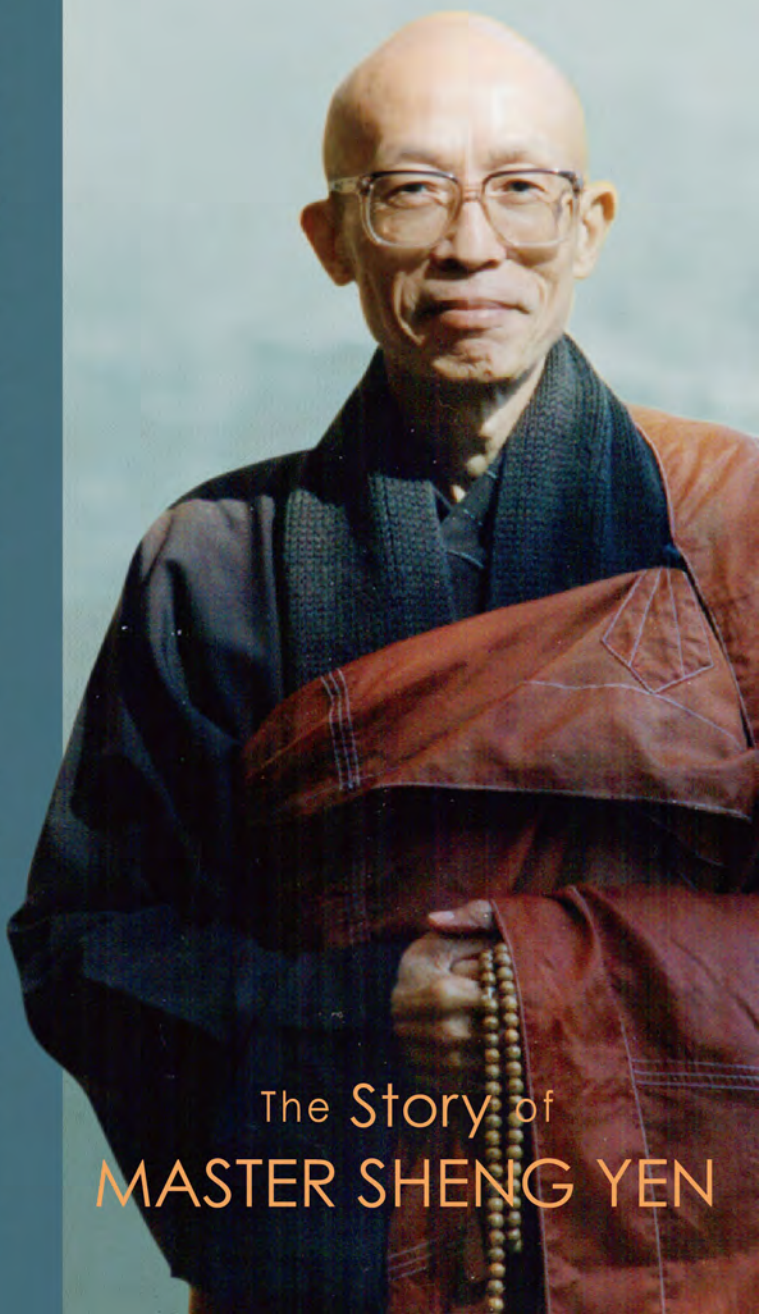


THUS HAVE I VOWED

The Story of
MASTER SHENG YEN



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MASTER SHENG YEN

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A process of putting Buddhist teachings into practice

If we have to use one single book to describe Master Sheng Yen's life, we will discover that there are endless stories and actions emerging, revealing how the Master had lived marvelously in his 80 years of life.

It is hard to sum up his life process in just a few words. The way the Master dedicated himself resembles how he beat the Dharma drum: with each drum stick striking the drum, the greatness of the Dharma would travel throughout the world, reaching far and wide. Like his monastic robe freely floating in the air, he has certainly left behind an unassuming yet significant mark.

In addition to the stories of traditions and creations, this book contains a rich collection of manuscripts reflecting the ideas and practice methods the Master left behind. The profound essence of the teachings derived from his perpetual learning, which, through his own experience and digestion, has become accessible words of wisdom that speak to people's lives, thereby touching and transforming them.

In reading this "book of life," one can find many familiar titles, such as "one of the most influential person in this century," a "traveling monk pressing forward in the stormy snow," a "religious leader,"

a "scholar monk," and a "Chan master." But these titles are hardly sufficient in fully describing the Master's core spirit.

By delving into Buddhist texts and Chan practice, he came up with the socially significant and influential philosophy of "Protecting the Spiritual Environment," DDM's vision, as well as ideas such as Four Kinds of Environmentalism, Fivefold Spiritual Renaissance Campaign, and Six Ethics of the Mind. This shows how the Master brought about a most inspiring legacy for the world and many people's lives.

There were two "rivers" serenely flowing through his life journey, his teachings and ideals, and the reverent monks and teachers he was close to. In the distance, at large-scale lectures or in the people's souls which he came into contact with through images, those two rivers traveled all the way down their routes, bringing us to meet at Dharma Drum Mountain's Main Buddha Hall and Wish-Fulfilling Guanyin Hall.

The plaque at the Buddha Hall's entrance that reads "original face" teaches us to constantly practice and train ourselves to explore the vast ocean of wisdom. "The rising great compassion," written on the plaque at the Guanyin Hall, reflects the Master's great vow manifested in his life-long endeavor. "Seeking the Dharma personally while striving to transform others," the phrase that touched him the most in his childhood, indicates that we should all strive to seek Buddhist insight while doing our best to help sentient beings with compassion.

By reading this book and following its stories, you will hear the Master say: the whole life represents a process of putting Buddhist teachings into practice.



Becoming a novice in Langshan

1943 – 1949

Having long heard of the legend of Dasheng Bodhisattva, Master Sheng Yen, as a teenager, found becoming a monk to be a beautiful dream. Buddhist chanting, and daily chores of cleaning, planting, and cooking—he all learned with great interest. Having developed wisdom by prostrating to the statue of Guanyin, he confirmed his faith in the Bodhisattva for the rest of his life. During his time studying at the Buddhist seminary, he got to learn with eminent monks at the time... His first encounter with Buddhist teachings immediately prompted him to want to share the benefit of the Dharma with more people he may encounter.

Born poor and becoming a Buddhist monk

Master Sheng Yen was born in Nantong, Jiangsu, China in 1930, an era that witnessed frequent natural disasters, on-going warfare, and prevalent poverty. A frail child prone to illness, plus long-term malnutrition, he developed his language skills and physical capability comparatively later than his peers.

First group of graduates from Jing'an Monastery, 1948

At 13, when it was 1943, he became a monastic at Guangjiao Temple, Langshan, through a



neighbor's introduction. Being a novice leaning what he should learn for monastic life, he realized the benefit of Buddhist scriptures: more than delivering the spirits of the deceased, they were actually meant for people to practice accordingly. Therefore, he aspired to further understand the sutras, in order to share their ideas with others.

After the 2nd Sino-Japanese War, in 1946, the Master followed his teacher to the Dasheng Temple in Shanghai, when he had to make a living by performing funeral ceremonies. After struggles, he finally entered the Jing'an Monastery seminary, laying a foundation for his Buddhist knowledge.



