

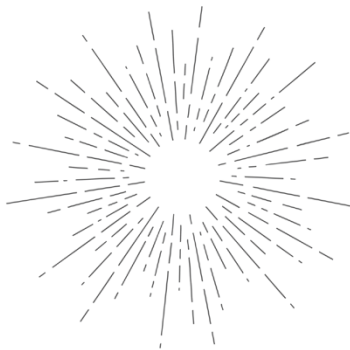
# 禪

## CHAN MAGAZINE

SUMMER 2023







Avalokiteśvara serves as a giant reflector, upon which thousands of people direct their thoughts. If these people were to direct their thoughts to different objects, they would be shining thousands of weak flashlights, scattered beams of limited power. But when people concentrate their thoughts on a single entity, they shine all of the flashlights' beams onto a single mirror, which creates a tremendous illumination. Avalokiteśvara is such a mirror. Externally, this may seem similar to the practices of many other religions, but the perspective is different. Other religions say that power comes from the deity one prays to. Buddhism maintains that power comes from the individuals who pray.



CHAN MASTER SHENG YEN

*Dharma Drum: The Life and Heart of Chan Practice, 1996*

# CHAN MAGAZINE

**PUBLISHED QUARTERLY BY** Institute of Chung-Hwa Buddhist Culture  
Chan Meditation Center (CMC)  
90-56 Corona Avenue  
Elmhurst, New York 11373

**FOUNDER/TEACHER** Chan Master Venerable Dr. Sheng Yen

**ADMINISTRATOR** Venerable Chang Hwa

**EDITOR-IN-CHIEF** Buffe Maggie Laffey

**ART DIRECTOR** Shaun Chung

**COORDINATOR** Chang Jie

**CONTRIBUTING EDITORS** David Berman, Ernest Heau, Guo Gu

**CONTRIBUTORS** Venerable Chang Ji, Venerable Chang Zhai,  
Venerable Chang Xun, Rebecca Li, David Listen,  
Rikki Asher, Kaifen Hu, Taylor Mitchell,  
Ting-Hsin Wang, Bruce Rickenbacker,  
Dharma Drum Mountain Cultural Center

**CHAN MEDITATION CENTER** (718) 592-6593

**DHARMA DRUM PUBLICATIONS** (718) 595-0915

[chanmagazine@gmail.com](mailto:chanmagazine@gmail.com)

<https://chancenter.org/en/publication/chan-magazine>

The magazine is a non-profit venture; it accepts no advertising and is supported solely by contributions from members of the Chan Meditation Center and the readership. Donations to support the magazine and other Chan Center activities may be sent to the above address and will be gratefully appreciated. Please make checks payable to Chan Meditation Center; your donation is tax-deductible.

# 禪 CHAN MAGAZINE

Volume 43, Number 3 — Summer 2023

The Noble Eightfold Path – Part III BY <i>Chan Master Sheng Yen</i>	4
Silent Illumination: “Admonition on Chan Practice” BY <i>Chan Master Hongzhi Zhengjue</i>	12
Being With BY <i>Simon Child</i>	22
Remembering Lindley Hanlon	35
Chan Meditation Center Affiliates	38

Articles published in *Chan Magazine* contain the views of their authors  
and do not necessarily represent the views of Dharma Drum Mountain.

---

**COVER PHOTO** Matthew Hume • **MASTHEAD BACKGROUND** Eric Masur





# *The Noble Eightfold Path*

## Part III

— BY —

CHAN MASTER SHENG YEN

Photo by Matt Hardy

In the fall of 2003 and the spring of 2004 Master Sheng Yen gave several lectures at the Chan Meditation Center in Queens, New York, on the Buddha's noble eightfold path. This article, which originally appeared in the Spring 2009 issue of *Chan Magazine*, is the third of four in which Master Sheng Yen discusses the eightfold path as a liberation process. The lectures were orally translated by Rebecca Li, transcribed by Sheila Sussman, and edited by Ernest Heau.

## Overview

**B**UDDHIST PRACTICE IS TRADITIONALLY defined as the cultivation of three related but distinct disciplines, namely precepts (ethical behavior), samadhi (meditation), and wisdom (awakened, or bodhi mind). Another tradition is to fold the noble eightfold path into the three disciplines in the following way: right view and right intention are the paths that comprise wisdom; right speech, right action, and right livelihood define ethical behavior, and right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration are the noble paths that make up the practice of meditation, or dhyana. In this article I will discuss right speech, right action, and right livelihood, the paths that make up the practice of the precepts, or morality.

## Right Speech

The third noble path is right speech, also called true speech, or noble speech. Right speech means speaking only what is true. The *Diamond Sutra* says that a buddha does not engage in the four kinds of unwholesome speech: lying, vulgarity, slander and frivolous talk. Lying means saying what is untrue, vulgarity means using improper language, slander means defaming other people and causing disunity, and frivolous speech means saying meaningless things, including idle chatter.

The true purpose of speech is to enable us to express ideas, opinions, and feelings in social interactions, and to bring comfort, benefit, encouragement and happiness to others. When we use speech for these purposes we benefit ourselves as well. Speech that causes harm to other people is not right speech regardless of the manner in which it is said. One should not hurt others with words and then say, "I said it in a nice way; I didn't mean to cause harm." But if what you said caused harm that is not right speech.

Speech is also properly used to express wisdom and most importantly, compassion, not for venting our own emotions and frustrations. Nor is the purpose of speech to fight, conquer, or suppress other people. There are people who rarely speak but when they open their mouth they are scolding and criticizing. Others use speech to vent their emotions and frustrations. As long as your speech discomforts other people that is not the practice of right speech. A teacher of Buddhism might say to their students, "I have been teaching you Buddhadharma and you should show more compassion." Or, "You people have no wisdom at all." Speaking this way is not in accordance with right speech and such a teacher has neither compassion nor wisdom.

A young couple fought all the time after two years of marriage. The wife would complain to the husband saying, "You are the only person in my life. I always think about taking care of you in the best way, to make your life comfortable. I'm willing to sacrifice

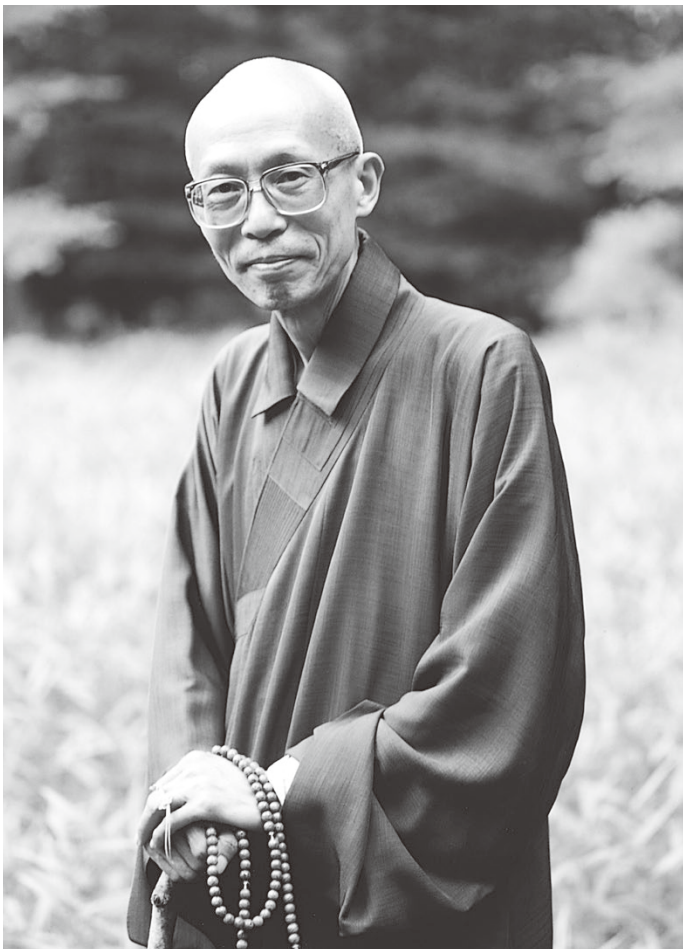
everything just for you, so why are you so cold to me?”

The husband responded, “Before I got married, I ate, slept, put on my clothes, in the same way I do now. I don’t need you to take care of me.”

They speak to each other in this vein all the time. So this wife felt very frustrated and upset and came to me for advice. I suggested that she tell her husband that she takes such good care of him because in return, she needs his help. She went back and tried this and it was very useful. It gave the husband a sense of accomplishment, feeling that he was being helpful to her.

How you use words can make a difference. If you express an idea in a way that makes the other person comfortable and happy, you also benefit from the interaction. If you express the same idea in a way that makes the other person uncomfortable, you also suffer the consequence. Therefore, when you go back and interact with your family and friends, whatever you say to them, if you make them feel happy, you are practicing right speech. Whatever you say to make them feel unhappy or uncomfortable, or give them suffering, at that moment remind yourself, “This is not right speech that I’m practicing.”

When long-time practitioners seem to suffer a lot some people may ask, “Why do some Buddhists who practice a lot still suffer a great deal?” In part, that may have to do with their not paying attention to right speech, not making sure to express themselves



*Chan Master Sheng Yen* DDM Archive Photo

in ways that bring happiness and harmony in their relationships. It is truly important to express yourself in ways that bring happiness and harmony to others. That way you will truly be able to depart from suffering. When people treat you unfairly or unjustly, you may feel an urge to respond by hurting them through speech. Instead, you should give rise to compassion and bodhi mind and hope that the other person will behave more harmoniously in the future. That way

you will automatically not be so upset or feel the urge to react with unwholesome speech. If you allow yourself to get upset you are no different from the other person. By practicing right intention, you will be able to handle the situation and avoid giving rise to more ignorance.

