



RIGHTVIEW QUARTERLY

Dharma in Practice

VOLUME ONE, NUMBER 2

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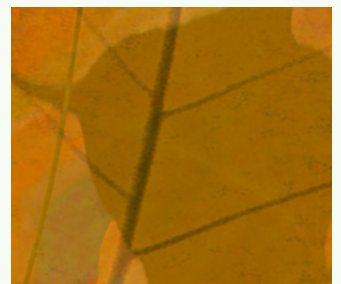


The cover picture is a composite of photographs from the Bodhi tree, *ficus religiosa*, donated to the Mid-America Buddhist Association by Venerable Thubten Chodron.



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notes and hopes

AN ACCOUNT OF CHINA'S FIRST WORLD BUDDHIST FORUM

BY MASTER JI RU

APRIL 2006

The First World Buddhist Forum was held April 13th - 17th in Hangzhou, China. The Forum, sponsored by the Chinese government, invited guests from over thirty-five countries, including internationally renowned Buddhist leaders, important politicians, and well-known scholars. I was honored to be one of the invited guests. The China Buddhism Association of the Chinese Religions Cultural Institute organized this event and is to be credited for the Forum's success. An assembly with this scale and importance, more than 1000 distinguished participants, is extraordinarily rare in China. It is clearly a sign of change in terms of the Chinese government's attitude toward and acceptance of religion in China.



I would like to thank the following parties for the two years of preparation that went into this event and for their hospitality: the China Buddhism Association of the Chinese Religions Cultural Institute, Zhe Jiang Province Government Community Office, Zhou Shan City Government Committee Office, and all those outside these agencies who contributed their time and effort to this event. The participants were warmly received and acknowledged, were pampered with first-class accommodations and sightseeing tours, as well as receiving publications and gifts from the Forum. All returned home with positive feelings about the future of Buddhism in China, optimistic about the possibilities for world peace and harmony, and with very favorable impressions and memories.

These are my recollections of the meeting, both the formal planned events and the behind-the-scenes informal and unplanned happenings. This is a token of appreciation to the Chinese government for its wise foresight in convening this First World Buddhist Forum.

As the first bars of the Goodbye Song were played, the nearly one thousand monks in attendance rose to their feet in reverence for Venerable Hong Yi, many of them with tears in their eyes.

Forum Briefing

On the first two days (April 13th and 14th), the delegates gathered and met, formally and informally, in Hangzhou. On the evening of the second day, we were taken to the China Hangzhou Theatre to see the premiere of the play *Peace Eulogy*. The play dramatized the development of Buddhism from its origin to the present day. The performance had a serious message, showing how many complex ideas, such as those of Chinese, Tibetan, and Mongolian Buddhism, as well as Daoism, Hinduism, and Indian culture, could coalesce harmoniously, yet the performance maintained a lightness in spirit and production values. The dynamic songs and dance of the play filled the audience with joy. The show also demonstrated that the tie between the Chinese people and Buddhism is long-standing, deep and wide.

An acknowledgment of gratitude must be extended to the actors, technicians, and producers who dedicated themselves for months to producing such a significant show. In addition, if it were not for government support, a production of such a high caliber would not have been possible.

The Forum's formal program was concluded on the third day (April 15th) at Putuo Mountain where we visited Huiji Temple, Fayu Temple, and Zizhu Lin. An activity named *The Mind's Lantern is without End* was the highlight of that evening. On the fourth day (April 16th), we headed to the city of Zhoushan where a new statue of Avalokiteshvara was erected. The sight of this new statue, standing more than 20 feet tall and looking out toward the sea, brought feelings of optimism and humility to us as we stood there and gazed upon the Bodhisattva.

A Buddhist service for world peace was performed with all the delegates gathered around the statue of the Bodhisattva and a declaration (appended below) was made there. On the last day (April 17), we returned to Shanghai and resided in Pudong (on the eastern side of the Huangpu River) across from the Bund (Old Shanghai). We toured the city and witnessed the amazing development of the port and its surroundings on the Huangpu River.

That evening we attended another premiere, a concert, *China Harmony*. Included in the concert was the *Goodbye Song* of Venerable Hong Yi. Venerable Hong Yi, who had been a composer in the mid-twentieth century before he became a monk, earned an international reputation as one of great Vinaya monks before his death during the Second World War when his monastery was bombed. He wrote about the need to appreciate close friends in the lyrics of this song. As the first bars of the Goodbye Song were played, the nearly one thousand monks in attendance rose to their feet in reverence for Venerable Hong Yi, many of them with tears in their eyes.

A fireworks display that evening, however, dampened the mood. The inherent explosive nature of fireworks, the potential danger to homes in the area, which might easily have caught fire, and several monks who were burned by falling embers, made this event seem discordant and antithetical to the theme of peace and harmony.

Being Practical In Reality

In the opening ceremony it was said that "China is helping to build a new platform for world Buddhism." Inherent in the statement was a quiet declaration that through China's domestic and foreign policy China plans to develop into a respected nation that Asian rim countries will



look to as a role model in seeking peace and harmony. It seems we may now be able to connect the political dots from the “ping-pong diplomacy” of Premier Chou En-lai and President Nixon in 1971 through the past three and a half decades to this Forum.

One purpose of the Forum was to begin the process of forming this new platform, this new ethos.

If the initial success of winning over the hearts and minds of those individuals attending is to continue over the long term, then proper follow-up and ongoing development will be crucial. Although the forum won the favor of its guests by its impressive attendance, its positive attitude, and its first-rate hospitality, the observant Buddhist scholars, leaders and politicians noticed that certain obvious issues and challenges were skipped over, or were only alluded to, in the formal proceedings; in the informal, relaxed conversations behind the scenes, these overlooked issues, such as China’s religions policy, the intent of this new policy, current and future regulations and laws, what assistance overseas Buddhists can offer, and the like, were on everyone’s lips.

Now a days, with China’s economy taking-off and China’s more open door policy, Buddhism’s renewal is inevitable; especially considering it has retained deep roots in Chinese local culture. Any problems previously seen to be derived from Buddhism will be blended into the new politics, policies, and economy in a positive way. It would appear to be the

responsibility of Chinese government to manage the energy and adjust the rules, regulations and laws so that Buddhism can naturally appear as a defender of morality as a source of stability through the promotion of individual, regional, and global harmony.

There is an ancient Chinese maxim which says that when the people’s minds are confused and the population is uneducated, it is the responsibility of the government to guide them with strong policies and to provide them with educations; but when the people ask for freedom, it is the responsibility of the government to make it available in a proper and appropriate way. The Chinese people now have the education and personal confidence, and to a considerable extent, the economic stability as well, to be asking for freedom; it is now the time when the government has the responsibility to adopt a religious policy that can be endorsed

by the global community. We hope

that with this new policy, the conflict with the Vatican,

for example, will be resolved and China

will never again be listed by the

United Nations as a country

without basic religious

freedom. I humbly

hope, and suggest this to China’s

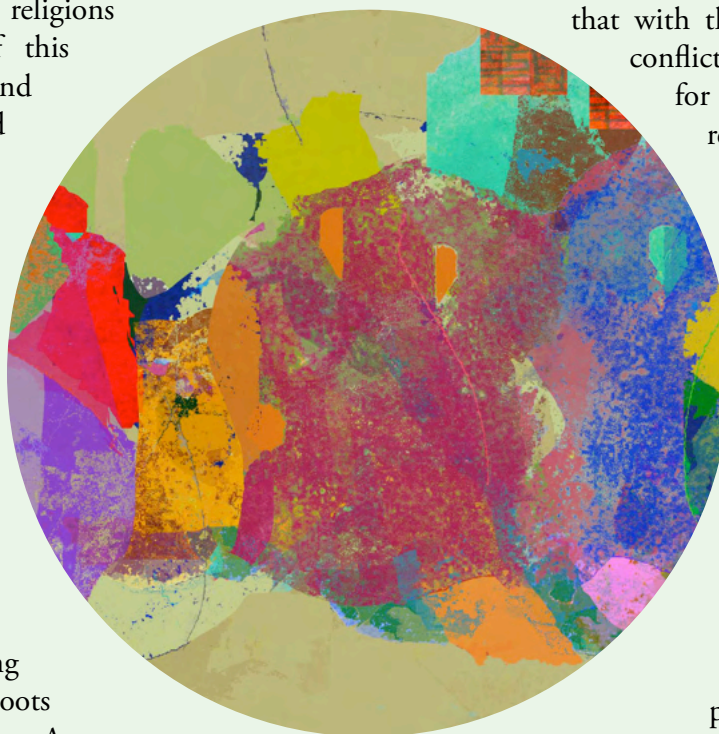
leaders, that it is time for them

to consider a new policy, and to find

a way to implement it, that is culture and custom

appropriate, that is a model for its neighbors and the global community,

and that serves all religions with respect.



A Model of a Leading Nation

China's role as a world leader has great potential benefit for local and global peace, harmony, and prosperity. On the international stage we see relentless violence and wars: the "War on Terror" in the aftermath of 9/11, which is led by the United States and backed by the British government; the occupation of Afghanistan and Iraq as part of the Bush pro-war policy; sectarian fighting, suicide bombings, roadside bombs, and the like have become part of daily life in the Mid-East. In addition, the oil/energy crisis and dwindling resources act as catalysts to violence in an already turbulent world. China now has the opportunity to emerge in a role of diplomacy and reconciliation to reduce this global discord.

It was an intelligent and historically unexpected move for China's communist party to sponsor a World Buddhist Forum. After nearly half a century of open conflict with Buddhism, this Forum has brought the world's Buddhists into a measured level of accord with the Chinese government. It has captured the attention of peace advocates and antiwar activists. It has raised new possibilities around the issue of statehood between Taiwan and China, and it provided recognition among the countries of the world for the belief that China was finally seeking balance and harmony with the international community.

I admire the new generation of leadership in today's China that is able to see this new dimension and that is able to grasp that the nature of Buddhism is in line with its cultural and socio-political goals for the future. It took courage and determination to make this first step. It is said that the Forum cost over a billion RMB (US \$125,000,000).

After nearly half a century of open conflict with Buddhism, this Forum has brought the world's Buddhists into a measured level of accord with the Chinese government.

I sincerely hope that the Chinese government will use this first step to encourage honest religious education in China in the spirit of Confucius, Buddha, and the great Taoists. I sincerely hope that the Chinese government will use this first step to pave a path that sees religions with an open mind, a broad view, a scientific conscience, and with equality and tolerance.

In order to become a respected world leader for Asian culture, the Chinese government must be able to see things anew and understand the nature of these changes, which this Forum would imply it is ready to do. For China to succeed in critical situations, effective and concrete moves must be able to be made in a timely fashion. We have seen clearly how China expedited its economic development by taking initiatives to participate in the global economy and by escalating contact and cooperation with the international community. We can only hope that Chinese religions will be encouraged to take the same initiatives and to be heard and seen as world leaders in the movement toward world peace and harmony.