Master Sheng Yen's graduate certificate from Jing'an Monastery Seminary

Taken in Shanghai, 1948, with Ven. Shou Cheng (right), a teacher at Jing'an Monastery



Military life in Taiwan

1949 – 1960

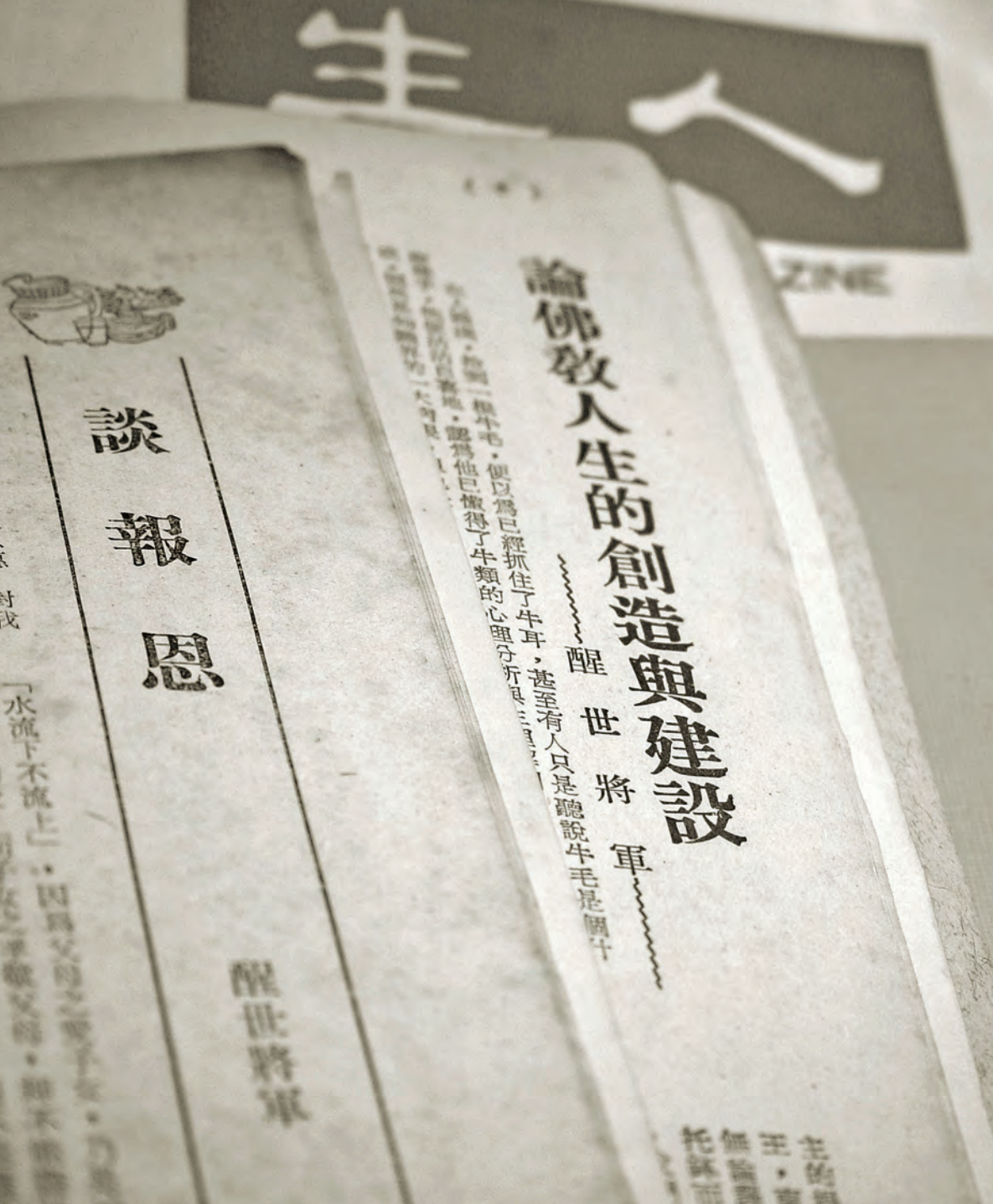
During that most chaotic era, for the sake of personal safety and his suffering country, as well as for the decline of Buddhism in China, the Master decided to join the army.

Ten years on, through extensive reading of a wide range of subjects,

he had taught himself to be a writer.

However, he never forgot his monastic identity, and always had in mind the current situation and future development of Buddhism.

By using the pen name of "World-awakening General" for the articles he contributed to Humanity Magazine, Master Sheng Yen expected himself to embrace, transform, and awaken people in the world



Following the army to Taiwan, becoming close to Buddhist circles

In 1949, when the war was still raging, the Master joined the army and followed the troops to move to Taiwan. During the harsh and challenging military life, he nevertheless got to further train his body and mind. In the meantime, he made the most of libraries and tour library buses, to read extensively on literature, history, and philosophy, among other subjects, which prompted him to engage in writing. He had contributed to Buddhist magazines such

Master Sheng Yen, second from the right in the front row, and his classmates at the army's telecommunication squadron, 1950



as *Buddhist Youth*, *Today's Buddhism*, *Humanity*, and *Ocean-Tide Voice*, to explore the issues of life and religion.

Meanwhile, the Master got in touch with teachers and fellow students from Jian'an Monastery who had consequently arrived in Taiwan, sought to associate with Buddhist elder venerables and young monastics, and showed concern with Taiwan's Buddhist circles, in the hope of resuming monastic life.



Master Sheng Yen as a military officer



Master Sheng Yen (centered) and his fellow students from Jing'an Monastery and later his military colleagues: Tian Feng (left) and Ven. Liao Zhong

Awakened by Ven. Ling Yuan's inspiring shout

After joining the army's telecommunication squadron, the Master, already troubled by his old symptoms, plus being a keen reader and writer, had to frequently work on night shifts, which resulted in long-term sleep deprivation and eventually led to his chronic rheumatism.

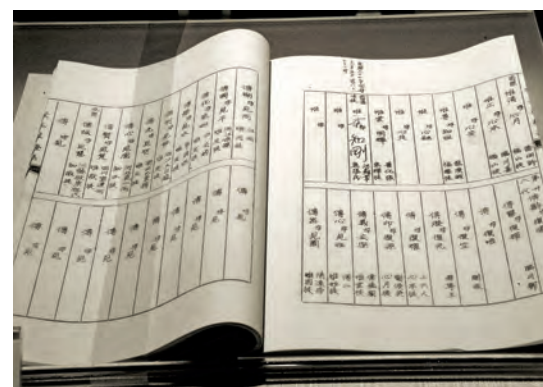
A visit to Ven. Ling Yuan (left) on Dec. 5, 1978, that inspired his understanding of Chan



In 1958, the Master visited Kaohsiung Buddhist Hall, and happened to share a room with Ven. Ling Yuan. While firing questions about life and Buddhist practice to ask, he was awakened by the venerable's sudden shout that inspired his understanding of Chan. Afterwards, by committing to teaching Chan and sharing the Dharma, in 1978 he was given the lineage Dharma name “Zhigang Weirou” by the venerable, making him Master Xu Yun's third generation heir and Linji Yixuan's 57th generation heir.