## Right Action

The fourth noble path is right action, or noble action. It is the idea that our every action should accord with Buddhadharmā. Right action also refers to the elimination of the three kinds of unwholesome bodily conduct: killing, stealing and sexual misconduct. For laypersons, sexual misconduct means sex with anyone other than one's spouse. For monastics, sexual misconduct means any kind of sexual interaction. The reasons why people commit the three kinds of unwholesome acts are: not having the right view; giving in to greed or desire;

and harboring hatred or aversion. Not having the right view, people will not be able to see these kinds of conduct as improper. Other erroneous views are thinking these kinds of unwholesome conduct will yield certain benefits such as fame, power, wealth, or health. Greed and desire can bring about unwholesome conduct when we have wants that we think we need to satisfy. And because of hatred and anger people want to hurt or retaliate against others, or vent their emotions and frustrations by killing, stealing, or sexual misconduct.

What causes the conflict between nations and cultures that have them killing each other, as we have today? Part of the answer is hatred and the perceived need for retaliation. It is also because of ignorance about the unwholesome consequences of war and conflict. The same logic applies to stealing and sexual misconduct. Some people steal out of hatred or wish for vengeance. This can take the form of stealing property, someone's spouse, or in fact,



Photo by Karsten Winegeart

an entire nation. The same thing applies to sexual misconduct, which can also be caused by hatred as well as desire. But if one can give rise to compassion and bodhi mind, one will not give rise to these kinds of unwholesome conduct.

From the positive side, right action expresses love for sentient beings and the desire to be very protective of the environment in one's own life, as well as at large. It also means engaging in a healthy and harmonious sexual relationship with one's spouse only, not thinking only about oneself and not harming individuals or the community. Furthermore, one should cultivate positive relationships with people, engaging in charity and so on, while at the same time giving oneself happiness. Positive relationships and charitable acts are therefore two proper paths to right action. As far as charity is concerned, one should not indiscriminately give to every cause or everyone who asks, but give to the right people, at the right time, in an appropriate way.

## Right Livelihood

Right livelihood is the true way to secure the necessities of life and the proper way to conduct oneself in daily life. The conventional sense of livelihood is earning a living, but right livelihood means doing that in accordance with wisdom and compassion. This means not causing vexations and afflictions for oneself or others. It is not right livelihood if your job causes others to lose theirs; securing one's livelihood should not cause unhappiness to others. A livelihood that brings a lot of security and safety but makes other people insecure and unsafe is also not right livelihood and not compassionate.

When taking a job, people should consider whether it is legal or likely to bring a lot of vexation. There are livelihoods that are legal but likely to harm

others. Knowingly taking such a job is not wisdom or compassion. For a lay practitioner the main principle is to make a living while upholding the five precepts.

What occupations would involve violating the five precepts? Foremost would be a job that requires killing sentient beings, especially humans. The second precept forbids stealing, so this would exclude jobs that involve getting other people's property improperly. Clearly, one should not take a job that entails sexual misconduct, which is forbidden by the third precept. Fourth is the precept against lying, so to be avoided are occupations that involve deception and saying untruthful things. The fifth precept, no use of intoxicants, precludes making a living dealing in illegal drugs or addictive gambling.

To summarize, occupations that contradict upholding the precepts, that cause harm to people and chaos to society, should not be taken by practitioners. At first glance some of these occupations seem to bring much benefit to oneself, but if one looks at them more clearly there can be more harm than benefit. For example, people who are involved in slaughtering animals may think they are just offering a service to society. However, killing animals causes suffering to them and is not a very compassionate way to make a living.

Someone who took refuge with me comes from a family that has been pig farmers for three generations. Their farm had about a thousand pigs at any given time. The pigs are ready for slaughter at three or four months, and in a typical year this farm processed about three thousand pigs.

This disciple told me, "Shifu, I'm very compassionate in taking care of my pigs. I make sure that they are fed well, I get them pretty chubby; I love these pigs." I asked him, "What happens to these pigs after you take care of them?" He said, "We sell them to the slaughterhouse." "What happens in the

slaughterhouse?” “Well, they get slaughtered.” Then he said, “Yes, those people who work in the slaughterhouse, they could use some help to reform their mind.” I asked this person, “Could you bring these people to me so that I can give them help and reform them a little bit?”

So, this disciple brought the two owners of the slaughterhouse to me. I asked them, “Of all the possible occupations, why slaughtering pigs?” One of them said, “Shifu, actually I am really very compassionate. In the past, pigs were slaughtered in a really cruel way. We worked very hard to figure out a system to kill pigs in a humane way, so these pigs are very fortunate. Besides, it’s all because people want to eat pork.”

I said to them, “Nevertheless, these pigs are still being slaughtered.” One of the owners said, “Master, even if we do not kill these pigs, other people would be doing it. So if you truly want to deal with this problem, get people to stop eating pork. It is the people who eat pork who are not compassionate.”

Two other people witnessed this conversation. I asked them, “Do you agree that if people stopped eating pork, there would be no need for people who slaughter pigs? Do you eat pork?” Their response was “Well, it’s not that we have to eat meat, it’s just that everywhere we go they serve meat. If they stopped slaughtering pigs there would be no meat in the restaurant and we won’t eat it any more. It’s out of our control.”

As you can see this is a very interesting cycle. The slaughterhouse people say it’s because of the demand for pork, the meat-eaters say it’s because meat is served to them. Neither admits responsibility and they all claim to be compassionate. What do you think?

Student: This sounds very familiar because most people are meat eaters. When we abstain from meat,

our families criticize us and our co-workers make remarks, so it is a familiar problem.

Sheng Yen: You happen to be vegetarian. Maybe other people would disagree with you.

Student: Other people think that I’m not very compassionate towards carrots and broccoli!

Sheng Yen: One can distinguish between living things that have a nervous system and memory, versus those that don’t. Human beings and higher forms of animals that have a nervous system and memory are capable of suffering. Some simple forms of life have a nervous system but they don’t have memory. Plants have cells but no nervous systems and no memory. Buddhism considers it not compassionate to eat living things that have a nervous system and a memory because they are capable of suffering. Plants lack a nervous system and are not unlike fingernails or hair, which are nourished by our circulatory system, but do not experience pain when cut. Out of compassion one refrains from killing or eating animals because we don’t want to cause them fear and suffering. Therefore, for right livelihood we should avoid any occupation that involves killing animals. Refraining from causing harm to others is not just directed to animals; in fact the emphasis should be on directing compassion to other human beings.

The second precept prohibits stealing – taking something from others without their permission – or robbery, taking something by force. Quite a number of occupations in the world involve stealing or robbing. Piracy is a vivid example of a profession that involves robbing people by force.

There was a case in Taiwan about people who went to a remote national park to collect rock specimens and rare medicinal herbs, which they would sell. Somebody discovered what they were doing and reported them to the authorities. At a trial, the defendants claimed that the rocks and herbs were just



lying there and nobody was using them anyway. They claimed that they performing a service that created wealth for society, but the court found them guilty. These people had the wrong livelihood.

Right livelihood means securing one's livelihood while following the Buddhist principles of wisdom and compassion. Lay people have families as well as careers, so upholding the precepts is adequate to ensure that they are practicing right livelihood. Those who have left home (monks and nuns) are supported by the offerings of followers and disciples. There is no need for them to engage in jobs or careers to secure their daily necessities. In fact, monastics are not allowed to earn money for material necessities. However, the standard for right livelihood in Buddhist monasteries can also vary across cultures. For example, in India of the Buddha's time, monks were supported by the lay people and by the royalty, so that their material needs were provided for. Also, Indian monks went around with an alms bowl, receiving offerings from the public. In China, lay people

also provided support for the monastic community but not to the same level as in India. For Chinese monks and nuns, farming was part of right livelihood and there was no strong mendicant tradition.

In olden times, it was considered improper to sell Buddhist sutras, which were supposed to be given freely as a way to help sentient beings. To sell a sutra would be like selling the Buddhadharma and was not right livelihood. When I was a young monk in China, if a Buddhist master charged a fee for teaching Dharma, he would be described as making money off the Buddhadharma. The problem is that in contemporary society if there were no admission fee, it would be difficult to raise enough money to maintain or rent facilities for teaching and practicing. I once asked a famous Buddhist teacher if charging admission for a lecture was selling the Buddhadharma. He replied, "The proper way they should think of it is making an offering to the Buddhadharma." 🌿

(To be continued)


A black and white photograph of a mountain landscape. In the foreground, there are rocky, grassy slopes. In the middle ground, a dense forest of evergreen trees covers the mountain slopes. Several large, jagged rock formations are visible, including a prominent one in the center. The background shows more distant, hazy mountain ranges under a bright sky.

# Silent Illumination:

*“Admonition on Chan Practice”*

— BY —

CHAN MASTER HONGZHI ZHENGJUE

A grayscale photograph of a person standing on a large, rounded rock in a mountainous landscape. The person is small in the frame, looking out over a vast, hazy valley. The background shows rolling hills and mountains under a bright, overcast sky. The overall mood is contemplative and serene.

Hongzhi Zhengjue (1091–1157) was one of the most illustrious Chan masters of the Song dynasty who revived the Caodong tradition. Even though his collected works include Dharma discourses and comments to hundreds of gong’ans, modern Buddhists and scholars tend to focus on his eloquent presentation of *mozhao chan* or “silent illumination Chan.” This article is excerpts from *Extensive Records of Chan Master Hongzhi*, originally printed in two parts in our 2007 Spring and Summer issues.

Translated by Guo Gu (Dr. Jimmy Yu). Guo Gu began studying with Chan Master Sheng Yen in 1980. In 1991 he was ordained as a monk and became Master Sheng Yen’s personal attendant. In 1995, he had his first Chan experience, and was given permission by the master to teach Chan independently. In 2000, Guo Gu left monasticism and re-entered the lay world. He is a professor of Buddhist studies at Florida State University. He is also the founder and teacher at the Tallahassee Chan Center.