The Mountain Pu Tuo Declaration

Suggestions from The First World Buddhist Forum Putuoshan Declaration

We, who share the same planet, enjoy the benefits brought by science and technology, also find ourselves facing many difficulties and challenges, such as worsening environmental pollution, a widening gap between the rich and poor, sudden strikes of natural disasters such as tsunamis and earthquakes, the spread of unknown diseases, continued conflicts and wars and frequent terrorist attacks. Outside the mainstream of peace and development, there is still disharmony, discord and unrest in our world.

For mankind, peace is an eternal aspiration and harmony a lofty ideal.

As a great spiritual tradition of mankind, Buddhism has been seeking the Path to universal harmony and spiritual peace since Buddha's time. In essence, one who follows the well-trodden Buddhist Path can see the true nature of the soul and purify his own mind. Mind is the forerunner of all dharma. If everyone opens his mind, becomes more tolerant, and constrains greed, hatred and bigotry, and does so by starting with ourselves and gradually extending this approach to our families, our communities, our nations and eventually our world, then the Earth will be purified, sentient beings tranquil and the whole world peaceful.

May there be peace and kindness of mind achieved through cultivating a wholesome mind and doing wholesome deeds.

May there be peace and happiness in the family achieved through steady family ties and infinite kindness.

May there be peace and amity among human beings achieved through sincere communications, mutual assistance and equality.

May there be peace and friendship in society achieved through personal fulfillment and peaceful co-existence.

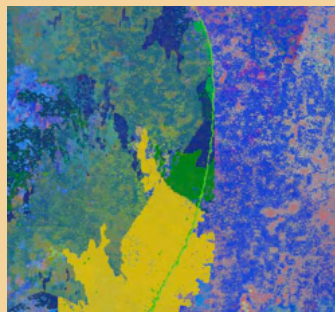
May there be peace and harmony in our civilization achieved through mutual appreciation, respect and tolerance.

May there be peace and equality in our world achieved through empathy and the transformation of enmity into friendship.

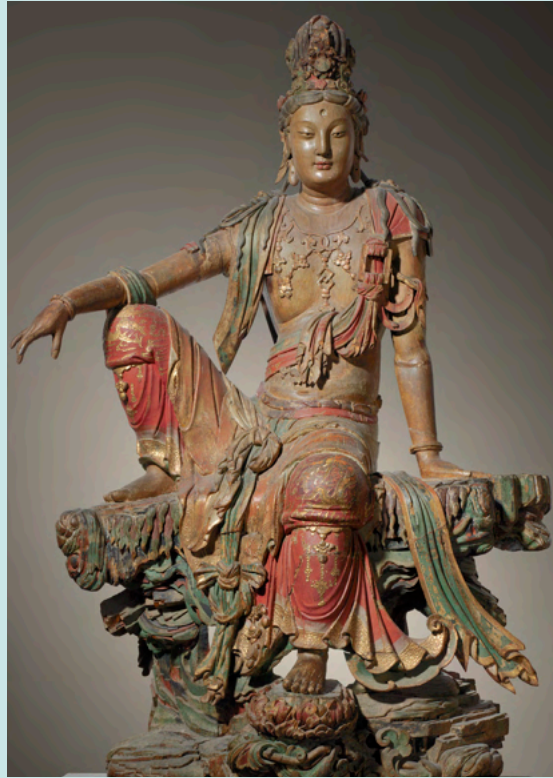
Let us follow Buddha's teachings and make ourselves paragons of harmony, educate people about compassion, inspire people's hearts, and guide and improve society. If everyone cherishes thoughts of harmony and goodness and people respond to each other from the heart the world will surely prosper.

Every one of us is responsible for harmony in the world! A harmonious world begins in our hearts!

**B.E. 2550 March 19
2006 April 16**



KANSAS CITY MUSEUM HOUSES WORLD-FAMOUS GUAN YIN STATUE



Among the Buddhist statues exhibited at the Nelson-Atkins Museum in Kansas City, Kansas is the nearly life-size Guan Yin (pictured here) that has graced the covers of more Buddhist books and magazines than any other statue.

This painted wooden statue of Avalokiteshvara, from the Liao Dynasty, 11th/12th-century, is formally designated as **Seated Guanyin Bodhisattva** and is internationally heralded as the finest sculpture of its kind outside China.


Since it opened in 1933, The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art has actively collected, preserved, studied and exhibited works of Chinese art. Even before the Museum was built, its benefactors planned to include in it the first major gallery in America devoted solely to Chinese art. As early as 1930, the focus was to build a collection that would represent China's highest achievements in art. As a result, the Chinese collection is one of the finest in the world.

The Buddhist sculpture and wall paintings in this collection offer some of the best examples of Buddhist art in the west. A jewel of the Museum's extensive Chinese Buddhist collection is the Chinese Temple Gallery. Sitting in front of a vast polychromed wall from the Temple is the Seated Guan Yin Bodhisattva.

HARMONY BEGINS WITH THE PURIFICATION OF THE MIND

Venerable Jing Yin

Excerpt from a talk Harmony in Society Begins From the Mind by Venerable Jing Yin, Director of the Board of the Chinese National Buddhist Association, at the First World Buddhist Forum; from Collected Works of The World Buddhist Forum, English Collection, presented to the delegates of the Forum held in Hangzhou and Zhoushan in Zhejiang Province, China, April, 2006.



It was recorded in an ancient text that when Chan Master Ma Zhu was in his younger days, he went to practice meditation under Master Hwai Yang. The latter could tell that Ma was a piece of good material for Chan, and deliberately asked him: “What do you meditate for?” Ma answered: “For becoming Buddha.” Hwai then pulled out a brick and started rubbing it against a stone. Surprised at the sight, Ma asked why the Master did that, and was told that he was trying to make a mirror. Ma found this answer ludicrous and said that it was an impossible task. At this point, Master Hwai replied: “If I cannot make a mirror by rubbing this brick, how could you become a Buddha by meditating?” Ma wondered why, and the Master continued: “If a person rides on a cart that does not move, should he beat the cart or the bull?”

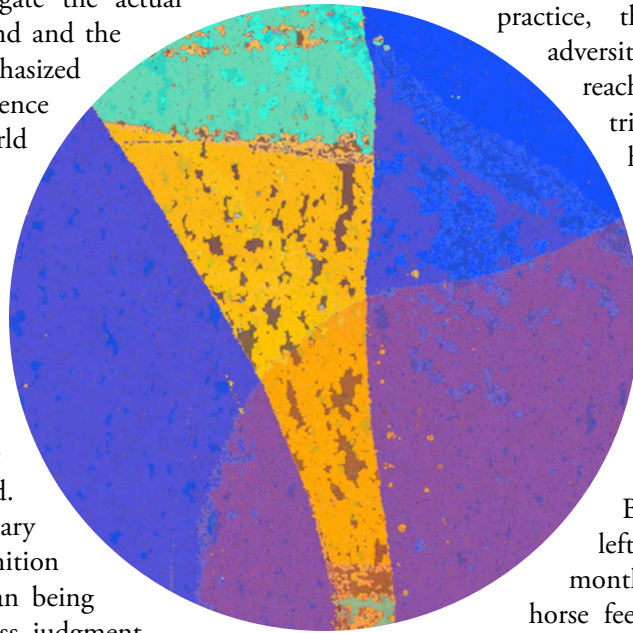
If the cart does not move, the problem is of course not with the cart but the bull that pulls it along. Similarly, the many problems in society today do not stem from society but the mind of the individual. In other words, to build a harmonious society, we must begin with the mind, and the fundamental way to do this is the purification of mental defilements. Once all impurities such as greed are removed, the human mind and spirit will find peace and stability, and harmony in society will automatically be attained.

*As the Mind Is Transformed,
So All Phenomena Will Be Transformed*

The episode about the discussion between Sixth Patriarch Hui Neng and two other monks on whether it was the flag or the mind that moved in the wind is well known by many. In interpreting the answer given by the Master, some scholars believe that it demonstrates the change of the Master’s emphasis from the objective to the subjective mind-only theory. Others even think that the subjective mind-only theory typifies the Chan doctrine pronounced by the Sixth Patriarch. In fact, what is so brilliant about the Master’s remarks in this incident is his perception of the important function of the mind in the arising of all phenomena.

Nothing arises without a cause. The Buddhist teaching on causation tells us that everything comes into being as a result of the casual convergence of a host of conditions. For example, the process of human cognition involves at least the three necessary conditions of (1) the sense root, (2) the external object, and (3) consciousness of mind. It is only when the three come into contact that cognition is effected. In the abovementioned episode, wind and flag are the externalities, the second on the necessary conditions. But without the presence of mind or consciousness, the presence of the wind and the flag would not have been known, not to mention whether they had moved. That is why Master Hui Neng pointed out that “it was the mind that moved” to demonstrate the crucial role of the mind in worldly existence, and awaken the monks to their lack of insight. We must also remember that he did not negate the actual movement of the wind and the flag, but only emphasized the important influence of the mind in the world we know.

The significance of Master Hui Neng’s emphasis is that it is initially the mind that determines the development of thing and not the other way round. When the three necessary conditions for cognition come together, human being will inadvertently pass judgment on the cognized, thus giving rise to three aspects of feeling: appeal, dislike, and indifference. Ordinary people believe that the suffering in life is caused by externalities, and hence they are easily affected by what is happening around them. Their emotional and mental state will change in accordance with their situations. In Buddhism, we often talk of the “Eight Winds,” namely praise, scorn, slander, repute, profit, deterioration, suffering, and happiness. In daily life, any one of these “winds” would easily move the mind and stir the emotions. For example, we get angry or feel depressed when people slander us. Or, we feel excited and overjoyed when we get praised.



One way or another, our emotional state will become turbulent, and this will trigger a series of effects that would likely end on a negative note.

In Buddhism, we also believe that the feelings of happiness and suffering are not real, because it is the mental attitude that determines the way we feel. What kind of life we lead depends on what attitude of mind we possess. It is therefore at the heart of Buddhist practice to train the mind until it becomes unaffected by external conditions but more like their master. When this state of being is attained, we would remain calm and relaxed in difficult times. The story of the life of the Buddha provides the best example of this.

Ordinary people see the Buddha as a religious leader with supernormal powers, and this is far from the truth. During his six years of ascetic practice, the Buddha constantly faced adversities. The nearer he was within reach of his enlightenment, the more trials he had to face. Even after his accomplishment of the Way, he met with many difficult situations and people. The “gang of six Bhikshus” gave him much trouble through their rebellious acts; people who were jealous of him falsely accused him in public assembly, thus misleading the laity to such an extent that the Buddha and his disciples were left without food offerings for three months, having to survive only on horse feed. Towards his later years, his cousin Devadatta made several attempts on his life, and the hostility between Korsala and Sakya produced the genocide of this clan.

In face of all these predicaments, was the Buddha ever caught in vexation? If the answer were affirmative, then he would not have been the Buddha. To have trouble, but without vexation requires the greatest wisdom the Buddha would have us cultivate. The Buddha taught that the minds of ordinary people are constantly being turned by their surroundings—they get worried even if they have done something good.

