

# Three Steps One Bow



HENG SURE: 12/18/77

"As water has just one flavor  
But is different according to the vessel that contains it,  
So it is with the Buddha's field of blessings.  
The differences are in the minds of living beings."

*AVATAMSAKA SUTRA*  
Bodhisattvas' Inquiries  
Chapter #10

On our bowing pilgrimage, the people we meet are looking more and more like family, like kinfolk in one big Dharma-family. What is it in two monks making ritual movements on a country road that causes some people to honk their car horns? What do others see that makes them instantly get angry? Why do some people stop their busy worlds, park their cars, and walk over to find out about these two bowing men? Every day strangers appear who spontaneously support the trip with bags of vegetarian food, with money offerings, with kind words, and offers to help? What do these people share in common? I believe it is the core of our work to simply be there on the public road doing Dharma-work as sincerely as we can. We are celebrating and exercising our inner Buddha-seed. We bow and pray, making efforts to give it what it needs to bloom and grow a Buddha-fruit. There's something magical in it; other people look at us and feel their own Buddha-seeds stirring. If conditions favor its growth, the response feels positive and we hear "bless you," "good luck," "right on, brothers." If conditions do not permit the expansions of the seed, those people with heavy karmic obstacles feel the turning of their seeds and resent being reminded of their burden. We hear "Go home!" "Freaks!," and harsher words from these people.

The Buddha sees all beings as Buddhas. Some potential, some actualized. Some are Buddhas of the past returned now to help others tend to their Buddha-orchards. The Venerable Abbot encourages every one of us to uncover our Buddha-capacity. He speaks and our glowing wisdom seeds spark and hum into life, no matter what size they are to begin with.

This process in small measure is what goes on when people stop to talk to us on, Three Steps One Bow. The people who make offerings look like family; nearly all wear the same look--a look of happiness with their humming, inner Buddha. When they give to the Triple Jewel they nurture their own Triple Jewel within. There is real magic here. We don't yet understand, but it feels clean and bright.

'It is also like a skillful magician who can please the crowd.  
The Buddha's field of blessings works this way in that  
It causes living beings to be delighted."

*AVATAMSAKA SUTRA*  
Bodhisattvas' Inquiries  
Chapter #10

HENG CH'AU: 12/18/77

The rain stopped; everything is wet, happy, and celebrating.  
Snow and rain, like the Way,  
Falls on all the same.  
Rain and snow, no home, no name,  
The Sage treats all the same.

Norman and Arleta Hammond, and their two children came out with a meal offering. Norman is a rescue fireman, and teacher at a local college. Although they didn't know much about Buddhism they felt a strong affinity with what we were doing. Although they could be very successful and live in affluence, they consciously choose not to. Instead, they try to find what's pure and natural--from food to their basic attitude and values. "We don't want our kids to grow up wanting things, and full of endless greed. We try to provide an alternative to the false values that they see on T.V."

To do it they pack together and try to stay clear of the cities. "They're plastic and too fast," said one of kids. Their style of hiking to go slowly and just be quiet, taking time every few steps to watch around them. "Boy, it's a lot like your Three steps One bow," said Norman. "I've often wanted to explore a canyon, or just sit on a lake for a week." We noted that Buddhists explore inside and sit quietly (dhyana meditation) and con-temple the "mind ground." "Yeah, that's it!" exclaimed Norman. "It's on the inside, really."

Norman later went on to describe a dream he has and hopes to fulfill some day: "I'd like to go out on a long walk and never come back--you know, just put it all down and keep going. Someone said that was a good definition of monks and nuns (left-home people). Just when I come close to connecting through, kind of losing myself and merging with something, it's time to come back and return to work and all."

"He does not seek what living beings can speak of.  
These are all conditioned, false, empty affairs...  
He gives rise to the supreme thought for enlightenment."