THE ESSENTIAL POINT OF ALL THE BUDDHAS, the critical essence of each and every patriarch: Without encountering things, it knows; not opposing conditions, it illumines. Without encountering things, it knows – its knowing is inherently subtle. Not opposing conditions, it illumines – its luminosity is naturally wondrous. Its knowing is inherently subtle – it does not involve discriminating thoughts. Its illumining is naturally wondrous – there are no signs whatsoever. Without discriminating thoughts – it knows without pairs; yet, it is solitary. Without any signs of haste – it illumines without any grasping, yet it still goes on knowing:

*The water so clear – transparent to the bottom.*

*Late, late, fishes have yet to appear.*

*The sky so vast – without boundaries.*

*Distant, out of sight, the birds have left no trace.*

## I.

The field is vacant and wide open. It is something intrinsic from the very beginning. You must purify and correct it; clean it off, and get rid of various deluded conditioning and illusory habits. Naturally, you arrive at a place that is clear and pure, perfect and bright; totally empty, without any image; solitary and independent, not relying on anything. Only in this vastness one can illumine intrinsic reality and relinquish external objects. Therefore, it is said, “With perfect and pervasive clarity, there is not a single thing to be perceived.” This field is where birth and death do not reach; it is the deep source of pure luminosity; it is able to emit light and function responsively. Permeating through all [worlds as many as] motes of dust, transparent, without forming semblance, the wondrous [activity] of seeing and hearing leaps far beyond those everyday sounds and

forms. Reaching everywhere, its function is without traces, its mirroring without obstruction. Naturally and spontaneously it impartially issues forth – flowing in response with thought after thought, object after object. An ancient said, “Having no-mind one attains in himself the Dao of no-mind. Attaining no-mind in himself, the Dao as well ceases to be.” With clear awareness, one takes up the responsibility of helping other sentient beings as if one were sitting in perfect silence. As for the subtle wondrous activity of leisurely entering the world, it is something you must dig into and investigate in this fashion!

## II.

The correct way of practice is to simply sit in stillness, and silently investigate; deep down there is a state one reaches where externally one is no longer swirled about by causes and conditions. The mind being empty, it is all-embracing; its luminosity being wondrous, it is precisely apt and impartial. Internally there are no thoughts of grasping after things; vast and removed, being just as it is – free from confusion. Alive and potent, all dependency and opposition are severed; one remains self-contained. This contentment has nothing to do with emotional feelings; one must not rely on anything at all. Being quite outstanding, [this state of suchness] is full of life and spirit, and does not fall into defiled appearance; one finds a resting-place. Pure and immaculate, it is bright; being bright, it is penetrating. It is able to respond smoothly in accordance with phenomena, where phenomena do not obstruct each other. Floating effortlessly, clouds appear on mountain peaks; shining boldly, the reflections of the moon flow along mountain streams. Everywhere – there are radiant luminosity and spiritual transformations; clearly, appearances are unobstructed! Mutually responding, like a cover



to a container or the tip of a sword meeting a shooting arrow's point. With further training and nourishing, it ripens. Its essence becomes firm and stable; it penetrates every place freely. Cut off sharp corners; don't speak of theories [of right and wrong]. Like a white ox or a tamed ferret that naturally [and willingly] responds to any command – one can then be called a true person. Therefore it is said, "Having the Dao of no-mind, one can be like this; having not yet gained no-mind, it is extremely difficult!"

### III.

Wide and far-reaching without limit; pure and clean, it emits light. Its spiritual potency is unobscured. Although it is bright, there are no objects of illumination. It can be said to be empty, yet this emptiness is

full of luminosity. It illumines in self-purity, beyond the working of causes and conditions, apart from subject and object. Its wondrousness and subtleties are ever present; its luminosity is also vast and open. Moreover, this is not something that can be conceived of as existence or nonexistence. Nor can it be deliberated about with words and analogies. Right here – at this pivotal axle, opening the swinging gate and clearing the way, it is able to respond effortlessly to circumstances – the great function is free from hindrances. At all places, turning and turning about, it does not follow conditions nor can it be trapped in models. In the midst of everything, it settles securely. With "that," it is identical to what "that" is; with "this," it is identical to what "this" is. "This and that" inter-fuse and merge without distinction. Therefore it is said, "Like the earth that holds up a mountain,

unaware of its steepness and loftiness; like the stone that contains jade, unaware of the flawlessness of the jade.” If one can be thus, this is truly leaving home. People who have left home must get hold of the essence in this way.

#### IV.

Patch-robed monks should wither away and freeze the [deluded] thoughts of the mind, and rest from remnant conditioning. Single-mindedly restore and cultivate [this field]. Directly cut down all the overgrown grass throughout the boundary of the four directions. Do not allow a single speck of dust to defile this field. Spiritually potent, it is bright; vast and removed, it is transparent. Thoroughly illumine that which comes before the [principle] essence, until you reach a state where the light becomes naked and pure – where not a single speck of dust can be attached

to. When you tug and pull back this ox-mind by the nose, it will naturally come alive and be imposing. Being quite unusual and outstanding, it mingles with others along the pathway without damaging people’s sprout and grain. Thriving and dynamic, the ox effortlessly responds to circumstances; responding to circumstances without artificiality, it thrives and is free flowing. Not fixed to any set place, it is free from fetters – this is the place where the ox plows through the field of the empty kalpa. Proceeding in such a way, all things appear vividly without obscurity; everywhere, all things manifest as they are, [maintaining] one thought for ten thousand years. Fundamentally, this is non-abidance in appearances. It is said, “The mind-ground contains every seed. The rain will universally cause them to sprout. When the meaning of the blossoming flower of enlightenment is understood, the fruit of Bodhi will ripen of its own accord.”



Photo by Annie Spratt

## V.

It cannot be practiced nor actualized because it is something intrinsically full and replete. No other things can defile it; it is thoroughly pure to its depth. Precisely at the place where purity is full and complete is where you recognize the eye. When illumination is thorough, self is relinquished completely; when the experience is bright, your steps are then solid and grounded. Birth and death originally have no root or stem; coming forth, sinking away fundamentally are without trace of the self. Intrinsic light illumines its peak thoroughly – empty in spiritual potency. Likewise, intrinsic wisdom responds to conditions – though quiescent, it is resplendent. Truly arriving at this place where there is no middle or extremes, before or after – it begins to become one pervasive totality. Sense faculties or sense objects, on each and every occasion, preach the Dharma through the broad and long tongue. The inexhaustible lamp is thus transmitted; everything emits great radiance – performing the great work of accomplishing Buddhahood. Originally one does not need a hair's breadth of an external object. Clearly, this is a matter to be found within one's own home.

## VI.

Silent and still, abiding in itself; just like this – in suchness, it is apart from conditioning, where luminosity is vast and spacious, without any [emotional] dust – directly the self is thoroughly relinquished. Arriving at this fundamental place, one realizes that it is not something newly acquired today. From the ancient home before the great kalpa, there has been utter clarity without any obscurations; in its liveliness and readiness, it shines alone. Though it is

like this, without enacting it there is no attainment. Precisely at the time of enacting it, simply keep it so that not a single thing arises; do not allow a speck of dust to cover it. In this great rest where [one's vexations are] dried up and frozen, there's vast and thorough, penetrating understanding. If this rest cannot thoroughly exhaust the self and you wish to reach the realm beyond birth and death, there can be no such realm! Just directly penetrate through. You will then resolve [this matter] thoroughly without the dust of conceptual thinking and be purified, without conditioned speculations. Take a backward step and open your grasping hands. Thoroughly resolve this matter. Then, your ability to put forth light and respond to the world will be appropriate – merging with myriad objects – just right, on all occasions. It is said, "The Dharma within dharmas has never been concealed; from ancient times to the present – it is always manifest and exposed."

## VII.

All Buddhas and patriarchs do not actualize something different; they all arrive at this resting place. The three times [of past, present, and future] are severed. The myriad conditions are silenced. Directly there is not a single hair's breadth of opposition, the spirited buddha illuminates itself. It's miraculous [illumination] thoroughly penetrates to the source. When realization is far-reaching and exhaustive, one's body diversifies to respond to situations. All sense doors issue forth light; every object manifests with silhouettes. Then one will realize that exhaustively all things flow out from oneself. The hundreds of tips of weeds everywhere are posed as causes or conditions in relation to oneself. Thorough and penetrating right through one's whole being – this is how one should proceed!

## VIII.

Being empty, it leaves no trace; in illumination there are no dusts of emotion. When the light penetrates, stillness is profound; mysteriously it severs all defects and defilement. When you can thus understand your “self,” you can thus resolve your “self.” Clear and pure, wondrous and bright – this field is intrinsically yours. Many lifetimes of inability to resolve [this matter of self-grasping] only come from obscuring doubts and hovering delusions. All these are but self-created obstructions and blocks. Openly, wisdom freely roams; internally, one forgets merits and rewards. Just directly relinquish this burden the self. Turn around, and resume your position! Put your feet firmly on the path. In this spontaneous responsiveness and wondrous function, all things encountered are reality. Here, there is not a single thing from the tiniest hair to a speck of dust outside yourself!

## IX.

The field of illumination in silence is likened to the clear autumn sky, where illumination is without effort and where the duality of light and shadow are severed – this is the time when the whole truth is transcended. The source is pure; the essence is potent. When the pivotal axis is open, its mobility is lively. Clear and brilliant, it is intrinsically radiant. When this center is discovered, one will be able to bring its potency forth and utilize it in manifold situations with full appropriateness. This is like the meeting of sky and earth, where the ten thousand appearances harmonize. Contented and composed, [one is] self-possessed and can roam about without any opposition. Responding to celestial beings in a heavenly appearance, delivering human beings in a human form, whatever the situation calls for one manifests

the appropriate body and appearance to expound the Dharma. If you can effectively experience thus, you will be vast and open and defeat all obstacles.

