity with the environment and its beauty, that's not liberation. Liberation means having no mind to be used, and no mind to be pacified. No-mind means one has entered into concentration, but it's not ordinary, worldly meditative absorption. In concentration

there is no space and no time, and no issue about the mind moving or not moving. That's the true reality of all dharmas. When a worm is crawling on the ground, you see that it's crawling, but your mind won't crawl along after it. Everything happens as it normally does, but your mind won't generate movement or discriminative thought.

At that time the mind is like a mirror which reflects everything that passes in front of it, but the mirror itself is not affected. Its surface does not change in response to things moving in front of it, nor does it retain the images of things that pass by. No-mind means having a mind that remains unmoved, and doesn't retain any trace of the forms in the environment. Precisely because the mind doesn't move, it accurately reflects the forms in the environment. And because it doesn't retain any traces, there is no overlapping or blurring of the forms that it reflects. When there is no mind to be pacified, there are no afflictive impulses, but the function of wisdom still exists.



Drawing by Rikki Asher

# Chan Thought and Chan Action

by

*Venerable Chi Chern*

This talk presents an overview of three systems of thought—Madhyamika, Consciousness-Only, and Tathagatagarbha—and how they relate to the Chan school of Chinese Buddhism. It was given at the Chan Meditation Center on September 23, 2012. It was translated by Venerable Chang Wen and edited by Buffe Maggie Laffey.

## Chan and Mahayana Buddhism

Good morning every one. The topic for this morning's talk is Chan thought and Chan action, and this is a very broad topic. It includes theories of meditation, not only those of Chinese Buddhism but other traditions as well. In addition it includes the many different Chan approaches to methods of practice. We also have Chan behavior: after a Chan practitioner has some experience and knowledge of the principles, their very behavior in daily life has a certain style about it. So, this topic could include all these traditions, theories, practices and aspects of behavior in daily life. But since time is limited we'll just give a general talk. We'll stay focused on the Chan school within Chinese Buddhism.

Within the Dharma Drum Lineage, when sharing the teachings our focus is on the aspect of meditation practice. For the most part, when people encounter information about meditation, the information comes from Chinese Chan. Chinese Buddhism has many systems of thought from which the Chan school eventually emerged. Its system of thinking was born from the Mahayana teachings. We're going to focus on how the Chan school embodies and expresses Mahayana Buddhism.

## Three Main Schools

If we look at Indian Buddhism and its teachings of the Mahayana we see three main schools which were transmitted from India to China. They are the Madhyamika or "teaching on the middle way," the Consciousness-Only, and the Tathagatagarbha. When these three schools were developing in India, the first two which developed were the Madhyamika and Consciousness-Only. These two schools seem to have had a lot of interaction in the form of debating. The debates were based on their differences in theory, and we find that many treatises or commentaries were written as a result. It seems that theory became the main emphasis of these two schools because at that time in India people were more inclined to be interested in theoretical teachings and debate. So these two schools developed in that way. The third of these schools which developed in India is the Tathagatagarbha. Some people claim that the Tathagatagarbha school really doesn't have much influence on Indian Mahayana Buddhism, perhaps because the school put more emphasis on teachings from the sutras, rather than writing lots of treatises. However this school does play a special role and it did have a certain amount of influence.

When these three schools were transmitted to China they became schools of their own within Chinese Buddhism. The Madhyamika became the Three Treatise school, and then the Consciousness-Only teachings developed into the Consciousness-Only school. But because these two schools emphasized theory and debate and principles, at the time they were developing in China they did not have a great impact on Chinese culture or society. So these two schools weren't widely accepted, though they did continue and they still exist today. Of the three schools, the Tathagatagarbha became the most widespread in China. It seemed to blend well with the native thinking that was developing in Chinese culture at the time. The Tathagatagarbha school was able to adapt to Chinese philosophies, and to adopt some of their principles into its own teachings. Not only that, there was a concrete method within this Tathagatagarbha school, a

method that people could apply. And here's an interesting thing: understanding of the teachings of the Madhyamika and the Consciousness-Only schools can help one to apply the Chan method of the Tathagatagarbha school.

## Madhyamika School

Nagarjuna was the founder of the Madhyamika school. The main approach of his teaching was to smash apart any and all philosophy. Basically, any philosophy, any kind of theory, is something relative. A theory or concept is based on the fact that there's another concept in opposition to it, so it's relative. It's the same for any kind of phenomenon itself, since Buddhism teaches that any phenomenon is conditionally arising; it's relative to something else. So in this way phenomena are relative, and theories are relative, they can't stand alone by themselves.



Photo by Ven. Chang Wen

Since they can't stand alone they can't show us reality and so the approach of the Madhyamika is to use philosophy to break apart attachment to philosophy. When a person is confronted with this kind of debate, this Madhyamika teaching would be able to break apart their attachment to any kind of theory, any kind of relative concepts. At that point naturally they would experience Dharma, or reality.

So this is the basis of the Madhyamika teachings. In a sense it is itself establishing a philosophy. However its purpose in establishing a philosophy is to break apart all theories and to realize what is called emptiness: the lack of some kind of independent nature. This theory can approach any kind of philosophy including that of the Consciousness-Only school and help break apart that teaching. That's why there were so many debates between these two schools. When one uses theory to break apart attachment to any theory, one naturally realizes this emptiness of any self nature.

## Consciousness-Only School

The approach of the Consciousness-Only school makes use of observation of body and mind to bring about a transformation from impure mind to pure mind. For example, the function of consciousness called the sixth consciousness has a lot of impurity within it and creates karma. With our sixth consciousness, our vexations, we create karma and keep cycling in this process. The practice of the Consciousness-Only school is to take this sixth consciousness and change it from this function of impurity to what is called the wisdom of wondrous observation. Basically this uses the mind to observe deeply all the different phenomena of the mind.

The Consciousness-Only school goes into very clear detail as to the different functions and the

various defilements of the mind. This is basically Buddhist psychology, a deep study and detailed analysis of the function of the mind. In the beginning one uses this practice of observing and then transforming the function of the mind into what is called the wisdom of wondrous observation. When one can do that, there is also a transformation in the function of the seventh consciousness. The main function of the seventh consciousness is self-attachment and when this transformation occurs, self-attachment becomes the wisdom of equality. Then further, when the transformation becomes deeper into the eighth consciousness, it becomes what's called the great perfect mirror wisdom. And when this transformation occurs then the previous five consciousnesses, those of sight, hearing, smell, taste, and touch, these functions then become the functions of mind, they become the function to help deliver sentient beings.

So we can see that the Consciousness-Only school emphasizes this practical awareness of our body and mind, and awareness of impurity so that we can transform the function of the mind into wisdom, into purity.

## Tathagatagarbha School

The main principle of the Tathagatagarbha school is that all sentient beings possess Buddha nature. This means that at heart every sentient being's basic nature is pure, and all the defilements and afflictions of the mind (which the Consciousness-Only school goes into in great detail), all of these pollutants are actually what we call foreign. We can describe the pure nature of the mind as "the host" and the pollutants of the mind as "the guest". The host doesn't move, doesn't go anywhere. It's always present. Whereas the guests are coming and going. So the basis of the Tathagatagarbha school is that, since we already have this pure nature all one needs to do is to

eliminate the pollutants of the mind. Very naturally when the pollutants are all cleaned out then the nature of the mind just manifests.

When this school was developing in China, its system of thought was very well received. Why is that? Because if we look at the systems of thought outside of Buddhism, traditional systems like Confucianism, we see that a very fundamental concept in Confucianism is that the basic nature of humanity is wholesome or good. This is very similar to the basic nature of the mind being pure. It's just that in Confucianism, instead of emphasizing some kind of practice, education is emphasized. People should be educated so that they learn how to be what's called a "great person". To be a great person one just needs to undergo an education called "great learning". When one succeeds in this great study then one realizes this basic nature of goodness, also referred to as saintliness. With the Confucian tradition already being very strong in Chinese culture, the similarity between its basic concept and the Tathagatagarbha school principle of the basic purity of the mind matched very well. So within China the Tathagatagarbha school developed and became most widespread and most well-received. Not only as a system of thought but actually as a very practical method for one to realize this innate purity of mind.