The truly wise use their minds to turn something around, thus transforming adversities into opportunities for mental development and progress. This is truly demonstrative of the saying: “Transforming vexation into Bodhi.”



When we see a good and wonderful person, do not think that he or she has no problems to confront. The mental attitude of that person is the clue to his/her ability to remain calm and clear-headed when having to cope with difficult times and people. Once our mental and emotional states are no longer severely influenced by the conditions around us, we can exist contentedly side by side with whatever conditions befall us. Everything in life can only be beautiful then, and harmony in society would become a realistic goal.

To summarize, from the seed of consciousness arises volition, which in turns affects the development of consciousness—it is from this continuous interactive flow that all things come into being. Within the endless cycle of life and existence, mind is the master and creator of all phenomena. A deluded mind is the source of defilement, while a mind that is pure is fundamental to harmony in society. In order to attain social harmony, we need to have objective and unbiased insight into the actual society we aim to transform. To achieve this we must initially remove our attachment to the self and depart from delusion. Everything will start to change once the world of the subjective mind is transformed, and harmony in society will be in sight.



The Verse of Karma Purification

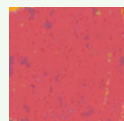
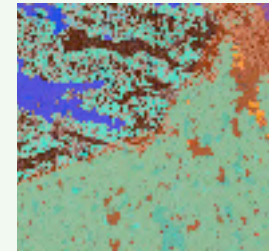
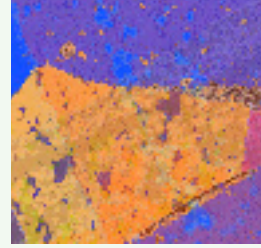
By Venerable Master Yin Shun
Translated by Venerable Ji Yen

When the mind is pure, we see all beings are pure,
When the mind is pure, we see all kingdoms are pure;
The dharma holds infinite knowledge,
All its teachings and practice are based on purity.

Precepts are to purify our action and speech,
Meditation is to (learn to) let go of worldly desires;
Wisdom is to purify our mind perceptions and understanding,
These three-fold practices (of precepts, meditation, and wisdom)
bring about gradual purification.

The water of samadhi washes away greed,
The wind of the compassionate vow extinguishes the fire of hatred;
The fire of prajna (wisdom) burns away delusion,
Our true nature is inherently pure.

(Then) boundless karma becomes purified,
When all (these) purifying acts gather together;
This practice of purifying the mind
Embellishes the kingdom of bliss.





How I Learned to *Meditate*

Robert Granat

Like everybody else these days, I'd heard about meditation—but never felt drawn to it in the slightest. The word itself didn't sound attractive, or the idea either. Too vague, I saw no point in sitting on my buttocks to contemplate my navel, which I doubted was any wiser than my head. The oriental circus that was touring the occident turned me off, not on, with the exotic get-up mystic knowledge it came decked out in. I had no desire to go someplace else and become somebody else. I was content to stay right here and be who I was. My discontent was simply that I wasn't being it. So how was doing something so foreign supposed to help me become more native?

One morning, as I was dealing the daily stack of junk mail into the wastebasket, my eye was arrested and my hand stopped; an invitation. An invitation to some conference. A "Conference on Buddhism and Christian Meditation." I keep getting invitations all the time—to join this, to contribute to that, to attend conferences. And I throw them out, with a pang of pity, perhaps, for the slaughtered forest they're printed on. Not this time. This time, a light flashed. Inside, outside, I didn't know. Or care. A light that had been dark for a long time suddenly flashed on. It was green. "Go," the light said. I went.

Now, thinking back, I can't explain what happened, I can hardly call it a moment of "miraculous intervention" into my existence. Since my existence itself, from the moment I was conceived against those inconceivable odds, strikes me as one ongoing miraculous intervention. But just as there in the fallopian darkness, all conditions had become ripe for me. Perhaps it was the sight of those sturdy adjectives, Christian and Buddhist, splinting up that wobbly noun, meditation. But this is just an afterthought—and after no thought at all. My decision then was utterly thoughtless. Not even a decision, since there was no alternative to choose.

About the conference itself I needn't say much. Three or four hundred other individuals from diverse traditions and situations, at diverse ages and stages, had also been drawn to this spot. It wasn't hard to see what united their diversity; they meant it. Meant it the same way I did, and for the same reason. Meant it as much as I meant it, and, it seemed to me, in most cases more. One thing for certain: they'd all done more about it. They'd all meditated. I was probably the only person there who hadn't.

I watched them sit themselves down on mats and cross their legs and position their hands, and I did what they did. A bell tinkled softly and the whole room froze. For the next forty minutes there wasn't a sound or a movement. This collective stillness had its effect. Forty minutes of utter silence in a room packed with four hundred breathing bodies inside which lived four hundred human beings who meant it, and something happened. Don't ask me what, but something no less actual for my inability to pin a name on it, something palpable and present, here and now. It wasn't The Answer, not The Because or The Why, The Question, that has been disturbing my existence so long—and, obviously now, had been disturbing at least four hundred other existences too. It was rather that The Question itself began shrinking and shriveling its size and weight, divided by four hundred, left me personal fraction light and easy to carry. For the first time in my life I felt right at home in a crowd. It wasn't like crossing over a frontier and entering my true country at last. It was rather an irrefutable confirmation that this motherland of my subjectivity was not a private fantasy spawned by my personal maladjustment but a communal dream, archetypal, inherent, the birthright of the race itself. I wasn't its only citizen. This was a convocation of exiles!

Meanwhile, down on more primitive levels, this meditation was beginning to hurt. My body, having no notion of what was going on up in its higher centers, and no appreciation of it either, had begun a resentful muttering, which, as the minutes went on without the habitual attention from me, grew steadily louder and angrier, from a mumbling grumbling protest to a howling, mutinous outrage. Never in its life had it been subjected to such neglect. Always its

calls and complaints had brought a swift and loving response from me. But now, suddenly, inexplicably, it was abandoned, getting nothing. Not a yawn or a cough of acknowledgment, not a shift or scratch of relief, not even a sign of sympathy. In the stillness I seemed to see my body in a light I'd never seen it with before, catch the look in its eye, so to speak, as it looked at me. Not looked, glared—the petulant glare of a rather spoiled child towards its doting parent. And no baby anymore either, a big one, almost an adolescent. Up to now I'd regarded my flesh variously and changingly as my servant and as my master, as my prison and as my escape vehicle, as my archenemy and as my very self.

My body, of course, was sharing none of this insight. All it wanted was my attention and by God it was going to get it.



Back began to ache. Skin surfaces broke out in a smallpox of itches. Hands suspended over belly trembled in righteous indignation. Legs crossed in front of me began an ominous tingling, sent out ever-more-urgent SOS's to shift their position. And when I didn't, when for the first time in our life together I didn't, they sank deeper and deeper into an excruciating sleep, into melancholy, nightmares of strangulation.



Around me no body moved a muscle, nobody hawked, scratched, fidgeted, beyond an occasional straightening up from a dorsal wilt. If one other soul had broken ranks, given way, stretched, moaned, uncurled, keeled over, I might well have been number two, since my body was now throwing an anything-goes tantrum, since physical pain had brutally taken all the territory of awareness now, was pushing to the very brink of bearability. Never had I willfully subjected my innocent bones, nerves, fibers, arteries to torture such as this.

And what remained to keep me at it, what held me out against this agony, fought off these heart-rending cries of mercy? Not my spirit, certainly—that had fled the scene. No, it was pride, ego-self pure and simple, just the thing, the obstacle, the impedance meditation was designed to break down. And it was about to do that, any second now, though hardly in the way prescribed. Ego, pride, was about to crack. Defeat, abject surrender, was imminent. Like all of us save the truly heroic, the truly selfless, I was about to cave in under torture, confess everything, sign anything.

I was saved by the bell. At the ultimate instant, the tinkle of brass broke the silence, the agony, and me simultaneously. Four hundred human bodies, mine among them, began to stir. Four hundred human sentiences returned from wherever they'd been.

I sat there, patting and massaging my poor calves, rotating my poor neck, undulating my poor spinal column, I heard a question rising from our midst toward the meditation master, who sat still peacefully self-enfolded, on a low dais.

“But what about the pain, sir? What about this god-awful pain?”

The instructor was a Zen roshi, a Japanese not yet fluent enough in our tongue to say much more than what was essential.

“Pain...ah, yes, pain,” he repeated softly—and flashed a sudden smile. A big searchlight smile of fine white teeth accompanied by smaller twin smiles of narrow black eyes that beamed from a round head of smooth skin. Well, he himself had been meditating for over thirty years now, he said and...

“And...?”

“And still hurt. But before *pain-ful* hurt. Now *wonder-ful* hurt. How you say? No pain, no gain?”

Four hundred faces replicated his smile, or tried. An arm went up and the Roshi nodded down to it.

“Thirty years of sitting meditation--could you tell us, what good has it done for you?”

The Roshi's smile underwent a sudden intensification, and again the four hundred faces grew bright, in reflection, like four hundred moons around a sun.

“Next questions, please,” the roshi said. Do you, as a Buddhist, believe in God?” A thin woman with a piercing white look, a religious probably.

Meanwhile,
down on a more
primitive level,
this meditation
began to hurt!

“Ah...” The roshi’s naked noggin began to bob gently. His bushy black eyebrows, the only hair left on it, lifted into two strokes of sumi-e calligraphy.

“Ah, yes... God...” He’s heard this one before. “I believe in... something.”

Something. The way he said it, Something was a far more precise word than God.

“Could you please explain that a little?”

“No.”

The beaming warmth played on the woman as she melted back into anonymity.

“Next question, please.”

A third question rose from the floor, a question I too might have asked, if I hadn’t been so self-conscious, so new to this kind of situation, this kind of company.

“Sir, I wonder if you could tell us what made you do what you’re doing? I mean, what made you decide to become a monk?”

Once more the teacher’s smile renewed its brightness, as if each question threw fuel on his fire. “I think a lot about dying,” he said.

Suddenly, down here in the four hundred, down here in me, a silent explosion of light. This Buddhist monk with his shaven skull and his strange robes, this exotic flower of a tradition so utterly separate and different from my own, this little man from the opposite side of the planet—I recognized him. He was my brother, he was myself.

His eloquence spoke not merely to me but for me. He knew what I knew but he knew it better. He was what I was but he was it more.

His path was my path but he hadn’t gone ahead of me. We’d both thought a lot about dying—Tolstoy said anyone who thinks at all thinks about his own death—but this man had thought about it a lot harder than I had. In stark contrast to me who yearned to be, this man *was*...

“I wonder if you’d mind commenting a bit on the distinction between the Buddhist notion of enlightenment and the Christian notion of salvation?”

Alight, a fire—that’s what he was. While I and most of us smoldered and smoked, spluttered and flickered, this man burned, burned with a bright and steady flame.

