



*Letters to the Venerable Master Hua from
Bhikshus Heng Sure and Heng Ch'au*

September 28, 1982
Gold Wheel Temple
Avatamsaka Dharma Assembly

Venerable Master,

During the bowing pilgrimage in 1978 and early 1979 I had some dreams. At the time they seemed too pessimistic, so we only mentioned one in a letter to the Abbot and pretty much forgot about them. However, the Dharma talks we heard this weekend from the Master and Sangha about the current state of the world (increasing and widespread disasters, calamities, proliferation of new destructive weapons like "death rays" and neutron bombs; the poisonous and demonic film now covering the planet, even on money, food, clothes, etc. the depravity of scientists and the rapid deterioration of kids that this demon energy is able to induce through drugs, music, movies and greed for power and fame)--all of this reminded us of these dreams. One could say they are only dreams, but dreams can so often come true and what is true often seems like a dream. Moreover, the Dharma we heard this weekend and our own experiences in L.A. confirm our deepest and worst fears for this world and all humankind. Nightmares of a few years ago now have become commonplace and in the future may well be old hat, if there is a future at all. The correspondence of the dreams to the descriptions of the current world conditions is uncanny and sad. We never thought to write before because we felt this kind of talk would be "too heavy." Yet the real horror and ominous "heavy" signs that no one can ignore daily outstrip even our worst dreams. Even so, the dreams also strengthened and deepened our Bodhi resolve and brought new vigor and courage to our daily practices and life as Buddhist disciples. They continue to be our silent battle cry and spur us on to forsaking ourselves for the sake of the Dharma and all living beings.

The first dream is as follows:

January 2, 1978
South of Half Moon Bay, Calif.

Dear Shih Fu,

I had a dream last month that really moved me to work harder:

Dream: It came silently gliding in from outer space, passing galaxies and covering incredible distances in seconds. It was huge, black and a totally evil thing. Attracted by a foul, amber smog, it was honing in on our galaxy. The smog was a color, a smell, a texture and vibes of a bad energy that permeated our whole universe. This "fly" was drawn to it like a bee to honey.

Everyone thinks the smog is beautiful -- like looking at a colorful sunset through layers of air pollution. No one notices the fly as it quietly zeroes in on our galaxy, then our solar system, and finally earth itself. The earth is center of the bad chi the fly is attracted to. The fly is diamond-hard concentrated evil and destruction. There is no goodness whatsoever to it.

It banked around the moon. You could see the footprints of the astronauts on its surface. The astronauts were jumping and playing around like kids digging in a sand-box. They never noticed the fly. It could change shape from the size of the Milky Way down to an atom particle faster than a thought.

At the top of a tiered flight of stairs, in an awesome idyllic place, lived an absent-minded professor type. I asked who he was, "Oh that's God." someone said. "God the Father." It blew my mind! "I'm going back to work!" I thought, "to fight the fly." The force of the fly was way beyond God's power of influence. He was having a party, and like the carefree child, waiting for the next surprise delight. He knew only bliss.

In a weird, yin mortuary-temple, devotees dressed in long white Greco-Roman robes were engaged in bizarre rites about death and the dead. It was like a deviant Forest Lawn. They were pouring oils and wines over a corpse, laughing and merrymaking. The fly was there, unemotional and very at home.

A radio station in a big city. It looks on the up and up out front, but inside it's a nerve center for the fly. It may have even beamed the fly in with its broadcasts.

An urbane, young, unmarried "people's politician" is at the radio station. It's his campaign headquarters. His aides excitedly tell him there's a major revolution going on in the High Schools and Junior Highs. The station is broadcasting the take-overs of the schools and fermenting the violence, "Orange Grove Jr. High has been occupied by... Glendale High School has been taken over by...The East wing of..." The politician is cool and calculating. He is going to ride the revolution to political power. There is a bloodbath, children are killing their parents and teachers.

People were in heavy trances, like under a spell. Their hearts and minds were numb and beyond the reach of reasoning or pity.

On an airport runway already to go like a 707 was a fighter jet plane with an ominous rocket/missile mounted on its nose. The rocket could not be stopped. It could penetrate anything and be shot anywhere. The missile was like a silver metal sliver and it could kill a single person by entering the eye, or wipe out an entire country. There were lots of them.