## Three Dharma Seals

With regards to Mahayana Buddhism we can say that its main principle is emptiness. If we don't talk about emptiness when talking about Mahayana Buddhism then we can't say that it's genuine Mahayana. In approaching this idea of emptiness within the three schools, they each describe it in a different way. But first we can approach emptiness by using a more fundamental teaching of Buddhism called the three Dharma Seals. The first Dharma Seal is that all phenomena are impermanent, any

kind of thing within this world is constantly in a state of change. If we use observation we will be able to see this, and this leads to the second Dharma Seal, that because of this constant movement and change then all phenomena are without self. Being without self means that there is no fixed kind of substance or center of anything. Everything is constantly changing so we can't find a fixed entity there. If one realizes that, then we have the third Dharma Seal which is nirvana, or quiescence, or the great silence. This is a realization which brings about liberation from all of one's problems, vexations, and afflictions.

These three basic principles are essentially the mark or the characteristic of everything. We can see that the most central characteristic that these



three seals are based on is selflessness. Because of selflessness, because there is no fixed entity, we have this fact that everything is changing, everything is in a constant state of movement. Because of selflessness we also have nirvana or liberation, the extinction of vexation. These three Dharma Seals, these three characteristics of things, are another way to more clearly describe the principle of conditioned arising which we mentioned earlier. If one can grasp the Dharma Seals, then if one gives a talk about the Dharma one would be sure to be leading people in the right direction. Because what is the right direction? Nirvana, the quality or experience of liberation. As long as the teaching is going in that direction, it's correct. Again, for one to do that the teachings have to correspond with this fact of impermanence as well as selflessness. So if one can understand, embody and teach these Dharma Seals, this would be a very complete understanding of the core principles of Buddha Dharma.

## Realizing Emptiness, Manifesting Wisdom

As we mentioned the basic approach of the Madhyamika school is to break apart attachment to any theories. It uses its own theory to break apart all theories. When one does that, one reaches a point where any kind of theory, any kind of speculation or concept is basically meaningless and is called "meaningless elaboration". When one is able to drop all kinds of theorizing and conceptualization, one then realizes emptiness.

THE MORE WE ARE ABLE  
TO DO LESS,  
THE MORE WE ARE ABLE  
TO DO NO METHOD,  
THE MIND NATURALLY  
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TO THIS STATE OF PURITY,  
THIS STATE OF  
SILENCE AND ILLUMINATION.

By emptying out concepts one realizes emptiness and this is the fruit of the practice. If we look at the Consciousness-Only school they also use the principle of emptiness, but it is applied to the fact that one is going through a transformation. One is transforming one's consciousness from being polluted or defiled so that it becomes wisdom or purity. That's why there's the saying within the Consciousness-Only school; "transforming consciousness into wisdom." As we explained, when one's consciousness is transformed it's like great and perfect mirror. This perfect mirror-like wisdom has countless functions of mind which one then uses to deliver sentient beings. So, although one has realized the fruit of liberation, one still has expedient means and uses one's wisdom to help others. The Tathagatagarbha school also uses the principle of emptiness to clean defilements from the mind and naturally manifest the wisdom inherent in each sentient being.

When we look at these three schools, we see that the approach of Madhyamika emphasizes selflessness, the empty nature of anything, so that any kind of concept or theory is rendered meaningless and one then realizes liberation. The Consciousness-Only school emphasizes the aspect of impermanence. They describe in detail all of these various functions within the mind, which you can say are impermanent. Whereas the Tathagatagarbha school emphasizes this nirvanic nature which is inherent in all sentient beings and is basically the fruit of the practice. All one needs to do is clear away the defilements of the mind

and then naturally one realizes emptiness. So, although all three schools have their different approaches, they all revolve around this main principle of emptiness.

## Deeply Coursing Within Prajnaparamita

We could also note that the Heart Sutra emphasizes emptiness. One of the very first lines, if translated correctly, says “When the bodhisattva Avalokitesvara was deeply coursing in prajnaparamita, she realized that all five skandas are empty.” About this line, just as a side note I’d like to emphasize that the way it’s translated now in English, the way we’ve been using it for years has been “when the bodhisattva Avalokitesvara was coursing in the deep prajnaparamita...” Right? That’s the way the Heart Sutra we have now is?

Actually the way I read it is not that the prajna is either deep or shallow, because prajna cannot be deep or shallow, prajna is just prajna—it is wisdom. Wisdom is emptiness, there is no depth or shallowness to it. A more accurate translation is, when a practitioner is deeply coursing within prajnaparamita. So this is for everyone’s consideration, you may want to look into representing this realization in that way. The realization of wisdom is the realization of emptiness. There is no deep or shallow to emptiness. Emptiness is just emptiness.

## Correct Perspective Towards Practice

So now let’s return to the Chan school. The Chinese Chan tradition is part of the whole system of Chinese Buddhism which includes the Madhyamika school, the Consciousness-Only school and the Tathagatagarbha school. But our

tradition of Chan includes within it all of these teachings. It’s more difficult to see the teachings of Consciousness-Only within our tradition of Chinese Chan, whereas the teachings of Tathagatagarbha as well as Madhyamika are more clearly seen. Again our Chan tradition is based on the Mahayana principle of emptiness, and it’s this perspective of emptiness that we use when approaching our practice. If we are not very clear about this principle of emptiness it’s possible for us to go astray, to encounter obstructions.

For example, we all know that within our Dharma Drum Lineage we have the two lineages of Caodong and Linji. They each have their own methods, the Linji tradition has the method of huatou and the Caodong tradition has the method of silent illumination, and these are our main practices. Most people approach the practice wanting to get something from it, wanting to attain some kind of realization. With this kind of mentality it’s quite natural that a practitioner might think, “well if I want to get enlightened I’d better make sure I use all sorts of methods.” They start adding different methods and approaches into their cultivation of practice, and instead of getting closer to emptiness they actually become full of all this stuff. With this approach the more they practice the more full they become, so to speak. They’re going in the opposite direction, they are not going in the direction of emptiness. They are complicating themselves by adding all these different things into their practice.

If we don’t have the right perspective towards practice, if we are all about achieving something, and we happen to be using the method of silent illumination, then most likely we will be sitting there imagining something: “Let’s see, how can I be silent? How can I be illuminating? Yeah, I think that’s it!” and trying to create an experience of enlightenment. With this approach of trying to

attain something, naturally we’d be adding all sorts of things into our method, all kinds of imagination. We could call them “meaningless elaborations” and we also refer to them as “deluded thoughts” If we are practicing in this direction we’re just adding more things into our mind and getting farther and farther away from silence and illumination.

## Doing Less and Less

If we look at silent illumination from the perspective of the Tathagatagarbha system of thought, silent illumination is the basic nature of our mind. We don’t have to do anything to achieve it. Actually all of the vexations we experience, all the afflictions we have, actually add things into the mind, all sorts of defilements. From the perspective of Tathagatagarbha we don’t necessarily have to add anything. We just need to clean out the filth from the mind and allow it to regain its natural silence and illumination. That’s why we have a saying in Chan, “when all mental activities cease, and when words and language are cut off.”

Again, this is a process not of adding or gaining something but rather a process of cleaning out, simplifying the mind and doing less and less. That’s why silent illumination is often described as “the method of no method.” Why is that? Because the more we are able to do less, the more we are able to do no method, the mind naturally returns to this state of purity, this state of silence and illumination.

If a person has this perspective of emptiness, and knows that all of our afflictions are extra and added by the mind, then they can understand that the correct approach is to do less. With the application of silent illumination there may be a kind of method in the beginning, but all the methods are aimed at doing less. Any method is aimed at doing less and less of the method until one realizes this state of no method.

Essentially this is also the approach of Madhyamika. With Madhyamika, or the “middle way,” the approach is to negate everything, to negate any kind of theory. And because Madhyamika is negating all theories, it also negates itself. So in the end you’re not left with another theory, you’re left with emptiness. You’re left with the experience of complete non-attachment to any theory, to any meaningless elaborations, or to any concept or activity of the mind. Silent illumination as this method of no method, really is founded on emptiness and can be described through either Tathagatagarbha or Madhyamika as they are all essentially going in the same direction of simplification. One’s mind goes from being very scattered and agitated—imagining and trying to get rid of vexation and become enlightened—to a state



of unified mind. In the state of unification the mind is silent, illuminating, but still there is something there, there's a oneness where eventually the simplest state of mind itself is emptiness. You really couldn't get simpler than that.

If we look at silent illumination based on this perspective of emptiness it should be going in that direction. With the method of silent illumination the approach, in becoming more simple, is really just letting go. Letting go, letting go, and continuing to let go until there's nothing to let go of. At that point you would realize the nature of emptiness.