## X.

Profound and transparent, still and silent, illumination thoroughly penetrates everywhere. This place is vacant yet potent, vast and resplendent. Even though there is the appearance of self-luminosity, there are no echoing shadows. If at this time it is disclosed and pierced through, then even though there are merits for taking up this burden to distinguish it clearly, it is all the more necessary that you take the backward step and reach the middle of the circle. Only at such time, luminosity will issue forth from its center. Astonishing and amazing, it is solitary and independent. When such merit [of taking up this burden] is understood and utilized, then will you comprehend what is called birth. Such is the obscure and subtle reality of the emerging and sinking away [of sentient being]. You must carefully discern this. Then, you can emanate different bodies and steer various affairs.

## XI.

The seal of ten thousand forms is a seal that leaves no impressions. Roaming the world responding to conditions, naturally one enjoys the function of being able to enter samadhis by way of every single dharma; such function is for one’s own use, and one cannot be self-satisfied. The empty valley receives clouds; the cold stream cleanses the moon. Not departing and not remaining, one is able to transcend ordinary circumstances and transform external conditions, and expound the doctrine without attainment or expectation. Present everywhere, yet always it remains at the same old field as if not a single

不觸事而知  
其知自微  
不對緣而照  
其照自妙  
宏智正覺句

聖嚴  
錄

Without encountering things, it knows – its knowing is inherently subtle.  
Not opposing conditions, it illumines – its luminosity is naturally wondrous.

Chinese Calligraphy by Chan Master Sheng Yen  
Background Photo by Maria Teneva

hair had been moved. [Despite being] crippled and needing assistance, or being ugly and stupid, you will naturally thrive in perfect accordance. Zhaozhou's responses "Go wash your bowl" and "Drink your tea" are not premeditated acts. From the very beginning it is already present. When your insight can be like this, from one instant to the next thorough and complete, then your conduct can be considered that of a patched-robed monk.

## XII.

Where the field is secure and concealed, when the activities are like a frozen pond, the empty kalpa is perceived. [In such a state,] there is not a single breadth of condition that can become a burden, no single mote that can be an obstacle. Utterly empty, it is bright. Perfectly pure, it is resplendent. Existing in utter clarity, the mind extends throughout ten thousand eras without ever being hazy. With regard to this matter, if you can be convinced with a nod of your head, you will neither conform to birth and death, nor will you abide in nihilism or permanence. In motion, you transform along with the ten thousand, myriad [sentient beings]. In stillness, you are enduring like the way heaven covers and the way earth supports. Emerging and sinking away, rolling and unrolling, everything is up to you. You fellows of "original being!" You must learn to bring it forth and let it go like this.

## XIII.

To contemplate the true characteristic of the body is to contemplate the Buddha. If you are able to directly experience the realm where nothing exists outside of your being, then all opposites will appropriately be extinguished, transcending all conceptions. Buddha

and mind are refined to their non-dual [nature]. The patched-robed monk silently roams about and abides nowhere. Vacant and potent, miraculous and penetrating, [his realization is identical] to the great space that surpasses this dusty kalpa. Brilliant and profound, addictions cease; luminous and bright, it is non-conceptual. When the mechanism turns, it transforms and emanates, responding to situations while passing through the world. Illumination is without effort; its function is without traces. Clouds leisurely drift, streams flow – there have never been any residual obstacles since the beginning. This direct teaching is pure and secure – nothing can budge it. There is no need to follow favorable conditions. This is where you gain genuine experience.

## XIV.

The path is not [something] transmittable by patriarchs. Before the arrival of patriarchs, the "imperial edict" had already pervaded and encompassed the whole [world]. Naturally empty without any traces, it is potent and spiritual – where opposites have terminated. Solitary and luminous, it transcends causes and conditions; eternally dynamic, it is separate from appearances. This is called becoming a patriarch. Only through mutual authentication [can that which is transmitted be known] – the patriarch cannot hand it to you. All Buddhas arrive here and take this to be the ultimate, and utilize it to respond, transform, and disseminate their [emanation] bodies like [a multitude of] flowers and leaves. Sense faculties and objects are [employed] to enter the three times [of past, present and future]. The ten thousand opportunities do not disturb you; not a single mote of dust is outside your being. Its marvel is beyond the great thousands of scriptures. Where can [illusory] shadows be obtained?



## XV.

In utter clarity, wonder exists. Potent and solitary, it illumines. Grasped, it cannot be obtained, so it cannot be called existence; grinded, it cannot be removed, so it cannot be called non-existence. It is utterly beyond the domain of the conceptual mind and it is separated from any traces of shadows and forms – wondrous, it is empty of its own being. This miraculous place can be experienced as spiritual potency; when potency is reached, it is evoked. Mind like moon, body like clouds, it is disclosed according to wherever one may be. Straightforward, it leaves no trace. Yet, it is able to issue forth light and luminosity. Responding to objects without refusal, it can enter the dusty world and not be mired. Breaking through all obstructing states; shining through all phenomena as devoid of selfhood. Why can it, through diverse conditions, enter the pure realm of wisdom and roam

and play in samadhi? You should thus genuinely experience and investigate it!

## XVI.

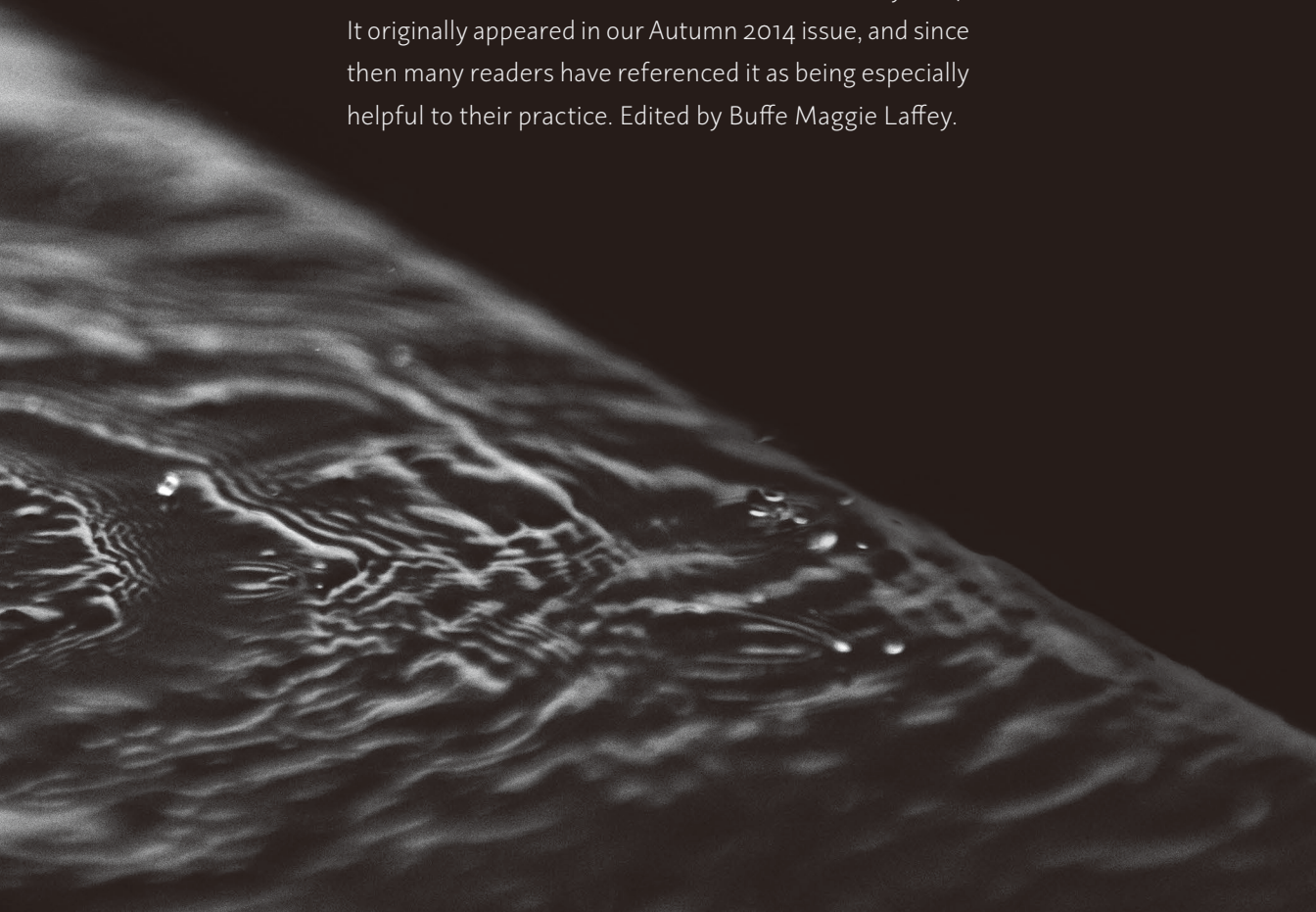
Vast – it is intrinsically potent; pure – it is intrinsically bright. It is universal and does not grasp the merit of its own illumination; it is able to discern without being burdened by conditioned thinking. It appears without form; it transcends emotions of thought and imagination. You can only accord with it through actualization. It is not something obtained from someone else. All Buddhas and patriarchs, in multitudes like leaves and flowers, continue this business. When responding, they do not grasp appearances; in illuminating, they are not ensnared by conditions. Dignified and impressive, nothing is concealed. This family style teaches that everywhere everything is already, of its own accord, replete. It is up to you to take charge of it. 🌿



# BEING WITH

— BY —  
SIMON CHILD

Photo by Ryan Kwok



This article describes some common misunderstandings that can arise among practitioners, and explains the correct attitude one should have towards thought in meditation. It is taken from a Dharma talk given on the fourth morning of a ten-day intensive Silent Illumination retreat at the Dharma Drum Retreat Center in May 2014. It originally appeared in our Autumn 2014 issue, and since then many readers have referenced it as being especially helpful to their practice. Edited by Buffe Maggie Laffey.