I can’t say whether or not the roshi offered any comment on the distinction between the notions Christian and Buddhist. If he did, I missed it. I was too busy ratifying the pact I had just made with myself. To begin meditation practice, starting today. On a trial basis only... for a minimum of thirty years.





INSIDE OUT PRACTICE

James Hicklin

James Hicklin resides in a maximum security prison in the midwest. He is serving a life sentence without parole.

Warning. The following article contains a graphic description of a disturbing event in James' childhood.

B*eing neither* articulate nor particularly skilled, I begin this article begging your indulgence. I'm not a formally trained Buddhist; I'm not a teacher. In fact, the only "wisdom" I can share is that which I have gained through living this life. Therefore, if my opening story, which is graphic and scatological, isn't what you expect to find in an authentic Buddhist publication, bear with me for this is a story about Shame, an intimate friend of mine.

Shame and I first became acquainted when I was nearly five. Our meeting wasn't some chance encounter while mingling with mutual friends. Typical of the beginning of so many relationships, Shame and I were destined for a far greater, momentous introduction.

I lived with my father and step-mother then. Dr. Hicklin, as my father came to be known by nearly everyone, claimed me as his pride-and-joy. Stepmother Chris had an entirely different opinion of me, though. It is therefore not surprising to learn that Chris introduced me to my new best friend.

I remember the day well. It was the day I made the awful mistake of letting Chris find me alone in the bathroom. Now there are many things five-year-olds don't know. But even at five, the one thing I knew with absolute certainty was: Never let Chris catch you alone! On this occasion there would be no burning, though, no whipping either. This time there was only Chris and I, and the excrement still floating in the toilet on which I was seated.

I don't recall the "wrong" I was punished for that day. Like much of my childhood, it's lost in the murky blackness of memories mercifully forgotten. I do recall the carpet that bit my knees as I crouched on it, though. I remember the ugly floral patterns that mocked me from the wallpaper. I recall the tiny shower stall that couldn't ever begin to wash away the feeling of *dirty* I would soon know. I recall peering through the tears that veiled my eyes as I followed the horrible orders she shouted at me.

My Shame, though, wasn't complete yet. Thirty minutes later, my family was driving down the highway in my father's fancy Cadillac. My sister began looking for "that smell." I cowered as she asked "Who stepped in dog poop?" I cried when she discovered the remnants of fecal matter still caught between my teeth. That's when Shame and I were married. That's when Shame and I became man and wife.

Shame stuck by my side through thick and thin. I thought she would be with me until death did us part. During the years of alcohol and stealing, Shame was always there with me. During the summer of sexual assaults, Shame was always there with me. Drug use didn't separate us. Nor rehab at 12. Nor dealing at 15. Nor prison at 16. Nothing that I did to rid myself of Shame, nothing that I tried would separate us. Nothing, that is, until I discovered the Dharma.

Shame was the source of my greatest suffering; shame destroyed my life.

Paradoxically, shame is also listed as one of the eleven "virtuous" mental factors. How can that very thing which caused me so much suffering, that very thing I was so glad to be freed of by my practice of Buddhism, be a thing of virtue? And being a thing of virtue, how can it possibly bring me happiness?

It is at this point that I recall Master Ji Ru's introduction to the first issue of RIGHTVIEW QUARTERLY. Master Ji Ru pointed out that seeking to create an authentic American Buddhism is a fundamentally flawed process. As we seek to extract the seed of authentic Dharma from the obfuscating shell of tradition and custom; we are forever in danger of embedding it in our own obscurations. We risk the non-accomplishment of supplanting one veil with another.

Equating shame--as the word is connotated in English--with virtue and morality is just such a veil. It is the mistake of believing that feelings of worthlessness are a personal confirmation of a virtuous nature. These feelings are unwholesome, they are painful, which confirms that they are associated with negative actions, with non-virtue. Is not the definition of negative karma "an action of body, speech, or mind that bring about an unwholesome result?"

What then is meant by "Shame is a virtuous mental factor?" What word might better convey the meaning of this than the word "shame"? Is shame even an appropriate translation of the word from the Tibetan?



An analogy might uncover some answers. In the *Uttaratantra Shastra* there is a story:

One day, as a merchant traveling along a bumpy road bounced in his carriage, a lump of gold fell from his pocket. The gold slid across the road, finally stopping when it mingled with the refuse on the roadside and was lost from sight.

Years later, a pauper came to build his shack on the very spot where the gold had been dropped. Not knowing of the gold's presence, the pauper lived in poverty.

In time, a god with divine sight came to look upon the very spot where the pauper dwelled. The god beheld the pauper's condition, as well as the presence of the gold lodged under the pauper's abode. The god commanded the pauper, "Dig beneath your dwelling, pauper, unearth the gold that lies there, and be poor no more."

The pauper listened to the god. He dug in the earth below the house where he found the gold which had been buried there the whole time. He was a pauper no more.

This analogy indicates the presence of our Buddha Nature, that quality of ours that makes Buddhahood possible. The poverty is our own lives in samsara. The refuse is our afflictions. The "god" is the Buddha.

Examining this analogy, what would have happened if instead the pauper had responded to the god by saying "I know what lies beneath my shack, there's nothing but garbage there"? That's right. He would have remained a pauper, remained in the cycle of suffering.

When we dwell in our shame, feeling worthless, we are paupers who see nothing but garbage. Never mind the divine sight of the god in the analogy. Never mind the

**What
then
is meant by
shame is a
virtuous mental factor?**

omniscience of the Buddha that beholds the good that we don't see. We prefer to be paupers living atop...not a lump, but a mountain of gold.

But this doesn't answer the question, "What was meant by shame?" Therefore, consider this scenario: the pauper believes, digs up the gold, and begins to clean it off. Midway through cleaning the lump of gold slips and drops back into the refuse.

We'd all agree that the man would be foolish to proclaim at this point "Oh, there's no gold underneath me, there's only garbage." He'd equally be a fool if he said, "Oh, I think there's gold there, but the garbage is so nasty I would rather stay poor." The only wise action is to dig in the garbage once again, picking up the lump of gold, grasping it more tightly than before, and cleaning it again.

This is faith in authentic Buddhism. Having glimpsed the gold (our Buddha Nature and the path to Buddhahood) that can end our emotional poverty (samsara), we'd be fools to proclaim, "There's no gold here."

This is the same as committing a non-virtue and then saying, “Oh, how horrible I am, I’ve destroyed my Buddhahood.” Rubbish! As I have learned, the garbage never changes the gold, it just hides it. Likewise, it is foolish to sit around thinking, “Oh, I’m so terrible, I don’t deserve the freedom of Buddhahood.”

Our garbage is just like that, *ours*. We can do with it as we please. If we wish to roll around in it, all the while complaining how dirty we are, then we are fools indeed. We can’t blame the gold for remaining in the rubbish, nor can we blame the god (the Buddha, our Teachers, our parents, our friends, etc.). We’re the ones who proclaim that our garbage is too horrible to deal with, not those kind beings who are urging us forward along the path to unearthing our gold, to finding our lotus within, to becoming Buddhas.

That leaves one the wise choice. If you are walking your path and drop your gold, PICK IT UP. Then reflect on your emotional poverty, considering how you are trying to end it, how you are trying to purify yourself. Likewise, consider how you are trying to end the emotional poverty of all beings.

Ponder how difficult these tasks will be if you can’t hold onto your gold a little better, if you can’t keep clean the parts you have already managed to clean. Maybe even consider how silly it is to cause yourself to have to start all over. Use this examination to resolve to be more careful next time.

Whatever the case may be, you must come to understand that this is not about the garbage, it’s about the gold.

It’s not about Shame with a capital S or shame with a lowercase s; it is about self-respect—a better word choice in this situation. Not egocentric self-respect, but the wholesome self-respect that is the respect we have for our Buddha nature.

Did I answer the question?
Did I make it clear?

Knowing these things, may we strive to protect the work we’ve accomplished.

May we strive to finish the work we have started for the benefit of all beings.



RIGHT VIEW AND THE PRACTICE OF ADDICTION

JEFFREY SCHNEIDER



At the beginning of a period of meditation, I offer the merit of my practice to all beings in the ten directions, and particularly for the benefit of those who suffer in the hell of active addiction.

One morning, as I made this dedication of merit, I began to think about what is meant by all beings. In the Buddhist cosmology, sentient beings wander through six realms of existence (the word *samsara* literally means to wander): the realms of the gods, the asuras, of humans, animals, hungry ghosts and of the various hells. And, as each of these realms, no matter how pleasant or painful, is still on the wheel of karmic existence, some sort of craving or clinging conditions the beings who inhabit them.

For the gods, perhaps, the addiction is pleasure. And we needn't think of it as some grossly material pleasure either, a sort of Roman orgy writ large. Rather, pleasure can be refined, aesthetic, cerebral, cool--and still habit-forming.

The asuras, the angry gods, are beings addicted to the heady stimulant of being right, of being angry about being right, of being willing to fight for things because "it's a matter of principle, dammit!"

And then there's us. More about us later.

The search for satiety and security is the constant goad of the animal.

The hungry ghost is addicted not only to the food and drink that never satisfies, but to the hunger itself. (For example, those who describe themselves as sex addicts will often admit that the hunt is as exciting, or more so, than the actual act.)

And finally, the frozen or flaming inhabitants of hell are bound to their suffering as much by choice (albeit often unconscious choice) as by circumstance.

So all beings, all of us, are created and conditioned by addiction.

That said, the focus of this essay is on the variety of addictions usually connoted by the term: abusive and persistent use of alcohol and drugs (either of the prescription or street variety). The origins of addiction (genetic, biochemical, familial, socio-economic, cultural, etc.) are not at question. The point is: once we are in the trap, how do we get out?

In the eightfold path, right view is listed first. It is the beginning and also the end of the path. Our view of reality is altered and corrected with practice, like a point that repeats itself on a rising spiral. At first, in both our introduction to practice and in our attempts to deal with addiction, right view is pretty basic. It consists of something like: "This really hurts---and nothing that I'm doing is helping." We all come to practice and to sobriety with suffering as the proximate cause.

Buddhism presupposes that insight is the ultimate means of liberation from suffering. But this insight is of a special sort. An intellectual knowing, an abstract ability to see the relationship between cause and effect is not enough. It is essential as a basis, but not of itself liberative. Rather the knowing that Buddhist practice aims at is the sort of knowing that we associate with the senses. We know by seeing that an object is near or far; we know when a sensation is hot or cold, pleasant or unpleasant, when a sound is loud or soft. This is a knowing that exists below the level of conscious discrimination. It is this sort of gnosis that Buddhism points to as the end of suffering. We must know, in our gut, that craving and suffering are identical--to the same extent that we know that to stick our hand into the fire will hurt. And we must recoil with the same instinctive alacrity.

But we don't. Mostly. Time and time again, we do the same thing expecting a different result each time. If it weren't so often tragic,

would be slapstick. We fail to get the message. We take up the drink or the drug again, get involved in the same doomed relationships, overeat, overspend, over and over. And it is not just those who are called "addicts" by society who do this. Every human person frequently works against his or her own best interests on a consistent basis, thereby creating avoidable suffering.