Cover page of Collection of Star and Lamp (names of the Linji lineage holders)



The Collection of Star and Lamp shows Master Sheng Yen's lineage Dharma name “Zhigang Weirou” given by Ven. Ling Yuan

Resuming monastic life, thanks to Ven. Dong Chu

By contributing articles for *Humanity Magazine*, the Master was quickly noticed and taken care of by its founder Ven. Dong Chu. So he began his frequent visits to Chung-Hwa Institute of Buddhist Culture in Beitou, Taipei. Having learned about Sheng Yen's health condition and his wish to resume monastic life, Dong Chu then offered help and encouragement, successfully assisting his discharging from the

Ven. Dong Chu at
Chung-Hwa Institute of Buddhist
Culture



army.

In 1959, during sick leave, Sheng Yen already moved into the Institute, as a gesture of gratitude towards Dong Chu's favor. When finally discharged from the army in 1960, he was then ordained by Dong Chu on the Buddha's Enlightenment Day on December 8 of the lunar calendar, given the Dharma name "Sheng Yen," meaning "adorning the Dharma with the sagely teaching, ornamenting the body-mind with sagely Dharma, and facilitating the purity of vinaya with sagely virtues." Meanwhile, he was assigned the task to help with editing work for *Humanity Magazine*.



Master Sheng Yen as a soldier and Ven. Xin Ru (left), his fellow student from Jing'an Monastery seminary



Ven. Dong Chu (front center) and Master Sheng Yen (front right) in a group photo in 1967 for the 4th anniversary of passing of Ven. Zhi Guang, who transmitted him the ten novitiate precepts

Solitary retreat in Meinong

1961 – 1968

*To advance and hone his Buddhist knowledge
and actual practice, laying a solid foundation for his
future work of sharing the Dharma,
Master Sheng Yen started a solitary retreat at
Chaoyuan Monastery in Meinong.
While transforming his learning and insight into
publications, he also delved into the essence of Chan,
practicing Chan without perceiving it.*



Living in the serene and simple solitary retreat quarters in the mountains

Self-study in solitary retreat, delving into scriptures

In the winter of 1961, after just receiving Bhikshu precepts, the Master decided to go on a solitary retreat at Chaoyuan Monastery in Meinong, to hone his Buddhist studies and practice. He engaged in repentance prostration, sitting meditation, and scripture study. By focusing on vinaya, in addition to the Agama, he sought to explore the source of Buddhist thought. In 1968, he concluded his six-year solitary retreat,

Second leave of the retreat, Feb. 20, 1968



though at times he would leave to seek treatment for his eyes and give talks at events.

During this time he continued to write and present articles on Buddhist study and practice, including those later contained in *Essentials of Buddhist Sila and Vinaya*, a result of his research of monastic rules and discipline. He also published *Correct Buddhist Belief*, a collection of his articles to explore the *Agama*, written in accessible language for *Bodhi Tree Magazine*. He also started on his autobiography, *The Return*, which was published as a serial in *Merciful Light Magazine*.



Studying sutras in his retreat quarters

Main Buddha hall of Chaoyuan Monastery



Further study in Japan

1969 – 1975

To raise the overall status of Buddhism in Taiwan, the Master went to Japan for further study at the age of 40. Despite voices of disapproval and opposition from Taiwan's Buddhist circles, the image of diligent study in the library remained a constant scene. After six years of hard work, he finally obtained his doctoral degree, winning praise and recognition from the originally skeptical academics.



Master Sheng Yen's room for his six-year study in Japan (the 2nd floor to the left)

Going to Japan for further study, obtaining a PhD

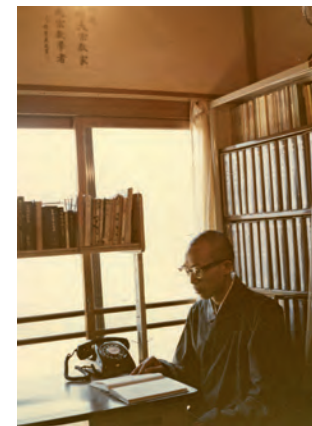
In 1965, Dong Chu urged Sheng Yen to go to Japan for further study. After much consideration, he decided to go to Rissho University for a master's in 1969. Given that many Buddhist monks had returned to the lay life after studying in Japan, his decision aroused voices of opposition from within Buddhist circles, making it harder to obtain financial support for his study. Nonetheless, he managed to obtain the master's

Receiving PhD certificate from Masamichi Sugaya, the then president of Rissho University, March 17, 1975



in 1971, and the PhD in 1975, with his dissertation entitled *A Study of the Chinese Buddhism in Late Ming*. In the same year, he went to the US to propagate the Dharma.

During this time, he also visited local Dharma centers and studied Zen with several Japanese Zen masters. After obtaining his PhD, he once attended a Zen retreat at the Sōji-ji, one of the “head temples” of the Soto Zen Buddhism, and acquired the “inka” recognition from Bantetsugu Roshi, a disciple of Daiun Sogaku Harada.



Studying in his room, with Ven. Dong Chu's admonition in the background



Doing daily practice in his room in Tokyo

Sharing the Buddhist teachings in the west

1976 –

The Master was invited to the United States, to share Chan teaching that transcends language and culture, introducing Buddhist wisdom and compassion to the west.

After living on the streets in New York for a while, he eventually established the Chan Meditation Center.

By inspiring practitioners of various inclinations, traveling far and wide, he sowed the seeds of Chan in Asia, Europe, and America.



Ch'an Meditation Center (photo taken in 1989)

Guiding Chan practice in the US

In September, 1976, the Master was appointed by Buddhist Association of the United States as board member, vice-president, and abbot of Temple of Enlightenment. This was the first time ever he had served as a Buddhist abbot.

In the same year, he started a Sunday Chan meditation class at Temple of Enlightenment, the first time he offered guidance on Chan practice as a Chan teacher. Subsequently, he set

Master Sheng Yen and practitioners in outdoor walking meditation, New York, 1979



up Chan meditation training class, introducing the Dharma to young people in the US. Afterwards, he also regularly gave lectures on Chan practice and Buddhist cultivation at invitation of prestigious colleges.

In 1977, at his students' request, the Master organized a seven-day Chan retreat at Bodhi House, which was well received. Therefore, he decided to use this experience and start offering guidance on Chan practice back in Taiwan in 1978.



Ven. Dong Chu (center) with Sheng Yen (left) and Shen Jiazhen when visiting the US



Chan meditation class at Temple of Enlightenment set up in 1976

Becoming the abbot of Nung Chan Monastery

1977 –

After his teacher Ven. Dong Chu passed away, the Master returned to Taiwan to take over his task in charity and culture, continuing the venerable's legacy. By teaching Chan and giving Dharma talks, he helped popularize Buddhist practice, introducing Buddhism as a way of life rooted in society, re-igniting the torch of Chinese Buddhism.



Inheriting his teacher's will

On December 15, 1977, Ven. Dong Chu passed away while sitting in meditation. On hearing the news, the Master immediately returned to Taiwan to take care of the funeral, and invited eminent monks to discuss what to do with the inheritance of the institute's properties. The Master adhered to three principles: endeavoring to promote and continue the ven-

Master Sheng Yen guiding Buddhist practice in the Institute's square, 1979



erable's legacy in Buddhist culture and education; striving to maintain and take care of the institute as a practice center and its resident monastics; keeping the properties left behind by Ven. Dong Chu intact.