The Sangha was working day and night in groups and teams. They were not under the spell and could see the deviant energy of the fly in all its manifestations. We travelled everywhere fighting it and planting good seeds, neutralizing noxious vapors. Our weapon was the Great Compassion Mantra and other mantras. Wherever the Great Compassion Mantra was recited a circle of pure, bright light was produced. The light was sunny and correct like the colors on the coast after a rainstorm when the sun comes out. The color of the fly-smog was the dense, choking amber of an old photograph, a stuffy attic without windows.

"I should be a light for all living beings,
And cause them to attain the light of wisdom,
Which eradicates the gloom of stupidity.
I should be a torch for all living beings
Which breaks through the gloom of ignorance.
I should be a lamp for all living beings
And cause them to dwell in the place of ultimate purity."

-Avatamsaka

The Sangha was pure lights travelling to all places, afraid of nothing. We told people just to sincerely recite the mantra and "Light up their minds, see the nature." The mantra helped all invisibly. Lots of people had responses to the Da Bei Jo. "Lighting up your heart"-these words registered deep inside and cut through the smog. Wherever it was recited a clear and wholesome goodness broke through the gloom. All who saw it returned to the good.

We moved around on foot, on bikes and scooters, telling our friends and all with whom we had conditions and affinities. But the fly was huge and our efforts seemed like trying to stop a typhoon with an eye-lash. And yet the power of the mantra was indestructable and unsurpassed.

An electrician teamed-up with us and was able to cross some wires in a panel in the bowels of the radio station. The station looked like an ordinary public service company, but with the electrician's skill we were able to see that inside was the fly, the deviant death rites, the politician and a constant wave of broadcasted evil.

Everyone knew about the fly. But they saw it as auspicious. They were blind to its true nature because they were immersed in the smog. People said, "Oh groovy, far-out-just

like science fiction!" They were merging their minds with it like in the mortuary cult. Even though the fly was eating them up and sucking up their lives, they were in a trance and getting off on it. No one could tell right from wrong, true from deviant--they didn't have "true eyes" anymore. The collective blindness was chilling and horrible.

It was all tied together: the fly, the rocket-jet, the radio station, the revolution in the schools, the strange religions and the slick politician. The fly was going into underground missile silos to spawn its eggs. The radio station and mortuary were its nest. Much of what went on was behind the scene. It took the mysterious electrician to penetrate the radio station.

God was like the card-playing fire chief who doesn't notice he's about to be burned by a forest fire. Right below his happy heaven were all these destructive missiles in silos, ready to be shot off. The missile silos looked like organ pipes or art sculpture and no one could see the fly go in and lay its eggs.

The electrician let us listen to the radio announcer say in a polished, sonorous voice, "And remember friends...Kill, Kill.. ." Then there was a fade-in to a popular folk singer masking the evil message with a simple song, "This land is your land..." It made it palatable.

There were lots of people engaged in a colorful ceremony hanging themselves. It was a religious group. They were killing themselves in order to obtain some kind of spiritual state and salvation. Death and ignorance were feeding each other. They were in a trance too and had no light of wisdom.

When I awoke my resolve was deepened. Heavy demonic forces and darkness created from bad karma could only be stopped by cultivation. What really counts is the 42 Hands and Eyes, the Great Compassion Mantra and the Shurangama Mantra. And most of all, a pure heart-a vast, unselfish, kind, and pure heart. That's where the light was coming from in the dream, pure, peaceful, happy people reciting mantras and transferring the benefit to all living beings. The politician had color but not light. It was the color of good food and cosmetics, not the light of wisdom and compassion. The people of goodness in the dream were like little suns of kindness, compassion, joy and giving. Even though our efforts seemed small in the face of big darkness, they were pure and done with big hearts for everyone.

"I should be like the sun which shines universally on everything without seeking repayment for its kindness. No matter what kind of evil comes from living beings I can handle it. I would never give up my vows on account of it...

Rather I vigorously cultivate the transference of good roots to universally cause living beings to obtain peace and happiness.

Even though my good roots may be few, I gather in all living beings and, using a mind of great happiness, I transfer it on a vast scale.

If there were good roots and I did not desire to benefit living beings, this could not be called transference."