Both Buddhism and recovery (and here I will note that I am using a Twelve Step model as the one with which I am familiar) propose a graduated approach to liberation. This is not to deny that insight can come in a momentary, blinding flash. But it can be the work of a lifetime to either incorporate that moment into our daily consciousness---or the work of a lifetime of practice to arrive at that single moment. The daily work of practice is what really accomplishes transformation.

We begin with honesty about our situation. This in itself can be a source of tremendous pain, as it presupposes our willingness to admit that most of what we've done to date has failed. But when the pain of continuing our course is greater than the pain of change, we will be more convinced. In talk about addiction, we often hear the word "denial" used in the sense that the addict denies the reality of his or her drug-induced situation. It is easy for a non-addict to see the insanity of this situation. But in reality, the suffering that most of us create for ourselves is also derived from denial---denial of the reality of cause and effect. We act as though we can escape the consequences of our actions; and this ignorance is the main fountainhead of most of our pain.

Having come to these uncomfortable, but inevitable, conclusions, we must look for a way out. Buddhism defines three areas in which practice must occur to be efficacious: ethical behavior (sila), meditation (dhyana) and wisdom (prajna). In recovery work, the



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names are different, but the functioning is the same. We must look closely at our lives, accepting responsibility and consequence for our past actions; seek to atone and make restitution where possible and necessary. Only with the calmness of mind that comes from living according to the precepts, can we have enough stability to practice meditation with any success. If we are living in fear about being found out, or in guilt and anxiety about things we have done, our meditation cannot be very effective.

Meditation itself can be seen to incorporate the entirety of the program of recovery as well as of Buddhism. When we sit down to meditate, we must practice both striving and surrender. We make an effort to sit up straight, to pay attention to our object of meditation, to stay awake and alert. Just so we must undertake on a daily basis those things which bring us further along the path of recovery (going to meetings, doing service, working with others, practicing the Steps, etc.). There is a lot of work to be done.

But, both in meditation and recovery, we must also surrender: to those situations in life beyond our control, to the process itself, to the time it takes (usually much too long for our liking) for change to happen, to whatever discomfort we bring to or discover in our sitting. Patience is not one of the more glamorous virtues, perhaps; but it is certainly one of the most necessary.

We must also surrender and accept the moment—the unrepeatable, irreplaceable, irritating moment in which our life occurs. Too often we would rather be some other place, doing some other thing, being some other person. If only I could be more patient, more calm, more settled in my meditation. If only I did not feel like such a failure so often in so many areas of my life. To surrender to the fact that we often feel this way, to nod sympathetically and to go on, is very difficult. But necessary.

I recall once, during a day-long meditation retreat, I was very bothered by my busy mind which would not settle down and behave, not settle into breath and posture and mindful attention. My mind had a mind of its own; the inner child was a brat. At some point, I just

gave up and felt sorry for my poor, busy mind. I imagined rocking my mind in my arms like a colicky baby and saying, “Poor little mind. You are so busy and so restless and so tired. Poor little mind.” Sometimes we must simply surrender to who we are, when we are and where we are.

In the midst of our radical imperfection, however, in the midst of the clamor our addictions have left behind, is the bodhisattva vow. The vow to remain in the world of suffering for the sake of all beings is wisdom.

In meditation we have the opportunity to observe the true nature of thought and feeling, of physical sensation, of all the five skandhas. And this nature is emptiness. Emptiness is the name we give to the lack of any abiding self which is capable of standing freely apart from the rest of reality on its own. All phenomena are of this nature.

However, emptiness is a negative (and very useful) statement of this essential fact. When we speak of it positively, we might use words such as interconnectedness or interdependency. All things depend upon and are defined and created and supported by all the other things they are not. To know this as experience is wisdom.

Because of the experience of interconnectedness, we realize the impossibility of striving for individual salvation. And because of the compassion that is born of a close observation of first our own, and then the suffering of others, we give ourselves over to the vow. This is, in the language of recovery, to turn our will and lives over to a power greater than ourselves.

The alcoholic, the addict, is in a sense a very lucky person, being one for whom the identity of craving and suffering is made abundantly clear, up close and personal. Seeing this, it is not much of a reach to understand the nature of the self and the nature of emptiness or interdependency. Of course, this implies the presence and availability of the teaching. Those who have suffered and who have been helped by the teaching of the Buddha, by the program of recovery, have a tremendous responsibility to carry the message from warm hand to warm hand. This is the Bodhisattva vow and this is how we practice with addiction.



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Making Good Use of the Three Doors of Action

Master Jen-Chun

*Let your body show integrity,
be clear in your speech;
let your intention be kind and unwavering.
Be humble, quiet, even, and steadfast;
studiously learn in movement and in stillness.*

Body, speech, and mind are commonly known as the three doors of action.

How do we make use of our body, speech, and mind so that they function as the true body, speech, and mind? My verse is intended to answer that question.

Let your body show integrity. Now that you are a student and practitioner of the Buddhadharma, the most important guideline to correct bodily action is to act rightly and honorably; not to put on a show when in the presence of others and then slip into laxity when you are alone. Otherwise your bodily action will lack integrity. And what is true integrity? Integrity means that you behave in the same way whether or not others are observing you. It means your action flows from your own inner standards, not from the desire to win esteem from others.

Be clear in your speech. Ordinary people can speak logically and coherently, but logic and coherence are not enough. The mark of true speech is to speak meaningful, inspiring words. It is not easy for ordinary people to speak clearly. Why? Because their wisdom is limited. When speaking of exceptional matters, they may not explain them clearly, and they may not inspire others.

What is the value of language? If you have true wisdom, a profound and correct comprehension of the Dharma, your words will be very clear and possess an exceptional power to move people. At the right moment one word from you can rescue others from the brink of death and bring them back to life. Thus, the content of speech is clear and powerful. Your speech is like a brilliant light. Normally, people's minds can be hazy and confused. If you use speech accurately to clear away the haze and brighten their minds, this is the value of speech.

Let your intention be kind and unwavering. No one can see another person's intentions, for they are private and hidden. But you can know your own intentions. How do you cultivate, practice, and maintain your intentions? The guideline is "be kind and unwavering." What is kindness? To be kind is to be pure, unselfish, decent, and tender-hearted. This means that in all affairs, you always consider others first. Sometimes you are ready to undergo suffering in order to enable others to live better than yourself. This is the meaning of kindness.

If you have this kind intention, your mind will have a profound sense of morality. In due time, you will naturally bring your sense of moral obligation to fruition and fulfill your mission as a disciple of the Buddha.

To be "unwavering" means that your mind is consistently healthy. If your mind does not have a special stabilizing power, then under difficult circumstances you will become unsettled. You will be spun around by circumstances and cannot maintain inner poise. If you have truly achieved some degree of success in practicing the Buddha Dharma, your mind will naturally be relaxed. In dealing with difficult people, or when facing obstructive conditions, your behavior will be pure, honest, simple and kind. You will not be sarcastic and heartless. You will persist in your aim without concern over gain or loss. Such concerns will not disturb you at all.

THE ABOVE IS AN EXCERPT FROM A SERIES OF LECTURES BY
MASTER JEN-CHUN ON
"THE BASIC CONCEPTS A BUDDHIST MUST HAVE."
THESE WERE THE PRELIMINARY
LECTURES TO THE STUDY OF
MASTER YIN-SHUN'S
'THE WAY TO BUDDHAHOOD'.





Sara Jenkins

IN THE FOREST, IN THE RAIN

Rinchen and I meet for what we call working meditation retreats, spending two or three days together, mostly in silence. We don't plan our retreats very far in advance; they just seem to come around, like the seasons. We follow a daily schedule, which, as in Zen retreats, includes several hours of work in the morning and again in the afternoon. Along with sitting meditation, we practice meditative dialog, and because we are both writers, we use the work periods for writing.



The house where we meet is in a forest, surrounded by hemlocks and rhododendrons, facing a rocky stream and a waterfall. At this moment in late April, dogwood has sprouted its first tiny leaves, paired upward-pointing hearts in the freshest newborn chartreuse.

They remind me of the heart-shaped leaves of the Bo tree, which sheltered the Buddha as he sat it out all the way to enlightenment. Today venerable Bo trees shelter countless shrines in Asia. Rinchen and I do not worship, we have no shrines, and yet the air we breathe here carries a delicate suggestion of a holy place, like the faintest trace of incense. No, not a place, but a holy time—the time we have dedicated to this purpose.

Neither of us remembers how the idea for these retreats first arose. I think the seed was planted years ago. We were among a group of Zen students who, when our teacher could not come to a sesshin at the last minute, held it anyway. We took turns ringing bells and leading walking meditation, and everything was arranged so that no one would need to communicate with anyone else for the duration of the retreat. Everyone was on time for every sitting, from early morning until late night. Four days of silence. No writing notes, no writing of any kind, no eye contact.

Until that time, I had perceived the teacher as a restraining force against which I could rebel, bending guidelines to suit myself; for example, never actually missing meditation, but not heading to the hall until the last possible minute and having to run to make it before the bell. The absence of the teacher was an opportunity for us to find discipline within ourselves. The responsibility had to arise within each individual, of course, and yet the supportive strength of sangha in that situation could hardly be exaggerated.

I didn't recognize the sangha aspect of that retreat because I wasn't thinking in those terms then. I was still discovering the richness of silence, and throughout the teacherless sesshin the silence was almost palpable, a presence in itself.

Leaving that teacherless retreat together, Rinchen and I did not speak for a long time. When we did, we agreed that we wanted more of that silence in our lives. Eventually it occurred to us that we didn't have to wait for somebody else to impose silence and structure; we could offer that to ourselves, by having our own retreats.

As in some Zen retreats, our schedule is drawn up when we arrive, not ahead of time. This is significant: the schedule is not imposed externally but arises in fresh response to our needs and the

situation. In general it follows this pattern: We rise and have breakfast separately and in silence.

9 am—We sit on facing cushions and meditate for half an hour.

9:30—We raise our eyes and begin our practice of meditative dialog, which may involve long periods of silence.

10—We return to silence and write.

12:30—One of us fixes lunch while the other continues to work, and we remain silent during that time.

1 pm—Lunch; we talk quietly while we eat and then take a walk.

2—We return to silence and writing.

5—Still silent, we have free time for yoga, reading, sitting outside.


6—The silence ends and we fix supper, eat, and clean up.

8 pm—Sitting meditation for half an hour, followed by open-ended dialog that often continues until we go to bed, in silence.

We may have sat together before breakfast on our first retreat; I don't remember. Sometimes we have had a sitting period before or after lunch, sometimes not.

