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“The power of group practice is not superstition; it comes from the collective energy of meditating with others for a common goal. We should trust in this power. When everyone’s mind consistently points in the same direction, this creates resonance. Although we cannot hear this resonance, it is indeed mutually supported by an invisible force.

The saying that two heads are better than one is also true for meditation practice. Practicing alone yields the brightness of a single lamp; bring two or three lamps together, or even more, and it gets even brighter. Similarly, in sitting meditation a single mind, like a single lamp, may not be very bright, but when five or ten people with strong minds gather, the brightness is much enhanced. Those of weaker mind as well as the stronger ones will all gain mutual benefit. In this manner the power of group practice can be very strong.

People often meditate together in this house we are in, so coming in here, one feels very calm. I have visited the Chan halls of ancient monasteries in China, some from the Song and Ming Dynasties, and some of them were ruined and rebuilt many times. Entering these Chan halls, one feels a powerful energy and deep calmness. The Chan hall at Ningbo Tian Tong Monastery is not very large, but many people were enlightened there. Although these people have long passed away and the temple has been rebuilt after many collapses, inside I sensed the power of the people who once practiced there. In the Chan hall of Jiangtian Monastery in Jingshan, in Jiangsu Province, eighteen people became enlightened in one night. When I walked into the place, there was a very calm, clear, and bright sensation in my mind.”

— Chan Master Sheng Yen
Talk given at Chan Meditation Camp
Dharma Drum Mountain, Taiwan
July 23, 1997

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Enlightenment and the Ten Ox Herding Pictures

by

Chan Master Sheng Yen

Here is an excerpt from *Experiences in Chan and Lectures on Chan (Chan De Ti Yan, Chan De Kai Shi)* by Chan Master Sheng Yen, currently being translated by Rebecca Li. This section on the *Ten Ox Herding Pictures* is taken from the chapter entitled “The State of Enlightenment and Demonic State in Chan”. The verses used here come from *Manual of Zen Buddhism* by Daisetz Teitaro Suzuki, D.Litt, 1935. The images are by the 15th century Japanese Zen monk Tenshō Shūbun. Shūbun’s images are said to be copies of originals, now lost, attributed to the 12th century Chinese Chan Master Kuoan Shiyuan, author of the original verses for the *Ten Ox Herding Pictures*. Layout by Shaun Chung.

What Is the State of Enlightenment?

Most people who have not practiced, or have not got a handle on the practice, and have not had actual practice experiences even though they have already begun practicing, tend to like to discuss the state of enlightenment. They long for such a state, thus generating curiosity or speculation as they imagine what enlightenment might be. In fact, there is such a thing as the state of enlightenment. It cannot, however, be attained with a mind of longing and curiosity. If one tries to figure out the state of enlightenment with speculation and imagination, one will never understand what the state of enlightenment is. It is thus said, “one is wrong as soon as one opens one’s mouth, off as soon as one gives rise to a thought.”

If one uses methods such as thinking, knowledge, words, logic, etc to understand and explain enlightenment, then one is farther and farther away from the state of enlightenment itself. This is why generations of Chan patriarchs and lineage masters in history rarely used words to describe their state of enlightenment even though they had very deep realizations. It is only through Dharma words, verses and poems spoken after their enlightenment that we can get a sense of what they realized. Even then, only people who have a certain degree of realization can begin to see that which is hidden behind those words. Some examples of words reflecting the state of enlightenment are: third patriarch



Reading in a Bamboo Grove
1446, Tenshō Shūbun
National Treasure of Japan

Sengcan’s *Faith in Mind*, Late Liang Dynasty Wang Ming’s *Calming the Mind*, Niutou Farong’s *Song of Mind*, Fu Yu’s *Song of the Mind King*, Shitou Xichian’s *Inquiry into the Matching Halves*, Yongjia Xuanjue’s *Song of Enlightenment*, Qingliang Jingguan’s *Dharma Door of the Mind’s Essence*, Dongshan Liangjie’s *Heart of the Profound*, Song Dynasty Kuoan Shiyuan’s *Ten Ox Herding Pictures*. Among them, the *Ten Ox Herding Pictures* provide a relatively explicit map of the mental path of a Chan practitioner from practice, through enlightenment to re-entry to the world of sentient beings. Since the realization of each individual varies in depth, the state of enlightenment each spoke of also varies. Hence, while these descriptions can be used as road signs for the way toward the state of enlightenment, they cannot necessarily be seen as its endpoint. Given the situation of neither any reference nor the ability to imagine, reading and explaining the words of these great Chan masters of the past is still extremely useful.

The *Ten Ox Herding Pictures* pictures represent how practitioners (symbolized by the ox herder) can allow their original face (ie. naturally wondrous mind or the Buddha nature of Prajñā, symbolized by the white ox) to manifest itself, thus gradually overcoming one’s vexations and attachments and exhibiting the natural and wondrous functions of being in the world. While not all practitioners will or must go through all ten stages, from this we can get some sense of the process of the practice.



忙忙撥草去追尋
水闊山遙路更深
力盡神疲無處覓
但聞楓樹晚蟬吟

一、尋牛

1. Looking for the Ox

In the first picture, there is a person with an ox-herding rope in hand running into the countryside, looking for their ox, but they still do not know where the ox might be. This is a person who has discovered that they have been imprisoned by vexations and delusions and have lost touch with their ox (their original face). For this individual the longing for seeing the nature and enlightenment has arisen, and they have begun practicing. In the accompanying text, the state of practicing diligently, is described:

*Alone in the wilderness, lost in the jungle, the boy is searching, searching!
The swelling waters, the far-away mountains, and the unending path;
Exhausted and in despair, he knows not where to go,
He only hears the evening cicadas singing in the maple-woods.*

Practitioners in this stage are very frustrated and agitated. Often one discovers they have more vexations than before practicing.



水邊林下跡偏多
芳草離披見也麼
縱是深山更深處
遼天鼻孔怎藏他

二、見跡

2. Seeing the Tracks

In the picture, the individual gradually discovers the foot prints of their ox of self nature. This is the stage of someone who, after reading the sutras and listening to the teachings and understanding their meanings, firmly believes that one possesses the Buddha nature that has yet to be revealed. Furthermore, through the practice, they can see that it is possible to see the nature and become enlightened.

*By the stream and under the trees, scattered are the traces of the lost;
The sweet-scented grasses are growing thick--did he find the way?
However remote over the hills and far away the beast may wander,
His nose reaches the heavens and none can conceal it.*

This is to say that after diligently practicing by the water and under the tree, the illusory mind that sometimes ceases and sometimes arises again is gradually calming down. One believes that when the illusory mind ceases to arise completely the ox of self nature will definitely be revealed.



三、見牛
 黃鸝枝上一聲聲
 日暖風和岸柳青
 只此更無回避處
 森森頭角畫難成

3. Seeing the Ox

The person in the picture, following the tracks of the ox's footprints, has heard its mooing and also seen the back half of the ox's body revealed by the side of a large tree. This is to say one has attained the goal of seeing the ox of self nature after using the method properly and following the right view to practice. However, one has yet to be in full control of the situation of seeing the nature and enlightenment. As soon as there is any disturbance, this pure and undefiled ox of mind will be obscured by the illusory thinking and scattered thoughts of grass and trees. The text is:

*On a yonder branch perches a nightingale cheerfully singing;
 The sun is warm, and a soothing breeze blows, on the bank the willows are green;
 The ox is there all by himself, nowhere is he to hide himself;
 The splendid head decorated with stately horns what painter can reproduce him?*

This is to say that as illusory thinking and scattered thoughts gradually lessen and extinguish, the mind is serene, gradually becoming clear and bright. Thus one is absolutely certain that one has already seen the ox of self nature. However, one has not yet seen the face of this ox of mind clearly and thus it is still possible to lose track of it.



