

# Three Steps One Bow



HENG CH'AU: 12/20/77

"All dharmas have no true reality, all dharmas are empty..."

*AVATAMSAKA SUTRA*  
The Ten Dwellings  
Chapter 15

Dick and Bill from Oceana found us camped on a side road in a grove of trees, and offered us a place to stay and to take care of our needs. "Stay at our place on the beach. There's Gene a big Indian with long black hair and a beard, and Pete, he's got long blonde hair and a parrot on his shoulder," said Rick.

"We're not the peak of spiritual attainment, but we're an okay group," added Bill with a grin. "You see lots of chopped-up dead bodies show up on the Mesa, because they're easy to hide in all these trees, but there's a totally different element on the beach. No worries there."

Why did Dick and Bill come out? Said Bill, "I gave up my social life for three years and tried to do for the world what you're doing--only through politics. I kind of felt like a priest. Okay, you know? I thought all that politics needed was some new blood, but all I got was drained, and nothin' changed.

"Besides, I've done some traveling and wandering and I know what it's like to walk cold into a strange town and not know anybody or where to go for help."

"That's what it's all about, isn't it?" I said. "One substance with all beings."

"Yes," said Rick smiling.

"Yes," adds Bill with a grin, "That's all that counts."

"When the Bodhisattva sees this (suffering of living beings) he gives rise to a mind of great compassion, and a mind of great benefit. And, he wishes that all beings obtain liberation."

*AVATAMSAKA SUTRA*  
Ten Transferences  
Chapter 25

Meditation feels like being a caged tiger floating in empty space.

Barry, the man who has taken upon himself to watch over us, stopped with some tea and a map.

"People gets lots of different opinions about you guys."

"Oh?"

"Yes. Some think it's a gimmick, a come-on. Some think you should be emptying bed pans in old folks homes if you really want to do something good. Some think you're just plain stupid. One guy wants to teach you mortification of the body with a tire iron. Some say you stop for steak and cocktails at the end of the day," related Barry.

"That's interesting."

"The way I figure it is that most of the problems in the world come from people trying to do big things, be heroes. All the wars and killings come from this. What I try to do is not do any harm in my own small way. Nothin' big, you know? I just try not to harm anyone in my own life and figure this is at least a little start."

"If you can do no harm, that in itself is great good."

"I think so," said Barry, checking out a storm rolling in from the ocean. "So anyway, what you guys are doing may not count two farts in a hurricane, but it's not doing any harm. So, who knows? Well, you all take care. See you."

Barry's point has principle: When you know it's right, no matter what others say, you should do it.

"It's just like the sun  
Which appears in the world,  
But does not hide or fail to appear  
Because there are blind people who fail to see it."

*AVATAMSAKA SUTRA*  
Ten Transferences  
Chapter 25

The Bodhisattva should be like the sun.

Norman, the fireman from Aroya Grande, stopped again to ask about the *AVATAMSAKA SUTRA*, and to say he was really moved by the idea of transferring the merit and virtue of one's work to all beings. He copied down the repentance verse from the end of the *AVATAMSAKA*, because he felt it was "right on."

"Of all bad karma which I have done,  
Based on beginningless greed, hatred, and stupidity,  
Committed with body, mouth, and mind,  
I now repent and reform."  
I can just recite this on my own, right?  
"The more the better, right."

HENG SURE: 12/77

Happiness is surely the highest state. Buddhas are happy all the time. Buddhas do the work of making others happy. So it's no wonder you never see an unhappy Buddha. Who wouldn't enjoy that job? You never see an angry Buddha, for that matter, or a Buddha who's got the blues. Buddhas never feel depressed or uptight, no matter what situation occurs.

Buddhas don't cheat, they don't smoke or gossip. They don't insist on their rights when driving, they yield to others in the supermarket check-out line.

Is it good to be a Buddha? You needn't ask others to find out. You can find out for yourself in this life while you wear this body that you woke up with this morning; why wait? How to begin your new life as a Buddha? Be happy all the time. Don't be angry or depressed, don't smoke or gossip, don't do anything that your heart knows is wrong. Do everything that your heart knows is right. Cultivate the Dharma and purify your mind. What else is there to it? All Buddhas to become Buddhas did just those things. So, get going! As the Venerable Abbot says, "Advance like a wild tiger charging downhill, chewing all karmic obstacles to death." And while you go, don't forget to be happy. It's the highest good. Who has ever seen a frowning Buddha anyway?

"Those beings who see him, hear him, listen to him, receive him, and make offerings to him--all such beings will be caused to get peace and happiness."

*AVATAMASAKA SUTRA*  
Worthy Leader  
Chapter 12

HENG CH'AU: 12/21/77

The County Sheriff stopped, "What you are doing is really commendable," he said, and advised us against continuing on Highway One ahead. Heavy rains are expected, and it's already been raining for a week. The roads are slick and dangerous. The shoulders are oozing mud and ankle-deep puddles. Where to bow?

Barry stopped again, "You are between the West Coast's biggest ICBM strike force that could destroy the rest of the world, and an unsafe nuclear power plant that's built on an earthquake faultline. Best to take one step at a time, huh? The winds are expected to get up to 100 mph."

Last night we read from the *AVATAMSAKA SUTRA*:

"When the Bodhisattva takes on all this grievous suffering,  
His vigor increases.  
He does not cast it off, he does not hide.  
He is not scared or startled.

