



The First Retreat at the New Sudhana Center – Sudhana’s Journey

善財參學中心的首次禪七 – 善財童子的旅程

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In 2015, DRBA purchased a seven-building, five-acre property in the center of Ukiah, just a short distance from the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas. Originally constructed as a convent for Dominican nuns, the property later became known locally as the Trinity School, a boarding school for troubled youth. The school closed in 2009, but now seven years later, in the summer of 2016, the center under its new name “Sudhana Center” hosted its first meditation retreat with a fitting theme: “Sudhana’s Journey,” an opportunity to follow the journey of youth Sudhana on his spiritual quest for awakening as narrated in the *Avatamsaka Sutra*.

The forty retreat participants came with a pioneering spirit of giving the newest Dharma center of DRBA a test run. Would the new Sudhana Center be an ideal place for creating a Dharma community in English? This weeklong retreat from May 28th to June 4th was a chance to find out. Everyone was encouraged to treat Sudhana Center like their home in terms of contributing to upkeeping the facilities. At the same time, participants maintained noble silence and refrained from digital devices while keeping a vigorous program that blended lectures, ceremonies, meditation, mantra practice, and service.

The lectures were led by Dharma Master Heng Chih and Doug Powers three times a day. These classes consisted of a close reading of several Sutras and Shastras that informed the daily practices. *The Six Dharma Gates to the Sublime* by Shramana Zhiyi provided a framework for meditation: from a starting practitioner to a sage realizing complete awakening. At the same time, it gave simple and practical insights into the mechanics of practice. Excerpts from *The Sutra of Underlying Meaning* and the *Awakening of Faith* investigated the depths of Buddhist psychology with a focus on the Bodhisattva’s practice of the six paramitas.

In the evenings, DM Heng Chih lectured on Sudhana’s journey from Chapter 39 of the *Avatamsaka Sutra*, *Entering the Dharma Realm*. She showed how each of Sudhana’s mentors embodied different

2015年，法界佛教總會購得座落於瑜伽市中心的新校區，包含七棟建築物，佔地五英畝，距離萬佛聖城很近。該校區原本是多美尼加修女修建的修道院，後來成了行為偏差少年的「三一」寄宿學校，該學校於2009年關閉。但七年之後，2016年的夏天，它有了一個新名字「善財參學中心」。如今，中心第一次舉辦禪七，名為「善財童子的旅程」，讓大家都來研讀《華嚴經》，跟隨善財童子踏上追尋真理的探索之旅。

帶著先鋒部隊的精神，四十名參與者來體驗和嘗試法總最新的禪修中心。這個新的善財參學中心會是創建以英語為主的修行團體的理想地方嗎？從5月28日至6月4日，大家有一週的時間回答這個問題。我們鼓勵大家像對待自己的家一樣對待這個學習中心，人人都來幫忙維護這裏的設施。同時，參加者都行止語並禁止使用電子設備。精進的日程結合了講法、佛教儀式、打坐、持咒和出坡。

每天安排的三次講法由恒持法師和鮑果勒居士主講。講法內容包括深入解讀和日常修行有關的幾部經論。智顓法師的六妙法門給禪修提供了一個體系從初學者到開大悟的聖人，同時也簡單實際的解釋了修行的原理。《解深密經》和《大乘起信論》的相關段落探討了佛教心理學的深刻義理，著重於菩薩對六波羅蜜的修行。

每天晚上由恒持法師講解《華嚴經》第三十九品〈入法界品〉。法師講解了善財童子的每一位老師是如何體現波羅蜜的不同方面。通過

aspects of the paramitas. These primary texts came to life from the stories and explanations of the teachers, insights on translation from experienced participants, and comments and questions from the larger group. For some, *The Six Dharma Gates to the Sublime* provided the missing link that brought together theory and practice. One participant reflected: “I’ve been on many meditation retreats in the past; this retreat gave me the big picture of my meditation practice.”

One of the main aims of the retreat was to create a program that allowed newcomers, especially English speakers, to learn the Dharma. All the ceremonies were conducted in English (except for the mantras, which were in “mantra-language”) and some combined Mahayana and Theravada chants: liturgy of the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas and the daily chants practiced at Abhayagiri Monastery. Participants reported that the Theravada chants provided a grounding in the fundamentals of Buddhist practice while the Mahayana recitations connected their hearts to the vows and spirit of the Bodhisattva. Five 45-minute meditation sessions complemented the daily ceremonies and lectures. Although challenging, beginning practitioners felt the schedule was doable while experienced practitioners had sufficient opportunities to deepen their practice.

The contemplative atmosphere of the retreat naturally supported participants in keeping noble silence and refraining from using digital devices. By removing the distractions of socializing, email, and social media, participants had the opportunity to develop inner stillness and reflect within. Some found that they were able to more easily attune to their natural rhythms as well as the community around them.

The food during the retreat was also healthy, light and nourishing. The CTTB organic farm provided some vegetables and herbs, while the rest was carefully picked to provide a balanced diet supportive of spiritual practice. Every lunch included a big green salad, which many participants greatly appreciated! Due to the summer heat, the kitchen team made their own Gatorade by mixing water with a bit of lemon, sugar, and salt. This allowed everyone to stay hydrated even in the hot afternoon weather.