## Not About Getting An Answer

With the method of huatou the approach is slightly different, but again, the purpose is, as it's said, to perceive your original face. What is your original face? Well, your original face is your own Buddha nature. What is Buddha nature? Buddha nature is the nature of emptiness, this purity of



Photo by Ven. Chang Wen

mind that one realizes. In the beginning, with huatou there is a method where one brings up a question (this could be also be a gong'an or, in Japanese, koan). Some people may think that this gong'an or huatou practice means that you are looking for some kind of answer. You get all these different answers and you may feel "Ah! I've got it! I've gotten the answer! I got more answers!"

One may think that the more answers that come up, the deeper the practice. But actually, this means again that something is being gained. If you feel that you acquired something, that's not going in the direction of experiencing emptiness. Huatou is not about getting any answer, it's actually about investigating into the nature of emptiness.

With this practice one recites a question (for example, "What is my original face?") until the point where one's mind and the question become unified; there is no more distraction in one's mind. At this point it's crucial to generate the sense of doubt (which can also be translated as deep inquiry into the nature of mind). One generates this questioning and it builds to a crescendo, to a point where it is called the great mass of doubt.

At that point all that's left in one's mind is this sense of questioning. The mind has been simplified by cleaning out all of these impurities, cleaning out even any answers that may come until all that is left is this powerful and deep sense of investigation. At that point one doesn't just stay there but proceeds to break apart this mass of doubt.

When the mass of doubt is broken apart one very naturally realizes one's original face. One realizes the nature of emptiness, all meaningless elaboration has been left behind. Any kind of attachment has been broken through. This direction of practice is, again, in line with Madhyamika.

## Simpler and Simpler

The purpose of Madhyamika is to break away attachment so that nothing is left except this very natural experience of all things as emptiness. Huatou is going in the same direction. You're getting simpler and simpler to the point where just this doubt remains, until even the doubt is shattered. No attachment is left and one experiences the original purity of the mind which was always there, not something that was attained. If a person practicing huatou feels that they need to attain something, then their practice will surely go in the wrong direction. Instead, they should recognize that emptiness is the nature of things and that their practice should be going in that direction, simpler and simpler, with less and less. So, the Chan methods of huatou and silent illumination are both clearly in line with these three schools of thought, especially Madhyamika and Tathagatagarbha. Based on these principles one can use either method to cultivate towards the experience of nirvana, or liberation from vexation.

Because of our limits of time, we can't go into much detail about these three systems of thought and how they relate to practice, but we just did a general explanation. If you are interested in the practice, it's important to get a good and clear understanding of the difference between these systems of thought and how they apply to the method. Basically, all three systems take emptiness as the main principle, the main direction for practice. By reading specific sutras or treatises and commentaries related to each of these schools, you'll be able to establish a clear conceptual basis

for the practice. When you have that, you can use this basic conceptual structure when you apply the method. We can't just enter into the method as swiftly and directly as we just described it, because our minds aren't so simple—actually we have a lot of troubles, problems, and vexations. So it's important to go through the practice in a sequential

THE REALIZATION  
OF WISDOM  
IS THE REALIZATION  
OF EMPTINESS.  
THERE IS NO  
DEEP OR SHALLOW,  
EMPTINESS  
IS JUST  
EMPTINESS.

way to understand the whole system of Chan practice and to begin with the basics. Chan practice starts with what? With adjusting the body, learning to have good posture, regulating the breathing so that it's proper and natural, and relaxing; and then we gradually use methods which are expedient means to the approach of Chan, either silent illumination or huatou. It's important to establish the foundation of a well-regulated, well-harmonized state of body and mind before entering into the direct practices of huatou

and silent illumination. With this conceptual background and understanding, and a sequential way of entering into the practice, we have a complete approach, a complete systematic study and practice of Buddhadharma. Since we have this aspiration to realize Nirvana, to realize peace and freedom from our sufferings, we need to have a clear conceptual basis and a clear system of actual practice to go about doing that. So this is how we can make use of these three systems of thought in combination with our Chan lineage approach of silent illumination and huatou.

We hope to share all the merits of the benefits of practice with all sentient beings, and may they all swiftly realize Buddhahood. Thank you everyone, I wish you all health and happiness.

# *The Arising of Conditioned Appearance from the True Mind*

## *Part 2*

by

*Abbot Venerable Guo Xing*

This is the second in a series of articles taken from Dharma talks given by Abbot Venerable Guo Xing at the Shurangama Sutra Retreat in August 2012. The talks focus on the first four chapters of the Shurangama Sutra, and include the discussion of Chan theory and practice, stories of the Chan Masters, and how to apply Chan methods in daily life.



Photo by Kaifen Hu

Seeing true nature,  
is  
the mind.

Having once  
seen true nature,  
there are no obstacles.

We sentient beings perceive that the mind dwells in the body, which leads to the thinking that “the body is me,” and that the body has awareness. When we look, do we look with the mind or with the eyes? When we hear, do we hear with the ears or with the mind? If we turn off the light now, can we still see?

Yes. You are hearing the sound of me talking right now. If there is no sound, does the ability to hear remain? Certainly. Our body has sensations at this moment. If body disappears, does the mind’s ability to be aware still exist? Yes, it still exists. There is a story in the Chan School: A person had entered deep samadhi and ceased to breathe. People thought he was dead, so they cremated his body. When the man’s consciousness returned, he couldn’t find his body. He searched all over, asking, “Where is my body? Where is my body?”<sup>1</sup>

Based on this story we can say that without the body, the mind that has the ability to be aware still exists. The body is merely a tool. It is really the mind that has the ability to see, to hear, to perceive.

Therefore, if you feel that your body has disappeared during meditation, there is no need to be afraid. There was once a person who became fearful when he was at the brink of entering the body-disappearing stage. No matter how we tried to explain it to him, trying to alleviate his fear, he dared not enter that stage. Why was that so? That’s because he still had a beautiful wife, adorable children, and a large business to run.

In truth, every time we sleep, we cease to feel the body, and we do not get afraid when we sleep. Yet we become fearful of the similar phenomenon encountered during meditation. There was another person who had cancer. He became afraid of sleeping at night, because he was afraid that he would never wake up again.

In a nutshell, the body is the mind’s object of awareness. The body itself does not have the function of awareness. During meditation the legs can become numb and lose sensation when stepping on the ground. In that case, do the legs still have the function of awareness? When the legs get numb, they do not have the function of awareness. What about when the legs are not numb? Do they then have the function of awareness? Do we exercise awareness via the nervous system, or via the mind?

*Student:*

A blind person only sees darkness, does this mean they are not able to see?

*Ven. Guo Xing:*

Does that blind person know that he cannot see? He sees darkness. At night, we also only see darkness. Do we then lose the ability to see? When we close our eyes, do we still have the ability to see? Yes, we do.

*Student:*

Still, we need the eyes. For instance, through my eyes, I can see what’s in front of me, but cannot see what’s behind me. Is it the same way with the true mind, that it can see the front but not the back?

*Ven. Guo Xing:*

In the sutra, Ananda had asked, “When we enter a room, our field of vision shrinks. When we exit the room, our field of vision expands. Does this mean our mind, which has the function of seeing, also shrinks and expands?” The Buddha said, “It’s the container that has the attribute of large, small, square, or round. Our seeing-nature does not change.”

When the mind is confined within the body it does not see. Once the mind exits the body, then it sees. When we enter the Chan Hall, we cannot see the surroundings outside of the Chan Hall. Once

we exit the Chan Hall, then we can see. Does this mean, upon entering the Chan Hall, our ability to see shrinks? If the ability to see is deemed “lost” due to the walls, then do we suddenly gain that ability back where there are windows? In fact, when we see through the eyes, the mind has already been confined. If the mind does not see via the eyes, then it in fact can see the back.

The reason why we can no longer see the outside after we enter a house is because the mind operates under the dualistic mode, falsely believing that we need to see through the eyes. Consequently the mind is restricted by the eyes. We are used to seeing with the eyes, hearing with the ears, and are subject to their restrictions. But when we operate through the consciousness, our thoughts are not restricted by our physical body.