四、得牛
 竭盡神通獲得渠
 心強力壯卒難除
 有時纔到高原上
 又入煙雲深處居

4. Attaining the Ox

The person in the picture has already put the rope around the ox. But the ox is still very wild and attempting to break free from the control of the rope. The ox herder, therefore, must be vigilant in using the whip to tame it. This is to say that even though the practitioner has already directly realized the totality of one's self nature, they are still under the temptation and influence of habitual tendencies and the environment. They are worried about regressing back to the situation prior to enlightenment and thus need to be even more diligent in their practice. The text says:

*With the energy of his whole being, the boy has at last taken hold of the ox:
 But how wild his will, how ungovernable his power!
 At times he struts up a plateau,
 When lo! he is lost again in a misty impenetrable mountain-pass.*

This is to say that after much hard work spent on the practice, one has finally been awakened and seen one's nature. However, the potential for vexations is still strong and cannot be eradicated easily. Even though one has worked hard to climb to the summit of a tall mountain from the bottom of the deep valley of vexations, at times one can still be surrounded by the haze and cloud of vexations where one stands.



五、牧牛
 鞭索時時不離身
 恐伊縱步入埃塵
 相將牧得純和也
 羈鎖無抑自逐人

5. Herding the Ox

The person in the picture carefully holds the whip and rope to maintain control of an ox that is yet to be tamed. With one moment of negligence, it is still possible that the ox would run off to the field by the road to steal farmers' grains. This is to say that one must not be lax and complacent and be too excited after enlightenment and one must be vigilant in ceaselessly doing the work of subduing one's vexations and illusory mind. Otherwise, as long as vexations are not eradicated, craving, hatred, and ignorance can still arise. The text is:

*The boy is not to separate himself from his whip and tether,
 Lest the animal should wander away into a world of defilements;
 When the ox is properly tended to, he will grow pure and docile;
 Without a chain, nothing binding, he will by himself follow the oxherd.*

If one has already attained the state of enlightenment but does not look after it with an alert and vigilant mind, it is very possible that one would return to the vexations of the old days. If one takes good care of the state of mind after enlightenment, the discipline from the precepts and the stillness and clarity from the meditative practice will naturally become accessible in the practitioner's daily life.



六、騎牛歸家
 騎牛迤邐欲還家
 羌笛聲聲送晚霞
 一拍一歌無限量
 知音何必鼓唇牙

6. Riding the Ox to Return Home

The person in the picture is riding on the back of a tamed ox, whip and rope hanging on their waist in a relaxed manner, and both hands are holding a flute, leisurely playing a herding song. This is to say that with time, after completing the work of regulating and stabilizing the mind, vexations and deluded thinking are completely subdued by the practitioner. As the mind no longer has the subtle urge to give rise to defiled illusory thoughts, it is a scene of pure harmony and clear brightness. It is gradually returning to the state of mind that is pure and undefiled. The text is:

*Riding on the animal, he leisurely wends his way home:
 Enveloped in the evening mist, how tunefully the flute vanishes away!
 Singing a ditty, beating time, his heart is filled with a joy indescribable!
 That he is now one of those who know, need it be told?*

Practitioners at this stage gradually go toward the old home of self nature that neither arises nor perishes. Along the way one can clearly feel and experience the existence of one's body and mind and the natural environment. Everything felt and experienced through the five sense organs is filled with the profound meaning of the Buddhadharma that cannot be described with words and there is also no need to do so. It is thus truly so that both the sentient and the insentient are extending a broad and long tongue (speaking the Dharma) and all is the wondrous sound of heavenly drum be it sound or soundless.



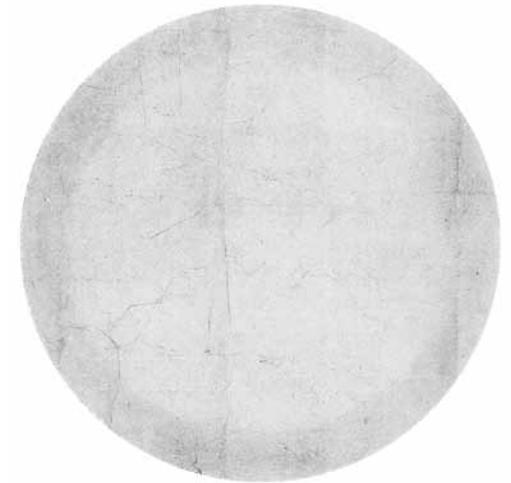
七、忘牛存人
 騎牛已得到家山
 牛也空兮人也閑
 紅日三竿猶作夢
 鞭繩空頓草堂間

7. Forgetting the Ox and the Person Remains

The person in the picture has already returned to their own home. Having forgotten the ox that they rode, this person sits down very much self-at-ease and comfortable. This is to say that practitioners at this stage are already always in samadhi, without the mind of vexation, right-and-wrong and delusion to be subdued. The illusory mind that can be subdued has already disappeared. One has truly arrived at the level spoken of in the *Platform Sutra of the Sixth Patriarch* "Not concerned with hatred and love, one lies down with two legs extended". At this time, the mind of vexation is no more. For the person without vexation no longer discriminates between internal and external, and there is also no attachment regarding vexation and bodhi. They, however, still can sense clearly the existence of a subjective self. The text is this:

*Riding on the animal, he is at last back in his home,
 Where lo! the ox is no more; the man alone sits serenely.
 Though the red sun is high up in the sky, he is still quietly dreaming,
 Under a straw-thatched roof are his whip and rope idly lying.*

The self nature is originally pure. Once the mind of illusory thinking disappears, the pure self nature is immediately revealed. Since it is absolutely pure, then there is not one thing to be seen. Therefore, after the self nature is revealed, that which is the self nature cannot be labeled and described because its existence pervades inside and outside. It is like the fish in the water not perceiving the existence of water, of people neglecting the existence of air. At this time there is no ox of the illusory mind to be herded and thus one becomes a person without a thing to do in the mind.



八、人牛俱忘
 鞭索人牛盡屬空
 碧天寥廓信難通
 紅爐焰上爭容雪
 到此方能合祖宗

8. Both Person and Ox Forgotten

The picture only has a circle with nothing inside. Both the ox and the ox-herder have disappeared. The ox is self nature and the person is the mind of cultivating the path that realizes self nature. Since one has realized that self nature is ubiquitous, the feeling of self nature as an object of the mind also disappears. When one enters the state of mind of absolute and complete unification, all sorts of subjective consciousness also disappears. Hence, there is neither the ox nor the person, neither the guest nor the host. With the guest and host being one, there is the existence that is real, content, ultimate and thorough. There are no traces of ordinary and sagely beings, both sentient beings and Buddha are empty. There is neither vexation to eliminate nor is there bodhi to be accomplished. The text is:

*All is empty – the whip, the rope, the man, and the ox:
 Who can ever survey the vastness of heaven?
 Over the furnace burning ablaze, not a flake of snow can fall:
 When this state of things obtains, manifest is the spirit of the ancient master.*

This is the stage of no word and language, and extinction of mental volition. There is no information that can be communicated because the thinking mind to assess and judge cannot be applied, nor can the thinking mind be applied to express and explain it. This is the state that can neither be thought about nor discussed.