In 1978, the Chung-Hwa Institute of Buddhist Culture Foundation was formed according to the venerable's will. At the meeting to form the institute's board of directors, the Master was elected chairperson and institute director, becoming abbot of the institute itself and its affiliated Nung Chan Monastery.



Ceremony of arrival for installation to mark the Master's taking over Chung-Hwa Institute of Buddhist Culture, March 24, 1978



Ven. Dong Chu interacting with young students at the Institute of Buddhist Culture

Founding CMC, dividing time between Taiwan and the US

After taking over the Institute, given his American disciples' eagerness to seek the Dharma, the Master started dividing his time between Taiwan and the US every three months. Without permanent accommodation, he once even had to live on the streets with his disciples. After struggling for a while, he finally managed to rent an apartment in the Queens, New York, in 1979, and set up Chan Meditation Center.

Master Sheng Yen
at the original loca-
tion of Chan Medi-
tation Center, 1984



In October of the same year, the Master, helped by Ven. Ren Jun, Shen Jiazhen, Ying Xingjiu, as well as Ma Yichang and his wife, bought an old two-story flat in the district, and started to use it as a practice center in May, 1981. Over time, with the growing number of practitioners and more frequent Dharma events



organized, the space became too cramped. Subsequently in 1987, they bought a three-story flat on the same street, where the Center is now located.

Eminent monks vis-
iting the newly relo-
cated Chan Medita-
tion Center



A Dharma picnic at
Bear Mountain
State Park, in Rock-
land County, New
York, June 12, 1983

Launching a publishing house, re-starting Humanity Magazine

In continuing Ven. Dong Chu's legacy, the Master expected to contribute himself to the Buddhist culture and academic field. In 1980 he launched Dong Chu Publishing House (predecessor of Dharma Drum Publishing Corporation), to introduce correct Buddhist belief and concepts to the public through written language and other media.

In addition, *Humanity Magazine*, launched by Ven. Dong Chu in 1949 to promote the idea

The Complete Works of Master Sheng Yen



of “Buddhism for human life,” was re-started in 1982. In the same year, the quarterly *Chan Magazine* and monthly *Chan Newsletter* also set up the Dharma Drum Publications, to publish the Master’s works in English.

In 1993, the Master’s works were compiled into the 40-volume Complete Works of Master Sheng Yen. In 1999 Dharma Drum Publishing Corp. re-edited and compiled the Works into 70 volumes, which were added to 100 volumes in 2005.



Master Sheng Yen's works in English



Humanity Magazine, re-started in 1982

Giving large-scale lectures, creating a new social atmosphere

Following the two large-scale lectures on daily Buddhism given in Tainan in 1981, which saw a participation of nearly 2000 people, the Master gave another lecture at Sun Yat-sen Memorial Hall in 1983, on “Chan and Modern Life.” This marks the beginning of a series of large-scale lectures in Taiwan’s Buddhist circles. Afterwards, he also gave similar lectures in Hong Kong, Singapore, and Australia.

Dharma talk on the Sutra of Infinite Life, Queen Elizabeth Stadium, Hong Kong, April 21, 1996



Starting from 1990, the Master gave a series of talks at Sun Yat-sen Memorial Hall, on Buddhist sutras including the *Heart Sutra*, the *Diamond Sutra*, and the *Vimalakirti Sutra*, with



each witnessing over 1000 participants. From 1999 on, he started to hold dialogues and seminars with top professionals in the fields of high-tech, education, culture, as well as entertainment and show business, reaching out to varied aspects of life in society.

Attending the Technology and Humanities forum at National Chiao Tung University, Hsinchu



Dharma talk on “Vimalakirti Sutra and Daily Life”, Sun Yat-sen Memorial Hall, Sept. 25, 1993

Pilgrimages in China, in search of spiritual roots

In 1988, the Master was initially going to lead a Chan retreat in London, but due to the visa problem he had to change his schedule and decided to go to China for a trip. This was his first visit back in China since arriving in Taiwan in 1949. This trip fulfilled his three dreams: exploring the ancient sites that mark the Chinese Buddhist sources; visiting Langshan to retrace his memories as a novice; and visiting Dinghui

Master Sheng Yen
on a trip to visit
family in China,
April 1988



Temple in Zhenjiang, where Ven. Dong Chu attained the Dharma. As he described the trip, “This trip to see my family is more about returning to the



sources of my family and my Dharmic affinities, for a pilgrimage visit to retrace the roots, rather than “returning to my root.”

The Master leading disciples on a trip to explore sources of Chan Buddhism, 2002

In 1991, the Master formed a research team to visit China to investigate features in Buddhist architecture, as a guide to constructing DDM; in 1996 and 2002, he was on two trips with his disciples to visit China, to explore the sources of Chan traditions.

Master Sheng Yen passing Ven. Dong Chu's relics onto Dharma heir Ven. Ming Shan, during relics enshrining ceremony





Developing Buddhist education

1978 –

Having witnessing the decline of Buddhism in Taiwan, the Master realized that without developing education today there is no tomorrow for Buddhism. Since becoming director of China Academy Institute of Buddhist Studies, he had founded Chung-Hwa Institute of Buddhist Studies, the Sangha University, the Buddhist College, Dharma Drum College of Humanities and Social Sciences (the now “Dharma Drum Institute of Liberal Arts”) constructing a complete academic educational system, to comprehensively nurture high-caliber Buddhist talent in Chinese Buddhism.

Remodeled Chung-Hwa Institute of Buddhist Culture completed in 1986, to be used by Chung-Hwa Institute of Buddhist Studies

Committed to education, cultivating talent

In 1978, the Institute for the Translation of Chinese Tripitaka of Buddhist Association of the US was moved to Nung Chan Monastery, with the Master as its director. Meanwhile, he was recruited as professor for the post graduate program of philosophy at the College of Chinese Culture. In October, he was appointed director of China Academy Institute of Buddhist Studies, which recruited its first group

Master Sheng Yen in a photo with Chang Chi-yun (second from left), founder of College of Chinese Culture, 1978



of graduate students in 1981. It is the first higher Buddhist institution in Taiwan to nurture Buddhist research talent.

Due to later reforms of the College, its Institute of Buddhist Studies was stopped. To continue to nurture Buddhist talent for Buddhist education and research, he went on to recruit students in the name of Chung-Hwa Institute of Buddhist Studies in 1985, based in the remodeled building for the Institute of Buddhist Culture.



Lecturing on Buddhism in Sui & Tang dynasties, at College of Chinese Culture's graduate program in philosophy, 1978



Formation meeting for Chung-Hwa Institute of Buddhist Studies at its new location, Chung-Hwa Institute of Buddhist Culture, Aug. 22, 1987

Promoting Buddhist research, organizing international conferences

In 1990, Chung-Hwa Institute of Buddhist Studies organized the first Chung-Hwa International Conference on Buddhism at the National Central Library, led by the Master. Themed as “Buddhist Ethics and Modern Society,” the event attracted more than 150 Buddhist scholars from over 20 countries, with 40 papers presented in the conference.