Those with the supernatural power of heavenly eye<sup>2</sup> are not restricted by the physical body or the organs. There was once a Chan master who got locked up in jail. Yet, many people witnessed him simultaneously running around on the streets outside. When our body is locked up, can the mind be locked up too? We are physically in the Chan Hall right now, but where are our minds? [laughter]

All phenomena are the manifestation of the mind. Therefore it is impossible for the mind to be restricted by the phenomena that it itself had created. It was stated in the sutra that:

*“From beginningless time until now, all living beings have mistaken themselves for things and, having lost the original mind, are turned around by things.*

*That is why they contemplate bigness and smallness in the midst of all this.*

*If you can turn things around, then you are the same as the Thus Come One.*

*With body and mind perfect and bright, you are an unmoving place of the Way.*

*The tip of a single fine hair can completely contain the lands of the ten directions<sup>3</sup>*

According to the Avatamsaka Sutra, while the Buddha was still inside his mother’s womb, there were already millions of bodhisattvas coming to listen to his Dharma teaching every day. The body is but a part of the mind. If you trap the mind in the body, then the mind will be restricted by the body. However, if you realize that the body is merely one function of the mind, then the tip of a single fine hair can indeed completely contain the lands of the ten directions.

We often say, “Everything is created by the mind.” People tend to understand it as “the way we view people, events, and objects is created by the mind.” But have you ever thought of this, that any person in front of you is also created by your mind? At this moment, you see me sitting here. But if you doze off, then I would disappear, right? Is there still a person then?

(To be continued)

<sup>1</sup> When the man’s consciousness had returned and was looking for his body, the man’s master (knowing that the man was very attached to his body) tried to help him.

The master told him “Your body is in the water,” but he couldn’t find his body when he entered the water. The master said “Your body is in the fire,” but he couldn’t find his body inside the fire. The master then said “No, your body is within the stone,” but the result was the same, he didn’t find his body inside the rock. So his master told him “You can’t enter the water, the fire, or the stone if you have a body. Now you can enter water, fire, and stone without obstruction. What do you need a body for?” The above story was told by Shifu (Master Sheng Yen), I don’t know its origin, but here is a similar story. There was a very famous Chan master called Old Master Guang-qin 廣欽老和尚 (1893-1985). One time he remained in samadhi for three months. Because he had no breath and no movement, people thought he was dead. But when his teacher, the great Master Hong-yi 弘一大師 (1880-1942) hit the chime beside his ear, Master Guang-qin woke up. Otherwise he would have been cremated in deep samadhi, and looking for his body.

- Abbot Venerable Guo Xing

<sup>2</sup> In the Shurangama Sutra Buddha explains how things are perceived from five different levels of vision: the ordinary physical eye of sentient beings, the heavenly eye, the wisdom eye, the Dharma eye, and the eye of the Buddha. With the heavenly eye; one can see something very tiny like the cell of an organism, or something very far away like a star or the moon, as clearly as if you held it in your hand. Once Sariputra refused to drink water for three days, because he saw thousands of germs with the heavenly eye, so the Buddha told him when you drink water, you have to use the physical eye instead of the heavenly eye.

<sup>3</sup> Buddhist Text Translation Society (n.d.) The seeing nature. In *The Shurangama Sutra*. Retrieved from <http://www.cttbusa.org/shurangama/shurangama7.asp>





# *Not Becoming Buddhist*

by

**Venerable Chang Wen**

This article is part of an East/West Buddhist exchange; a series of questions and answers between Taiwanese Buddhists and Venerable Chang Wen. The original Chinese version appeared in *Humanity Magazine*, a publication of Dharma Drum Mountain.

*Question:*

Why do we often see Westerners eating vegetarian diets and engaging in meditation practice, but not formally becoming Buddhists?

*Answer:*

According to my observation, this is not only a Western phenomenon. Across the globe, especially in developed countries, people are seeking ways to deal with the stress and anxiety of a fast-paced modern lifestyle based on material growth. Many of these people are looking for happiness beyond material wealth; they feel the need for spiritual nourishment. In addition to taking care of their physical health by making lifestyle changes, including exercise and possibly a vegetarian diet, people are turning towards meditation. Even throughout universities and health institutions, meditation is being taught and applied in research and treatment of physical and mental illness. More often the term “mindfulness” is used, and applied to a specific field of practice, as in “mindfulness and stress reduction,” etc.

Even in small towns, at community centers composed mostly of elderly retirees playing bingo and holding book club meetings, you can still find

people leading meditation classes. Meditation has permeated almost every stratum of modern society. Therefore, when we see people eating vegetarian diets and meditating, we cannot assume that they have an interest in Buddhism, or in becoming members of any religious community, for that matter. If they are indeed interested in religion, we cannot even be sure that their meditation practice or dietary habits have anything to do with Buddhist practices. Many Eastern and more recently, Western religions use sitting meditation as a practice of centering prayer, or a means to get in touch with their own God. Meditation and health, caring for body and mind, have become the focus of many modern people.

## **Obstacles to Commitment**

However, let's limit our discussion to people who study meditation and eat vegetarian food because of Buddhist influences, and currently engage in the study of Buddhadharma. Why is it that even some of these people do not consider themselves Buddhists, or would not formally commit to the practice by taking the Three Refuges and Five Precepts? From the people that I've encountered, I've observed that there are a few obstacles that prevent them from

making the commitment to becoming a Buddhist. In some cases, there are people who have had very negative experiences with religious communities, Buddhist or otherwise. They may have initially had a great deal of faith in a particular group or spiritual leader. Later on, they found out shameful news about these people, which completely turned them off to organized religion. We've all heard of cases where the spiritual leader took advantage of the followers, or where the followers themselves completely lost judgment due to an excessive amount of faith in their teacher, and made terrible decisions themselves. Many recent news articles about renowned and much-respected teachers, tell stories of years of manipulation, sexual harassment, or sexual misconduct from teachers who abused their power and their disciples' trust.

Going through an experience like this, it may be very difficult to ever trust another spiritual teacher or community again. The scars of such experiences remain deeply cut into the minds of those affected. However, they may still recognize the wisdom of the Buddha's teaching, and wish to continue the practice. As such, they would not consider themselves Buddhists, or join any community, but they still continue to meditate and study the Dharma.

## Concepts and Doubts

In other instances, there are students of the Dharma who have a great deal of confidence in a teacher and community, yet they harbor many doubts about the Dharma itself. They feel that

there are some concepts that are too difficult to understand. Other ideas are too difficult for them to accept. Some people think that if they cannot accept everything, then they are unable to have genuine faith in the Dharma. Others are just stuck in doubt regarding a few key ideas. For example, concepts such as non-self can be daunting to grasp, especially if they do not have a proper understanding. "How can I have no-self? Am I not right here? And if there's no self, who will I be in my next life? It just doesn't make sense."

The concept of previous and future lives, the round of rebirths, the cycle of transmigrating from one existence to the next; these ideas are especially hard for most Westerners to have faith in. Even in Western culture, the idea of reincarnation is not common. When they hear that not only is it possible to be reborn as a human being, but that they could also be reborn as an animal, hell-being, hungry ghost, angry god or deva, this becomes all-too-hard to accept.

Many people studying Buddhadharma are simply looking for peace in this present life. Yet, with their study they are confronted with the intellectually daunting task of accepting a description of reality that includes multiple lives. This can be a great obstacle to their genuine faith in the Dharma.

Ideas related to the existence of omniscient buddhas and bodhisattvas, seemingly similar to the idea of an all-knowing eternal God, can be equally puzzling. "Doesn't Buddhism say there's no eternally existing God? So how can there be an eternal Buddha?" In fact, when the Buddha talked about the "eternal" Dharma Body, or Body

of Reality of all buddhas and all phenomena, it can be mistaken as a concrete entity, or body. Properly understood, the Dharma Body is not a body, rather it is the functioning of awakened awareness as the empty nature of all phenomena. So eternal in this sense does not carry the same meaning as an eternal *thing*. In many cases, such as in *The Sutra of Complete Enlightenment*, the Buddha speaks of the nature of empty phenomena as being permanent, but emptiness is not an entity. Furthermore, it also says that to think of the nature of awakening as "permanent" or "impermanent" is not in accordance with enlightenment. The reality of "buddha" is beyond concepts. This is another intellectual challenge for people to grasp: that reality cannot be grasped with the intellect!

With regards to buddhas and their Pure Lands, it sounds very similar to the idea of heaven in other religions. "So when Buddhists die, they all go to the Pure Land? I don't want to go to the Pure Land, I don't even believe in it."