Whatever schedule we adopt, we do not always adhere to it perfectly. We no longer see the schedule as a restraining force, *in loco parentis*, as it were, just as we no longer see the teacher that way. Sitting meditation, dialog, and writing are what we want to spend our time on, and pursuing those activities within the structure provided by the schedule makes them all the more focused, meaningful, true. The schedule serves our most cherished purposes. Why wouldn't we want to follow it? Well, conditioned minds have their reasons. We might want to have a snack or talk or take a nap, and we might do those things. But the presence of the other person is a reminder of our purpose in being together in that particular way, a way different from ordinary life in which we unconsciously succumb to—indeed, are almost entirely driven by—the siren songs of ego.

Nor is our environment as controlled as it would be at a retreat center. Most notably, there is an elderly cocker spaniel who



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spends most of the time asleep, until we begin to meditate. Then he wakes up, walks back and forth between us, clicks his toenails on the floor, paws obsessively at an old towel he plays with, snuffles, and—most distracting of all—stands close in front of each of us, looking up into our lowered eyes.

A childhood memory comes to me: looking into the eyes of my kitten—this creature I love so utterly—and wondering, Who are you? What are you? The question we ask ourselves, in one way or another. The question with no answer. The question at the heart of spiritual practice.

When I sink into doubt and despair, my teacher advises me to ask the classic questions, who experiences doubt, who is in despair? Recently she suggested something different—that in low moments, I say to myself, I am a person on the path to awakening.

I look into the mirror and face the being I know so intimately, yet do not know.

Beneath the placid surface of silence and schedule, any retreat has the potential for serious internal upheaval. In my retreats with Rinchen, there have been two such incidents.

On one retreat we inserted forty-five-minute periods of “real” work, clearing branches and debris left from a fallen tree, pruning overgrown bushes, and weeding. Our aim was to treat work as meditation, our guidelines to focus on the immediate activity rather than the result and to maintain mindfulness of body, thoughts, and feelings. We worked in silence, stopping periodically to stand together and take several breaths, bring our minds to the present, relax our bodies, and recommit to our tasks at a gentle pace.

It was early summer, and we started our schedule at 8:30, working outside until 9:15. When we finished the outdoor work, we changed clothes, sat down on our facing cushions, and spent a few minutes reflecting, in meditative dialog form, on our experience during the work period. Then we returned to the scheduled periods of sitting meditation and writing. In the afternoon we stopped writing an hour early for another

forty-five-minute period of outdoor work, plus reflection. The season, the day, the warm air seemed to bless our efforts: close by, bumblebees pursued their own tasks, and in the woods around us, an ancient species of magnolia blossomed with ragged pale-yellow stars.

Rinchen’s relationship to work is problematic; she has never liked the manual labor involved in our Zen practice. But we share the commitment to face what is hard, and working meditation offered areas of aversion for both of us. In my case, what’s problematic is being in charge. Thus, on our retreat, my taking the role of “work director” is not because I know more than she does about yard work but because being in charge is hard for me. Telling someone else what to do “brings up my conditioning,” as we say, meaning that ego is uncomfortable, and the mind fills with reasons to avoid the disagreeable task.

That first morning we walked the few yards from the front door to the driveway armed with garden tools and work gloves and guidelines from Zen retreats, our mission involving, ostensibly, overgrown vegetation. As I look back on that scene, I am touched by our earnestness: spiritual warriors, venturing forth to confront our demons. Inviting our demons to meet us at that time and place, for the purpose of getting to know them. That is, getting to know us.

The morning work period went well. But Rinchen did not appear for the afternoon period. What to do? In our tradition, the work director role involves seeing that each person has what is needed for the job, including encouragement to resist ego’s promptings to push ahead to the result, or do the job differently from the original assignment, or quit when it gets hard. But I had no idea what was going on with Rinchen. What to do?

I went off to my immediate task, moving tree limbs from a big pile at the edge of the driveway. What if Rinchen were asleep? What was my responsibility? I felt resentment arise, felt how it tensed my body. I would drag a branch from the pile up a little clay slope and into the woods, my mind briefly on the task, then riddled with worry.

What if Rinchen had given in to her aversion and decided work wasn’t her thing after all? Fear flooded in, alarm surged in my solar plexus: our

joint effort would be abandoned, I would be abandoned, even humiliated if she derided my commitment, my seriousness. I heaved a branch into a clearing and stumbled back down the clay bank.

What if it was Rinchen who was humiliated, ashamed at having given up? The alarm sank into my abdomen, ominous, pressing. I lifted the end of a big branch. The leafy end caught in other branches, and I tried to jerk it free, tension mounting in my head and neck.

A cue to pause. I laid the branch down, stood still, and let my attention follow my breath. Where is my conditioning in this? I asked myself. I don't know what to do, and I feel as if I should know, because I am in the role of being in charge. Which I hate. What's beneath that resistance? Fear. If I confront my friend, she might challenge—or worse, ignore—my authority. Resent me, not like me, leave me. I felt like a whimpering toddler.

Amazing how much ego reaction boils down to childhood abandonment.

What if instead of feeling myself to be in charge I thought of what I could offer? If Rinchen were sunk in her own conditioned reaction, shame, say, what would be the most helpful, compassionate, enlightened response? Ah—to help her see that suffering is unnecessary. Not my job to get her out of bed, to enforce the schedule, to defend my earnestness. But I could point out that suffering serves no purpose and can be let go.

I freed the tree limb from the pile of brush and dragged it into the woods. Worry subsided, and I kept my attention on the physical experience as I moved the rest of the brush pile, finishing just as our work period ended.

No Rinchen. What would happen? How would things unfold? No way to know.

I went to my room, changed clothes, and since Rinchen wasn't there for our scheduled dialog, went onto the deck and did yoga. I was lying in relaxation when Rinchen came out.

She asked if I would dialog with her, even though it was an hour behind schedule. I agreed, and we moved to our facing cushions.

We sat in silence, our eyes open. Breathing. At ease. Gentle movement of air on skin. In the woods around us the pale magnolia stars, luminous in the late afternoon sun. Into that full and empty space, Rinchen released a single sentence.

“I just realized that I don't have to say a thing.”

Yes. Rinchen is there, I thought. Or rather, we are here. Not a word need be said, by her or by me.



The other unsettling incident also occurred in dialog and involved very few words. It was nighttime, and we sat on our cushions in a dark room with a candle lit between us. Looking into each other's eyes, we described our body sensations, thoughts, and feelings. Our pauses became longer and longer. My memory is that we settled into such deep stillness that the normal inner agitation subsided, and we rested easily in each other's gaze. Then Rinchen spoke.

“I see through you.”

The shock felt seismic. What words could be more frightening to ego? My mind lurched into protective mode, anticipating attack. Never have I felt so vulnerable. Not only naked, but transparent, seen through. And yet my body remained still. It felt as if I had spent my whole life hiding flaws that now would be exposed, although, oddly, no particular flaws came to mind. The terror seemed to be about being judged.

We are here together, my teacher once said to me in what I perceived as a tirade, and you act as if you are alone. Those words had served as a central koan in my life (and may apply to all of us suffering under the illusion of separate selfhood). Now Rinchen and I were together, and I could not run, hide, pretend, or act as if I were alone. Our agreement was to look together at whatever was there to be seen.

What if, instead of feeling myself to be in charge, I thought of what I could offer?



Eons passed before I found words.

“What do you see?”

Within awareness, attention may fix on fear and turmoil, but awareness itself is stable. I let my attention rest in awareness, the ultimate refuge. Something in me would survive, I sensed, however devastating the reply. I sat still, in total terror and in deep calm.

“You know more than you admit.”

Now, it might seem like a reprieve to hear those words rather than, say, “You know less than you think,” not to mention words naming my acts of cruelty or folly or deviousness. What I remember, though, was a vast sinking, as if the ground beneath me had vanished and gravity along with it; disorientation, almost dissolution. What was it that I knew and would not admit? The secret seemed as limitless as the universe, and completely closed to me.

“Know about what?” I asked.

“About the spiritual path.”

An involuntary wish to disappear, an impulse I had felt before when my teacher refused to accept my assertion that I didn't know what I was doing in my practice. Now I could not hide behind the student role; Rinchen and I had become our own teachers, our own windows onto ourselves and each other. We hide our wisdom from ourselves, but not from our teachers, not from our spiritual friends.



Rinchen and I have practiced sitting meditation more or less regularly—dutifully, even—for many years. Gradually the balance of our attention has shifted away from sitting meditation and toward maintaining mindfulness in ordinary activity. At times each of us has considered giving up sitting practice, and yet we never do.

We wonder if once people set foot on the spiritual path, they are on it forever, regardless of how long it takes to get there.

Get where?

We've both been reading books by Advaita masters about enlightenment, the once-and-for-all, ever-after kind, not the momentary glimpses that leave us tangled in longing. Are we going for ever-after enlightenment, we ask each other? My teacher says that one result of dharma practice is that we grow up, we become adults. Jiyu-Kennett, a Zen teacher admired by my teacher, called Buddhism “an adult religion.” Vipassana teacher Matt Flickstein says it's easy to find people who have had enlightenment experiences, but rare to find people who are truly adult. Rinchen and I decide that our aim is adulthood. If enlightenment lies further along that same axis, so much the better.

During one dialog session, when I lower my eyes, the shape of Rinchen's head glows in afterimage against her body, like an inner being deep inside her, the same size but without surface features. I sense a similar being within myself.



We speak through our personalities, but does something in that speaking come from these deeper aspects? The words that emerge in this meditative communication are so simple, so direct, so clear, so compassionate—even as they take us into unexplored territory, where we encounter unexpected subtleties and unspeakable complexities, pain and fear, awe and ease and joy. That is the fruit of giving full attention to what we say. After the dialog, I think, This is how I want to be with people.

*At times
each of
us has
considered
giving up
sitting practice,
and yet
we never do.*

On a walk we stop at the edge of a lake. Fish turn to face us in the clear water. Are they looking at us, as the dog looks at us, oblivious to our personalities, asking the wordless question, Who are you? What are you?

One evening rain drowns out the sound of the waterfall. We sit in meditation with the rain. When it is time for dialog, there is a sense of, why speak at all?

We do speak a little, quietly, embraced in the sounds of the forest, and then our speaking dies down.

The rain stops. We continue to sit, our schedule abandoned. We sit in the hum of fridge, the chant of frogs, the murmur of the waterfall. Fridge hum stops. Frog sounds fill the world. Are the frogs speaking to us? Or are we, in our listening, asking them the same question the fish and the dog ask in their looking at us?

Frog chant fades into a few solo voices, falls off into single notes, then silence. Still we sit. At some point it seems clear that the last frog has spoken. We rise without speaking, go out onto the porch, stand in the dark facing the waterfall, the only sound.

The next morning as we sit in meditation, my lowered gaze is filled with Rinchen's motionless form—the horizontal base, knee to knee, and the

upright torso with hands forming a circle, the cosmic mudra familiar from Buddha figures. A Buddha before me. Buddha-shaped, anyway. I am aware of myself as Buddha-shaped.

In the final writing period before the end of our retreat, I come to a stopping place, put away my notebook and pencil, and go out onto the porch, looking into the treetops. Soon, summer will screen the view of the waterfall with foliage. But not the sound. It will vary, from a burble to a soft roar of white noise, but the sound of falling water is heard year-round.