The first Chung-Hwa International Conference on Buddhism, at National Central Library, Jan. 12-15, 1990

As the Master pointed out, the international conference had three aims: promoting Bud-



dhist research and advocating the spirit of Buddhist culture; introducing global Buddhist traditions to Chinese Buddhists and sharing Chinese Buddhism globally; enabling religions practiced

in Taiwan to realize the importance and necessity of Buddhist academic research, while dedicating to training Buddhist talent.

Afterwards, the Conference was organized every few years, and this has greatly enhanced its international academic status and academic exchanges.



Master Sheng Yen giving an opening remark at the 4th Chung-Hwa International Conference on Buddhism



Master Sheng Yen exchanging ideas with scholars at the 5th Chung-Hwa International Conference on Buddhism

Establishing the Sangha University, nurturing Buddhist talent

Founded with an aim to nurture monastic teachers dedicated to Chinese Buddhism, Dharma Drum Sangha University started to recruit students in 2001. This marked another realization of the Master's dream to advance Buddhist education, following his establishing the Chung-Hwa Institute of Buddhist Studies.

Giving a lecture for the Sangha University's students at a fruit fig tree, Jan. 3, 2004



Back in Ven. Dong Chu's time, there were voices to urge Taiwan's Buddhist circles to set up a Buddhist university. The Master also

echoed this urge by writing articles in Buddhist magazines such as *Humanity*, and *Awakening the World*, in the hope of



“founding Buddhist institutions with the power of Buddhist community” and “nurturing Buddhist talent by means of Buddhist education.”

The Master expected the University to nurture monastic talent with insights into the needs in modern time, to reflect the essence and spirit of Chinese Buddhism, and take up a position in the international Buddhist arena and academic circles. He also urged student monastics to one day become true and dedicated religious teachers.

The Sangha University's inauguration and school opening ceremony; Chung-Hwa Institute of Buddhist Studies' school opening, graduation, and course completion ceremony; opening ceremony for the Sino-Tibetan Buddhist Cultural Exchange Program, at DDM complex, Sept. 30, 2001



Master Sheng Yen speaking at the student orientation meeting for the Sangha University's first group of students at DDM complex, Sept. 12-14, 2001

Accomplishing the aspiration to advance Buddhist education

Following Chung-Hwa Institute of Buddhist Studies and the Sangha University, on April 8, 2007 Dharma Drum Buddhist College was formally established. It was the first mono-religious college approved by Taiwan's Ministry of Education.

Dharma Drum Institute of Liberal Arts started recruiting students in 2015

In 2014, Dharma Drum Buddhist College and the “Dharma Drum College of Humanities and Social Sciences” still in preparation were



merged into the Dharma Drum Institute of Liberal Arts. Starting to recruit students in 2015, it aims to nurture leadership talent who

have the quality as religious teachers with an international perspective, as well as with academic and cultural cultivation. The Master's compassionate aspiration to advance education was finally realized, as his blessing for the following generations.



Dharma Drum Institute of Liberal Arts formally established on the Buddha's Birthday, April 8, 2007

A view of the Dharma Drum Institute of Liberal Arts



Inauguration of Dharma Drum Mountain

1989 – 2005

To establish a permanent and stable practice center with a future outlook, the Master spent 16 years founding Dharma Drum Mountain, a world center for Buddhist education responsive to our time.

With a vision to uplift the character of humanity and build a pure land on earth, it covers education, religion, culture, and spiritual cultivation, by focusing on education, thereby enhancing the quality of humanity and purifying human minds, achieving a pure land on earth.



Reciting the Dharani praying for land to establish DDM

In 1989, as Nung Chan Monastery was facing its imminent demolition, purchasing land became urgent. After years of futile efforts, the Master took Xiong Qingliang's suggestion and led some 1000 monastic and lay practitioners to chant the Great Compassion Dharani 21 times, praying to acquire a plot of land. Three days later, good news came. The Master then went to Jinshan in what was Taipei County to check out the land. One week later he signed the land

The Guanyin Hall tucked away in the hills was the original building on Dharma Drum Mountain, where is Building II



transfer contract with the owner's representative Ven. Quan Du.

In July of the same year, when the Master returned to Taiwan from the US, he named the land purchased in April "Dharma Drum Mountain," expecting it to serve as a "morning bell and dusk drum" to transform the world with the Dharma. As he once stressed, DDM belongs to all Buddhist communities and is a place for public Buddhist education, an international practice center for academics, education, and uplifting human character.



Board members and supporting laity of Chung-Hwa Institute of Buddhist Studies finally found the land, but there was still a long way to go in constructing DDM. From the left: Ven. Quan Du, Master Sheng Yen, and Ven. Jin Neng. Photo taken on July 17, 1989



Master Sheng Yen investigating the construction site for DDM

Vision and common ethos to build a pure land on earth

In 1989, the Master proposed “uplifting the character of humanity and building a pure land on earth” as the vision for DDM. In the same year he launched *Dharma Drum Monthly*, as a platform to connect to DDM’s followers and members as they grew in number. In 1991, he proposed the Common Ethos of Dharma Drum Mountain, as follows:

Announcing and explaining the Common Endeavor of Buddhists at Nung Chan Monastery’s Buddha Hall, to urge devotees to practice Buddhism in daily life, 1990

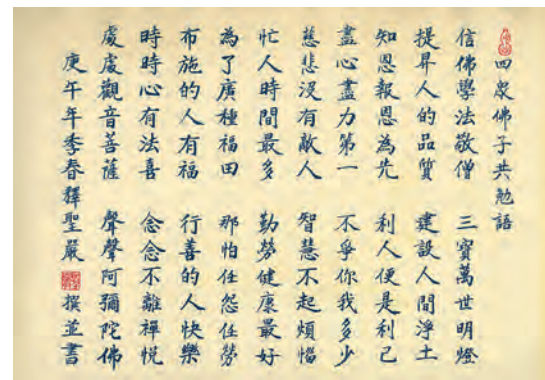


Our vision: to uplift the character of humanity, and to build a pure land on earth.

Our spirit: to give of ourselves, for the benefit of all.

Our direction: to return to the original intention of the Buddha, and work for the purification of the world.

Our approach: to promote comprehensive education, and extend loving care to all.



The Common Endeavor of Buddhists, calligraphy by Master Sheng Yen in 1990



In 1989, the Master proposed “to uplift the character of humanity and build a pure land on earth” as DDM’s vision. This photo shows the children’s Buddhist camp at Jinshan Elementary School in 1995

Innovating Bodhisattva Precepts after 30 years of investigation

In 1991, the Master transmitted Lay Bodhisattva Precepts at Chan Meditation Center for the first time. In 1993, he did the same in Taiwan for the first time.

When writing the *Essentials of Buddhist Sila and Vinaya*, he already showed his aspiration to promote the essence of Bodhisattva Precepts while also seeking innovation. As he pointed out: the purpose of Bodhisattva Precepts lies

The first Bodhisattva Precepts ceremony at Chan Meditation Center, Dec. 22, 1991



in generating the great Bodhi-mind rather than rigidly sticking to the details of entries. After 30 years of efforts by studying Buddhist

theories and scriptures, he brought innovation to the Precepts, aiming to return to the spirit of the Buddha's time awhile responding to the needs of changing society. Therefore, by using the Four Great Vows and the Three Groups of Precepts for Purity as the basis, along with Ten Wholesome Deeds as the guiding principle, he hoped to invite more practitioners to receive the precepts.