Those with a practice which is not based on faith or devotion to the buddhas may be turned off by hearing that even Buddhism talks about the idea of buddhas "saving" sentient beings. What they may not know is that buddhas are not creator gods, and Pure Lands are not permanent resting places for sentient beings. A Pure Land can be likened to a retreat center, where people take a break from daily life to cultivate the practice in a serene and ideal environment. When they have rested, healed, and cultivated their awareness of their own suffering, they then leave the retreat center and return to their normal daily life. In a Pure Land, a place where a buddha is teaching the Dharma, sentient beings cultivate towards enlightenment. After enlightenment, they return to the world of ordinary sentient beings to share the practice and help them liberate themselves. Pure Lands are not eternal resting places, like the idea of heaven in

other religions. Not understanding or accepting these and the above concepts can prevent people from considering themselves Buddhists and having genuine faith in the Dharma.

## Misunderstanding The Five Precepts

Another big obstacle for many people is taking the Five Precepts. There are those who have faith and confidence in the Buddha, the teachings, and the community of practitioners (known as the Three Jewels: Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha.) Yet these same people may lack confidence in their own ability to uphold the teachings and to practice the precepts, which are the guidelines for daily life. Often, their lack of confidence comes from a misunderstanding of the scope of the precepts.

For example, when people hear about not killing, not stealing, not engaging in sexual misconduct, not lying, and not taking intoxicants, they think that it's too difficult to uphold. They may think that not killing means they cannot eat meat, or engage in their profession that may involve killing animals or insects, like a butcher or a scientist who does testing on animals. They think that not lying means that they have to tell everyone what's on their mind, and completely reveal their personal feelings, especially when others demand them to share. Or they may assume that, no matter what, they have to reveal the truth about a private matter or sensitive issue to someone who asks. For example, if someone asks them about a third party's situation, which speaking about may harm that third party they think they must tell the truth despite endangering others. They may also think that not engaging in sexual misconduct means that they cannot have sexual relations with anyone, unless they have already chosen to marry that person, or that having multiple boy/girlfriend relationships

throughout one's life is wrong. Regarding the fifth precept, many people feel that to not drink alcohol would impoverish their social life or obstruct their career. What's more, they may be afraid that they are unable to uphold the precepts purely, and will surely break them. If they broke the precepts, they would feel guilty and unworthy of calling themselves Buddhists, and so feel discouraged from taking the precepts altogether.

## Repentance and Reform

What many do not know is that not killing refers mainly to not killing people. Of course Buddhists are encouraged to eat vegetarian food and refrain from killing insects when not necessary, for the sake of being compassionate to these living beings who fear death and love life. Not lying refers to not telling falsities for the sake of personal gain or to harm others. Sexual misconduct refers to unhealthy sexual relations, such as changing partners often because of a craving for sexual stimulation, or engaging in adulterous relations that damage the stability of family life. Not taking intoxicants is surely recommended, as they make the mind unclear, which often leads to one doing harmful things such as that outlined by the first four precepts. What they do not recognize is that precepts are a code of conduct designed to safeguard us from causing harm. Their main principle is to encourage us to protect ourselves and others.

Even if one were to break the precepts due to weakness of mind amidst a challenging situation, one needs only to repent and reform one's actions (with the exception of the first precept that, once broken, cannot be taken again). With repentance, we recognize our faults and take responsibility for our actions. With reform, we vow not to make the same mistake again. Practicing in this way, one's mind becomes purified and free from guilt. The momentum of harmful thoughts, speech, and

action is weakened. But many people contemplating taking the precepts do not know this. Due to this lack of knowledge, although they are dedicated to the practice and have faith in the Three Jewels, they shy away from formally becoming a Buddhist and taking the Three Refuges and Five Precepts.

## Non-Buddhist Meditation

With respect to the practice of meditation, some people do not see the difference between Buddhist meditation and non-Buddhist meditation. "It's all the same thing; all religions are doing the same practice and going towards the same goal," they say. However, this is not entirely true. Yes, there are lots of similarities. Religions have similar ethical principles, meditations, and ideals. However, if one were to look deeply into each religion and its practices, you would find that the goals, methods, and principles are quite different. For example, with basic meditation that's taught in self-help books or medical fields, the practice is to simply relax the body and mind, and achieve concentration and clarity. The goal is good health and mental stability.

With some yogic practices, the goal is a bit deeper, where the meditator seeks to stabilize the mind to the point of reaching samadhi, or meditative absorption. In deep states of samadhi, normal functions of mind cease. Seeing, hearing, feeling, and thinking all stop, and one is left with a sense of great liberation and ease of mind. The sense of body and mind may have vanished to the point that one feels that nothing exists at all, there's just a feeling of "liberation."

Other religious practices may emphasize that the goal of meditation is to cultivate immortality or a union with the basic unchanging source of life, an eternal being that lies underneath the superficial changes of phenomenal reality.

## Buddhist Meditation

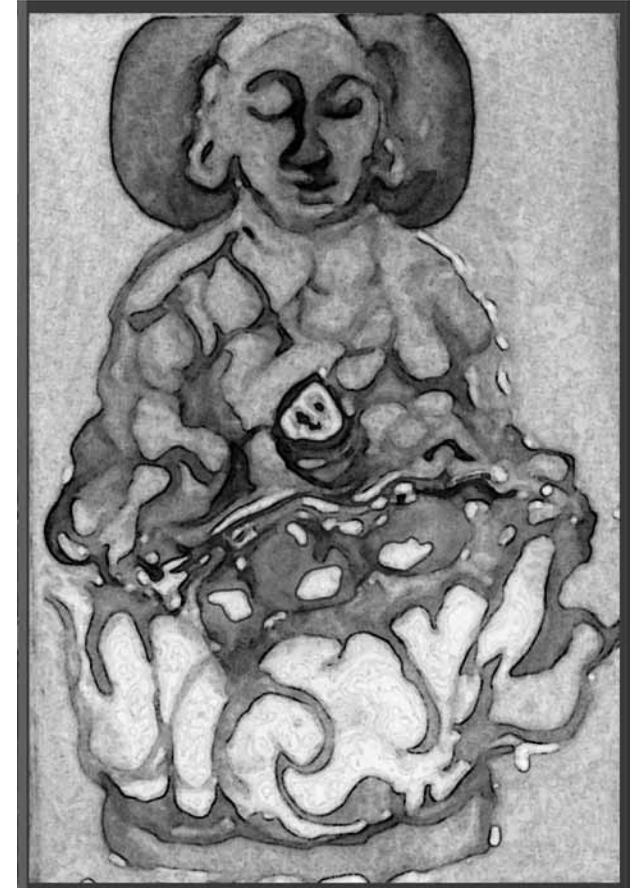
If we compare these to Buddhist meditation, we can clearly see that it's not the same. The basic principle of Buddhist meditation contains some of the above aspects, such as cultivating a healthy body and mind, and developing meditative concentration and clarity. Some Buddhist traditions emphasize the necessity to cultivate deep samadhi as well. However, Buddhist meditation is different from all these other non-Buddhist practices, in that the most important task is for the practitioner to cultivate the liberating wisdom of observation.

With observation, or *vipashyana*, the mind is directed towards insight into the empty nature of things. Through specific or general observation, either through analysis or direct observation, one cultivates a practice of mindfulness of body, mind, and environment. With this wisdom of observation, the insight into the impermanent, non-self, and empty nature of things arises. With further observation, the state of enlightenment itself is seen as empty. There is no mind, body, world, or anything called "enlightenment" or "nirvana." This doesn't mean that everything disappears; rather, self-attachment and the confusion of clinging to ideas disappear. This is true liberation.

Due to the lack of knowledge of this unique quality of Buddhist meditation, many people don't seek to immerse themselves in this practice and become Buddhist, but stick to the simplicity of concentration or the ordinary mindfulness commonly talked about in various circles today. To them, it all seems the same anyway. "Why become a member of a religion?"

There are various reasons that people interested in meditation and overall healthy living do not become Buddhists. Every individual has their own causes and conditions and direction of mind. The above are merely a few possibilities and examples of what I've observed. Maybe the next question is: What obstacles keep someone from either becoming Buddhist, or from having firm confidence in the practice of Buddhadharma?

This you have to look into for yourself.