九、返本還源
 返本還源已費功
 爭如直下若盲聾
 庵中不見庵前物
 水自茫茫花自紅

9. Returning to the Original Source

The picture portrays the utterly undefiled green bamboos and yellow plum tree, green mountains and green water to represent the reflection of real life from the samadhi state of absolute unification. The mind is unmoving yet there is the clarity from the power of wisdom that brightly illumines everything without giving rise to vexation, to anything whatsoever. When spring comes, a hundred flowers bloom beautifully, when autumn comes red foliage covers the thousand mountains. The moon is white and the wind clear. This mind is like a bright mirror reflecting myriad things without changing its pure self nature. The myriad things are but the Dharma body of all inherently pure Buddhas. The text is:

*To return to the Origin, to be back at the Source – already a false step this!
 Far better it is to stay at home, blind and deaf, and without much ado;
 Sitting in the hut, he takes no cognizance of things outside,
 Behold the streams flowing – whither nobody knows; and the flowers vividly red – for whom are they?*

In the picture there are objective scenery and objects but there is no subjective person. Although mountain is still mountain and water is still water, it is not the mountain and water seen prior to the practice. While mountain and water are still the same, there is no longer the “self” whose mind can be moved by the scenery of the mountain and water. Since one no longer gives rise to the illusory mind of vexation caused by discriminatory attachment to sound and sight, hence it is like being deaf and blind. There is seeing but the mind is not moved. There is hearing but the mind is not moved. One can taste the food but the mind is not moved. The red flowers and green water in front of and behind the temple are merely the natural existence of objects of nature. One neither keeps them outside the mind nor does one identify with it in the mind. Thus one can be confronted with the myriad phenomena without giving rise to any obstruction in the mind whatsoever. One can get a glimpse of the thus mentioned liberation and freedom and ease here.



十、入廓垂手
 露胸跣足入廓來
 抹土塗灰笑滿腮
 不用神仙真秘訣
 直教枯木放花開

10. Entering the City with Bliss-Bestowing Hands

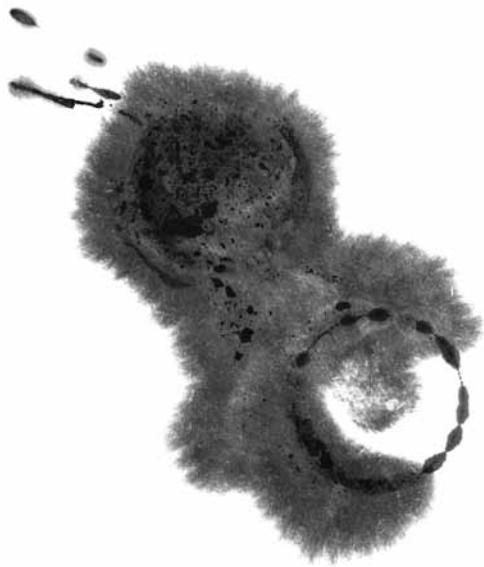
In the picture is a monk at ease and free, carrying a cloth sack facing a beggar who is skinny, weak, impoverished and suffering. The monk is giving and the beggar begging for offering. This explains that when practitioners have accomplished their cultivation and become liberated, they will naturally give rise to the mind of great compassion to deliver sentient beings. This is the inevitable outcome of one’s aspiration to achieve liberation. It does not rely on will power. It does not follow any ideal. It is not about fulfilling any mission. From one’s own life of cultivation, one naturally acts to help others. Therefore, they do not consider such actions as helping and delivering sentient beings. Rather it is merely arises from the innocent, playful samadhi. The Text is:

*Bare-chested and bare-footed, he comes out into the market-place;
 Daubed with mud and ashes, how broadly he smiles!
 There is no need for the miraculous power of the gods,
 For he touches, and lo! the dead trees are in full bloom.*

This is entirely a picture that expresses the wondrous function of the supernatural power that is innocent and natural, free and at ease, unbound to particular forms and unrestricted by worldly norms. One transcends the world without being averse to it. One is in the world without attaching to phenomena. One is filled with the lively energy of great liberation, great compassion, great wisdom and great supernatural power. The Chan school does not pay much attention to so-called supernatural power. However, when you can experience the great liberation that results from uprooting the vexations that bind us, and the mind is at ease without abiding to any dualistic thinking involving the discrimination between self and others, wholesome and unwholesome, ordinary and sagely, as well as impure and pure — the body will also feel at ease. One will then be able to freely transform external phenomena. Hence, rocks can nod and flowers can bloom from a dead log of wood. There is no need for the secret of supernatural power. It is merely something that naturally happens.

Summary

The stages of enlightenment and the phenomena represented in the above-mentioned ten ox-herding pictures is my explanation based on the pictures and accompanying text to provide a reference for readers who want to understand what enlightenment is. The actual experience of the levels and stages of enlightenment vary from person to person. What is represented in the ten ox-herding pictures is not necessarily the standard sequence. This is because some people may experience enlightenment multiple times, or over dozens of times or even uncountable times, but the level of each enlightenment experience is similar. They merely have the experience they have had over and over again. For others, their first and second enlightenment experiences differ in depth. For most people, their first enlightenment experience would not be very deep. Yet for those with deep virtuous roots and sharp karmic faculty, their first enlightenment can be rather deep.



The Arising of Conditioned Appearance from the True Mind

Part 4

by

Abbot Venerable Guo Xing

This is the fourth 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.

Ananda asked the Buddha, “Now I recognize that the nature of my visual awareness is that it does not depend on anything else. But how can I come to know that it is my true nature?”¹

In order to find the true mind, we must first change those misconceptions that take what’s not true, as the true mind.

At this present moment, you see me, see the cup, see the table, see the floor, and see all sorts of objects. [*The Abbot asks while pointing to the various objects.*] These are all objects, not your mind, right? Now we are certain that our mind is capable of perceiving these objects. Can they see you? No. When I say I am sad, you would take the phenomenon of “me being sad” as “me,” Wouldn’t you? But this is the phenomenon that is perceived by the mind; it is not the true mind.

Now I’m speaking. The things I say are language and symbols, not the true mind.

Presently, I want to say, “In another week, I’ll be going home.” If this sentence is indeed the mind, does it disappear after it’s spoken? When you are talking, first there is the notion of “subject” and “object.” Once the sentence has been spoken, the sentence disappears. This process of creating-and-ending is called “arising and ceasing.” When you say, “I’m going home tomorrow,” the words themselves do not have the ability to perceive or be aware.

When we talk to ourselves, are you really talking to “yourself?” Or has your second-thought taken your first-thought, which had been perceived by the mind, as the “self?” Once you understand this concept, you would realize that when you are

talking to yourself, you are actually talking to a lifeless phenomenon of thought, an object that had been previously been perceived by your mind.

This is the first point, that “the Mind is not an object.” Applying this understanding: everything that’s perceived by you, that arises and ceases, that lacks the ability to perceive or lacks awareness — none of these are you.

Let me ask you this: Can your true mind be separated from the object? Can you draw a dividing line and say this part is the true mind and the other part is the cup? Let me give you an analogy. Gold does not have a fixed form. When you make it into the shape of a fist, would you then say the fist has fixed characteristics? If so, then which part is formless?

The mind is not object, but apart from the object there is no mind and no function of visual awareness. In our practice, having this understanding is crucial. This is the so-called “not one dharma is attached to the nature,” while “phenomenon does not reject any one dharma.” This is just like a mirror that can reflect all phenomena, yet the mirror itself does not grasp onto or reject any phenomenon. Principle is the same as nature. It does not grasp onto any one phenomenon. Yet when its function is manifested, it does not leave out any one phenomenon either. In other words, the nature is formless and without characteristics, but phenomena exhibit forms. We call this, “the

true form is formless yet not rejecting any form.” The nature of true form is emptiness. But it can be just like a mirror that reflects everything. This is a very important concept for practice — you should not look for nirvana apart from vexations. Do not try to look for the empty nature apart from phenomena. It’s said, “form is precisely emptiness.” So it would be futile to reject forms (phenomena) in search of empty nature.