Now in late April, the forest is revealed in all its ongoingness. Trees toppled in a winter ice storm pierce the space with fractured trunks, and the ground is littered with limbs. A few dogwood blossoms still fleck the woods with brilliant white, but most are past their peak. Against the dark evergreen background, the pink-yellow fuzz and slick maroon of new oak and maple leaves suggest a tapestry, woven on trunks and branches splotched with moss and lichen, pale green in the damp. This forest lives much of its life veiled in rain and mist. I think about forest monks in the Buddhist tradition, their rainy season retreats, their Bo trees. We are a world away from that; renunciates we are not. And yet there is a thread of intent linking them and us. Who are we? We are on the path to awakening.



6 VIEWS OF THE 6 PARAMITAS

Paramita means crossing over to the other shore. There is this shore, where we find stress and distress, nervousness and apprehension, pain and suffering, sickness, old age, and death; and there is the other shore, where we find joy and bliss, peace and harmony, and the end of suffering and rebirth. The six paramitas form a raft on which to cross from this shore to the other. It doesn't need to take years, or months, or even weeks to cross. You can do it right now by wholeheartedly practicing with the Six Paramitas.

Here are six views—linguistic, poetic, and graphic—of the paramitas, starting with a “poem” by Jack Kerouac from *Some of the Dharma* and ending with an excerpt from *The Way of the Bodhisattva* by Shantideva, translated by the Padmakara Translation Group.

1

THE SIX PARAMITAS BY JACK KEROUAC

1. Unselfish giving for others, **DANA**, radiant & selfless
2. Moral purity, kindness, **SILA**, sympathy, absence of craving
3. Forbearance, patience, **KSHANTI**, endurance, forgiveness
4. Energy, enthusiasm, **VIRYA**, effort for the ideal
5. Dhyana concentration, **DHYANA PARAMITA**, 4 stages of meditation
6. Wisdom, insight, **PRAJNA PARAMITA**, absence of conceptions and illusions

THE SIX PARAMITAS

DANA is giving giving in every moment giving in every moment wholeheartedly is giving **DANA**

2

SILA is giving virtue giving virtue in every moment giving pure virtue in every moment wholeheartedly is Bodhi **SILA**

KSHANTI is giving patience giving patience in every moment giving patience in every moment wholeheartedly is giving no anger ever never ever giving anger always giving giving no anger is giving of fearlessness never ever giving fear **KSHANTI**

VIRYA is giving through Right Effort Right Effort in every moment is dana sila kshanti **VIRYA**

DHYANA is giving to each moment to each and all beings single-pointedly Right Concentration wholeheartedly in the face of dukkha **DHYANA**

PRAJNA is giving with Right View purely patiently energetically unreservedly wholeheartedly with full Right Concentration **PRAJNA**

MEDITATION ON THE SIX PARAMITAS

from the Japanese Soto Zen tradition

3

- Dana** May I be generous and helpful.
Sila May I be pure and virtuous.
Kshanti May I be patient and able to bear and forbear the wrongs of others.
Virya May I be strenuous, energetic, and persevering.
Dhyana May I practice meditation and attain concentration and oneness to serve all beings
Prajna May I gain wisdom and be able to give the benefit of my wisdom to others.

Dana—giving or generosity—offered to those worse off deepens our compassion and loving kindness, offered to those better off develops faith, devotion, and confidence

4

Sila—following the Precepts—provides a more peaceful and harmonious life, builds trust and respect

Kshanti—patience--leads to compassion and acceptance in the face of dukka, diminishes anger

Virya--unafflicted effort—increases discipline, produces joy

Dhyana—meditation—allows us to become governors of our own minds, allows us to remain calm in the face of stress

Prajna—wisdom—allows us to penetrate emptiness and to increase our practice of Dana, Sila, Kshanti, and Virya

5

THE ANTI-PARAMITAS

Paramita	Anti-Paramita
Giving	Desire, greed
Morality	Immorality, feeling threatened
Patience	Anger
Effort	Laziness
Meditation	Delusion, distractions, an out-of-control mind
Wisdon	Ignorance

6

FROM THE WAY OF THE BODHISATTVA BY SHANTIDEVA

The six perfections, giving and the rest,
Progress in sequence, growing in importance,
The great should never be supplanted by the less,
And it is the others' good that is the highest goal

Therefore understand this well
And always labor for the benefit of beings
The far-seeing masters of compassion
Permit, to this end, that which is proscribed.

Written or compiled by Xianyang, unless otherwise noted.

FROM OUR BOOKSHELVES



The Xinxinming--Faith in Mind, or Trust in Mind, depending on the translation, is one of the seminal works of Chan Buddhism. This poem is attributed to the Third Patriarch, Sengcan, about whose life we know very little, though it is believed that he died in 606 AD. The Xinxinming is one of the most cherished poems in Chan and has been elevated in some practice communities to the level of a sutra.

The words have a chiseled clarity and purity, and the poem holds the distinction of having been written from the other shore. Most of today's Buddhist literature is written by those seeking to reach enlightenment, looking at the other shore from samsara. This poem reverses that, explaining how to reach enlightenment by someone on the other shore looking back to us in samsara. Even in translation, the poem has a deeply penetrating and personal effect on each reader, and has for nearly 1500 years.

The first two lines of this poem, could, in and of themselves, be all that one needs to do to reach enlightenment.

Here are two important commentaries on Sengcan's poem: Faith in Mind, A Guide To Chan Practice by Venerable Master Sheng-Yen and Trust in Mind, The Rebellion of Chinese Zen by Mu Soeng. The former is a practice-oriented commentary, the latter a more scholarly approach, with background chapters on the Dharma, the Tao, and Chan as they are threaded together in this poem. Here are two translations of the Xinxinming which we hope will allow you to discover insights into the poem not available when just one translation is present.

TRUST IN MIND

**Translated by Richard B. Clarke
As presented in *Trust in Mind, The Rebellion
of Chinese Zen* by Mu Soeng
Wisdom Publications**

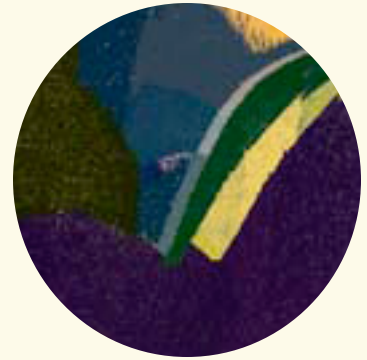
Xinxinming

The Great Way is not difficult for those who have no preferences.

When love and hate are both absent
everything becomes clear and undistinguished.
Make the smallest distinction, however,
and heaven and earth are set infinitely apart.
If you wish to see the truth,
then hold no opinions for or against anything.
To set up what you like against what you dislike
is the disease of the mind.
When the deep meaning of things is not understood,
the mind's essential peace is disturbed to no avail.
The Way is perfect like vast space
where nothing is lacking and nothing is in excess.
Indeed, it is due to our choosing to accept or reject
that we do not see the true nature of things.
Live neither in the entanglements of outer things,
nor in inner feelings of emptiness.
Be serene in the oneness of things
and such erroneous views will disappear by themselves.
When you try to stop activity to achieve passivity,
your very effort fills you with activity.
As long as you remain in one extreme or the other,
you will never know Oneness.
Those who do not live in the single Way
fail in both activity and passivity,
assertion and denial.
To deny the reality of things is to miss their reality;
to assert the emptiness of things is to miss their reality.
the more you talk and think about it,
the further astray you wander from the truth.
Stop talking and thinking,
and there is nothing you will not be able to know.
To return to the root is to find the meaning,
but to pursue appearances is to miss the source.
At the moment of inner enlightenment,
there is a going beyond appearance and emptiness.
The changes that appear to occur in the empty world
we call real only because of our ignorance.
Do not search for the truth;
only cease to cherish opinions.



Do not remain in the dualistic state;
 avoid such pursuits carefully.
 If there is even a trace of this and that, of right and wrong,
 the Mind-essence will be lost in confusion.
 Although all dualities come from the One,
 do not be attached even to this One.
 When the mind exists undisturbed in the Way,
 nothing in the world can offend,
 and when a thing can no longer offend, it ceases to exist in the old way.
 When no discriminating thoughts arise, the old mind ceases to exist.
 When thought objects vanish, the thinking subject vanishes,
 as when the mind vanishes, objects vanish.
 Things are objects because of the subject (mind);
 the mind (subject) is such because of things (objects).
 Understand the relativity of these two
 and the basic reality: the unity of emptiness.
 In this Emptiness the two are indistinguishable,
 and each contains in itself the whole world.
 If you do not discriminate between coarse and fine,
 you will not be tempted to prejudice and opinion.
 To live in the Great Way is neither easy nor difficult,
 but those with limited views are fearful and irresolute;
 the faster they hurry, the slower they go,
 and clinging cannot be limited; and
 even to be attached to the idea of enlightenment is to go astray.
 Just let things be in their own way,
 and there will be neither coming nor going.
 Obey the nature of things (your own nature),
 and you walk freely and undisturbed.
 When thought is in bondage the truth is hidden,
 for everything is murky and unclear,
 and the burdensome practice of judging brings annoyance and weariness.
 What benefit can be derived from distinctions and separations?
 If you wish to move in the One Way
 do not dislike even the world of senses and ideas.
 Indeed, to accept them fully
 is identical with true Enlightenment.
 The wise person strives to no goals
 but the foolish person fetters himself.
 This is one Dharma, not many; distinctions arise
 from the clinging needs of the ignorant.
 To seek Mind with the (discriminating) mind
 is the greatest of all mistakes.
 Rest and unrest derive from illusion;
 with enlightenment there is no liking or disliking.
 All dualities come from
 ignorant inference; they are like dreams of flowers in the air:
 foolish to try to grasp them.
 Gain and loss, right and wrong;
 such thoughts must finally be abolished at once.



If the eye never sleeps,
all dreams will naturally cease.
If the mind makes no discriminations,
the ten thousand things are as they are, of single essence.
To understand the mystery of this One-essence
is to be released from all entanglements.
When all the things are seen equally
the timeless Self-essence is reached.
No comparisons or analogies are possible
in this causeless, relationshipless state.
Consider movement stationary and the stationary in motion,
both movement and rest disappear.
When such dualities cease to exist
Oneness itself cannot exist.
To this ultimate finality
no law or description applies.
For the united mind in accord with the Way
all self-centered straining ceases.
Doubts and irresolutions vanish
and life in true faith is possible.
With a single stroke we are freed from bondage;
nothing clings to us and we hold to nothing.
All is empty, clear, self-illuminating,
with no exertion of the mind's power.
Here thought, feeling, knowledge, and imagination
are of no value.
In this world of suchness
there is neither self nor other-than-self.
To come directly into harmony with this reality just simply say
And this truth is beyond extension or diminution in time or space;
in it a single thought is ten thousand years.
Emptiness here, emptiness there,
but the infinite universe stands always before your eyes.
Infinitely large and infinitely small;
no difference, for definitions have vanished
and no boundaries are seen.
So too with Being and non-Being.
Don't waste time in doubts and arguments
that have nothing to do with this.
One thing, all things:
move among and intermingle, without distinction.
To live in this realization
is to be without anxiety about non-perfection.
To live in this faith is the road to nonduality,
because the nondual is one with the trusting mind.
Words! The Way is beyond language,
for in it there is no yesterday, no tomorrow, no today.