Painting by Tim Jundo Williams

## Eight Form Moving Meditation

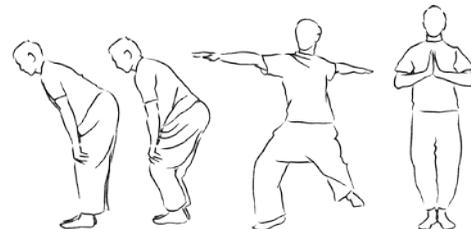
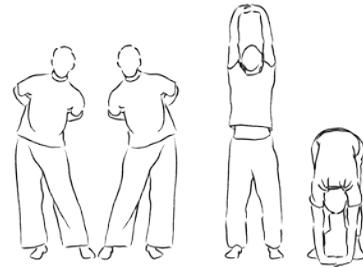
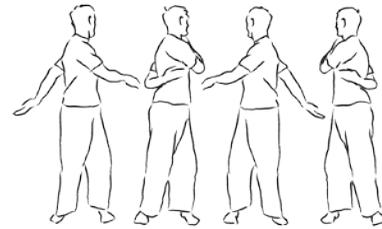
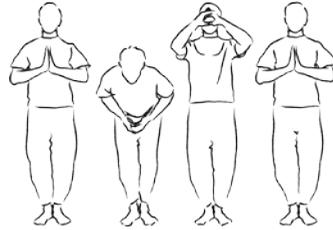
DDMBA's San Francisco Chapter organized the "Chan 2013 Live" event at Foothill College Stadium on Sunday, October 20th. With the help of 140 volunteers, they were able to share the teaching of the Eight Form Moving Meditation with upwards of 600 people. The practice encourages relaxation of the body and mind, in the hope of bringing peace and stability to the surrounding environment.

CMC's Abbot Venerable Guo Xing introduced the core principle of the practice and its motto "Be mindful of the body; be relaxed in total clarity" before the large group performed the exercises in unison. Afterwards, the DDM's Abbot President Venerable Guo Dong gave a short talk about the protection of the spiritual environment. Then everyone enjoyed a Chan Festival where educational booths and activities had been set up for people to learn more about Chan in daily life.

The Eight-Form Moving Meditation was developed by Master Sheng Yen as a means of allowing people living stressful lifestyles to enjoy some of the benefits of Chan meditation. The system, based on many years of practice and personal experience, has incorporated the essence of Chan meditation into a series of eight simple physical exercises. The practice helps you relax, so that you can develop a healthy body and a balanced mind. If you'd like to learn more, visit these sites on the web:

[youtube.com/watch?v=y178LH5R9k8](https://youtube.com/watch?v=y178LH5R9k8)

[dharmadrumretreat.org/teachings.php?id=eightform](http://dharmadrumretreat.org/teachings.php?id=eightform)



## DDMBA 2013 Annual Meeting

The Dharma Drum Mountain Buddhist Association (DDMBA) held its Annual Meeting at DDRC on November 1-3, 2013. Members of more than 12 branches from across North America, as far as Vancouver and Los Angeles, and representatives from DDM (Dharma Drum Mountain) Taiwan, attended. The theme of the meeting was "Welcome Home! Caring and Recharging of Oneself, Before Re-starting on the Journey Again."

While most participants arrived Halloween night, the meeting officially kicked-off on the 1st. In his opening address, the Abbott President Venerable Guo Dong welcomed the participants home and encouraged all to generate the spirit of compassion and give rise to wisdom; so that our homes, our branches, will be in accordance with the Buddha's home.

There followed reports on current status and developments. DDM headquarters reported on having 11,398 visitors from over 68 countries this last year and now being listed as one of the top 20 places to visit in Taiwan. CMC will be doing extensive renovations of their newly purchased property. DDRC has been seeing their best year in the number of retreatants and donations in some time. The New Jersey Branch has purchased a new home and will be doing renovations. Likewise, the Toronto Branch is in the process of purchasing their own new practice center. The San Francisco Branch shared their recent and very successful event (*see page 28*). The Los Angeles Branch had much to report on the opening of their DDM monastery, only the second one to be opened in North America. They continue with work on a 42 bed dormitory that should be completed by December. Already, they have been able to host the Transmission of the Bodhisattva Precepts with 111 receiving.

Guest speakers presented a range of topics at the meeting. Alan Chang, a business consultant, shared some of his knowledge and some of the work he has done with various DDM branches on utilizing strengths and retaining practitioners. Chou Lien, a lighting engineer, gave a moving talk on his life and work, and finding understanding through it. Edward Lin spoke about networking and, in particular, about attracting and retaining westerners. Peter Lin, a psychologist, talked on the importance of understanding the self to help cultivate virtue, which can lead to a greater sense of well-being.

After two days of talks and discussion, the meeting was rounded out with an evening talent show. Many of the chapters put on wonderful performances, from taiko drumming and choir to funny plays and charades; showcasing some of the branches additional group practices.

The 2013 Annual Meeting came to a close in a very positive spirit. Many chatted excitedly about new ideas for the future of their branch, rededicated and reinvigorated. The road may be a long one, but grounded in Chan, the journey seems entirely acceptable, and even light.

-by Kasey Andrist

## Gardening Weekend

More than 20 people gathered at DDRC for the Autumn Gardening Weekend on October 26-27, 2013. The fall colors were at their peak, the skies were sunny, and there was just enough chill to make the air feel crisp. During the day participants made a mindful practice of raking leaves and preparing the garden and flower beds for their winter sleep. In the evening there was Dharma discussion and hot chocolate in front of a warm fireplace.

禪

## Principles of Chan Gardening Meditation

1. 安住於當下  
Keep your mind in the present.
2. 放鬆身心  
Relax your body & mind.
3. 放下妄想雜話  
Put down excessive thinking & talking.
4. 享受與大地接觸  
Enjoy being in touch with the earth.
5. 體驗呼吸  
Experience your breath: if you're tired, stand or sit still and breathe naturally; your energy will return.
6. 安靜出坡  
Quietly work together and enjoy the deep communication of practicing together.
7. 提起方法  
When you forget, pick up your method. (the above six points.)



Drawing by Venerable Chang Wen



## Good News for Dharmaloka

In June 2013 the Dharmaloka Buddhist Community in Croatia finally received a permit to build their new retreat center. In 2005 they had purchased 26,000 square meters of undeveloped agricultural land 70 minutes driving distance from the capital, Zagreb. The site is surrounded by an old forest, with a view of beautiful grassy hills that disappear one after another like large waves in a green ocean. The property is well connected by public transport and has all the basic infrastructure. At the same time it is in a very peaceful and scarcely populated area.

Dharmaloka can now fulfil their long-standing vision of a center dedicated to the cultivation of peace and enlightened care for all people and the world we inhabit. The center's residential nature will allow prolonged stays for retreats. It will house a school for meditation and for the training of Dharma teachers. It will become the focal point of programs pertaining to Chan practice and Buddhist studies, including a special program that is unique to the Dharmaloka community—Chan in Movement—through the disciplines of zenyoga and kempo. In addition to specifically Chan content, the

center is envisioned as an exemplary application of principles governing Buddhist social ideals and Buddhist relationship towards nature. It will serve as a platform to promote cooperation and dialogue with similar religious and other organizations in Croatia and abroad.

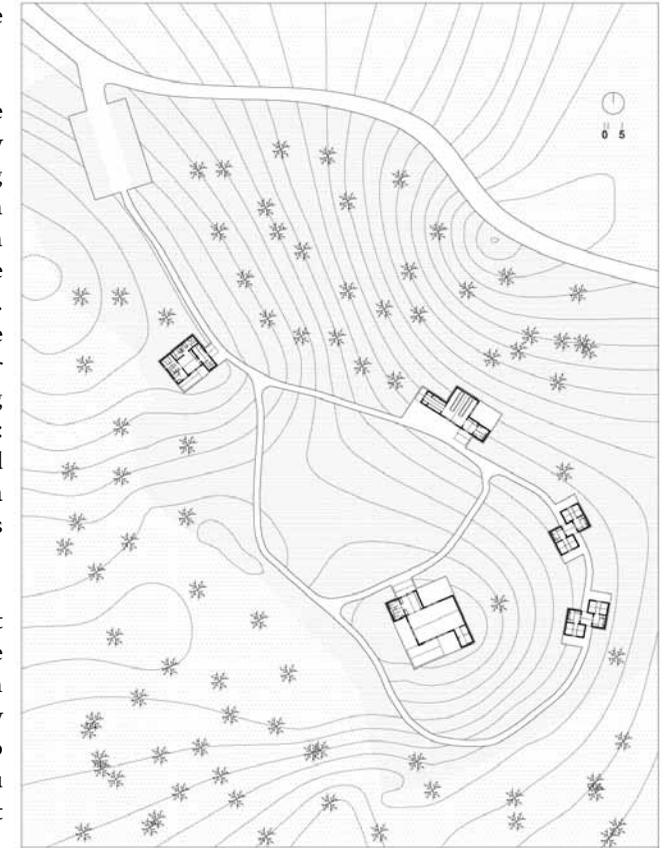
Its design and technical solutions will showcase the feasible application of sustainable and energy efficient philosophy in practice. During the planning of the building great emphasis was placed on green building principles. This is reflected through natural building materials with low embodied energy—mainly wood for load-bearing construction and straw bales for the insulation of outer walls. Buildings will be well regulated with the use of solar gain during winter for heating and, on the other hand, the use of shades for sun blocking and natural air circulation for cooling the interiors in the summer. Solar panels will be used for heating sanitary hot water. A sewage water biological purifying facility will allow the return of cleaned grey water to the surrounding environment. Biological waste will be composted and returned back in a natural cycle as fertilizer for the orchards and garden. The aim is to demonstrate and promote a lifestyle that has a minimum

ecological footprint and low negative impact on the environment.