-*Avatamsaka*

Unselfishness and great compassion is where it's at. Peace in the Dharma,

Disciple Kuo Ting
(Heng Chau) .
bows in respect.

The second dream happened on December 28, 1978 near San Gregoria, California:

A large U.S. city, heavy with violence and chaos. Country in state of emergency, cities like a war-zone, only everyone was fighting everyone else. Small gangs of youths filled with hate and possessed by demons ran wild down torn-up streets, looting, destroying, and harming everyone and everything. Buildings were half-gutted by fires (arson) and past battles. People were launching rockets and missiles from their porches and apartment roofs into the main street and no one could stop them--no police or restraining power. The firemen were exhausted and sirens blared non-stop.

It was 'every man for himself,' or selfishness reigned supreme. People clung tightly to their possessions. No mutual helping, everything read 'private,' 'exclusive.' As soon as you parked your car it was set upon by street gangs, and everything was stolen. If you escaped with your life, you were lucky. A computer/ radio dispatch gave running reports on traveling conditions (like news and weather every half-hour) for the city sectors:

"...Sector B from 7th street to the East side is extremely critical and not safe to enter. Sector C from Ellison and downtown to the Heights is dangerous. Travellers are advised not to stop or slow down for any reason. Sector D continues to be mild and OK for daylight hours only. An outbreak of rioting and more murders is expected in Sector 12 from Michigan Ave. to..."

No one would help or even let you use a telephone to call for help. People ran to their cars, locked their doors and drove off, ignoring all cries for help. Our sensibilities and natural instincts were eroded to that of animals.

Football heroes were smoking dope in the locker rooms while the best and brightest people with good roots were living out misguided fantasies acquired from popular books on Utopias and revolution. The books were written by transformation demons--dull and musty, full of dead-end ideas and totally lacking any light. The heroes and heroines of the young people were flaky rebels, rock-and-roll stars, anti-heroes out for self-benefit, wearing strange clothes and manifesting shocking appearances.

They were putting down everything (especially parents and elders) and addicted to pleasure-seeking. They lived in luxury and dressed as gypsies and fairybook characters.

The Big Darkness was pressing in on all sides and growing. The heart of this cancer and disintegration was selfishness. Each day and every year people did less and less to benefit others, and thus goodness and giving were no longer believed in. Children in turn became what they beheld, and soon only knew greed, hatred, and self-benefit because they grew up never seeing kindness, compassion, joy, or giving.

Yet right in the midst of this darkness was a small, but extremely pure circle of golden light. The light emanated from the Venerable Master and the Sangha as they travelled about giving Dharma. At one place the host offered wine. The Master replied: "We don't want any wine to drink or meat to eat, and we don't 'lecture.' We all use our wisdom and look into things together, level and equal, mutually benefiting."

"But the Lamas like to drink wine and meat and lecture," protested the host.

"We're different," answered the Master. There was no time to rest. The Sanghans were as busy as a spiritual Red Cross team working night and day to provide relief and avert further suffering. Small in numbers, but great in courage and virtue-powers, as long as they continued their efforts at peace and liberating life, the demons could not triumph or bring about 'doomsday.'
(end of second dream.)

It's in the air, Shih-fu. The air is filled with violence and bad vapors pervade everywhere. We didn't sense it so much while we bowed in the purity and tranquility of the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas. But a few steps outside the front gate and the weight of Sumeru descends on one's heart and shoulders. Now in L.A. we hear sirens constantly from police cars, fire trucks and ambulances. The smell of fear, terror, and tension saturates, the sounds of suffering and fighting totally pervade. At night outside our window we hear gunshots, screams and the running feet of people crying for mercy from the attackers. "No, no, please, not me! Please!! What did I do, please..." Then temporary silence, followed by more sirens. Police helicopters circle night and day, shining high-powered search lights on the alleys, parking lots, and homes. The passing radios are "possessed" with demon energy, truly a subconscious wave length-brain washing that goes right in the marrow of people's psyche.

We people acclimate to this unnatural state and each day as the mania and madness escalates another notch, we deaden our senses to it and soon take a living hell for 'the best of all possible worlds.' It's in the air and blow in the wind. The world is a wound up spring of tension, conflict, worry, insatiable, striving, and hair-trigger violence. Who can escape it, and where could one hide?