## Common Misunderstandings

**Y**ESTERDAY EVERYBODY HAD AN INTERVIEW. One of the purposes of interview is to respond to your questions. Perhaps we also need to respond to the questions you didn't think of asking because you thought you knew (but you were wrong). We [the interviewing teachers] were looking out for some common misunderstandings. Some of them are so common we don't really have to look for them; we can just assume they're there, and yesterday you didn't let us down.

There are two common misunderstandings I want to mention. One is, those who've read perhaps too much (or maybe they've not read quite enough). They've not understood what they've read, but they've picked up ideas and pointers, and then they think they *know*, and they follow this sense of knowing and delude themselves further. We hear people saying things like: "The task of my practice is to get rid of myself. I am a delusion, I am not here," or, "You are a delusion, you're not there," or, "I don't need to face this problem, it's all imaginary." This is a person who's read something about emptiness and thinks they know what it's about, they are making themselves more confused.

There is actually quite an easy remedy for someone who believes they don't exist. You say, "Oh, that's great! So please now stop taking your share of the food; there will be more for others to eat." Some try and brave that out, and pretend it's okay, because it's in the future. They don't actually have to commit to it until the next meal, they've got thinking time left. Another approach is: I can pick up the stick and say "I've seen a delusion on that chair and I want to beat it away. You don't mind, do you?"

Certainly there is a teaching about no self, no mind, emptiness. But it's one that is easy to

misunderstand. So be wary of being caught in your own cleverness. You've read something, you believe you've understood it but you haven't, and you are creating difficulties for yourself. For example if you believe that situations in your life don't need to be confronted because they're delusions, you are setting yourself up for a life that's more painful than necessary. We need to respond to the demands of life.

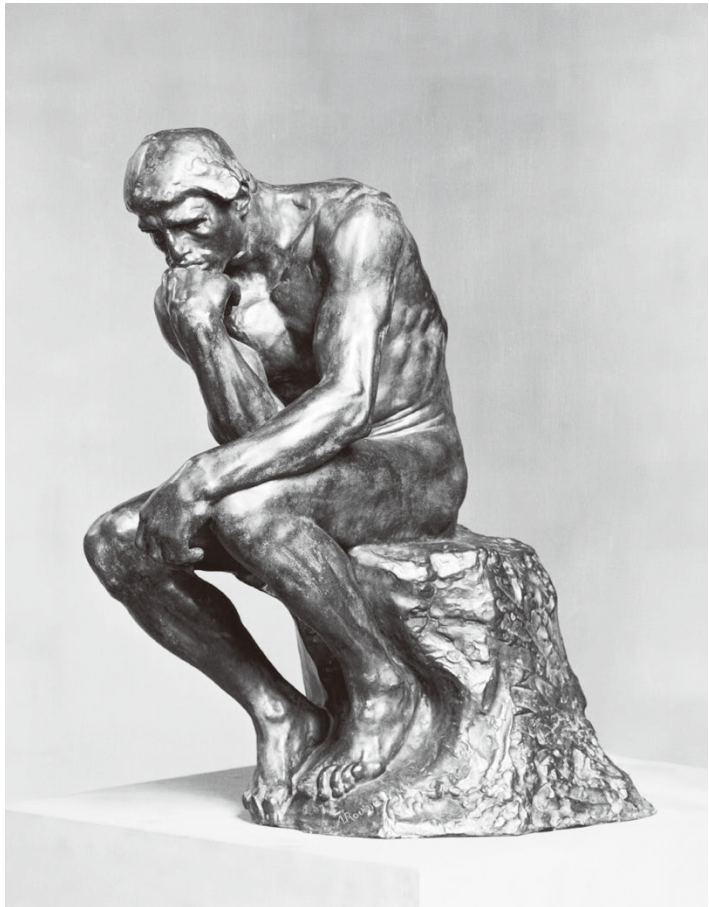
## Awareness of Thought

Another common misunderstanding is: how we handle *thought* in the practice. This is revealed by people who state that the purpose of their practice is to empty the mind and get rid of thought, to have a blank mind. Some people take this to quite the extreme. Yesterday somebody told me their strategy was to have an ax ready for each time a thought appeared: cut off the thought. On a previous retreat, someone gave me a very clear image of his practice. He was watching a rabbit hole waiting for the thought to appear, and the moment the thought appeared, he was ready – with his machine gun. That's a true story. This wasn't a teaching he got from me, though.

This reveals an attitude that thought is somehow bad, it's in the way, it shouldn't be there. "It's rather a nuisance, it's disturbing my mind!" It's easy to see where this mistake comes from; again it's really just being a victim of our own cleverness. When we start off with practice we are taught methods of calming the mind. We experience for ourselves how a mind which has very many thoughts tumbling over each other can indeed, through training, become a mind with much fewer thoughts. So it's natural that we extrapolate, and think "obviously the objective is to have NO thought! So I will get myself there! I will get rid of the remaining thoughts!"

We might hear people talk of experiences of indeed having no thoughts, and this confirms our sense of “to be a better practitioner we must get rid of every thought.” No. That’s too extreme an extrapolation. Indeed we do have practices to calm the mind, and they may involve cutting thought off to some extent by limiting the awareness, focusing on a single point. We narrow the awareness and thereby cut off “awareness of” of the thoughts. Do we really cut off the thoughts? Or do we just cut off awareness of them? There is maybe the first trap – if we narrow the mind down, it can *seem* as though there are no thoughts. But maybe we’re just overlooking them, because we’re not looking at where they are. We’ve trained ourselves to focus intently on our object of practice, and we get good at it, so we’re training ourselves to overlook what else is going on.

This is a very useful start to practice, when you have a mind that is so wild, full of thoughts and videos of all sorts, you know that experience. You can’t really engage in much practice until it’s calmed down to some extent. There are various methods to help it calm down. But the extrapolation was incorrect. Even though people may have the experience of no thought (and some of you have had that experience) that doesn’t mean that’s your destination. Here is a somewhat different interpretation: The purpose of calming the mind is so that you can become very clearly aware of what



*The Thinker* Sculpture by Auguste Rodin

IS there. And that’s a different endpoint, isn’t it? It’s not cutting off, denying, overlooking or avoiding. It’s saying “this mind is somewhat calmer now; I can really see what’s going on. Before, I couldn’t see the beginning, middle, and end of a thought; they overlapped too much, and crowded each other out. And now, with this mind that is somewhat calmer, I can observe the process of thought. I can see indeed how a thought has a beginning, a presence, and an end. I can see that thoughts are transient” and so on.

## Investigate the Mind

You can investigate the nature of thought, the nature of mind, when the mind is calmer. This is not something you can do if you've cut the mind off, trained yourself to ignore it. You then don't have that opportunity to observe the mind and see how it works. So these are two different ways of developing the understanding of practice, and the first one, the extrapolation "my task is to get rid of thoughts as completely and as quickly as possible" is a misunderstanding. I would put forward the alternative which is: when you've calmed the mind sufficiently, you're in a position to investigate the mind.

Remember again these two aspects of practice, presented to us by the Buddha. Often we need to do *śamatha* (calming the mind) first, because of the state our minds start in. Then we investigate the mind (*vipaśyanā*). In silent illumination, we're doing both. But the calming of silent illumination is not a cutting-off sort of calming, it's rather different than that. So how does that work?

It's worth bearing in mind that if you compare practices, you could say that the two main methods of Chan (*huatou* and silent illumination) are more advanced than the other methods which can help to prepare the mind. The other methods can help illustrate different aspects of mind, while silent illumination and *huatou* can take us all the way to enlightenment. The advanced methods don't have these built-in limitations of awareness, constricting the mind in that sense. Being a more advanced

method therefore gives us different challenges. One of these challenges is how we handle thought. It can be particularly challenging because maybe, until picking up this advanced method, you trained yourself to this attitude that thought is something "in the way," the enemy of your practice, a disturbance, a distraction. And now you're being told that's not quite so. This is confusing for people; it's counterintuitive. It even feels almost dangerous sometimes in the sense that you've put in a lot of effort, long hours of painful legs, to develop a certain calmness of mind and now

it seems at risk of being disturbed by a shift in the method. You feel a sense of "this is not right, I don't believe this, I disagree," and you resist opening the awareness. But if you're going to be moving yourself forward along the path towards enlightenment, at some point you need to be able to have a mind which is wide open.

If I want to paint a caricature of the Buddha, do you imagine the Buddha as someone who had a rather narrow attention? Someone who didn't dare open his attention wide in case it disturbed his practice? That's not my image of the Buddha. So you could say you're preparing yourself, testing it out. You're finding out what the difficulties are, and through practice you find ways of handling these difficulties, and indeed you find it is possible to have the mind open wider. You could say you're nudging yourself towards enlightenment. Still, in silent illumination we talk about sudden enlightenment, we don't talk about gradual enlightenment. But certainly we talk about gradual cultivation; that

THE PURPOSE OF  
CALMING THE MIND  
IS SO THAT YOU CAN BECOME  
VERY CLEARLY AWARE OF  
WHAT IS THERE.  
IT'S NOT  
CUTTING OFF, DENYING,  
OVERLOOKING OR AVOIDING.

would be reasonable. We're gradually exploring and getting to know the mind, getting to know its obstructions, getting to know how to handle them, and finding that indeed we can! There *are* ways forward. We find that, yes, we can keep the attention wide open, confront an obstruction, and keep the mind open and handle it. We don't have to retreat into our rabbit hole. That's a dangerous place, a rabbit hole, isn't it?