An effort to permeate the architectural design with Chan simplicity and purity resulted in a plan comprising of five buildings functioning as a modern reinterpretation of a traditional mountain “hamlet”. The central building will house the Chan hall and accompanying facilities. One building is intended for dining, one for administration and study, and two for living accommodations. Every building however has a multifunctional character: the Chan hall can be used as a yoga and kempo training hall, the dining hall as a classroom, the dormitories can be studios for prolonged stays.

The Dharmaloka Buddhist Community believes that building the first residential Buddhist retreat center in all of the former Yugoslavia is a worthy goal. Now they are raising funds to help transform their vision into reality. If you would like to learn more about the project or make a donation, visit their website:

<http://www.chan.hr/donate>



# The Future

Retreats, classes and other upcoming events

Schedule is subject to change. Please check the website for updated and detailed information, or to register for activities online.

## “Zen & Inner Peace”

Chan Master Sheng Yen’s weekly television program  
 Now on ICN Cable  
 Channel 24.2 in NY  
 Fridays 6:45 pm - 7:00 pm



<b>Dharma Drum Retreat Center (DDRC) in Pine Bush, NY</b> (845) 744-8114 - ddrc@dharmadrumretreat.org - www.dharmadrumretreat.org		
REGULAR WEEKLY ACTIVITIES		
Thursday Evening Meditation	7:00 pm –9:00 pm	Sitting, walking, moving meditation, Dharma talk.
RETREATS (register online)		
1-Day & Children’s Program	Saturday Feb 1	9:00 am–5:00 pm
	Saturday Mar 1	Led by Venerable Chang Wen
3-Day Retreat	Feb 14-16	Led by Venerable Chang Wen
7-Day Gateway to Chan Retreat	Mar 8-15	Led by Dr. Rebecca Li
3-Day Beginner’s Mind Retreat	Mar 28-30	Led by Dr. Rikki Asher and Nancy Bonardi
CLASSES (register online)		
Beginner’s Meditation Class	Jan 25	Led by Venerable Chang Wen
SPECIAL EVENTS		
Passing on the Lamp of Wisdom	Feb 1-2	DDRC Staff

<b>Chan Meditation Center (CMC) in Elmhurst, Queens, NY</b> (718) 592-6593 - chancenter@gmail.com - www.chancenter.org - www.ddmba.org		
REGULAR WEEKLY ACTIVITIES		
Monday Night Chanting	7:30 pm–9:15 pm	Last Monday of each month: Recitation of the Eighty-eight Buddhas’ names and repentance.
Tuesday Night Sitting Group	7:00 pm–9:30 pm	Sitting, yoga exercises, walking meditation, Dharma sharing, recitation of the Heart Sutra.
Saturday Sitting Group	9:00 am–3:00 pm	Sitting, yoga exercises, video teachings by Master Sheng Yen
Sunday Open House	10:00 am–4:00 pm	See below
CHAN MEDITATION CENTER (CMC) SUNDAY OPEN HOUSE		
Sunday Schedule	10:00 am–11:00 am	Sitting Meditation
	11:00 am–12:30 pm	Dharma Talk
	12:30 pm–1:00 pm	Food Offering and Announcements
	1:00 pm–1:45 pm	Vegetarian Lunch
Chanting and Recitation	1st Sunday 2:00 pm–3:30 pm	Guan Yin Bodhisattva Chanting Service
	2nd Sunday 2:00 pm–4:00 pm	Great Compassion Repentance Ceremony Dharani Sutra
	3rd Sunday 2:00 pm–4:00 pm	Earth Store Bodhisattva Sutra Chanting Service
	Last Sunday 2:00 pm–3:30 pm	Bodhisattva Precept Recitation Ritual
	(Please note: If there are five Sundays in the month, there will be a Guan Yin Bodhisattva Chanting Service on the 4th Sunday.)	
RETREATS (Pre-registration advised)		
1-Day Beginner’s Mind Retreat	Jan 25	Saturday 9:00 am–5:00 pm Led by Dr. Rebecca Li
1-Day Retreat	Feb 22	9:00 am–5:00 pm
	Mar 29	Led by Harry Miller
CLASSES (Pre-registration advised)		
Beginner’s Meditation Parts I & II	Jan 11 & 25	Saturdays 9:30 am–12:00 pm Led by Nancy Bonardi
Intermediate Meditation Class	Feb 15	Saturday 9:30 am–12:00 pm Led by Dr. Rikki Asher
Dharma Drum for Young People (DDYP) Gathering	Every 3rd Saturday except otherwise noted	2:30 pm–5:00 pm. Buddhists and non-Buddhists ages 18-35 are welcome!
Taijiquan with David Ngo	Thursdays ongoing	7:30 pm–9:00 pm \$25 per 4-week month—\$80 for 16 classes First class is free for newcomers
SPECIAL EVENTS		
Film Viewing and Discussion	every other 3rd Sunday	2:00 pm–5:00 pm Led by Dr. Peter Lin; check website for film description.

# Chan Meditation Center Affiliates

Local organizations affiliated with CMC and DDMBA provide a place to practice with and learn from other Chan practitioners. If you have questions about schedules, activities or publications you may find useful information at one of our affiliates near you.

NEW YORK - USA HEADQUARTERS			
<b>Chan Meditation Center (CMC)</b> • Dharma Drum Mountain Buddhist Association (DDMBA) America • Dharma Drum Mountain for Young People	90-56 Corona Avenue Elmhurst, NY 11373	(718) 592-6593 Fax: (718) 592-0717	ddmbausa@yahoo.com www.chancenter.org www.ddmba.org www.collegedharma.org
<b>Dharma Drum Retreat Center (DDRC)</b>	184 Quannacut Road Pine Bush, NY 12566	(845) 744-8114 Fax: (845) 744-4753	ddrc@dharmadrumretreat.org www.dharmadrumretreat.org
TAIWAN - WORLD HEADQUARTERS			
<b>Dharma Drum Mountain World Center for Buddhist Education</b>	No.14-5, Lin 7, Sanchieh Village, Chinshan, Taipei	02-2498-7171 02-2498-7174 Fax: 02-2498-9029	webmaster@ddm.org.tw www.ddm.org.tw
<b>Dharma Drum International Meditation Group</b>		02-2893-4646 ext. 6504	contact@ddm.org.tw www.ddm.org.tw
<b>Nung Chan Monastery</b>	No. 89, Lane 65, Tayeh Road Peitou, Taipei	02-2893-3161 Fax: 02-2895-8969	
NORTH AMERICA - CANADA			
<b>Toronto</b>	Toronto Ontario Canada	(416) 855-0531	ddmba.toronto@gmail.com www.ddmba-ontario.ca
<b>Vancouver</b>	8240 No.5 Road Richmond, BC Canada V6Y 2V4	(604) 277-1357 Fax : (604) 277-1352	info@ddmba.ca www.ddmba.ca
NORTH AMERICA - MEXICO			
<b>Chacala, Mexico</b>	Mar de Jade Oceanfront Retreat Center Chacala, Nayarit,	(800) 257-0532 01-800-505-8005	info@mardejade.com www.mardejade.com
NORTH AMERICA - UNITED STATES			
<b>California</b>	4530 N. Peck Rd El Monte, CA 91732 Los Angeles	(626) 350-4388	ddmbala@gmail.com www.ddmbala.org
	Sacramento	(916) 681-2416	ddmbasacra@yahoo.com
	San Francisco 1153 Bordeaux Dr. #106 Sunnyvale, CA 94089	(408) 900-7125	ddmbasf@yahoo.com www.ddmbasf.org
<b>Colorado</b>	Denver	(732)754-8984	tomchu100@gmail.com

