

# Three Steps One Bow

## DAILY RECORDS OF BHIKSHUS HENG SURE AND HENG CH'AU

HENG SURE: December, 1977. I am no longer able to pin my problems on external dharmas. I now can only face my mind's projections and own the thoughts that chase out of my inner gates.

Whenever cultivation is stepped up, the mental noise increases and concentration melts away. It comes down to fear--of death. The teachings are full of principles to cope with this fear, but what I am experiencing is not a head trip. Somewhere inside, the Ego is really scared and fighting back hard to keep me from going the direction I'm going. This requires relaxation, patience, sincerity, solidity, and constancy.

The other voice, the true cultivator, is impatient with the long hours of unclear head-work. He wants a still mind and right now. He wants the system to obey and he will take no nonsense. As he gets stronger, so does the resistance. Faith in the Middle Way helps the situation. Light eating really helps douse the fire, and reviewing basic instructions helps. What remains is the work of constant mindful maintenance and working out solutions with the Ego as I bow. Gradually it is subsiding. Conscious relaxation of the body helps too. Using the Great Compassion Mantra as an inner exercise and tai chi basic movements release the tension of the work. The tension shows up in tight muscles, shallow breathing, uncertain steps, and stooped posture.

Tell myself: Death is just change. It's the end of a round. It's false and there is nothing to fear. What do you hold onto and who holds on? All dharmas are alike and they have one flavor: bitter. Give them up and go home. What is there to hang onto? All feelings that come in through your senses are suffering. Give them up.

HENG CH'AU: December 5, 1977. The City of 10,000 Buddhas is our own original face and pure nature. It is the face of the Master, the pulse of the Patriarchs and Sages, and the thread of light we follow inside each of us. The City is a tool for Buddhahood. Ultimately it's all within your own mind.

*If one wants to understand and know  
All Buddhas of the past, present, and future,  
One should contemplate the nature of the Dharma Realm:  
It's all made from the mind alone.  
-Avatamsaka Sutra  
Chapter 20*

HENG SURE: Dec. 77. Common people seek to return to ignorance through the Five Desires. They seek a place of total security, all needs filled. They seek the foetal position, all curled up and dark.

Cultivators of the Way are the opposite. They seek to return to their original source before birth and death. There is nothing to cling to, nothing to get that gives security. They seek the lotus posture, all straightened out and full of light, like the Buddhas.

"Returning the light" is an inner practice. You pull back the energy that leaves you through the gates of the sense organs. Thoughts in the mind are a major energy leak. Cultivation is a process of pulling the energy in thoughts back to the energy center in the middle of the body.

When you use the wisdom sword or a *hua t'ou* (meditation topic) to cut off thoughts as they arise to consciousness, it is most effective if you first pull from the energy center, then cut off any thoughts that remain above. By analogy, it's like trying to block off the light from a lamp by using your hands and a piece of cardboard. How much better to simply turn off the lamp at the source, than to scramble to catch all the light/thoughts that leave out the top.

I am not bowing for food!  
I am not bowing for pleasure!  
I am not bowing to survive!

Whatever hard or fearful or unpleasant states arise, you should recognize them as an aid to your practice of patience and equality of all dharmas. Respect all states as equally illusory and don't move. Say thank you with your true heart. They put you on your center.

Say: neither grasp nor reject. Unpleasant states I do not avoid. Pleasant states I do not welcome. I am leaving this triple world through my Buddha port-hole. I will be happy on my way out.

We ignore states and comparisons are false, but anyway I noticed that I have already surpassed the very "finest" experiences I ever had on chemical or dope highs. In the bowing and the sitting there is peace and stillness.

You never do understand the Way in a dry intellectual way. Only through hard patient practice of a Dharma door, through physical work and mental concentration, do you change enough in your electrical and chemical systems in your cells to allow the understanding to come forth in the body/mind/heart. You have to want it enough to follow instructions perfectly. Just go out and work. Try your best to keep all emotion out of your method, keep on purifying the mind without cease. Let the changes happen without choosing or rejecting. Maintain good cheer and good faith as you walk the Sagely Way.



Bhikshu Heng Ch'au bowing at the City of 10,000 Buddhas, 1982