He does not retreat, he is not frightened.  
He has no fatigue."

*AVATAMSAKA SUTRA*  
Ten Transferences  
Chapter 25

It helped somehow--the verse gave us that little extra courage to "chin-up" and keep going.

The rain stopped while we were bowing. In the middle of a black clouded sky was a clear circle of blue. All afternoon it followed us overhead. As we did our last bow and transferred the merit, two red clouds appeared momentarily in the blue patch, and then it closed completely.

By the time we reached the car it was pouring rain and blowing cold winds.

Sitting in meditation by oil lamp. The rain and wind continued through the night. It's too dark to tell where we were camped. It doesn't really matter anyway--wherever we are inside is all that we need to know.

Barry stopped by again. Storms and winds swept across California--winds up to 100mph destroyed a couple of towns and turned over trailer homes and diesel trucks near here. A big fire just a few miles south of us swept across Vandenberg AFB killing the Base Commander and others. "But for some reason we've been blessed here (the Mesa)," said Barry. "Nothin' much happened at all. Kinda' strange, huh?"

"Do you eat clams?: he asked,

"No--nothing that lives."

Vegetables live, they just don't scream when you kill them--ha, ha, hee, hee," chuckled Barry.

"Well, if you need anything, just call."

As he started to get into his truck, he turned, "Oh, by the way, it's a good thing you have that cop keeping an eye on you."

"Oh?"

"Yeah! There's some pretty bad characters on this Mesa. These woods have turned up a lot of bodies."

We could spend a lot of time worrying about what lies ahead and the mistakes we left behind. This is false thinking and cripples you to the present. So it's said:

When one attends to the hear and now,

The false returns to the true.

HENG SURE: 12/77

"I" is a Lie

We seek the true heart within. There is no "me" at the center of the world. We have dropped out of the race for first place. All the time we are looking out for ourselves, trying to find the real--all the time, the real was waiting to be found right inside the one who was looking out. The "I" who used to fight for the spotlight at center stage is a lie, a phoney "I" is a mistake, a fault of vision, a bad habit.

No more chasing the best of everything. What come is what's best. Why look at the scenery? What is it but more pictures of empty, self-seeking self?

Outside is in.

Inside stays home.

Watch the gate closely.

Protect your own.

No one will miss you.

No one will care.

Lost and forgotten,

Already there.

HENG CH'AU: 12/23/77

Storm continues and so does "donut hole" clearing overhead. Black clouds for miles, and in the middle a patch of blue. We are reaching the end of the Mesa, and can feel a strange kind of energy building.

Some laypeople from Gold Mountain (the Bachs, and their baby) stopped with picture of Gwan Yin Bodhisattva, and a copy of the *SHURANGAMA SUTRA*. Just yesterday we had been thinking about those two items, and today in the middle of a rainstorm they appear.

At the foot of the Mesa, our water jugs blew off the roof of the car and were crushed by a passing truck. This hill coming off the Mesa is steep and fast with no shoulder. It's going to be tricky even walking down it. The alternate road is impassable and was ruled out by the CHP. Neither of us likes the "feel" of this road, but we have no choice but to bow it tomorrow. Christmas traffic is heavy and if it rains--okay, well,

When one attends to the here and now,

The false returns to the true.

The reason the water jugs were run over was because I was thinking about tomorrow's bowing route and drove off with them sitting on top of the car.

HENG CH'AU: 12/24

Bowing at the bottom of the hill coming off the Mesa. A car slides out of control and heads straight for us. Suddenly, as if an invisible broom swept it off the road, the car veers away and tail-ends into a deep muddy cauliflower field. The man gets out and sinks up to his knees in oozing, thick mud. We try to help out, the car just keeps sinking deeper. Then the man gets really angry at us. Bad vibes.

A woman drives up with an offering. Quite a scene, happy and full of goodness; this woman handing us some home-made food, and just across the road the man in the mud cursing and shaking his fists at us.

We decide to move and bow in place a half mile up the road.

The new picture of Gwan Yin has a kind of magic about it. We could feel a change since its arrival yesterday. The atmosphere in the car is cleaner and enriched, and so are our minds. A new and powerful sense of purpose and mindfulness has been added to our work.

While bowing, I remember back to when I was twelve or thirteen. I remembered wanting to "go it alone," and figure things out until there wasn't anything left to figure. But a fear of facing the ultimate truth of no self came up. I knew the girl-boy business was fed by fear and insecurity--not wanting to give up the mother figure. But choices were few then, or were they?

The Hammonds stopped with a meal offering. Why is Buddhism appealing? Because it doesn't just go along with things in the world. It goes a little deeper and hits a place we all remember and want to explore.

Arleta: "It's like when I was a kid. My father had a gas station. He never got rich. He was too nice for that. He had a lot of friends and a lot of unpaid accounts. We were happy. We had a little, but we had much."

Norman: "I'm happy when living close to nature. There's something spiritual at root in all of us, as opposed to having nothing in a sea of nothing."

"He vows that all beings leave behind all worldliness and dwell in all-wisdom...

"That they dwell in the ultimate path and in places of peace and happiness."

*AVATAMSAKA SUTRA*

Ten Transferences

Chapter 25

The "place of peace and happiness" we all seek is what the Hammonds are talking about, and looking for. It's Christmas Eve. But lots of folks are still looking for the "ultimate path." The mind doesn't rest until it's home.

*-continued next issue*