NORTH AMERICA - UNITED STATES			
<b>Connecticut</b>	Fairfield County	(203) 972-3406	contekalice@aol.com
	Hartford	(860)805-3588	ling_yunw@yahoo.com
<b>Florida</b>	Gainesville	(352) 336-5301	LianFlorida@hotmail.com
	Miami	(954) 432-8683	ddmbaus@yahoo.com
	Orlando	(407) 671-6250	chihho2004@yahoo.com
	647 McDonnell Drive Tallahassee, FL 32310	(850)274-3996	tallahassee.chan@gmail.com www.tallahasseebuddhistcommunity.org
<b>Georgia</b>	Atlanta	(678)909-0068	Schen@eleganthf.net
<b>Illinois</b>	Chicago 1234 N. River Road Mt. Prospect, IL 60056	(847)255-5483	ddmbachicago@gmail.com www.ddmbachicago.org
<b>Massachusetts</b>	Boston	(781)708-9255	baipang@gmail.com
<b>Michigan</b>	Lansing	(517) 332-0003	lkong2006@gmail.com
<b>Missouri</b>	St. Louis	(314) 277-5640	acren@aol.com
<b>New Jersey</b>	789 Jersey Ave. New Brunswick, NJ 08901	(732) 249-1898	enews@ddmba-nj.org www.ddmba-nj.org
<b>Nevada</b>	Las Vegas	(702) 896-4108	yh12527@yahoo.com
<b>North Carolina</b>	Cary	(919) 677-9030	minganlee58@gmail.com
<b>Pennsylvania</b>	Philadelphia	(610) 254-5028	tchiang2001@hotmail.com
	State College	(814) 867-9253	ddmbapa@gmail.com www.collegedharma.org/ddmbapa
<b>Texas</b>	Dallas	(817)274-2288	ddmba_patty@hotmail.com
	Houston	(713)628-8058	
<b>Utah</b>	Salt Lake City	(810) 947-9019	Inge_Fan@hotmail.com
<b>Vermont</b>	Burlington	(802) 658-3413	juichulee@yahoo.com www.ddmbavt.org
<b>Washington</b>	Seattle 14028 Bel-Red Road Suite 205, Bellevue WA 98007	(425) 957-4597	mhwong77@gmail.com seattle.ddmusa.org
<b>Washington</b>	District of Columbia	(301) 982-2552	chiehhsiungchang@yahoo.com

# Chan Meditation Center Affiliates

ASIA and AUSTRALASIA			
Australia	Melbourne 1 / 38 McDowall Street, Mitcham Victoria 3132, Australia	(03) 8822-3187	info@ddmmelbourne.org.au www.ddmmelbourne.org.au
	Sydney	(61-4) 131-85603	ddmsydney@yahoo.com.au www.ddm.org.au
Hong Kong	Room 203 2/F, Block B, Alexandra Industrial Building 23-27 Wing Hong Street Lai Chi Kok, Kowloon, Hong Kong	(852) 2865-3110 (852) 2295-6623	info@ddmhk.org.hk http://www.ddmhk.org.hk
Malaysia	Block B-3-16, 8 Avenue Pusat Perdagangan Sek. 8 Jala Sg. Jernih 46050 Petaling Jaya, Selangor	(60-3) 7960-0841	ddmmalaysia@gmail.com www.ddm.org.my
New Zealand	9 Scorpio Place, Mairangi Bay Auckland NZ	(09) 478 8430	
Singapore	Singapore	(65) 6735-5900	ddrumsingapore@gmail.com http://www.ddsingapore.org
Thailand	1471. Soi 31/1 Pattnakarn Rd. 10250 Bangkok Thailand	(662) 713-7815 (662) 713-7816	ddmbkk2005@gmail.com www.ddmth.com
EUROPE			
Belgium	15, Rue Jean Schaack L-2563 Luxemburg	(352) 400-080	ddm@chan.lu
Croatia	Dharmaaloka Buddhist Center Dordiceva 23, 10000 Zagreb	(385) 1-481 00 74	info@dharmaloka.org www.dharmaloka.org www.chan.hr
Poland	Zwiazek Buddystow Czan ul. Promienna 12 05-540 Zalesie Górne	(48) 22-7362252 Fax: (48) 22-7362251 Cell: +48601224999	budwod@budwod.com.pl www.czan.org.pl www.czan.eu
Switzerland	Zurich	(411) 382-1676	MaxKailin@chan.ch www.chan.ch
	Bern Haus Sein, Bruungasse 16, CH3011	(31) 352-2243	hthalmann@gmx.net www.chan-bern.ch
United Kingdom	Western Chan Fellowship 24 Woodgate Avenue Bury Lancashire, BL9 7RU	+44 (0) 1934 842017	secretary@westernchanfellowship.org www.westernchanfellowship.org
	The Old School House Weeton Lane Weeton LS17 0AW UK	(44) 7787 502 686	
	28 the Avenue London NW6 7YD UK		liew853@btinternet.com



7-Day

## Gateway to Chan Retreat

March 8-15, 2014

Dharma Drum Retreat Center

Pine Bush, NY

Led by Dr. Rebecca Li



*The hundred rivers flow to the ocean, the thousand mountains face the loftiest peak.*

*- Hongzhi Zhengjue*

## 7-Day Chan Meditation Retreat "Silent Illumination"

February 2-9, 2014

Felsentor, Vitznau, Switzerland

Led by Žarko Andričević, a Dharma heir of Master Sheng Yen

For more information contact Hildi Thalman | info@chan-bern.ch | www.chan-bern.ch





## 10-Day Intensive Chan Retreat *in Taiwan*

Led by Guo Ru Fashi  
a Dharma heir of Master Sheng Yen  
February 7-16, 2014  
*Chinese with English translation*

Chan Grove, 198 Fuxing 3rd Road, Beitou District, Taipei City, Taiwan

[inquiry.ccc@gmail.com](mailto:inquiry.ccc@gmail.com)

+886-2-2891-5205

[www.changrove.org/news\\_detail.php?NNo=40](http://www.changrove.org/news_detail.php?NNo=40)



## 7-Day Intensive Chan Retreat *in Croatia, European Union*

Led by Guo Ru Fashi  
a Dharma heir of Master Sheng Yen  
May 17-23, 2014  
*Chinese with English translation*

contact Ante Samodol

[info@linji.eu](mailto:info@linji.eu)

[www.linji.eu](http://www.linji.eu)

# Retreats in Poland 2014

## 10-Day Intensive Chan Meditation Retreat

The method of Silent Illumination

March 20-30, 2014

Dluzew near Warsaw, Poland



*“Discovering the  
shining silence”*

Led by Dr. Simon Child, a Dharma heir of Master Sheng Yen

*Through the Chan gate we come back to our true home*

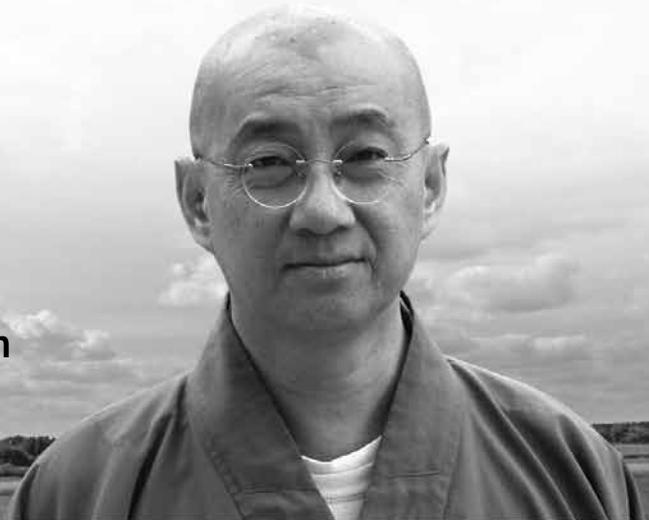
## 10-Day Intensive Chan Meditation Retreat

Teachings on methods of relaxation,  
Silent Illumination, and Huatou

July 31 - August 10, 2014

Dluzew near Warsaw, Poland

Led by Chi Chern Fashi,  
a Dharma heir of Master Sheng Yen



**Contact:** Pawel Rosciszewski, ul. Promienna 12, 05-540 Zalesie Gorne, Poland **E-mail:** [budwod@budwod.com.pl](mailto:budwod@budwod.com.pl)

**Mobile:** +48601224999

**Phone:** (48) 22 7362252

**Fax:** (48) 22 73622251

**Web:** [www.czan.eu](http://www.czan.eu)