*AVATAMSAKA SUTRA*  
Ten Transferences  
Chapter #25

The kids really like the chanting prayers before and after lunch. The Hammonds are typical of a lot of bright, young families who come to offer help and check out the Buddha-dharma. They have lots of energy, compassion, and good roots. They are a

special breed of people who aren't afraid to question and turn around from false values and empty "highs." They want the truth, and they want to benefit the world. Politics and traditional religions have left them cold. They are starting to look within. Yoga, T'ai Ch'i, meditation, natural foods, and alternative life-styles, are just scratching the surface of this vast potential. The back-to-nature impulse will lead eventually back to the original self-nature and "supreme enlightenment." It's just a question of time and exploring. "Some day," says Norman, "Some day soon."

"All beings have the Buddha nature;  
All can become Buddhas,"

said the Buddha. Some day soon...

"Everything that happens to you comes from what you do."

#### *AVATAMSAKA SUTRA*

A man runs over to us seeking our blessing, "We don't do that. You bless yourself, it's in your own heart."

"Pray for me then?"

"We pray for all beings everywhere, equally. We pray as we would for family. You've got to go towards the good; that's what matters; it's what you do."

"Not even the sign of the cross or something?" he pleaded.

HENG SURE:

Signs posted in our 1956 Plymouth Vihara

SAVE WORDS!            KEEP BOWING

SAVE WORLDS!

Working hard is true  
Be without fear or joy    Constantly  
Don't attach to anything    Real  
Then you can reach a state    Constantly  
of real accomplishment    Reverent

Lunch is work

No vacations

Concentrate!

"Real affluence is not needing anything."

Gary Snyder

When we really concentrate (an act of will, a pure desire) we fall off the center of the world. We become no more than just a part of it like the road, the flowers, the sky. No more feeding the self with "the best the world has to offer." Why waste energy chasing such foolish fine discriminations while standing in a blazing house? In our search for the way out of the house we have given up our attachment to fine material things. We eat roadside weeds, coarse grains and cold water, things no one fights for. We walk in the gutter wearing patched robes, while the world flies past. Bearded chins, scruffy heads, an unused cracked mirror; we prefer silence.

"The force of words is soon lost.  
Far better to keep what is in the heart."

*TAO TE CHING*

We have music: diesels, engines, tires, hawks, and crickets.  
We have friends: mountains, streams, sun, and moon.  
We have pillow: the palm of the hand.  
We have food: fields full of healthful weeds.  
We have drink: water falls from the sky.  
We have clothing: Patched with clean gutter rags.  
We have entertainment: We sing praises of the Triple Jewel (in our ceremonies day and night.)  
We have joy: Sitting still.  
We have a teacher: "The stupidest one on earth; lower than a ghost."  
We have maps: In eighty-one garlands of flowers.  
We are satisfied. We are wealthy beyond measure.

"When selfish desire is ended forever,  
This is true riches and honor.  
When false thoughts no longer arise,  
This is the true field of blessings."

"They rest peacefully in empty space  
Within this ocean of worlds  
The variety of Buddhalands is  
Difficult to conceive  
Each and every one is free and at ease."

To the west a silent mirror of ocean. To the south the brooding Mesa.

To the east the Santa Lucia range now green after the drought-breaking rain. To the north, the skinny coast road, cliffs and waves. Little towns; Oceana, Grover City, Pismo Beach, Shell Beach: wide spots where people cluster to soothe that lonely ache of too much emptiness, too much silence.

Holiday, Holy day. Each day is holy day when you slow down and look within. The lesson we relearned each year, and then forgot each year: Happiness is the highest

achievement, not an easy or simple state to maintain. No wonder it is the foremost practice of a Bodhisattva's ten practices. You can't hold, buy it, drive, or eat it. The more of it you drink or smoke, the less of it you have.

Happiness is a balance between no expectations and no regrets. When you need nothing, this is true freedom. What is more valuable than fullness in the heart, peace and purity of mind? The big basic truth of Buddhism is understanding that when you look outside of your own mind/heart-(心-hsin) for what you need you're on the road to more pain. The harder you look outside, the more false everything becomes. Everyone loves what is true and rejects what is false; when we find the truth, something inside changes for good. What was once valuable no longer seems so; what we took for granted now holds mystery and infinite wonder.

*-continued next issue*