We sit in meditation and bow within the pure sanctuary of this adorned oasis, but the sounds of fighting and greed pour in the windows, seep through the walls, and fill up every niche and fiber of our being and the Dharma realm. The screams, threats, screeching tires, wailing souls, frightened laughter, darting eyes, flexed, tight bodies and short breaths are inescapable and loud. As the song from a passing radio says,

"...you can have anything, anything
that you desire...
Come on, come on, shake it baby,
let's get higher..."

The poison permeates every dust mote and hair pore. Although we don't have spiritual powers to actually see it, we would have to be deaf, dumb, and blind not to feel it. Time and time again this passage from the *AVATAMSAKA SUTRA* comes to our mind,

I do not seek the Unsurpassed Path for myself, nor do I cultivate Bodhi practices in order to seek the states of the five desires or the many kinds of bliss in the three realms of existence. Why? Because of all the happiness in the world there is none that is not suffering, which is not the realm of a host of demons and what ignorant people are greedy for. There is none which the Buddhas have not warned us about. All the disasters that arise are caused by these. The hells, animals, hungry ghosts, and King Yama's region; the hatred, conflict, slander, insult and all evils are caused by greed and attachment to the five desires. The Bodhisattva contemplates the mundane world in this way and reduces his greed for the flavors of desire. He thinks: I should act as a general for the troops and uphold the torch of great wisdom to show the path of peace and security and lead all living beings away from dangers and difficulties.

AVATAMSAKA SUTRA
Ten Transferences
Chapter #25

Recently I had two other dreams and both place the Master and Sangha at the center of safety for the world--a path of peace and security, a torch of great wisdom for all that lives.

First Dream:

The entire Bay Area is about to be engulfed by disasters. Earthquakes fracture and fragment the earth underground like a broken safety plate windshield. Tidal waves and winds/rains press in on all sides with the awesome power of nature that could swallow the entire State in one gulp, like an ocean wave sweeps away a grain of sand. Above, rockets and missiles hang by thin threads, and the planets themselves are about to run amok. And all this imminent disaster is held at bay by the strength of a sage and his faithful disciples who protect and uphold the area with the power of vast vows and pure practices. People are oblivious and unaware as they run about playing house, having parties, making plans, painting and decorating their homes like doll houses, and striving for name and gain while the world they dwell in is as fragile and uncertain as a child's sand castle on the shore.

Second Dream:

L.A. and another large metropolitan city are saved from huge fire disasters by the invisible efforts of the Master and the Sangha.

It's hard to distinguish dream from real these days, but in the end, both add muscle to our Bodhi resolve. We know that only the power of Way-virtue, only the strength of pure precepts and the wholesome energy of the Proper Dharma can avert these tragedies and clear the air. Nothing is fixed or fated. Everything is made from the mind alone. The future of the world has clearly and decisively fallen into the hands of true disciples of the Buddha. The odds are against us, but the deviant cannot overcome the proper. It is only to be feared we will be 'lukewarm' in our courage or recognize the severity of the situation too late.

The Master always teaches us to "return the light and illumine within," to seek the solution for the troubles of the world by first purifying and rectifying our own hearts and minds. This is to know which way the wind blows.

The superior person knows what is distant lies in what is near. He knows which way the wind blows. He knows that what is minute becomes manifest. Such a one will certainly enter into virtue.

—Confucius—

The wind is the influence we exert on the world, the source of the wind is our own virtue. What is minute and near is our own persons and minds; what is manifested and distant is the entire universe. The wind that can save the world blows from the mind of no greed, no fighting, no seeking, no selfishness and not pursuing self benefit. This is virtue.

Last year a huge forest fire swept down from Cow Mountain National Forest, threatening to destroy the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas. Suddenly and unexpectedly a wind came up and shifted, to blow away the uncontrollable blaze, and save the home of the Proper Dharma. The wind was moved by Way-virtue. If we are sincere, there is still time to blow away the demonic fire that is sweeping through the Three Thousand Great Thousand Worlds. May the Proper Dharma long dwell in the world and all beings quickly accomplish the Unsurpassed, Proper and Equal, Right Enlightenment.

Much peace in the Way.
Disciples Kuo Chen and Kuo T'ing humbly
bow in respect.

continued next issue