## Opening the Awareness

So we're exploring the capacity of our own mind, our own awareness and yes, we are challenging it. Opening the awareness is challenging, it makes it more likely that the mind wanders away because you are giving it more things to be interested in and attach to. If you are sitting here with a very narrow focus, very intensely concentrated, you're not so distracted. People walking around the room, traffic outside, birdsong – you're not paying any attention to that, it can't disturb you.

You hardly perceive it. But then if you open the awareness and you perceive the richness all around you, it can be almost overwhelming and you immediately attach to something, start having a discussion with yourself about it. So opening the awareness is tricky and challenging but also crucially important.

In terms of this practice of silent illumination we can trace the origins of it, in some ways, back through history. We can also find the

basis of it in the sutras. In Shifu's book *Hoofprint of the Ox* when he is talking about silent illumination, he uses the *Diamond Sutra* as an illustration of the approach to practice. There is a famous line in the *Diamond Sutra* from which Hui Neng the sixth patriarch became enlightened:

*Without dwelling in anything whatsoever,  
allow this mind to arise.*

"Without dwelling in anything" points toward silence, towards nonattachment. "Allow this mind to arise" points towards illumination, towards the mind being fully awake and present. It doesn't say, "without dwelling in anything whatsoever, make sure the mind doesn't arise." It doesn't say, "without dwelling in anything whatsoever, be very careful if the mind arises." Just, allow the mind to arise. Brighten the mind, be fully awake. Be fully attentive without dwelling in anything whatsoever.



That phrase “without dwelling” that’s pointing to nonattachment, brings up another area which people find difficult sometimes. Nonattachment is perhaps a little bit difficult to describe. But if we think of it in terms of attachment, it’s becoming over involved, over identified, over immersed in a particular thought and it’s drawn you off-center. You’ve lost your wide-open awareness, you’re preoccupied with something. The other extreme is avoidance of attachment, and this is where the phrase non-Buddhists often use about Buddhists comes from: “Buddhist detachment.” Detachment is not quite the same as nonattachment. Detachment has a negative quality about it, an avoidance, a dualism. So it’s not about avoiding, and it’s not about attaching. It’s somewhere in between. We can call it nonattachment. To put it another way: you’re not so concerned whether you end up involved or not involved; there is no strong preference, there’s just an acceptance. “Yeah, this is in the mind, or this isn’t in the mind. I’m really open to either possibility.” If you are attached, you want to keep it in the mind. And if you’re detached, you’re trying to keep it out of the mind. But nonattached means, well if it’s there, it’s there, and if it’s not it’s not. No big deal. I’m not shaken by its presence or its absence.

So without dwelling in anything, without being concerned about what’s there, nevertheless let awareness arise and inform you what’s there. It’s tricky; it’s finding a balance, and we easily lean one way or the other. Of course our personal histories lead us to have certain avoidant behaviors and certain attaching behaviors. We feel safety in certain objects and circumstances and we don’t want to let them go. Then we feel risk and danger in other situations and we put effort into avoiding them. The mind which is not dwelling, the mind of nonattachment, allows itself to experience *all* that is present. Now that doesn’t mean

that it doesn’t respond to dangers; of course it does. It doesn’t mean that it doesn’t respond to need. It can go and eat that food that the other person is no longer eating. That’s not attachment; attachment is when you get obsessed with food. The *Diamond Sutra* is pointing towards us having a mind functioning in awareness. It’s not telling us to restrict the mind, to only allow certain types of mental activity to occur. It’s just saying, be present with the mind.

## Trains of Thought

For another way of looking at the issue of attachment and nonattachment I’ve made up a variation on the metaphor of the host and the guest that Master Xuyun (1840–1959) used to talk about. We can look at this way, if we are aware of the phenomenon of a thought becoming a train of thoughts. A thought arises in the mind and there’s no particular problem with that. But thoughts link to other thoughts. They create ideas and another thought joins them and maybe these become problems, or solutions, or opportunities. Images are painted in the mind by thoughts congregating. The common phrase in English is “a train of thought;” one thought leads to another. Sometimes it’s interesting to reflect on, when you find yourself thinking about something, how did you get there? Often we have no idea because we’ve not been paying attention. I once caught myself out and I thought “How on earth did I find myself thinking about this?” I was able to trace it back; maybe fifteen thoughts had linked together and ended up at a completely different place to where it started.

Now, there’s no problem with thoughts doing this, they create these trains and it’s okay. We can just let these trains of thought pass through the mind and show themselves to us. But we don’t attach to them; we’re not engaging with them. The problem is our



tendency to board the train and follow it to its destination. We hop on the train and it takes us away to some future fantasy, or back in time to something that we want to fix (even though it's already happened). We get tangled up in these trains of thoughts. The image that works for me (rather than Xuyun's host and guest) is: you are the railway station master, and the trains are your guests. There's no problem with trains coming and going in a railway station. But it is a problem if you hop on one and travel off three hundred miles; then you've abandoned your duty. So by all means have thoughts coming and going through the mind, forming trains of thoughts, congregating. But don't jump on them. Observe them, but don't board them.

There is another example from the sutras, of how we can handle thoughts during our practice. This is

from the *Sutra of Complete Enlightenment*, and is also taken as one of the gong'an in the *Book of Serenity* (Case 45). I'll just read you the first part of it:

*At all times do not produce delusive thoughts,  
Also don't try to stop or annihilate  
delusive states of thought.*

Now, we don't have any great difficulty agreeing with the first line: "At all times do not produce delusive thoughts." That's fairly straightforward, isn't it? The challenge comes after the comma: "also don't try to stop or annihilate delusive states of thought." That's a bit more challenging, if you have the idea that your task is to purify the mind by ejecting unwholesome thoughts. But the sutra tells us, "Put away your machine gun, put away your axe. Don't annihilate



deluded states of mind.” That means that if a deluded state arises, you don’t stop it. Maybe that’s a rather different idea of practice to what you thought you were doing. Sitting there with a deluded state of mind – that actually makes practice easier, doesn’t it? Sitting there deluded is quite easy, and quite a common experience really. Maybe we’re better at practice than we thought...

No, it’s not quite meaning that either. If you have deluded states of mind, and they are held within awareness, it’s not saying that *you* should be deluded. But if there’s an obstruction in the mind based on a misunderstanding of some situation, maybe provoking an anxiety, don’t annihilate that. Use it as an opportunity to investigate how you create your own delusion, a sort of case study. The mind is holding this painful idea, this anxiety, fear, or grief. Positive feelings, negative feelings, whatever has arisen in the mind, here is your opportunity to investigate it. This word “investigate” is a little bit difficult to understand, so let’s look at how this might work.

Investigate, illuminate, floodlight – we’re not in denial about this thought, because we’re clearly aware of it. We don’t regard it as an aberration that shouldn’t be there, or should be got rid of. We just say “Oh, yes that’s what’s in my mind; I’m feeling anxious, sad, negative, confused. I’m feeling happy, joyful, free.” Anything. Any state of mind, don’t annihilate it – investigate it.

## Silently Investigate

Master Hongzhi (1091–1157) was the one who gave the name to the practice “silent illumination.” These phrases like “silently investigate” come from his writings. How do we “silently investigate,” what does that mean? When we find ourselves holding one of these states of mind, we silently investigate, which means we illuminate it; we allow the light to shine on it. We allow it to be seen, felt, tasted. There’s no aversion or avoidance; we fully experience it. Rather than our usual habit of trying to shy away from some

Photo by Bryan Craddock & Gerd Altmann

experiences and pull towards others, we just continue sitting in the presence of the state. No avoidance, no denial. Here it is; I'm experiencing it. At this moment, I'm feeling this way. It is so. No running away. To investigate "non-silently" would be to start a wordy, intellectual analysis, a review of past experiences and personal history (which can also be useful, because it can sometimes illustrate the origins of some of these states). But a silent investigation is just sitting there with it, no deliberate delving back in history, no deliberate classification.

Indeed, classification and naming can actually get in the way; here's an example of how the sheep pen exercise I mentioned a couple of days ago has its limitations. Some of you have found that a useful exercise, and it is useful, that's why I mentioned it to you. But the reason that sort of approach is useful is *because* of its limitation. What it does is take a number of thoughts about the same topic and put them together to make it more manageable for you. But that loses some subtlety. If the thoughts were about your boss at work there are probably overlapping issues, different examples and problems. Since they all have a common theme of "problems with your boss at work," the sheep pen method worked to help concentrate the mind. But now with a silent investigation, if you just label it as "boss at work" it sort of turns off the investigation. You have no incentive to pay any attention. "Oh I know what that is." You've categorized it, labeled it, put it in the cupboard and forgotten about it.

"Silently investigate" means not applying words and labels, because these are limiting. It is simply "being with" and maybe noticing the mixture of feelings. Maybe the complexity of memories arising is not just one incident, maybe there are various similar things jumbled together. But if you jump quickly to saying "I know what that is" and you name it, you

are in a sense detaching from it. You are shutting it away. So, silently investigating is just "being with." A thought arises in the mind and you are just with it. A feeling moves through the body and you are with it. A sound touches the eardrum and you just let it do that. If you jump to naming the species of bird because you are a birdwatcher, in a sense you've lost contact with the bird – it's just become something in your tick list of "birds I've heard." You've distanced yourself from the actual hearing experience.

So, to "silently investigate" is just "being with," and being with *as it changes*. A more analytical investigation would be looking back in history deliberately. Silent investigation might include some awareness of the history of the situation, because it just comes to mind. That's the way the mind works; thoughts get triggered and thought trains form themselves, you don't have to go and create them. You're sitting, something has arisen, something else arises, and then something else arises. There may or may not be a connection between them. You're not *trying* to make connections; sometimes the connections are obvious. You just continue sitting. This full awareness, this openness to what's arising, IS the silent investigation. Disconnecting from experience means there's no investigation. Controlling the experiencing; labeling it, categorizing it – is not silent.