Once there was this person who did not get along with her family. She couldn’t stand her mother-in-law and had requested to leave home (become a monastic.) I told her, “There are 300 mothers-in-law in our sangha, all waiting for you.” So, the phenomena are always just fine and okay. It’s our mind that’s differentiating, grasping and rejecting. If there’s anything that doesn’t suit you, should you try to change the external phenomenon or change the mind that’s making you find things irritating?

In truth, it’s still not the ultimate solution even if you try to change the mindset that makes you find things disagreeable. When there’s something you find irritating, there are still two layers of understanding that you can change. The first layer is to change “disagreeable” to “agreeable.” This is the lower level, although it’s already not easy to do. Second, realize that there is a “self” that finds things disagreeable; that it’s due to the dualistic-mind, and we have to change the concept of subject and object.

Visual awareness
is not
a perceived object,
at the same time
it’s not
separate from objects

There was once a Dharma Master who said that, in his mind, there isn’t one person he dislikes. Let me ask you this: Does this mean that he doesn’t dislike anyone at all, or that there isn’t any object for him to dislike? In actuality, when there isn’t any object, there wouldn’t be any person for you to dislike or like. If you are able to eliminate the dualistic mind (subject and object), then there would be no need to eliminate “like” or “dislike.” To eliminate the dualistic mind means to not reject any dharma while not grasping onto any dharma.

The way Master Sheng Yen explained it was, “Do not treat the other person as an object.” Once you’ve taken the other person as an object, whether

it’s a person or other form of object, then the dualistic mind has already arisen, and so then do greed and anger. So the second point is: The true mind has no form. But all of these phenomena have form (exhibit characteristics). You would not be able to depart from the phenomena which have characteristics, and find a formless mind.

The Linji Lineage called the true mind the “true person of no status.” In the *Record of Linji*, Chan masters likened the myriads of phenomena as someone putting on robes. In this moment, when you are feeling happy, there is a robe of “happiness.” In the next moment, when you get upset, there is a robe of “upset.” When you give rise to the thought, “What is this monk talking about?”



Drawing by Rikki Asher

there is this robe that is the thought of “What is this monk talking about?” Your talking and gesturing are ever-changing phenomena, just like series of new and old robes being put on and taken off. You have taken these robes as what is real, mistaken them as the “self,” and you even interact with these ever-vanishing phenomenon. Life after life, you are entangled in the series of putting on robes and taking off robes, and reincarnating into the Three Realms. This is all because you’ve mistaken the robes as the “self” and as the truth.

Now I ask you, “Who is it that wears the robe?”

(To be continued)

1. *The Surangama Sutra*, by *The Buddhist Text Translation Society of the Dharma Realm Buddhist Association*, 2009, p. 59



Drawing by Rikki Asher

Music from the Chan/Zen Mind

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:

Many people listen to music because of its ability to make a person feel at ease. Music can even be used for healing physical and mental illness, as in modern music therapy. Can music also be used as a meditation? Does Chan Buddhist practice include any methods that make use of music?

Answer:

Music is a universal phenomenon. It can be defined as an intentional arrangement of sounds that creates harmony, but that idea is a limitation. Intentionally arranged sounds are not always “harmonious,” as defined by classical music theory. Furthermore, why must sound be intentionally arranged for it to be called “music?” From a broader perspective, music is sound that is appreciated. If one can appreciate sound, one hears music everywhere. In this sense of the word, many different sentient beings create their own music. From humans, to birds, bugs, fish, bees and various animals, and according to Buddhist cosmology, even beings in heavenly realms create music. Some sounds are soft and gentle, and may create a sense of harmony in the listener, such as sweet birdsong or a piece of classical lute music by Bach. Other sounds are harsh and loud, which may give the listener a sense of fear or un-ease, such as the howl of a fox in the night forest, or the scolding

of an angry person. Yet when used skillfully, music and sound can certainly bring about the effects of meditation. When used wisely, music and sound can be a tool for liberation.

Music and the Buddhist Tradition

Buddhist liturgical chanting, or *fanbai* in Chinese, is a clear example of musically-abetted meditation. The tradition of chanting goes all the way back to the Buddha’s time. However, it wasn’t fully developed in early Buddhism, due to the practice being directed and transmitted mostly by monastic practitioners. A fundamental practice for monastics is to leave behind all craving for sense pleasures, including the pleasure associated with sounds. To engage in musical chanting could possibly become an attachment and lead to vexations. If the person likes the sounds, they would continue to hear them internally, staining

the mind and preventing it from entering samadhi, and ultimately from realizing liberation. Yet, eventually the monastics developed a simple chanting style and melody which allowed everyone to recite harmoniously and enter into a refined state of mind. You can hear such simple melodies in the Theravada traditions of Sri Lanka, Thailand, and Bangladesh, to name a few. However, we cannot be certain that these melodies were used during the Buddha's time or soon after the Buddha's parinirvana, since the chants of these countries are influenced greatly by the music of their indigenous cultures.

In later Buddhism, especially in the Chinese and East Asian Buddhist traditions, chanting has been developed more fully. In principle—as opposed to the earlier view of pleasant sounds being an obstruction to practice—the Mahayana sees sounds as useful as means for cultivating enlightenment. This teaching is apparent in the *Shurangama Sutra*, in particular the chapters describing the methods of enlightenment through the organ of hearing and through the method of reciting the Buddha's name. The chanting used in Dharma services, for example the “Yoga Offering to the Hungry Ghosts”, contains some of the most intricate chants within Buddhism as a whole. In addition to complex chants, many instruments are used, from drums to bells, cymbals, and chimes. Monastics who lead these services must train for long hours to memorize the melodies and music as well as the text, including mantras, visualization, and hand mudras. I had the opportunity to participate in a few occasions of this offering service, but due to my lacking in fluency of Chinese, I did not fully participate in the training. (At the time, it was also not among my duties.) In the Japanese Tendai tradition, the chanting can be very intricate, requiring the chanters to not only memorize text and melody, but to be able to precisely perform the chants' subtle pitch vibratos exactly according to the manual. A Tendai priest

who was a friend of mine in college, shared with me her experience of the intense training it required to learn and perform these chants. To be able to chant and perform Buddhist music of these sorts requires a great deal of practice, musical ability, and is a practice in meditative concentration, for sure. It can be a practice of cultivating wisdom as well, since the texts are Dharma teachings – one can study and learn the Dharma while chanting. Engaging in these services, one practices compassion, as the recipients of the offerings are sentient beings who are unable to practice on their own. We chant for the sake of these hungry ghosts, so that they can be nourished from hearing the Dharma, and direct their minds towards wholesomeness and liberation. Of course, this practice is most beneficial for the people involved, as they are able to hear, reflect on, and apply the teachings in their lives.

