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Hoofprint of the Ox: Principles of the Chan Buddhist Path as Taught by a Modern Chinese Master

By Master Sheng-yen



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Revered by Buddhists in the United States and China, contemporary Master Sheng-yen shares his wisdom and teachings in this first comprehensive English primer of Chan, the Chinese tradition of Buddhism that inspired Japanese Zen. Often misunderstood as a system of mind games, the Chan path involves a process of self-transformation grounded in carefully hewn spiritual disciplines and premises.

Master Sheng-yen provides an unprecedented understanding of Chan, its precepts, and its practice. Beginning with a basic overview of Buddhism and meditation, the book then details the progressive mental exercises traditionally followed by all Buddhists. Known as the Three Disciplines, these procedures develop moral purity, meditative concentration, and enlightening insight through the "stilling" of the mind. Master Sheng-yen then expounds Chan Buddhism, recounting its centuries-old history in China and illuminating its fundamental tenets. He contemplates the nature of Buddhahood, specifies the physical and mental prerequisites for beginning Chan practice, and humbly considers what it means to be an enlightened Chan master.



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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Master Sheng-yen, author of *Subtle Wisdom* and the head of monasteries in both Taiwan and the United States, has written another inspiring introduction to the Chan Buddhist tradition of China, more familiar to Americans as Zen, its incarnation in Japan. Eastern religion bookshelves these days are crowded with Zen primers and collections of sermons by eminent monks or nuns, but Sheng-yen's work stands out, bridging the two genres in a way that has been much needed. Buddhist sermons by Asian masters, when transplanted to American soil, can be misinterpreted by an audience lacking the cultural context for deeper understanding, leading to disillusionment with the institutional practice of Chan/Zen Buddhism. Sheng-yen, having taught in America for many years, is well aware of this and places Chan meditation in the larger Buddhist picture, showing its basis in history and morality. He explains the relationship between actual practice and the ideals expressed in sermons and in the paradoxical stories of early masters in such a way that a beginning student of Chan/Zen can then read the sermons with a deeper understanding of their relevance to his or her life. Aided by a masterful introduction by well-known scholar Dan Stevenson, this work brings introductory books on Chan/Zen to a new level of sophistication, accuracy and relevance to both the more advanced and the novice American practitioner. (Nov.)

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Review

"In this illuminating treatise readers will discover a Chan practice that is marvelously alive.... A very special book; highly recommended."--Library Journal

"Master Sheng-Yen has written another inspiring introduction to the Chan buddhist tradition in China, more familiar to Americans as Zen, its incarnation in Japan.... Aided by a masterful introduction by well-known scholar Dan Stevenson, this book brings introductory books on Chan/Zen to a new level of sophistication, accuracy and relevance to both the more advanced and the novice American practitioner."--Publishers Weekly

"In the last few decades the EV has, as it were, made noises off stage and been glimpsed occasionally peeking round the curtain as if assessing the audience. Chan and Chau are unabashed enthusiasts for the EV. Their backstage work has been assiduous and careful over the last 20 years. They are part of a relatively small but growing corps of automotive engineers sensing that the audience may be ready."--Power Engineering Journal

About the Author

Master Sheng-yen is an expatriate monk from mainland China who has been teaching in Taiwan and the United States for over two decades. He is the author of numerous popular and academic works, including *Subtle Wisdom: Understanding Suffering, Cultivating Compassion through Ch'an Buddhism* (1999) and *Complete Enlightenment: Translation and Commentary on the Sutra of Complete Enlightenment* (1997). He leads Dharma Drum Mountain, one of the three largest Buddhist organizations in Taiwan.

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