So you are bringing yourself to just "sitting with" whatever is there. You've been starting that off by sitting with the body; every sensation it gives you, you experience it. You don't start saying "I need more of this sensation and less of that; I wonder why that one is gone." You simply sit with whatever the body is bringing you at this moment. This extends to whatever the wider awareness is bringing you. It's arrived, it's with you and you accept it. The sound of bird song. The sunlight coming through the

windows at different angles. Brightness, shadow. A memory. A sadness. A joy. All of these things just present themselves to our awareness, and we remain silent but we also remain present and bright, which is the investigation.

## Constructs of Mind

If you are cutting off thoughts, you are missing the chance to get to know the constructs of your mind. Because what's presenting itself to you is partly the direct perception of a sound, but it's also the construct of the mind that gives a name to the sound. It's also the construct of the mind that joins the sensations together, creating objects, creating stories. We don't need to do this deliberately, it's doing itself out of habit. And by watching the mind you are watching your own habits in play. You're watching how you construct your own experience of the world, you are watching it happening and you remain silent and you continue watching. This watching is a very deep investigation. It can be quite challenging; watching yourself displaying your habits, you begin to feel embarrassed about them, uncomfortable for some of the ways that you think and behave. But here they are playing themselves out in front of you. You remain silent. The video of "me" can be quite uncomfortable, can't it? But we don't switch it off – watching it is the investigation. We make sure the projector for this video is on full brightness, fully illuminated. We don't want to miss anything.

YOU'RE WATCHING  
HOW YOU CONSTRUCT  
YOUR OWN EXPERIENCE  
OF THE WORLD,  
YOU ARE WATCHING  
IT HAPPENING AND  
YOU REMAIN SILENT AND  
YOU CONTINUE WATCHING.

This points to the value of this investigation process. It's teaching us about how we view, react to, and actually construct our own world. Because we have habitual patterns of behavior, certain perceptions become something wonderful and we attach to them. Certain other perceptions become something frightening and we shy away. We create our own world to a very large extent as the *Avatamsaka Sutra* tells us, in the opening verse of the evening service: "*To know all the Buddhas of the past present and future, (i.e. to become enlightened) perceive that all worlds of experience are created by the mind.*"

You are creating your own world of experience, and if you practice silent illumination you can observe it happening. Mind grows more still and you actually observe this process from beginning to end. You observe for example a direct perception of sound, but you notice how you name it; the name is coming from a person or an animal, or from the building.

Then an attitude attaches itself, an attitude of joy or irritation or judgment. This usually happens in a flash, unseen. Because you've cultivated a habit of watching the mind, of observing and being present with whatever the mind presents to you, you find yourself noticing far more than just body sensations. You notice the activity of mind. You notice how you are creating your own sense of irritation from simply the perception of a certain type of sound. Well, it's not that that particular sound is inherently irritating, because twenty other people around you are hearing the same sound and they are not irritated. So it's something about you.

## Silent and Non-Silent

There may be another slight point for confusion here: with silent illumination, I'm telling you that "silence" is you not adding anything to it, but then here you are finding yourself adding something. You're adding an interpretation, a reaction. So does that mean you should cut off these things? No. What it means is, you take them as something to be observed. What you *don't* do is react by cutting it off. The deliberate action of "cutting off" would be non-silent. Allowing the mind to show you how it behaves and acts, IS silent. It's the interfering which is non-silent. I hope that's not too confusing. But the point is, you stay with whatever the mind presents you. There's no plan to steer the mind a certain way, no plan to avoid negative, unwholesome, deluded thoughts. And there's no plan to amplify pleasant, happy, generous thoughts. You observe what the mind brings, you observe how it reacts.

You are investigating the nature of your mind in quite a deep and challenging way. Sometimes it takes you to difficult areas, but then, that's very useful. Because if you investigate a difficult area, you can begin to understand the nature of *why* you find that difficult, and this can be very important. If you habitually shy away from difficulty, you're limiting yourself. There are certain things in life that you don't do, that you avoid. You may shape your life so that you are not confronted by these things. But in silent investigation you may find that something you've always assumed is challenging or frightening turns out to be a mistake. You drew a conclusion in the past from some particular event, and it got stuck in the mind and you haven't challenged it. Now as you sit there you find yourself challenged by the circumstance arising in the mind and you also find, "Oh, that's why I feel challenged." That presents itself

to you, and you find, "Oh, that isn't challenging anymore. My life has changed; I see things differently." You can release this rather stale, habitual reaction and find freedom from fear of that particular situation which always led you to avoidance before.

This type of practice takes you deeply into some of the dark corners of the mind, and this is very useful. It's useful in the sense of your worldly life experience because it can free you from some restrictions you've put on yourself. And it's useful in terms of your meditation practice because it frees you from some obstructions. Certain obstructions to your practice have to do with fears and anxieties and the way you build yourself to be safe from them, keeping the mind closed. But actually if you dissolve these away by confronting them, you find that practice flows more freely. The mind takes one more step toward stillness – one of the guards has gone off-duty permanently, he's retired. So there's less noise in the mind; the mind is more open and freer. Clarifying the mind in this way has benefits both in terms of your personal life and in terms of your practice; they go together. It's useful either way.

I'm saying these things to point you towards why it is that we say "allow the mind to arise." Allow yourself to experience whatever arises. There is no editing, no filtering. There's no judgment on whether this is an appropriate thought to be here now or not. It's already here; it's in the mind. Watch the process triggered by that thought. Watch how you react. Get to know yourself, and get to know how you limit yourself. Find your own way towards freedom.

## Having No Obstructions

Since this is somewhat stepwise as you move through different obstructions, we can call it "gradual cultivation." Hopefully you can see how it is leading you

towards a mind which is ready for enlightenment; a mind which is ready to become totally open and not waver, not retreat or be afraid – because it's already dealt with all its fears, there's no longer any obstruction. But at the moment, obstructions *are* there. They're waiting for you to investigate them by simply allowing them to be there in full awareness. Allow them to show themselves and tell you about themselves, if you are willing and have the strength and focus to stay there with them. They are often not at all what you assume. We live by assumptions,

habits of thinking. But when we confront our obstructions we are very surprised by what's going on. They're often actually quite minor concerns which have become amplified and fossilized. They've become stale and outdated and no longer relate to our current situation. So actually it's safe to investigate these even when it feels scary.

Commit yourself to your practice. Commit yourself to a fully open mind. Commit yourself to confront what the practice presents you with, and in that confrontation, rather like the Buddha confronting

Mara, be present with what is there. The Buddha didn't close his eyes and pretend that Mara wasn't there. He just said "Oh, Mara, this is what you've brought me now, is it? Okay, what's next? Bring me some more." Take that attitude. Don't be fixed on the idea of closing the mind down, having a sort of limited silence and a dull mind. Commit to opening the mind, letting whatever arises be fully experienced, and whatever follows *that* to be fully experienced. If they link themselves together you will see those links. If they don't, that's okay too. You have no program here, no expectations. You are just watching the mind, investigating the mind, and it is a very deep practice. So see where it takes you. 🌿

Photo by Simon Child



# Remembering Lindley Hanlon

March 14, 1948 to March 4, 2023

Professor Emerita Lindley Hanlon, a pillar of Brooklyn College for four decades, shaped the Film Department as its founding chair. Renowned scholar, mentor, and inspiration, she touched countless lives. Lindley was a cherished member of our lay sangha at the Chan Meditation Center and the Dharma Drum Retreat Center. Here are some fond memories of her from fellow practitioners.

## From Guo Gu

TODAY, MARCH 14, 2023 WOULD HAVE BEEN Lindley's seventy-fifth birthday. It is hard to write down all her qualities; she was eminently capable, kind, and extremely creative – but she was so much more than any words can capture. She and I worked very closely together during the decade or so when I was at the Chan Meditation Center (CMC) in the 1990s. I learned so much from her resourcefulness. Together, we offered our best years to help spread Shifu's teachings, which made a mark on Buddhism in the West. I loved her dearly for it.

Lindley helped to organize all of the big events for Shifu – his important talks in New York City, his dialogue with His Holiness the Dalai Lama, his books that we edited, all the publicity materials for Chan. None of these were small feats, and Lindley played an important role behind the scenes in all of this. We worked so well together. Our wave lengths matched in ways like no other. When I came up with an idea for an event for Shifu, she would complete it.

We engaged with projects at a rate of a hundred miles per hour, to the best of our abilities. In the midst of it all, her beautiful smile, always uplifting, allowed me to see the lighter side of things – to have fun!

I will meet Lindley again. In the meantime, she lives on in me; in the way I write, the way I design various Dharma events, the way I experience the world, and in all those whom she has touched. Her story is intimately woven into the larger stories of my teacher and me, and how Chan was, is, and will be experienced in the West.

## From Rebecca Li

I was deeply saddened to receive the news of Lindley Hanlon's passing. I still remember the time we spent on the second floor of the Chan Meditation Center, giving each other short presentations on Friday evenings during our years of Dharma Lecturer training with Shifu. When she told me that she spent her sabbatical leave as a professor to help organize Shifu's dialogue with His Holiness the Dalai Lama,

I was deeply inspired by her devotion and generosity. She was a welcoming presence for us when we first moved from California out of graduate school and I will always remember the lovely day we spent with Lindley at her apartment in the Village. She has made important contributions to the Chan Center community and I am forever grateful for what she has done for us and for her Dharma friendship.