Transmitting Lay Bodhisattva Precepts in Taiwan for the first time, 1993

The 2nd Bodhisattva Precepts ceremony at Chan Meditation Center, Dec. 8, 1997



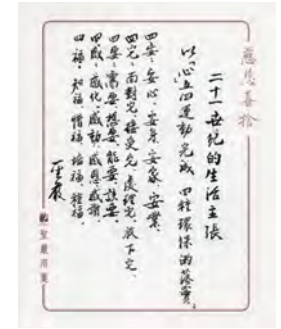
Protecting the spiritual environment, purifying society and human minds

In 1992, the Master proposed the idea of “protecting the spiritual environment.” The Master first introduced the concept in 1989, in that he believed only through purifying the mind can the purification of individuals’ minds and society be achieved. Subsequently, in 1994, he also launched the Protecting the Social Environment movement, which, combined with the previously initiated Protecting the Living Envi-

Members of Dharma Drum Young Buddhists demonstrating sitting in meditation at the Protecting the Spiritual Environment Expo 2002



ronment and Protecting the Natural Environment, is part of the Protecting the Four Environments campaign. In 1999, he further advocated the Fivefold Spiritual Renaissance Campaign as the method to realize Protecting the Spiritual Environment.



Master Sheng Yen's calligraphy of the content of Fivefold Spiritual Renaissance Campaign

Following the 921 Earthquake, he initiated the “Take Heart, Taiwan!” movement to help people rebuild their minds, which received wide response from the public. In 2007, he proposed the Six Ethics of the Mind campaign, urging people to practice the ethics pertaining to our daily life, family, natural environmentalism, workplace, and interaction of ethnic groups, as an effort to help achieve “uplifting the character of humanity and building a pure land on earth”.

DDM inviting prominent entrepreneurs and scholars to help promote Six Ethics of the Mind. Photo taken at Xinyi Square, Dec. 21, 2007



Exploring electronic media, reaching out far and wide

In 1994, the Great Dharma Drum TV program started to broadcast at CTS. The program features the Master addressing profound questions regarding human activities and spiritual practice from the Buddhist perspective in plain language. Originally scheduled for 50 episodes, the program was so popular that it was later extended to over 1000 episodes, spanning over 10 years. English subtitles were later added,

The Different Voices
TV program



for broadcast on a cable TV channel in New York, which prompted many locals to become Buddhists.

The contents of the program were subsequently edited and compiled into books, including *Finding Your Self*, *Heart to Heart Communication*, *True Happiness*, *Using Work as a Buddhist Practice*, and *Understanding Relations*.

Another TV program “Different Voices” started to air in 1996, in which the Master had dialogues with prominent professionals in Taiwan and from abroad. The program lasted for 10 years.



10th anniversary of
the Different Voices
TV program



Recording the
Great Dharma
Drum TV program
at DDM Anhe
Branch Monastery

Setting up Dharma Drum Retreat Center, systemizing Chan practice

Given the growing number of practitioners at Chan Meditation Center and hence a lack of space for practice, the Master and his disciples eventually bought a plot of land in upper state New York in 1997, as another place of practice.

The Master leading practitioners in outdoor walking meditation at DDRC



The newly purchased place was soon used to hold Chan retreats and DDM's North America Annual Meeting. In 1998, single-method Chan retreats, for either the practice of "huatou" or "silent illumination" were conducted for the first time. In 2000, a 49-day Chan retreat was held there for the first time.



Master Sheng Yen leading a 7-day Chan retreat at Dharma Drum Retreat Center

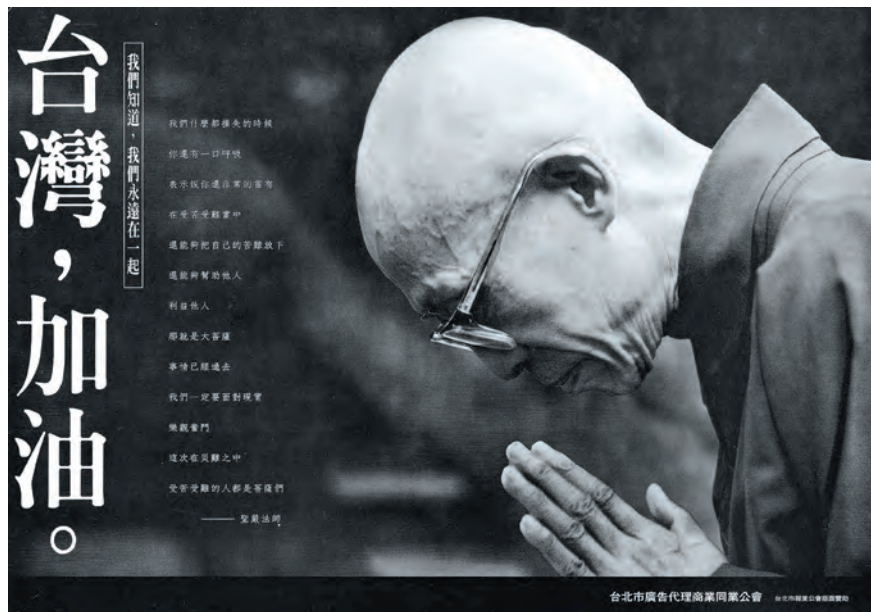
A view of Dharma Drum Retreat Center



Selected by Common Wealth Magazine as an influential figure

In 1998, *Common Wealth Magazine* for its 200th issue special edition selected Master Sheng Yen as one of the 200 most influential figures in Taiwan society in the past 400 years, among other prominent figures including Chiang Ching-kuo, Dr. Sun Yat-sen, Sun Yun-suan, Yuan-Tseh Lee, Wang Yung-ching, and Stan

The Master in the public service ad "Take Heart, Taiwan!" to bring calm to society following the 921 Earthquake in 1999



Shih, as well as Venerables Yin Shun and Cheng Yen.

Afterwards, the Magazine invited its readers to vote for the first 50 most influential figures, and the Master was once again selected. As he

once pointed out: "This is because our Dharma Drum Mountain always organize activities and events for the purpose of uplifting people's spirit, improving social customs, and influencing social atmosphere for the better. And for more than a decade these movements have done echo in society."



From 1994, DDM started organizing Buddhist-style joint weddings, an effort to change people's attitudes towards wedding customs



Master Sheng Yen attended a seminar organized by Common Wealth Magazine, which chose him as one of the most influential figures in Taiwan in 400 years

Inauguration in the spirit of rising great compassion

DDM inauguration ceremony on Oct. 21, 2005, with distinguished guests and devotee representatives jointly unveiling Buddha statues

On October 21, 2005 DDM World Center for Buddhist Education was inaugurated, 16 years after its founding. As the Master pointed out in his opening remark, “I recall 16 years ago Dharma Drum Mountain was not even here. But now many buildings have emerged. Buildings should have their meaning and purpose,



with which we are supposed to do things for the benefit of society and the world. For necessary things people haven't thought of we should

strive to do them. This is the initial conviction of Dharma Drum Mountain.”