Service provided an opportunity to practice giving, the first paramita. Everyone was given a simple work duty such as food preparation, cleaning or dishwashing—many hands make for light work. All the participants could engage fully in the retreat. Work, study, and practice were integrated into a holistic experience of living within a Dharma community.

The retreat was truly a community effort. The planning for the retreat began many months in advance by the DRBU Extension team consisting of Jin He Shi, Jin Chuan Shi, Kien Po, Jason Tseng, Meghan Sweet, and Flavia Lee-faust. Mrs. Cheng and Wayne Chen have been managing the facilities and made sure that the center was ready to host a retreat of this scale. A week leading up to the retreat, many DRBU students and retreat participants volunteered to help clean the facilities. And during the retreat, Flavia Lee-faust, Jackie Farley and Kenneth Cannata along with many of the participants prepared three vegetarian meals every day.

老師們的故事和講解，加上有經驗的學生們對翻譯的深刻見解，以及集體的評論和提問，經典變得生動而具體。有的學生感覺六妙法門把理論和實踐結合起來。有一位學生分享說：「過去我參加過很多禪七，這次禪七才給我指出禪修的全面架構。」

舉辦這次禪七的一個主要目的，是讓初學者，特別是西方人，來了解佛法。所有的儀式都是用英文進行（只有持咒是念誦咒語），有的儀式結合了北傳和南傳佛教的唱誦：萬佛聖城的儀式和無畏寺的日常唱誦。學生們反饋，南傳的唱誦提供了佛法修行的基礎元素，而北傳的唱誦讓我們與菩薩的大願和精神連接起來。每天有日常課誦、講法、以及五次各四十五分鐘的靜坐。雖然這日程並不容易，但初學者覺得可行，老參們也有很多機會增進修行。

整個禪七的沈靜、冥想的氛圍使參與者自然止語和不使用電子設備。去除了社交、電子郵件、社交媒體的干擾，學生們有機會開發內心的沈靜和反省。有人發現這樣更容易接通到自己自然的節奏和周圍的團體。

禪七期間的飲食健康、清淡、有營養。萬佛聖城的有機農場提供了一些蔬菜和香料，其它的食材也都為有助修行而精心挑選。每日的午餐都包括一大份綠色沙拉，很受歡迎。因為夏日炎炎，香積組用水、檸檬、糖和鹽，自製能量飲料，讓大家在炎熱的下午能補充足夠的水份。

出坡讓大家有機會行佈施第一波羅蜜。每個人都被分配一個簡單的職責，例如準備食物、清潔、洗碗——人多力量大。大家都能夠全心參加這個禪七。出坡、學習、修行有機地結合在一起，構成一次在修行團體中共住的完整體驗。

這次禪七是團體合作的結果。法大的特別課程團隊近合法師、近傳法師、傅顯儀、曾俊銘、梅根·施薇特和李德清，多月前就開始進行籌備工作。鄭居士和陳頌明一直在維護參學中心的設施，確保這樣一個規模的禪七可以順利舉辦。在禪七開



The final feedback from everyone was that the Sudhana Center was an ideal setting for a retreat. The former chapel, now transformed into a Buddha Hall, was an inspiring space for ceremonies, meditation and lectures. The elegant courtyard at the center of campus allowed participants to walk around mindfully while others sat on benches studying the Sutras and Shastras. The dorm rooms occupied by the participants were simple and practical with a wooden bed, desk, and drawer. The contained environment naturally allowed for noble silence and stillness.

There were requests for future retreats: programs introducing the basics of Buddhism, intensive retreats with more meditation, and even family retreats to help develop better relationships. People also suggested that the noble silence could have been implemented more consistently as some people ended up talking unnecessarily while working. Others hoped that there would be more outreach to people with no prior experience with DRBA. Nevertheless, as the first retreat at the new Sudhana Center came to a close, there was a sense that this was just the beginning of a long journey of bringing the Dharma to the West or simply the modern world. ❀

始前一週，很多法大的學生和禪七學員自願來幫忙打掃。禪七期間。李德清、潔吉·法蕾和肯尼斯·科納塔還有其它很多學員，都幫忙準備每日的三餐素食。

最後，很多參加者反映善財參學中心是一個非常理想的修學場所。原來的小教堂如今被改造成佛殿，很適合進行儀式、禪修和講座。校區中心的中庭十分雅緻，學生們可以散步，同時其他人可以在長凳上學習經論。宿舍的房間簡單實用：床、書桌、櫃子。簡樸幽靜的環境很好地支持了止語和寧靜的修行。

有人提議以後可以開辦不同主題的禪七，例如佛教入門、精進禪七、甚至家庭禪修班來幫助改善家庭關係；有人建議止靜能更徹底一些，因為在出坡時有人講閒話；還有人提出需要更多地去接引不了解法界佛教總會的新人。儘管善財參學中心的第一次禪七結束了，但這其實是把佛法傳到西方、乃至現代社會漫長旅程中的一個開始。 ❀

