



The Great Assembly winds down Virtue Way to pay homage and welcome the large white jadestone Buddha invited to the City from Singapore. The procession of disciples and friends of the Buddha, six hundred strong, goes beyond the confines of the photo.

Three Steps One Bow

Daily Records by Bhikshus Heng Sure & Heng Ch'au

HENG CH'AU: November 26, 1977:

He Manifests Within the World

Had tooth pulled in Santa Maria. I felt the Master's presence throughout the entire ordeal, guiding and protecting.

We went back out to an abandoned field out of view of the highway. Heng-sure, bowed in place, while I recovered in the back of the car.

A kindly old man, in a beat-up camper pulls up and peeks in the door, "Oh, you're okay, huh? Just checking to see if anyone was sick, but you look fine to me," he said cheerfully, and in a way very familiar to me. I didn't know what to say, or do. He completely surprised me. I was still half doped-up, from the anesthetic.

"You're the praying monks, right? Well, just you keep on praying and try your best." and he tipped his hat and left.

I felt better immediately and sat up straight to meditate. Then I thought, "Hey, who was he? How did he find us here? We're completely hidden in this thicket. 'Try your best?'" Those are the Master's own words. I turned to see if I could find him, but he was gone. Heng-sure, made a poultice of comfrey and golden seal. I stuffed it into the cavity, and recited the Great Compassion Mantra; I sat in Ch'an, waiting for my bowing legs to return. Heng-sure, translated this passage from the *AVATAMSAKA SUTRA*, to give me some Dharma Medicine:

"...Realize the self does not exist. This body is falsely set up. Its dwelling place has no fixed position. When one truly understands this body, then with it there is nothing at all to attach to."

AVATAMSAKA SUTRA
Bodhisattva Enquiries
Chapter 10

How much the less attach to a tooth! Good medicine, the Buddhadharma.

Break Through

I have very little patience. In cultivation, there's a tendency to want to smash, break through all obstacles and cut off, and put down all attachments in a single swoop. Slash; slam; bang! Enlightenment. It doesn't work that way, and can often turn into a demon state. "I've put down food; I've put down sex; I've this and I've that..." Suddenly the ego is in charge and one is attached to putting it down. "I'm bored. I need something to put down," follows.

Sound cultivation is a question of habits--attrition, not revolution. Steady, gradual change and maintaining solid daily practice breaks the coverings. Instant attainment is just another kind of attachment. Underneath it is just laziness. Who wants to work hard!!

False thoughts and attachments accumulate to the size of a mountain, slowly, over a long period of time. Suddenly recognizing these as false and bringing forth the mind for Bodhi, can be sudden--a break-through. But, actually changing faults, and ignorance into, virtue and wisdom, takes time, hard work, and patience. Returning to the self-nature takes minute-to-minute, thought-to-thought vigor and effort. Break-throughs and sudden awakenings are tools to increase faith and resolve. They are sudden or gradual only in contrast to how confused we were. If, you think you've made it, you're ripe for a fall and a setback.

Not force, not laziness, not winning, not losing; just "try your best," and get a little better every day. Attaching to anything, is false. When there is no, "it," sought or attained, then

there is real effort and real results. You are your own "good knowing advisor," but it takes a little skill to learn how to teach yourself.

HENG CH'AU: November 27, 1977:

Open to Reveal

Dream:

Shih fu, shows me all the different methods, (dharma) and "tricks" used to try to "cross over" living beings. He then sends me to a burning house. It's my house! Inside are all the people I know waiting for firemen to rescue them. I go to the back porch, and climb up and start helping them down to safety.

When I return the Master is waiting in a large hall alone. He asks, "Do you understand now?"

"A little, Shih fu?" I answer.

The Master is warm and personal. "Do you understand how people's Dharma names are chosen, what they mean?"

"Not completely."

Shih fu, answers, "It's to wake them up. The name points to the quality, or obstacle that stands between them, and crossing over."

"You mean kind of like the last little bit of glue or falseness?" I ask.

"Yes." says the Master, smiling. "Then they all go out and find more to 'trick' into leaving the suffering and burning house."

Right then, the door of the hall opens and scores of new disciples stream in--wary, uptight, but looking. Shih fu becomes quiet and grave. I feel, "Wow! What a burden to keep taking on new disciples! What a sacrifice!" But, there is something quiet and peaceful about the Master's role--like it never began and never would end. Shih fu was a person without a self. He was an infinite source of compassion and light crossing over living beings without a thought, without limit. It made my little hang-ups and thoughts, and troubles, seem really small.

Some lay people drive out and offer food, water and supplies, and join in bowing every three steps for an hour or so.

Windy, and wide open spaces inside and out.

HENG SURE: November, 1977:

The Response Body

The Abbot, is soft outside, and totally in control inside. His will and inner strength, surpass understanding, while his nearly-seven-decades--old body, remains as supple and as vigorous as a young boy's.

Few people have occasion to touch him. Riding in a car on the freeway once, I was sitting next to the Master. We made a sudden stop. He was sitting in full lotus, and the momentum pitched him forward. Before he could strike the front seat, I did the natural thing and grabbed his shoulder and arm, and stopped his plunge. We continued on, and my hands carried a vivid sense impression of having touched a young baby--there was no tension at all in the Master's body--he was fully relaxed, even as his head sped towards the hard seat back. Yet, in this soft shoulder and arm, there was a tangible electric vibrancy that made my hands tingle for minutes afterwards. What a wonderful state it must be, the purity and calm response of one who has, "returned to the root and gone back to the source!"

HENG CH'AU: November 28, 1977:

Making One's Heart as Calm as the Sea

We should connect with Highway One again in a day or two, past the next valley. We are coming out of a high hilly plateau into a dusty dry flat valley. We can see the lights of Santa Maria, at night from where we camp.

Motorcyclist, "I feel a lot better driving this road everyday, now."

"Oh?"

"Yes, you're blessing this highway, aren't you?"

"LOOK WHAT'S UP IN THE SKY!" Watch for this feature article next month--an account of the events heralding the arrival of the white jadestone Buddha invited from the City of 10,000 Buddhas to the new Gold Wheel Temple, 1728 West Sixth Street, Los Angeles, Ca. 90017.