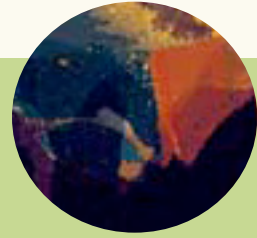
DO NOT
SEARCH FOR
THE TRUTH;

ONLY CEASE
TO CHERISH
OPINIONS.



FAITH IN MIND: ***A GUIDE TO CHAN PRACTICE***

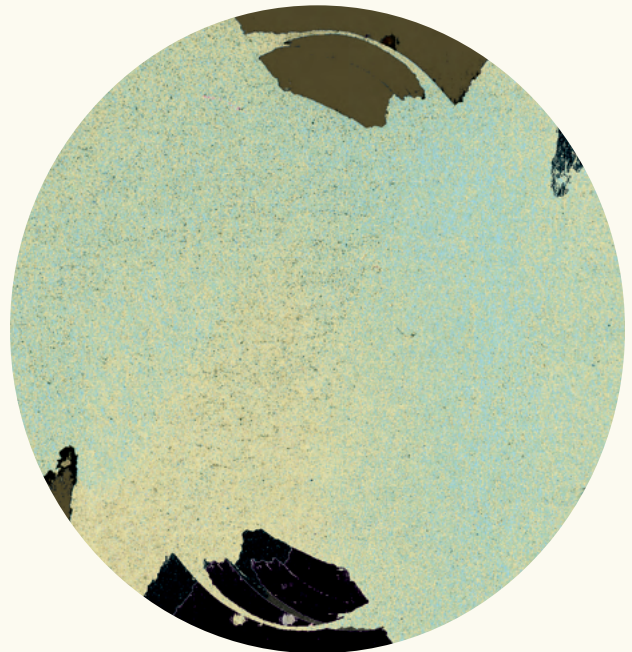
BY MASTER SHENG-YEN



The Supreme Way is not difficult If only you do not pick and choose.

Neither love nor hate,
And you will clearly understand.
Be off by a hair,
And you are as far apart as heaven from earth.
If you want the way to appear,
Be neither for nor against.
For and against opposing each other —
This is the mind's disease.
Without realising the mysterious principle
It is useless to practise quietude.
The Way is perfect like a great space,
Without lack, without excess.
Because of grasping and rejecting,
You cannot attain it.
Do not pursue conditioned existence;
Do not abide in acceptance of emptiness.
In oneness and equality,
Confusion vanishes of itself.
Stop activity and return to stillness,
And that stillness will even be more active.
Only stagnating in duality,
How can you recognize oneness?
If you fail to penetrate oneness,
Both places lose their function.
Banish existence and you fall into existence;
Follow emptiness and you turn your back on it.
Excessive talking and thinking
Turn you from harmony with the Way.
Cut off talking and thinking,

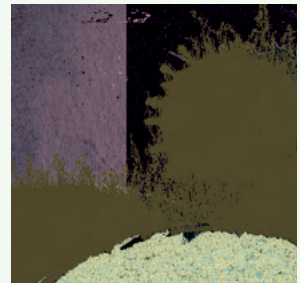
And there is nowhere you cannot penetrate.
Return to the root and attain the principle;
Pursue illumination and you lose it.
One moment of reversing the light
Is greater than the previous emptiness.
The previous emptiness is transformed;
It was all a product of deluded views.
No need to seek the real;
Just extinguish your views.
Do not abide in dualistic views;
Take care not to seek after them.
As soon as there is right and wrong
The mind is scattered and lost.
Two comes from one,
Yet do not even keep the one.
When one mind does not arise,
Myriad dharmas are without defect.
Without defect, without dharmas,
No arising, no mind.
Not seeing fine or coarse,
How can there be any bias?
The Great Way is broad,
Neither easy nor difficult.
With narrow views or doubts,
Haste will slow you down.
Attach to it and you will lose the measure;
The mind will enter a deviant path.
Let it go and be spontaneous,
Experience no going or staying.
Accord with your nature, unite with the Way,
Wander at ease, without vexation.
Bound by thoughts, you depart from the real;
And sinking into a stupor is as bad.
It is not good to weary the spirit.
Why alternate between aversion and affection?
If you wish to enter the one vehicle,
Do not be repelled by the sense realm.
With no aversion to the sense realm,
You become one with true enlightenment.
The wise have no motives;
Fools put themselves in bondage.
One dharma is not different from another.
The deluded mind clings to whatever it desires.
Using mind to cultivate mind —
Is this not a great mistake?
The erring mind begets tranquility and confusion;
In enlightenment there are no likes and dislikes.



NO NEED
TO
SEEK THE
REAL;

JUST
EXTINGUISH
YOUR VIEWS.

All dreams will cease of themselves.
If the mind does not discriminate,
All dharmas are of one suchness.
The essence of one suchness is profound;
Unmoving, conditioned things are forgotten.
Contemplate all dharmas as equal,
And you return to things as they are.
When the subject disappears,
There can be no measuring or comparing.
Stop activity and there is no activity;
When activity stops, there is no rest.
Since two cannot be established,
How can there be one?
In the very ultimate,
Rules and standards do not exist.
Develop a mind of equanimity,
And all deeds are put to rest.
Anxious doubts are completely cleared.
Right faith is made upright.
Nothing lingers behind,
Nothing can be remembered.
Bright and empty, functioning naturally,
The mind does not exert itself.
It is not a place of thinking,
Difficult for reason and emotion to fathom.
In the Dharma Realm of true suchness,
There is no other, no self.
To accord with it is vitally important;
Only refer to "not-two."
In not-two, all things are in unity;
Nothing is not included.
The wise throughout the ten directions
All enter this principle.
This principle is neither hurried nor slow —
One thought for ten thousand years.
Abiding nowhere yet everywhere,
The ten directions are right before you.
The smallest is the same as the largest
In the realm where delusion is cut off.



The largest is the same as the smallest;
No boundaries are visible.
Existence is precisely emptiness;
Emptiness is precisely existence.
If it is not like this,
Then it is not worth preserving.
One is everything;
Everything is one.
If you can be like this,
Why worry about not finishing?
Faith and mind are not two;
Non-duality is faith in mind.
The path of words is cut off;
There is no past, no future, no present.



SPIRITUAL TEACHERS

*Cherish spiritual teachers
even more than your own body.
Choose a teacher in whom you have faith--
be intimate and trusting, mindful and receptive.
Heed his advice and follow his practice;
make offerings, do service, show respect.*

This is the way of the Bodhisattva.

--Gyalsay Togme Sangpo



You should have faith in your teacher; if not, find another teacher.

--Zenshin Philip Whalen

A roshi is a person who has actualized that perfect freedom which is the potentiality for all human beings. He exists freely in the fullness of his whole being. The flow of his consciousness is not the fixed repetitive patterns of our usual self-centered consciousness, but rather arises spontaneously and naturally from the actual circumstances of the present. The results of this in terms of the quality of his life are extraordinary—buoyancy, vigor, straight-forwardness, simplicity, humility, serenity, joyousness, uncanny perspicacity, and unfathomable compassion. His whole being testifies to what it means to live in the reality of the present. Without anything said or done, just the impact of meeting a personality so developed can be enough to change another's whole way of life. But in the end it is not the extraordinariness of the teacher which perplexes, intrigues, and deepens the student, it is the teacher's utter ordinariness. Because he is just himself, he is a mirror for his students. When we are with him, we feel our own strengths and short-comings without any sense of praise or criticism from him. In his presence we see our original face, and the extraordinariness we see is only our own true nature. When we learn to let our own nature free, the boundaries between master and student disappear in a deep flow of being and joy in the unfolding of Buddha mind.

*--Trudy Dixon, from Richard Baker's introduction to
Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind by Shunryu Suzuki*



We're all in this together--
by ourselves.

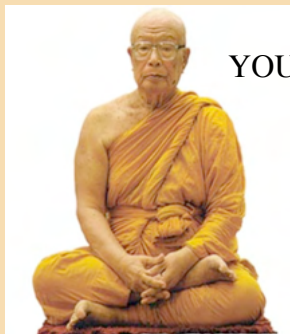
--Lily Tomlin

dharma in the moment



Experience Chan!
It's not a lot of questions.
Too many questions is
the Chan disease.
The best way is just to
observe the noise of the world.
The answer to your questions?
Ask your own heart.

-- Venerable Master Xu Yun (Empty Cloud)



YOU DON'T HAVE TO
LIVE THE LIFE
THAT BITES ITS
OWNER.

--Buddhadhasa Bhikkhu

NEVER BELIEVE
ANYTHING
SO STRONGLY
THAT YOU HAVE
TO DEFEND IT.

--Buddhist Teaching



WHEN I DO GOOD, I FEEL
GOOD; WHEN I DO BAD,
I FEEL BAD. THIS IS MY
RELIGION.

--Abraham Lincoln

That which is within, surrounds us.

CONTRIBUTORS

ROBERT GRANAT has published two novels: *The Important Thing* and *Regenesis*, and numerous essays and other writings. His interest in Buddhism goes back many years; his concern with “the important things” even further.

JAMES HICKLIN resides in a maximum security prison in the midwest. He is serving a life sentence without parole. His practice is deeply inspirational.

For the past 20 years, **MASTER JEN-CHUN** has led a simple life in New Jersey, teaching with the goal of creating a pure form of Buddhism in the United States by emphasizing the study and practice of Dharma, instead of ritual practices and ceremonies. He is founder and spiritual leader of Bodhi Monastery in New Jersey.

SARA JENKINS is the author of *This Side of Nirvana: Memoirs of a Spiritually Challenged Buddhist*. A version of *In the Forest, In the Rain* will appear in *Hello At Last: Adventures in Spiritual Friendship*, to be published by Windhorse in autumn of 2007.

Born in Malaysia, **MASTER JI RU** was ordained as a Theravada monk in 1980. He later studied Chinese Buddhism and ordained in that tradition under the great Buddhist Master, Venerable Zhu Mo in 1986. Currently he is Abbot of Mid-America Buddhist Association in Augusta, Missouri, and its sister temple in Chicago, the International Buddhism Friendship Association.

VENERABLE JING YIN is Director of the Board of the Chinese National Buddhist Association.

JEFFREY SCHNEIDER has been practicing at the San Francisco Zen Center since 1978. He is a priest who has lectured, taught, and led retreats on the subject of recovery and Buddhist spirituality in San Francisco, the bay area, and in the Midwest and Texas.

XIANYANG is a lay student of Master Ji Ru.

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