

Three Steps One Bow

DAILY RECORDS OF BHIKSHUS HENG SURE AND HENG CH'AU

HENG CH'AU: December 6 & 7, 1977: Riding back to the bowing site in an overpacked, top-heavy old VW bus stuffed full of offerings for the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas, Heng Shun was wedged between two boxes in the back translating Sutras. Heng Sure and another Bhikshu and I were sitting quietly in front looking out at the rolling hills and long valleys. Each of us bowing inside and remembering the wordless, silent bowing state. Sharing without talking, bowing without moving.

Thinking less, being more
Talking less, giving more
Eating less, bowing more
With one heart, bowing more and more
To the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas.



HENG SURE: December, 1977: There is not a single dharma in the world that carries the label "good for Kuo Chen" or "bad for Heng Sure." All dharmas have one bittersweet flavor. By hard work for a long time you slowly change among them. Even though you grew from the mud, with practice, you leave the mud behind.

If you notice a state and then suddenly there exists a noticer and something to notice, both are not true. In order to notice you have to stop the work which produced the state. States are small. They are tests of your resolve to cut through self and dharmas. On the other side of states is the realization of the all-inclusive Mahayana.

Working hard is true. Be without fear or joy and don't attach to anything.
Then you can reach a state of real accomplishment.
-Master Hua Ch'an Talks.

Sitting in meditation today below Titan Gate at Vandenberg AFB felt better than eating lunch despite the aches and pressures on knees, back, and mind. If you sit more, you see more. If you eat more, your vision dims.

HENG CH'AU: December 8, 1977: Strong winds and cold fog hamper bowing. We had to bow in a low ditch as the force of the wind kept ripping our sashes off. We camped in a make-shift dump full of old mattresses and wine bottles next to the train tracks south of Gaudalupe.

Small discovery: When a false thought arises it can be caught, arrested on the spot, and put to rest. If I just watch my own body, mouth, and mind, I can nab the false before it shoots out and drags me through the dust.

It's like a game. False thoughts sooner or later run out the eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and mind (six gates). Using energy to "return the light" and watch the gates, you can turn back the flow. What a fine difference this makes! I no longer feel like what happens to me is out of my control--fated or luck. I never knew how or where to look before. Funny the "secret" was right under my nose all the time.

HENG SURE: December, 1977: As a child I spent at least two hours a day and often up to five staring at the television screen. Where did I learn my social values? From my daily lessons in situation-comedy family behavior. Here's a partial list: My Three Sons, Leave It To Beaver, Father Knows Best, Ozzie and Harriet, Dick Van Dyke, Donna Reed, Gale Storm, Andy Griffith, Patty Duke, Lassie, I Love Lucy, Dobie Gillis, The Honeymooners. Add to this countless hours of westerns, crime shows, sports events, cartoons, mysteries, variety shows, Ed Sullivan, Walt Disney, the 20th Century, Camera Three, specials, news, Star Trek, adventure series, military serials, comedy hours, movies by the hundreds, and all those commercials and you have a child whose mind was larded with deviant knowledge and deviant views. Perhaps five percent of what I saw was beneficial to me in any way. I retain none of it now save a score of commercial jingles and theme songs. Mine is the first generation in history to be mesmerized by a flickering beam of light in the name of entertainment. All those thousands of hours I could have been moving my body, playing, learning, working, exploring, relating to people, reading good books. Instead I sat, crouched or slumped on the living room floor and stared and absorbed false thoughts and poisons.

HENG CH'AU: December 9, 1977: Where is Heng Sure? Heng Sure is basically skinny. When the sun came out and warmed the air he started to peel off his warm clothes. Before my eyes he grew smaller and smaller with each discarded piece of clothing. In a very short time impermanence will take his eyes, ears, hair, and healthy body and then where will Heng Sure be? We are all wearing borrowed elements and living on borrowed time. Hurry up and cultivate! Where is Heng Sure?

HENG SURE: December, 1977: Resolve is "bringing forth the heart," literally. You must want to cultivate to enlightenment for the sake of all living beings before the Bodhisattva path responds. Resolve is knowing/feeling in your head/heart what you want and then doing what is necessary to achieve it. If you do not bring forth a true sincere heart and get behind it, then every move will be a false one and you will go sideways.

What is the expression of the resolve? Vows and practice based on faith. Cultivation is saying no to yourself and yes to others. With each no in the mind, the self dies a little bit more. At a certain point you can see through it to its empty nature.



HENG CH'AU: December 10, 1977: Bow through small town of Guadalupe. Inside there is an energy building with no immediate place to go. It builds and throbs, creating hot and cold flashes. Feeling a lot of impatience-- like ocean tides swelling inside or like being cramped in a stuffy box.

HENG SURE: December, 1977:

"The Buddha is the only being on the planet to appear in inedible form."

-Poet Gary Snider

At heart, who isn't afraid of being eaten? Even if in your entire lifetime you never bump into a hungry animal or bird big enough to devour you, in the end, you are eaten by the earth. Who isn't afraid of death? The Buddha isn't, all those who have cultivated to end birth and resolve death aren't either. Most people go about quelling this fear in the wrong way, however. They feel that death is inevitable so the best answer is to work one's way back to ignorance, back to a place where there is no pain or fear. Then when death comes, you've done all you could, you've grabbed all your senses and you can "rage against the dying of the light" all you please. On the way to death most of us grab at five desires hoping to forget more quickly our coming end. We feel that freedom, happiness, peace, and security can be clutched and grasped in wealth or sex or fame or food or sleep.

In fact the Buddha tells us that this is a trap--a one-way door to a maze--a no-exit labyrinth that will always bring you to a dead end.

With the Buddha's teachings in the world, however, there is a door out, an exit from the maze, a porthole into inedibility. Where is it? It's not outside of you and it can't be thought about, it can't be bought. But it can be cultivated and opened by anyone who studies the Buddhadharma contained in Buddhist Sutras, who draws near a wise advisor--one who has already resolved his own birth and death--and who makes offerings in faith to the Buddha through the "field of blessings" of the Sangha--Buddhist monks and nuns. This is the final and highest road to peace, freedom, happiness, and security, and it's right here among the "dog eat dog" world. Look for it with an open heart and you will surely find it.