A more common method of chanting, which any person can do, is to recite the names of buddhas or bodhisattvas. These melodic chants are simple and easy to memorize, and have a harmony which can soothe the minds of the chanter and the listener. They are recited as daily practices as well as used during ceremonies for the sick or deceased. Great Chan masters of the past, such as Zhongfeng Mingben and Ouyi, both advocated reciting the Buddha's name as well as investigating Chan. The well-known and popular Dharma service, “Buddha-name Recitation in Three Periods” which includes a host of melodic chanting was written by Master Zhongfeng Mingben. Our founder, Master Sheng Yen, also emphasized the efficacy of chanting and developed Buddha-name recitation Chan—combining the simplicity of Chan retreat with the method of recitation. Since ancient times, there have been many occasions of practitioners who entered into deep concentration through these recitations. In principle, reciting a buddha's name can lead one from a scattered mind, to a unified mind, to no-mind, or the enlightenment

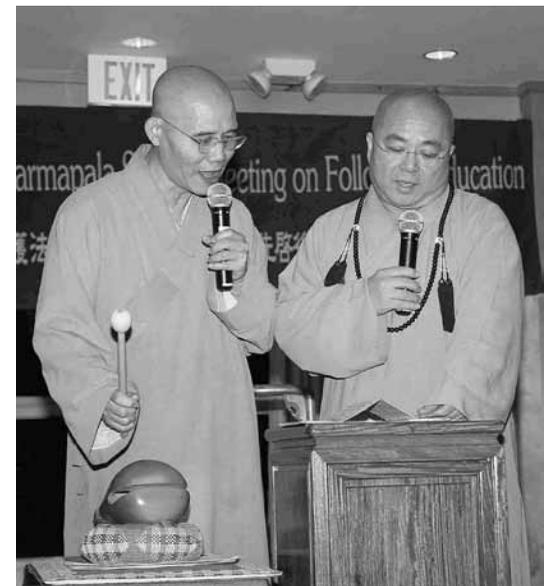
of non-attachment to mind states. There are also documented accounts of people who near the end of their life recited a buddha's name and died very peacefully, with miraculous occurrences following their death. During ceremonies for the deceased, chanting the buddha's name can also bring about a physical change in the corpse and mind of the deceased—resulting from the consciousness of that deceased person, which being still attached to the body, is put at ease. In many cases, the appearance and texture of the body changes to a pleasant facial expression and fragrance or soft corporeal quality. The consciousness of such a person is thereby headed in a wholesome direction, towards a rebirth where they can continue to practice. For the living and the deceased, such chanting has transformative effects. Chanting in this manner is a cultivation of wisdom and compassion, developing liberating insight for oneself, and offering the practice as guidance to others.

Chanting plays an important role in the Buddhist monastic tradition as well, as monastics engage in daily recitation, usually in the morning and evening, which can last from 30 minutes to one hour. There are also chants that are used throughout the day, which bring together into harmony the body, mind, and speech of the community. For example, there are meal offerings which are chanted, and in olden times, before Dharma talks, the lead chanter would recite a verse to bring the assembly into mindfulness. When monastics recite the precepts there are also various forms of melodic chanting employed to collect the mind. In the early morning and evening, when the drum and bell are sounded, there is a solo chant done to remind the practitioners of the urgency of resolving vexations, and to keep the Buddha path clearly in mind. Those selected from the monastic community to lead these chants often do not only have excellent vocal ability, but are accomplished Chan practitioners as well. To be able to lead the assembly in chanting is

technically not easy, and also requires a stable and powerful mind, to help lift the spirit of the sangha with one's voice. As such, the chanting leaders are called “Those who bring joy to the assembly.” The power of a stable and clear mind combined with a pleasant voice can have transformative effects on the listeners. When monastics chant together, they cultivate inner harmony as well as harmony among the community. From this, we can clearly see that music is deeply embedded in the culture of Buddhism, and has the function to help practitioners experience peace and ease of mind, and ultimately enlightenment.

Modern Dharma Music

Throughout Buddhist history, secular music has been created as well, based on the principles of Buddhadharma. There are Buddhist “nursery rhymes” as well as folk songs about the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha circulated widely among lay people. Even monastics of the modern Buddhist reform era, such as Master Hongyi and Master



Taixu, together wrote songs, such as the acclaimed “Song of the Three Jewels.” In more recent times, musicians have put the *Heart Sutra* to music in styles including New Age, pop, folk, and classical. I’m not sure, but maybe there’s a rap or techno version of the *Heart Sutra* out there somewhere. Musicians such as Steve Tibbetts combined the traditional chants of Tibetan Buddhism with modern instruments and a variety of musical styles, transcending genre definitions in creating new Buddhist songs. Venerable Heng Sure, an American monastic disciple of the late Dharma Master Hsuan Hua, has used his affinity with folk music, and created Buddhist songs with guitar, mandolin, banjo, and other stringed instruments, as a way to teach the Dharma and promote vegetarianism and environmental consciousness. In Mainland China, Buddhism, which has emerged internationally, has again become a national treasure, and various concerts are held which include traditional and modern Buddhist music. Chi Chern Fashi of Malaysia, a Dharma heir of Master Sheng Yen, and an elder Dharma brother to us monastics, has written lyrics which have been set to music by some musician disciples of his, and which have been made into full-length albums. Master Sheng Yen himself wrote lyrics for songs, which have been composed by professionals and often performed by choirs and orchestras at Dharma Drum Mountain (available from Dharma Drum Culture in Taiwan). In the above cases, some of the pieces are even meditative in style, leading the listener into subtler states of a concentrated mind. This shows that Buddhist music can be a creative expression of the Dharma and is a way of sharing the practice with a wide audience.

Sound and Meditative Experience

The above are examples of how Buddhism embraces music as a means of spiritual cultivation. In the least, the music can serve as a gateway for people to enter into the practice. With music as the means to please the mind of the listener, they may engender a curiosity towards the practice. As the saying goes, “Bodhisattvas use desire as a means to attract [sentient beings to the Dharma].” This may sound like deception at first, but if we look at the meditative practice of following one’s breath, that also follows the same principle. Breathing is a somewhat pleasant sensation upon which a person can rest the mind, and find joy focusing on. Eventually, the joy from the sensation abates and one enters more deeply into concentration, or other methods leading to liberating insight. After all, if an object of the mind is not pleasant, it can be very difficult to encourage someone to be intentionally aware of it, let alone focus on it continuously.

Music can serve as just such an object of mind, a pleasant sensation, which leads the mind into a state of refinement, unification, and ultimately dissolution. “Dissolution” refers to dissolving the mind of attachment, of self-centeredness. In some cases, this refers to a state of “the cessation of sensation and perception” where the meditator’s six senses cease functioning completely. Seeing, hearing, feeling, thinking, etc. cease altogether. The mind is liberated from the incessant movement and karmic activity of vexation—even free from the most subtle attachment to states of concentration. However, with the dissolution of self-centeredness, this “liberation through samadhi” is not necessarily

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the path one takes. With “liberation through wisdom” one can go directly to a state of mind where the six senses function fully, yet there is no self-attachment. One can see, hear, feel and think, but the mind is not at all affected by the sense objects, or environment. There is no longer identification of these things with the “I.” This latter state is what the Chan school encourages us to achieve—a mind which is actively engaging in the world, yet not stained by it.

To illustrate the elementary stages of the process of meditation through music, I had a few experiences of chanting where our voices were so harmonious, and my mind so absorbed, that the sounds seemed to resonate in my whole body. I felt a sense of such concentration that the body and mind felt light and at ease, and joy permeated my whole being. It seemed as if space was limitless and there was just the sound of chanting. This is part of the process of refining the body and mind where lightness and ease and joy are apparent. As for deeper experiences, I heard of a great master from Singapore who used to enter into samadhi while playing the wooden fish during sutra recitation. Still deeper experiences in meditation are possible, where music emerges from the absorption of the mind. Beyond mere experiences of lightness and ease, beyond concentration, the mind eventually enters into an effortless unification, where sometimes a limitless sound is heard. The meditator feels as if the sound comes from within, which is experienced as the whole universe, a sound so pleasant and harmonious. Such an experience can be likened to that of devas who abide in the heavens in Buddhist cosmology.

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However, concentration, unification, samadhi are not the goals of music meditation or chanting, but a byproduct. Eventually, one must transcend the limitation of fixing the mind on any object, even limitless sound, and realize a mind of non-attachment. In the *Shurangama Sutra*, Bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara expounds the method of enlightenment through the sense organ of hearing, using sound as the object of meditation. First, the mind rests on the object of sound; then the mind enters into the absorption into the internal “sound” or stream of unified concentration. Then layer by layer, one sheds the attachment to the reification of subject and object of meditation, until the realization of the non-self, or buddha-nature occurs.