### **From Joanne Chang**

Lindley Hanlon was my dear mentor and friend. I had known her for over 24 years and she was always there for me, especially when I needed academic and professional support. Initially, we met through the Chan Meditation Center where she was introduced to me as the experimental study teacher for my dissertation research on Mindfulness and Music Performance Anxiety; later she became my dissertation committee member. As a City University of New York professor as well, she had guided me every step of the way on re-appointment, tenure and promotional pursuits. She had come to every single concert I had performed in New York City. I wouldn't have come this far without her. She was among the most positive, encouraging and artistic colleagues and friends I have had. The memories I have had with her are precious and I will carry that with me.

### **From Peter Lin**

I have known Lindley since 1999. She has been an important friend and mentor in both my professional career and Dharma practice. Working in academia has its ups and downs, and Lindley shared her experiences and encouraged me to achieve my fullest potential. The "Movie and Mind" workshop at

the Chan Meditation Center is a legacy of hers. She started this program and passed the torch to me. Running this workshop was quite a challenge because her film choices are much more meaningful and artistic. It is hard to match what she can offer to the audience. For many years, we celebrated our birthdays together as we are both March-born. Her twin sister Lesley often joins us, and our gatherings are always delightful and insightful. It is hard to find someone who can replace her. I hope her lessons for me can continue to be passed on to others.

### **From Bob Lapides**

When I think about Lindley, I remember driving her to the Dharma Drum Retreat Center (DDRC) for retreats since she also lived in Manhattan. She had a softness about her and concern for others, too. A smile comes as I think about her "new age" quality because she had a bit of a new age persona. She was very Buddhist, though, and helped spread the Dharma, which I will always admire and appreciate.

One story I'd like to share is that on a retreat at DDRC in the early 2000s, Lindley was the timekeeper. I was stirring around on my cushion for quite a while. She came up behind me, and I could feel her presence. I didn't know what she was going to do or say. She leaned down and simply said, "Don't move." It had a great effect on me! I stopped moving, and suddenly sat completely still. It gave me a great boost on retreat. Plus it showed me the power of the mind (my mind) that I could go from stirring around to still in a heartbeat. Years later, when I told her how much I appreciated what she said and asked her how she knew to tell me that, she said something like, "Oh, I didn't know what to say, that's just what came out." I thought that was very interesting, too, if not remarkable. 🌿

# *Eulogy for Lindley*

by Venerable Guo Yuan



A beautiful Lady  
Full of creative Ideas  
Helping without saying No  
What you have Done  
Play a role of Leading  
Ray of compassion and wisdom Emitted  
Will last for many many Years....

# Chan Meditation Center Affiliates

## NORTH AMERICAN CENTERS

### **Chan Meditation Center (CMC)** • Chang Hwa Fashi, Director

Dharma Drum Mountain Buddhist Association (DDMBA) America (DDM USA Headquarters)

Dharma Drum Publications

90-56 Corona Avenue  
Elmhurst, NY 11373

(718) 592-6593

chancenter@gmail.com

www.chancenter.org  
www.ddmba.org

### **Dharma Drum Retreat Center (DDRC)** • Guo Yuan Fashi, Abbot

184 Quannacut Road  
Pine Bush, NY 12566

(845) 744-8114

ddrc@dharmadrumretreat.org

www.dharmadrumretreat.org

### **DDM Los Angeles Center** • Chang Yue Fashi, Director

4530 North Peck Road  
El Monte, CA 91732

(626) 350-4388

ddmbala@gmail.com

www.ddmbala.org

### **DDM Massachusetts Buddhist Association** • Chang Xuan Fashi, Associate Director

319 Lowell Street  
Lexington, MA 02420

(781) 863-1936

ddmmba.boston@gmail.com

www.ddmmba.org

### **DDM San Francisco Bay Area Center** • Chang Xiang Fashi, Director

255 H Street  
Fremont, CA 94536

(510) 246-8264

info@ddmbasf.org

www.ddmbasf.org

### **DDM Vancouver Center** • Chang Wu Fashi, Director

8240 No.5 Road  
Richmond, BC V6Y-2V4

(604) 277-1357

info@ddmba.ca

www.ddmba.ca

## TAIWAN – WORLD HEADQUARTERS

### **Dharma Drum Mountain World Center for Buddhist Education**

No. 555, Fagu Rd.  
Jinshan Dist.  
New Taipei 20842

02-2498-7171  
02-2498-7174

webmaster@ddm.org.tw

www.ddm.org.tw

# DHARMA DRUM MOUNTAIN - NORTH AMERICA

<b>California</b>	Los Angeles Chapter	(626) 350-4388	Tina Wang	ddmbala@gmail.com www.ddmbala.org
	Sacramento Branch	(916) 681-2416	Janice Tsai	ddmbasacra@yahoo.com
	San Francisco Chapter	(408) 900-7125	Kyle Shih	ddmbasf@gmail.com www.ddmbasf.org
<b>Connecticut</b>	Fairfield County Branch	(203) 912-0734	Alice Peng	contekalice@aol.com
	Hartford Branch		Hsiong-Ching Chang	cmchartfordct@gmail.com
<b>Florida</b>	Gainesville	(352) 336-5301	Lian Huey Chen	LianFlorida@hotmail.com
	Miami	(954) 432-8683	May Lee	ddmbaus@yahoo.com
	Orlando Branch	(321) 917-6923	Anchi Chang	achang1117@gmail.com
	Tallahassee Chan Center	(850) 888-2616	Frances Berry	tallahassee.chan@gmail.com www.tallahasseechan.org
<b>Georgia</b>	Atlanta Branch	(678) 521-5483	Ricky Lee	www.ddmbaatlanta.com
<b>Illinois</b>	Chicago Chapter	(847) 255-5483	Shiou Loh	ddmbachicago@gmail.com www.ddmbachicago.org
<b>Massachusetts</b>	Boston Branch	(978) 394-1391	Jinghua Zhou	ddm.boston@gmail.com
<b>Michigan</b>	Lansing Branch	(517) 332-0003	Li-Hua Kong	lkong2006@gmail.com
<b>Missouri</b>	St. Louis Branch	(636) 825-3889	Tai-Ling Chin	acren@aol.com
<b>New Jersey</b>	Edison Chapter	(732) 249-1898	Jia-Shu Kuo	www.ddmbanj.org
<b>Nevada</b>	Las Vegas	(702) 896-4108	Mabel Lin	yhl2527@yahoo.com
<b>North Carolina</b>	Cary	(919) 677-9030	Ming-An Lee	minganlee58@gmail.com
<b>Ontario</b>	Toronto Chapter	(416) 855-0531	Meili Chen	ddmba.toronto@gmail.com www.ddmbaontario.org
<b>Pennsylvania</b>	State College Branch	(814) 687-9253	Kun-Chang Yu	ddmbapa@gmail.com
<b>Texas</b>	Dallas Branch	(682) 552-0519	Patty Chen	ddmba_patty@hotmail.com
<b>Utah</b>	Salt Lake City	(801) 947-9019	Inge Fan	Inge_Fan@hotmail.com
<b>Vermont</b>	Burlington Branch	(802) 658-3413	Jui-Chu Lee	juichulee@yahoo.com
<b>Washington</b>	Seattle Chapter	(425) 957-4597	Gary Lin	ddmba.seattle@gmail.com seattle.ddmba.org
<b>Washington, DC</b>	DC Branch	(240) 424-5486	Jack Chang	chan@ddmbadc.org

# Chan Meditation Center Affiliates

MEXICO				
<b>Nayarit</b>	Chacala	(800) 257-0532 (800) 505-8005	Dr. Laura del Valle	info@mardejade.com www.mardejade.com
ASIA and OCEANIA				
<b>Australia</b>	Melbourne	(03) 8822-3187	Tess Hu	info@ddmmelbourne.org.au www.ddmmelbourne.org.au
	Sydney	(61-4) 1318-5603 (61-2) 9283-3168 (FAX)	Agnes Chow	ddmsydney@yahoo.com.au www.facebook.com/ddmsydney
<b>Hong Kong</b>	Kowloon	(852) 2865-3110 (852) 2591-4810 (FAX)	Chang Zhan Fashi, Director	info@ddmhk.org.hk www.ddmhk.org.hk
	Island	(852) 3955-0077 (852) 3590-3640 (FAX)		
<b>Malaysia</b>	Selangor	(60-3) 7960-0841 (60-3) 7960-0842 (FAX)	Chang Zao Fashi, Director	admin@ddm.org.my www.ddmmy.org
<b>Singapore</b>	Singapore	(65) 6735-5900 (65) 6224-2655 (FAX)	Gan SweeHwa Joe	ddrumsingapore@gmail.com www.ddsingapore.org
<b>Thailand</b>	Bangkok	(662) 713-7815 (662) 713-7816 (662) 713-7638 (FAX)	Porntip Chupinijsak	ddmbkk2005@gmail.com www.ddmth.com
EUROPE				
<b>Belgium</b>	Luxemburg	(352) 400-080 (352) 290-311 (FAX)	Li-chuan Lin	ddm@chan.lu
<b>Croatia</b>	Zagreb	(385) 1-481 00 74	Žarko Andričević	info@dharmaloka.org www.dharmaloka.org www.chan.hr
<b>Poland</b>	Zalesie Górne	(48) 22-736-2252 (48) 60-122-4999 (48) 22-736-2251 (FAX)	Paweł Rościszewski	budwod@budwod.com.pl www.czan.org.pl www.czan.eu
<b>Switzerland</b>	Zurich	(411) 382-1676	Max Kälin	MaxKailin@chan.ch www.chan.ch
	Bern	(31) 352-2243	Hildi Thalmann	hthalmann@gmx.net www.chan-bern.ch
<b>United Kingdom</b>	Bury	(44) 193-484-2017	Simon Child	admin@westernchanfellowship.org www.westernchanfellowship.org
	London	(44) 7826-566-353	Xin Li	info@londonchanmeditation.org www.londonchanmeditation.org