With “The Rising Great Compassion” as the theme, the inauguration ceremony expected every individual to generate the great compassionate mind from within, and treat, love, and care for their families, friends, and all ethnic groups with equality. It was also prayed that all humanity can generate great compassionate mind, thereby bringing permanent peace to the world.



Foundation laying ceremony at DDM, with prominent monks escorting iconic Buddhist artifacts and items to be placed in the underground palace, Oct. 6, 1996



Contemporary quarters (now the Lotus Academy), the main venue for events before DDM's construction was completed

Global propagation of the Dharma

1989 –

Dedicated to promoting Chan practice and religious exchanges, especially at Millennium World Peace Summit of Religious and Spiritual Leaders, where the Master advocated Protecting the Spiritual Environment, displaying an insight and image widely recognized across religious boundaries. Afterwards, frequently participating in global conferences, he pinpointed the source of international disharmonies lying in mutual discrimination and rejection, and expected reciprocal respect and support among religions, to jointly push forward world peace.



Master Sheng Yen visiting Temple of Hercules in Jordan on Aug. 10, 2004, when attending World Council for Religious Leaders

Traveling globally to guide Chan practice

In 1989, at invitation of disciple Dr. John H. Crook, the Master travelled to Wales to lead a seven-day Chan retreat. As the first Chinese Chan teacher to guide Chan practice in the UK, he profoundly inspired and moved many local practitioners.

The Master with local practitioners after concluding a retreat organized by John Crook, April 1992

Afterwards, his footsteps also reached the Czech Republic, Poland, Croatia, Russia, Ger-



The Master leading a Chan retreat in Russia for the first time, 1998

many, and Mexico. With invitations from practitioners, the Master wouldn't mind travelling far to sow the seeds of Chan practice, introducing Buddhist wisdom and compassion worldwide.

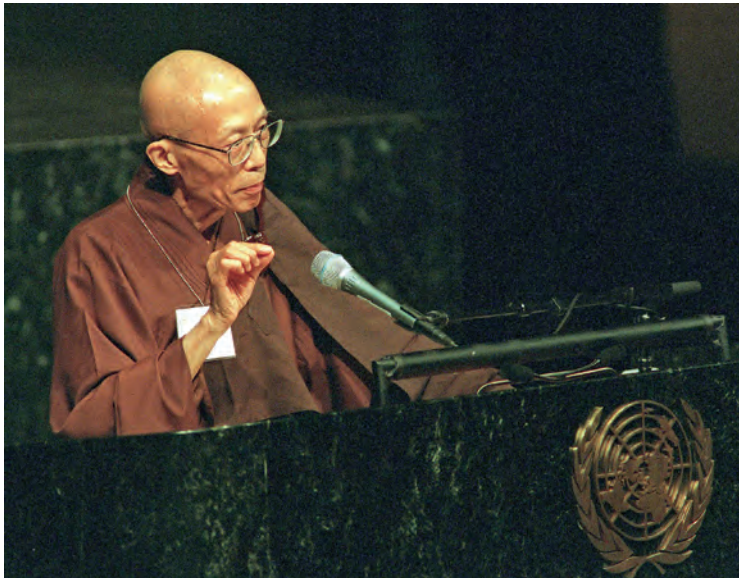
The Master leading practitioners to walk in meditation during a retreat in Wales, 1992



A speech at the UN to promote world peace

The Master giving a speech at Millennium World Peace Summit of Religious and Spiritual Leaders on Aug. 29, 2000

At the Millennium World Peace Summit of Religious and Spiritual Leaders, held in August 2000 at the UN, Master Sheng Yen delivered a speech urging compassion and care among ethnic groups, as well as wisdom to solve religious conflicts and racial discrimination. He showed



an insight and image that was widely recognized.

In the speech he also stressed the importance of protecting the spiritual environment, by pinpointing that the root of international disharmony lies in religious issues. Therefore, he started to engage in movements for world peace, expecting various religions to exert their functions properly to help bring about world peace.

The Master giving a speech at UN Headquarters on May 21, 2003, at the invitation of UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan



Sharing the idea of protecting the spiritual environment internationally

Since 2002, the Master had been invited to attend World Economic Forum Annual Meeting, World Council of Religious and Spiritual Leaders, and Conference of the Global Peace Initiative of Women Religious and Spiritual Leader, in which he delivered speeches on the importance of protecting the spiritual environment.

The Master attending the Leader's Meeting on Faith and Development in Dublin, on Jan. 31 and Feb. 1, 2005



In 2003, he traveled to Moscow to meet with religious leaders of Eastern Orthodox Church, Islam, and Buddhism on behalf of World Council of Religious Leaders. He was also on a



trip to Israel and Palestine to promote peace, at the invitation of Israeli and Palestinian governments, as member of the World Council of Religious Leaders.

The Master on an official visit to Israel and Palestine in December, 2003



The Master walking on the Via Dolorosa in Jerusalem while on a visit to Israel in December 2003



Passing on the lineage before passing away

2006 – 2009

By giving the whole of his life, the Master still strived to write calligraphy even with sickness since 2005, all for building a university with the Protecting the Spiritual Environment philosophy.

His final words read: Busy with nothing, growing old. Within emptiness, weeping and laughing.

Intrinsically, there is no "I." Life and death, thus cast aside.

This shows he faced life and death with ease, a final teaching by example.

Passing Dharma to next generation, passing abbot presidency

To permanently continue the Dharma Drum lineage, in an effort to help Buddhist light keep on shining, the Master handed the DDM abbot presidency over to Ven. Guo Dong on September 2, 2006, after transmitting the lineage to his 12 Dharma heirs at Nung Chan Monastery on September 2, 2005. The new abbot president was appointed according to the Abbot President Appointment Procedure approved by DDM

Master Sheng Yen's 12 Dharma heirs to inherit the Dharma Drum Lineage of Chan Buddhism



Sangha Assembly. The Master considered this to be the only way to ensure the continual inheritance of Chinese Buddhism, to inspire future generations in the Dharma.

This decision signified the second generation of DDM Sangha officially taking up the Buddhist undertaking, and showed the Master's selflessness while keeping in mind how to help the Three Jewels permanently remain for the benefit of the world.



The Master holding the Dharma Drum Lineage of Chan Buddhism transmission certificate to be given to his 12 Dharma heirs during the Dharma transmission ceremony at Nung Chan Monastery, Sept. 2, 2005



The succession ceremony at the Buddha Hall on Dharma Drum Mountain on Sept. 2, 2006, with Ven. Guo Dong appointed as 2nd abbot president of DDM

Dharma assembly as group practice, demonstrating compassion

In 2007, DDM held the first Water and Land Dharma Service, and chose “The Great Compassion” as its permanent theme.

Having performed frequent funeral services in his teenage monastic life, the Master had long thought of improving the content of Dharma services. In 1997, Nung Chan Monastery organized a Liang Emperor’s Repentance Ritual to

The Yogacara Offering ritual of Water and Land Dharma Service, 2013



commemorate Ven. Dong Chu. Different from conventional practices of erecting physical spiritual tablets and burning ghost paper, it instead introduced the con-

cepts and methods of Chan practice by creating an atmosphere of group practice that resembles the abode of pure land, marking a major step in improving the Dharma assembly.