Experimenting with Meditative Improvisation

Listening passively is one way of using sound as the object of meditation. However, creating music is another more active way to use sound as practice. Recently, after ten years of not touching a guitar or other musical instrument—other than those used in our ritual chanting services—I have begun to experiment with creating music as meditation. Quite accidentally, a few local practitioners and I found ourselves playing a few instruments that were left here at the Dharma Drum Retreat Center, by various volunteers and the previous property owners. A piano and organ had sat on the stage of the dining hall, collecting dust for 15 years. They were rarely used. One day though, after a one-

day retreat and the evening meal, a young lady who played guitar brought it to the hall and was practicing there. A few of us were listening after the meal and a few parents and children were there as well. I decided to join in and just played around on the organ. The kids started dancing, and a gentleman who played drums began a rhythmic beat on the guitar case. The little boy joined in and, lo and behold, we had a small band. The parents and teachers who were there seemed to enjoy the music and creativity. The upbeat Latin rhythms and melody may not have been seen as meditative, but to the players it requires immersion in sound—a kind of unification with mind and sound. In any case, this was a seed of music meditation.

A few months later, another “accident” occurred when one fellow who played organ and piano happened to be around, and we started playing on the organ and piano after an activity. A third gentleman who played drums wanted to join in, so he went home and brought his hand drums over. Soon after, the three of us were improvising, playing anything that came to mind, and listening closely to each other. It was quite a meditative experience. On another occasion around Chinese New Year, there were a few musicians that happened to be at the Center on a festive dinner event, and I invited them to bring out their instruments. We all got together and played various instruments, from guitar, to recorder, flute, piano, organ, and hand drums. What resulted was an experience of connectedness and harmony, brought about by playing “off the cuff” music without any preparation, just listening to each other and harmonizing with the sound—in effect, improvising, or “jamming.” Since then, we have experimented with percussion, and started a new activity called “Dharma Drum Circle.” After our one-day retreats, we invite people to join in a drum circle—simply, where people sit in a circle and play drums. This is nothing new, but we emphasize meditation as the key to drumming together.

There, at DDRRC, drumming and percussion are tools for meditation. We have held quite a few Dharma Drum Circle events, where various drum and percussive instruments are used as a way to listen to and harmonize with others. It has become a very attractive activity that combines individual creative freedom of expression with concentration, and brings people together in unity. There is also the social aspect of communicating through music, and sharing our thoughts afterwards. Some who were not ready to go on a meditation retreat, but were interested in practicing Chan, have found it more comfortable to join in the drum circle. Thus, it serves as a gateway into the practice, a meditation, as well as a social gathering and creative outlet.

Informally, I have also invited musicians to DDRRC or to places, where I routinely travel to lead Chan practice and give lectures, to join in music meditation. On one occasion at Penn State University, we gathered mostly professional and experienced musicians into the “Strum Circle.” That time, the whole experience of listening to each other’s sounds and improvising became an increasingly concentrative exercise. After one song, we all sat in silence for a few moments. I felt the effect of playing soft and refined music as it made my mind refined and subtle. There was also joy there. Many of them expressed that it was a transformative experience for them.

However, more than just cultivating concentration and unification of mind, playing music can also be a practice for cultivating wisdom. Making sounds and harmonizing with others seems easy, however, self-centeredness can make it difficult. When the self gets in the way, harmony is not possible. For example, some people just want to play their own music; they may ignore what others are doing and just play what they want. They can be absorbed into their own music, but have lost awareness of others. At that moment,

they lose the ability to see themselves and their relationship to others. In this way, their sounds conflict and interfere with the group. There is no communication, listening, or harmony. The self and its own interests have gotten in the way. On other occasions, possibly one can hear others and wants to harmonize, but one wants to be the loudest and the most clearly seen. “I want everyone to listen,” is the attitude at this time. This person is aware of others and themselves, yet wants to dominate. They are unaware that their self-centeredness is becoming overpowering and oppressive in the way they make sounds. Professional musicians may find it difficult to harmonize with those who don’t have the same skill level as they do. “This music is so elementary,” they may think. Their judgmental “expert’s mind”

causes them to lose the ability to hear the music in a fresh way. On the flip side, some people feel overly self-conscious in a way which makes them timid or afraid to be heard. The self-critical voice inside their minds tells them that they are not good enough, or they don’t know how to play, and that others will make fun of them. This obstructs them from being able to really hear themselves and others, and be able to freely join in the communication of sound. They repress their “voice” of music and don’t allow their creativity to flow freely. All of these states and habits represent the obstruction of self-centeredness. Here then, the practice is to be able to recognize these self-centered attitudes and to let them go. If one is able to relinquish the pride, self-pity, attachment to one’s own likes and dislikes,





and enter into the flow of the present moment of sound, one can be liberated from those habits. One will find that the creativity inherent in the mind is able to express itself freely without the interference of self. With the obstructions of self absent, one finds that it's easy to interact with others musically. Going beyond the context of a music circle, one will find that in daily life, one is able to recognize self-centered obstructions and let them go, opening up a new way of interacting with others that is harmonious and free. From harmony with sound, one can learn to harmonize with all sentient beings.

Gratification, Danger, and Escape

Despite the potential of using music as a way to cultivate concentration and wisdom, there is still a “danger” as the Buddha called it. Pleasant sounds—or more accurately, what we perceive to be pleasant sounds—as well as all enjoyable sensual pleasures, have an ability to capture the mind. Since we enjoy them, we have a tendency to hold on to them. Then we have the possibility of falling in love with them, and drowning in our craving for them. Since these sensations—sounds in this case—

have no permanent nature, we may end up perpetuating the sounds in our minds in order to enjoy them again and again. Why else do people hum their favorite songs as they work? Or when a person finds themselves bored, why else would they sing a song they know to stimulate the pleasure in the mind associated with that sound? The tendency of the mind is to try to perpetuate that which is not real, not permanent. Yet in doing so, agitation and craving

revolve in the mind. Since the mere memory of sound is not as gratifying as actual sound, people then crave sounds and seek them out. For a short while, they are gratified, then shortly after become bored. Have you ever listened to your favorite song 10 times in a row or more? What happens? You eventually get bored. The music may even become irritating as the sense of hearing and the mind becomes tired of listening and of following it. Thus, the sounds are essentially not gratifying. However, by craving and seeking out sounds, the seeds of craving are watered and become stronger, growing into great vines of vexation. This momentum of ignorance and craving pushes one into the cycle of craving for sounds. This process is endless.

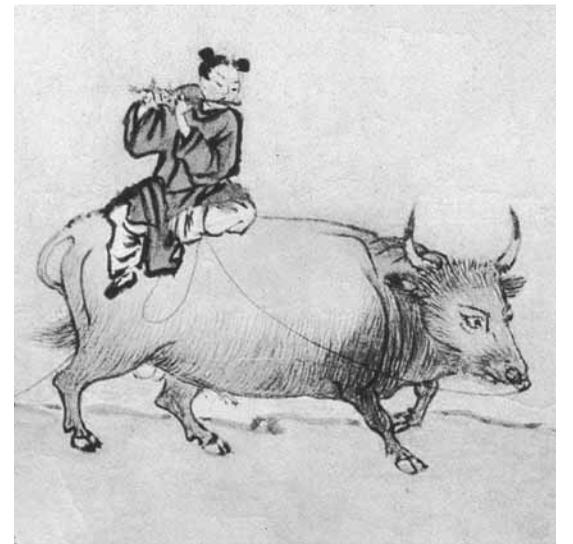
In the case of using music as meditation, this potential is still there. We must therefore be careful to listen with a disciplined mind. If the mind is scattered or listening along with craving, then it's problematic. How to listen without craving? For the observer, one just listens with pure attentiveness to sound. Don't follow the sound by matching one's thoughts with it. Don't recreate the sound in the mind. Just hear like listening to water

flow. For the musician, however, one has to follow the sound and have spontaneous ideas arise in the mind; otherwise, it's impossible to create. Yet, after the creation is done, don't let the trails of sound resonate in the mind in the form of wandering thoughts. When the music is over, let the mind return to a restful and silent openness. In this way, there's no clinging to sound or music; the mind can be like the “painter-mind” mentioned in the Avatamsaka (Flower Ornament) Sutra, freely creating forms and sounds, yet unattached to them. Rather than a true “creator” though, one is just an element in the causes and conditions of body, mind, and environment. When these causes and conditions come together, with consciousness as a main cause, music is born. There is no “I” in there “creating music.” To avoid the danger of using music as meditation, one must therefore have right view and the right approach. Then, one can “escape” the pitfall of sensual pleasures connected with sound.

Bodhisattva's Expedient Means

In this day and age, where information and sensual pleasures are so readily available to people, it seems that people are much less interested in turning away from these things and engaging in silent meditation. Although there is much hype about mindfulness practice in various professions, to dedicate a lot of time to traditional seated meditation—essentially sense deprivation and abandonment of sense pleasure—seems less and less attractive. Although the Chan school emphasizes that meditation is daily life, to be able to practice successfully without a routine of seated meditation is not very likely for most people. Sitting still and being quiet physically and mentally is thus an important foundation for developing a fluid and active wisdom. Yet there are so many stimulating things to do and senses to engage. “Why just sit and do nothing?” Those

with this mindset may need a more enjoyable and stimulating means of entering the practice of meditation. One such means is music. When provided a pleasant and somewhat entertaining means of calming and illuminating the mind, sensually-inclined people might be more willing to engage in meditation. After experiencing such calming and clarifying, being able to see the habits of self, and learning to let go, they may want to go deeper. To go deeper, one must become still. Going from the motion in music to the stillness of silence, they find the mind is likewise stilled. In stillness, the subtleties of self-centered vexation become apparent. When the subtlest attachment can be seen, it can be relinquished. When self-attachment is relinquished, the mind can truly be still. With the absence of the self-mind, wisdom arises. From that point on, the mind can then move and engage in activity, yet be silent and still—without vexation. A person able to cultivate this mind becomes a true bodhisattva, using various means to help others also find the path from a mind of agitation to one of stillness. Stillness in activity is the bodhisattva way, and music can be one such path.



Detail from Japanese Handscroll, 1278

Relocation Announcement – the Unlikely Story

Dharma Drum Mountain San Francisco Chapter (DDMBA-SF) has been operating in a new location since May 1, 2014. Situated in a hidden gem southeast of San Francisco called Niles District in Fremont, California, the volunteers here continue to carry what Master Sheng Yen and DDM stand for, serving the Greater San Francisco Bay Area and beyond. The newly purchased facility is a historical church requiring renovation (in progress) with workable layout and tranquil surroundings for volunteers to continue spreading Chan and Dharma to the West.

Our new presence here in Niles would have been an unlikely one few years ago. It was a story of fate for a growing group of drummers facing a set of unfavorable circumstances that brought forth a promising new page onto our journey through the audacity of hope, faith, and unity – the belief that, yes, we can!

It all began with a change in property ownership of the office location we had been renting for five years. The new owner, a real estate developer,

bought out all the surrounding area in order to start building a workplace campus totaling 1.9 million square feet. We were encouraged by the developer to move out earlier than our contract term as the construction noise and debris would render our location unfavorable for running our events.

Throughout the course of the move, volunteers formed into numerous working teams for new location search, planning, communications, public relations, legal, finance, fundraising and more, with Chang Hwa Fashi and the sangha providing guidance and moral support along the way. Timing and funding were the two biggest challenges that the teams were facing: we were forced to move on a short timetable and real estate is very costly in the bay area.

We were challenged mentally as well: feelings of uncertainty, anxiety, and fear abounded when our new place was as yet to be found. There were plenty of challenges as a group, too – Chang Di Fashi’s potato analogy summed this up well: to get rid of all the skins and rough edges of potatoes,



restaurants simply put them all into a big wooden bucket and stir and stir until all the skins and rough edges are worn away.

Looking retrospectively, this really has been a blessing in disguise. We were given a great opportunity to practice Dharma and Chan every step of the way and we came together through the whole process as a tighter team. Furthermore, the realization that we were now moving into a purchased location we can finally call Home – after moving from one rental place to another since 2003 – brought tears of joy and gratitude to many.

During the move all the volunteers came together as one, dedicating themselves to help make the new location a framework conducive to sharing the richness and usefulness of Chan Buddhistharma with the local community and the rest of the Bay Area. We all felt an indescribable faith that Shifu's work will continue at our new location. Watching his shadow disappear off the far end of the street, he is still within us – in his teaching.

Right after the move, the volunteers wasted no time in doing an open house for the local community. *Open House – Open Arms – For You* (the

local community) was the theme. The introduction unfolded Shifu's huge humanitarian aspiration that cuts across all religious boundaries and finds itself in people's hearts and compassion, and serves as an infinite common ground for all.

The local community got a practical taste of Chan in daily life through eating raisins as a meditation. They decompressed meditatively with a small cup of tea, unstressed through relaxation, sitting meditation, walking meditation and water bowl meditation. Our new location is now officially open to continue to carry on what Shifu and DDM stand for.

We are brimming with vibrant energy and undiminished conviction to continue onto a new page in our DDM journey. Recalling the humbling causes-and-conditions of being forced to move, and how the DDM Sangha guided and encouraged us to come together – this is a Chan-in-Daily-Life lesson that all the volunteers here will never forget. Never give up. Our tomorrow starts here and in the NOW, day after day, week after week, year after year.

by Warren Hsing and Ping Liu



Relocation Announcement – New Permanent Home

DDMBA-Ontario first began in 1995 at a member's house in Etobicoke, where a library and contact hub was established for practice and study. Since then, the chapter has prospered through numerous transitions and rentals, in order to accommodate its growing membership. However, every time the chapter has relocated, inevitably its membership has been impacted in turn. Therefore, having a permanent home has become the greatest wish of the local members and volunteers.

The idea to purchase a permanent home first began in 2008, according to Meili Chen, who was chapter President at the time. Ms. Hsiao-Fang

Liao learned that DDMBA Ontario was in need of funding to cover monthly rent and expenses (which were collectively supported by volunteers and donations) and subsequently donated \$50,000 CAD to the chapter. In order to optimize the value of this generous donation, the Board and President at the time designated the donation as a Building Fund for a Permanent Home. Subsequently, the chapter conducted a survey of its members, to determine where and what to have in a permanent home. In 2011 Angela Chang, the chapter's President at the time, organized several rounds of meetings and discussions with core members and the Sangha from New York and Taiwan. Finally, a consensus



was reached, and a Housing Committee was established to actively look for a suitable property.

Two years later, in 2013, causes and conditions came to a favorable fruition: a property next door to the current rental building became available. Kevin Lin, our current President, invited core members and long-time volunteers to participate in the evaluation of the property. After several rounds of discussions, we voted in May 2013 to pursue the purchase of the property at 1025 McNicoll Avenue in Toronto. It was then that we started to see light at the end of the tunnel, finally having a place to call our Dharma Home.

In September 2013 we organized a Fundraising Gala in Toronto to gather the additional funds needed for closing costs. We were greatly supported in these efforts by CMC, and received donations from both DDM Headquarters and DDMBA-Vancouver. In addition, the Fundraising Gala was covered by local media and attended by guests and friends from the community, cultivating both friendships and public support. Thanks to generous donations we were able to complete the closing of the purchase at the end of September.