The Water and Land Dharma Service organized under the Master’s guidance combined humanistic vales, environmentalism, technology and arts. It sought to reflect the spirit showed in Buddhist scriptures and the Chan Buddhist idea of “original face.” It also promoted on-line group practice, participants’ preparation work, and innovations for environmental purposes.



The Master showing care towards participants of Water and Land Dharma Service, 2008

The Master explaining the meaning of Dharma assemblies as a way of practice during the Sending Off the Sages ritual of DDM’s first Water and Land Dharma Service, Dec. 15, 2007



Letting go of life at ease, leaving behind compassionate aspiration

The Master died on February 3, 2009. His ashes were buried in the Jinshan Eco-friendly Memorial Garden, a place to realize his advocacy for natural burial to change people's mind-sets towards conventional burial practices.

In 2004, he had already written his will, in which he said, "After I pass away, do not issue an obituary, make meal offerings, dig a grave, build a stupa, construct a monument, erect a

Master Sheng Yen
at Dharma Drum
Retreat Center,
2004



statue of me, or collect my relics, if any." About his funeral, he wrote: "Please perform the ceremony for my death not as a funeral, but as a solemn Buddhist ritual." Since 2005 when he became ill, the Master had all the more embraced the attitude of contributing himself until the very end of his life. As a conclusion



he composed the following verse: "Busy with nothing, growing old. Within emptiness, weeping and laughing. Intrinsically, there is no 'I'. Life and death, thus cast aside." This serves as his final teaching by example, on how to face life and death.

The Master's ashes
being buried in Jin-
shan Eco-friendly
Memorial Garden
on Feb. 3, 2009



The Master writing
calligraphy of Dhar-
ma phrases at
Dharma Drum Re-
treat Center in
2006, when he was
still ill

Continuing the vows

*Since Master Sheng Yen passed away in 2009,
DDM's monastic and lay practitioners
have always remembered his will,
and urged each other to universally
share Chinese Buddhism, at home and abroad,
by striving to realize DDM's ideals,
building a pure land on earth.*



An overall view of the Dharma Drum Mountain complex

Inheriting the past, continuing the vows

Let us jointly realize Master Sheng Yen's wishes

Buddhist education

Master Sheng Yen expected DDM, upon its establishment, to be a place for public education. Sheng Yen Academy's Buddhist Teachings Program, Chan Studies Program, Evergreen Class, and the "Be A Happy Buddhist" class, organized by DDM Public Buddhist Education Center, represent a milestone of DDM in realizing its effort in holistic Buddhist education.

Sheng Yen Academy introduces DDM's ideals to members, helping them build a solid foundation of Buddhist knowledge and thereby become practitioners of Bodhisattva path



Developing Dharma centers

In 2010, DDM's Tiannan Monastery and Yunji Monastery were inaugurated. In 2012 Nung Chan Monastery completed its renovation, as a "Water-Moon Dharma Center." Baoyun Monastery and DDM Lanyang Branch Monastery were inaugurated respectively in 2015 and 2016. The completion of these Dharma centers helps DDM further promote its ideals more widely in Taiwan.



Baoyun Monastery

Nung Chan Monastery



On-line and digital Dharma propagation

The launch of the Master Sheng Yen Website and the Dharma Drum Mountain Web TV reflects the trend to bring modern web technology into the media. Through Dharma Drum Lectures and online digital learning courses, it is hoped to transcend the limitation of time and space, facilitating the public to approach Buddhism.

The digital archive website dedicated to Master Sheng Yen



Dharma Drum Mountain Web TV



Publishing

After more than a decade of editing and compilation, *Chronicles of Master Sheng Yen* was finally published. The book gives readers an overall picture of the Master's actions and deeds. *Humanity Magazine*, to celebrate its 70th anniversary, organized the Global Buddhist Village Symposium, where monastic representatives, as well as Buddhist scholars and publishers were invited to share their experience, to seek a global blueprint for the future development of Buddhism. In an effort to continue the Master's vow to build a pure land on earth, DDM's publications will also become more diversified, to enable more people to know and learn about Buddhism.



Chronicles of Master Sheng Yen

Dharma Drum Corporation, Public Buddhist Education Center, and Sheng Yen Education Foundation co-organized the Global Buddhist Village Symposium at GIS NTU Convention Center on June 27, 2018, to mark the 70th anniversary of *Humanity Magazine*



The Peace of Mind Project



Former abbot president Ven. Guo Dong presiding over the Prayer Dharma Assembly at a Peace of Mind Station on Yongda Rd., Feb. 6, 2016, following a devastating earthquake in southern Taiwan

To reflect the Master's wish for people-seek peace of mind within yourself, and you will have a peaceful life-DDM continues its post-disaster reconstruction efforts, such

as helping with reconstruction works in Sichuan following the earthquake and in Taiwan following Typhoon Morakot. Following natural disasters, DDM's volunteer workers can be seen helping people clean up their homes or conducting visits. Whether at home or abroad, as long as people have the needs DDM will reach out and bring peace of mind to people in society.

Minxing High School's Library, part of the reconstruction project following the Wenchuan earthquake in 2008, was opened for use on Jan. 22, 2016



The 5475 Fundraising Project—a great vow to establish the University

To raise the fund to build Dharma Drum University, DDM launched the Project in 2007. In 2014, after being approved by Taiwan's Ministry of Education, the Dharma Drum Institute of Liberal

Arts was established, as a comprehensive educational environment for both Buddhist studies and worldly leanings.



The Master required DDM's construction and architecture to fit in with the surrounding environment



Dharma Drum Institute of Liberal Arts' Great Vow Bridge and Institute History Hall were inaugurated on April 8, 2017



The overview of Dharma Drum Institute of Liberal Arts

Global promotion of Chan Buddhism



Ven. Guo Hui giving an opening remark on United Nations Day of Vesak on behalf of DDM, 2009

Ven. Guo Yuan and practitioners at Mar de Jade after the conclusion of a Chan retreat, 2016



It was Master Sheng Yen's lifelong aspiration to promote Chan Buddhism worldwide. After his death, the DDM Sangha nevertheless continue to engage in Dharma activi-

ties and international exchanges, at home and overseas. In recent years, DDM's monastics have also participated in global conferences and events even more frequently, to universally introduce Chinese Buddhist insights and the idea of protecting the spiritual environment by reaching out in a diverse way.

Biographies of Master Sheng Yen

Autobiographies of Master Sheng Yen, either authored or dictated by himself, include *The Return, A Journey of Learning and Insight: An Autobiography of Chan Master Sheng Yen*, *Footprints in the Snow: The Autobiography of a Chinese Buddhist Monk*, and *Master Sheng Yen in His Late Years*. Besides, *Flowers Blossom on a Withered Tree*, a biography of the Master by Shi Shuqing, explores his compassionate mind and spiritual capacity from various settings and perspectives, as well as how he developed his thoughts and characters of aspiring to help and transform others. Through these books, one can have a glimpse of the Master's deeds, and relate to what he said, "My life is one of practicing and realizing the Buddha's teachings."



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