Our new home is a building of three levels: two levels above ground plus one below ground. The environment is landscaped with tall trees and garden paths. Situated in a quiet business area, it is highly accessible by car and public transportation, yet the low traffic of people coming through the plaza also provides a quiet ambiance. Both serve as a perfect condition for practicing meditation and learning Dharma in an urban city.

To transform the newly purchased property into a place for Dharma learning requires a tremendous amount of work and planning, including the key challenge of how to make use of every dollar of donation as effectively as possible

on the renovation project. We continue to learn to use Dharma as a guide to communicate, coordinate, and to brainstorm solutions. Throughout this process, we depend on the wisdom, teachings and compassion of Buddha to help us let go of our egos and disintegrate any differences.

Existing interior décors and partitions must be taken down before the interior can be transformed into a meditation space that suits Chan and DDM style. The first floor of the building will become a reception area, offices, multifunctional rooms for meetings and classes, and a library. We started the renovation on the second floor and turned it into a Chan Hall. The very first public event occurred on February 8th of this year, Passing on the Lamp of Wisdom Memorial 1-Day Retreat. It was especially meaningful for DDMBA-Ontario to commemorate Master Sheng Yen in our first use of the brand new Chan Hall, which is bright, spacious and serene. Since then we have organized one-day retreats, a three-month Field of Merit Class, and many Dharma services by visiting monastics. In due time, the construction on the first floor will be completed. Moving is scheduled at the end of May.

We greatly appreciate all the causes and conditions that make things happen for our chapter, especially the work done by our core members, volunteers, and followers. Your contributions are the Bodhi seeds that will nurture and cultivate more opportunities for spreading the Dharma. People can learn Dharma at our new home, and can also apply Dharma in their daily lives through becoming a Bodhisattva Volunteer, as Master Sheng Yen encouraged everyone to be.

by Evelyn Wang, Angela Chang and Keith Brown



The Future

Calendar of retreats, classes and other upcoming events

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

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Thursday Evening Meditation	7:00 pm–9:00 pm	Sitting, walking, moving meditation, Dharma talk.
RETREATS (register online)		
1-Day & Children's Program	Saturday Jul 12	9:00 am–5:00 pm Led by Venerable Chang Wen
	Saturday Sep 6	
10-Day Intensive Chan Retreat	Jul 18-27	Led by Venerable Chi Chern
3-Day Retreat	Aug 22-24	Led by Rebecca Li PhD
3-Beginner's Mind Retreat	Sep 19-21	Led by Rebecca Li PhD and David Slaymaker PhD
CLASSES AND WORKSHOPS (Pre-registration advised)		
Beginner's Meditation Class	Aug 16	Visiting Monks from DDM Taiwan
SPECIAL EVENTS		
Meditate in the Mountains	Sep 13	DDRC Residents

Chan Meditation Center (CMC) in Elmhurst, Queens, NY

(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	Guan Yin Bodhisattva Chanting Service
	<i>(Please note: If there are five Sundays in the month, there will be a Guan Yin Bodhisattva Chanting Service on the 5th Sunday.)</i>	
CLASSES AND WORKSHOPS (Pre-registration advised)		
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		
Family Chan Camp (at DDRC)	Aug 6-10	Applications due by Jul 20 Download application form at www.chancenter.org
Sunday Afternoon Movies	Aug 24	2:00 pm–5:00 pm Film Viewing and Discussion Led by Dr. Peter Lin; check website for film description.
Dharma Study Camp (at DDRC)	Aug 29-Sep 4	Led by Abbot Venerable Guo Xing Applications due by Aug. 15 Download application form at www.chancenter.org

Chan Meditation Center Affiliates

NEW YORK - USA HEADQUARTERS			
Chan Meditation Center (CMC) • 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
Dharma Drum Retreat Center (DDRC)	184 Quannacut Road Pine Bush, NY 12566	(845) 744-8114 Fax: (845) 744-4753	ddrc@dharmadrumretreat.org www.dharmadrumretreat.org
TAIWAN - WORLD HEADQUARTERS			
Dharma Drum Mountain World Center for Buddhist Education	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
Dharma Drum International Meditation Group		02-2893-4646 ext. 6504	contact@ddm.org.tw www.ddm.org.tw
Nung Chan Monastery	No. 89, Lane 65, Tayeh Road Peitou, Taipei	02-2893-3161 Fax: 02-2895-8969	
NORTH AMERICA - CANADA			
Toronto	1025 McNicoll Avenue Toronto, Ontario Canada M1W 3W6	(416) 855-0531	ddmmba.toronto@gmail.com www.ddmmba-ontario.ca
Vancouver	8240 No.5 Road Richmond, BC Canada V6Y 2V4	(604) 277-1357 Fax : (604) 277-1352	info@ddmmba.ca www.ddmmba.ca
NORTH AMERICA - MEXICO			
Chacala, Mexico	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			
California	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 255 H Street Fremont, CA 94536	(408)469-0321 (Chinese) (510)996-8572 (English)	info@ddmbasf.org www.ddmbasf.org
Colorado	Denver	(732)754-8984	tomchu100@gmail.com

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.

NORTH AMERICA - UNITED STATES			
Connecticut	Fairfield County	(203) 972-3406	contekalice@aol.com
	Hartford	(860)805-3588	cmchartfordct@gmail.com http://www.ddmhartfordct.org
Florida	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.tallahasseechan.com
Georgia	Atlanta	(678)909-0068	Schen@eleganthf.net
Illinois	Chicago 1234 N. River Road Mt. Prospect, IL 60056	(847)255-5483	ddmbachicago@gmail.com www.ddmbachicago.org
Massachusetts	Boston	(781)708-9255	baipang@gmail.com
Michigan	Lansing	(517) 332-0003	lkong2006@gmail.com
Missouri	St. Louis	(314) 277-5640	acren@aol.com
New Jersey	789 Jersey Ave. New Brunswick, NJ 08901	(732) 249-1898	enews@ddmmba-nj.org www.ddmmba-nj.org
Nevada	Las Vegas	(702) 896-4108	yh12527@yahoo.com
North Carolina	Cary	(919) 677-9030	minganlee58@gmail.com
Pennsylvania	Philadelphia	(610) 254-5028	tchiang2001@hotmail.com
	State College	(814) 867-9253	ddmbapa@gmail.com www.collegedharma.org/ddmbapa
Texas	Dallas	(817)274-2288	ddmmba_patty@hotmail.com
	Houston	(713)628-8058	
Utah	Salt Lake City	(810) 947-9019	Inge_Fan@hotmail.com
Vermont	Burlington	(802) 658-3413	juichulee@yahoo.com www.ddmbavt.org
Washington	Seattle 14028 Bel-Red Road Suite 205, Bellevue WA 98007	(425) 957-4597	mhwong77@gmail.com seattle.ddmusa.org
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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

Chan Meditation RETREATS

Led by **Chi Chern Fashi** · a Dharma Heir of Chan Master Sheng Yen

Teachings on methods of relaxation, Silent Illumination and Huatou

10-DAY INTENSIVE RETREAT

31 July – 10 August 2014

Dluzew near Warsaw, Poland

CONTACT Pawel Rosciszewski · +48 601224999 · budwod@budwod.com.pl · www.czan.eu

5-DAY RETREAT

16 – 21 August 2014

Haus Tao, CH 9427 Wolfhalden, Switzerland

CONTACT Hildi Thalmann · info@chan-bern.ch · www.chan-bern.ch · www.haustao.ch

21-DAY INTENSIVE RETREAT

1 – 22 August 2015

Dluzew near Warsaw, Poland

CONTACT Pawel Rosciszewski · +48 601224999 · budwod@budwod.com.pl · www.czan.eu

