

# *The Proper Dharma Platform Sutra*

*-composed and compiled by Bhikshus Heng Sure & Heng Ch'au*

From Evening Lectures:

"...Americans all want to be #1. They all want to be leaders, to be the best at everything. People fight for first place and all the world's troubles begin right here. Do you believe it? It's true.

"All of the troubles come from greed and seeking. Originally there are no problems, but we people give ourselves all the hassles in the world. Don't worry. It's all a play, including our lives, our bodies, and our minds. The whole world is a mixed-up pot of rice congee. There's no way to sort it out, but we still fish around in it looking for something good to eat. In fact, the world's a bitter sea of suffering.

"We are all boiling up our pots of stew (congee). We all have things we want and it's all greed. Basically there is no problem; everything is okay, but we create our own afflictions and postpone our cultivation. We feel that we will live to be 1000 or 500 years old, and if we don't make it to Buddhahood in this life, we will come back and try again in the next. We keep trying, yet never learn to turn around and go back the other way.

*The sea of suffering is boundless,  
But a turn of the head is the other shore.*

So, resolve to leave the kitchen and just don't hang around cooking up rice congee. In everything you do, keep to the Middle: too little is as bad as too much.

"How to be? Be like Maitreya Bodhisattva. Be a big dummy. Be like the Patient Immortal who could bear anything and still remain 'Thus thus unmoving, understanding and eternally bright.'"

Someone asks a question about receiving merit and virtue for doing good deeds. The Abbot answers: "Don't expect a reward for your good deeds. We are all the same substance. When you do good, be as if you are doing it for yourself. If we are all one, then who is there to gain benefit? Just go and do good. Doing good with the expectation of getting a reputation as a philanthropist is hypocritical. This type of behaviour is called, 'a thief amid the virtuous.'"

\*\*\*\*\*

Monk: Sometimes donors bring more food than we can eat. If we try to eat it all, we can't bow, but we don't want to waste offerings.

Abbot: Feed it to the birds and fish. Give it to other living beings.

Monk: And extra clothes?

Abbot: Send them to me and I'll distribute them or wear them myself. Be sure to keep enough clothes for yourself. In all things keep to the Middle Way: too little is as bad as too much.

Monk: We want to quickly get rid of all selfishness...

Abbot: Don't force having no self. Let it be natural. Just don't actively calculate for your own benefit. Don't seek. Don't seek anything. Just cultivate. This is the meaning of "Don't think of yourself and don't attach to reflections of yourself." Don't think of personal gain.

We are sitting on the kitchen floor at the Master's feet. The afternoon sun is slanting in through the windows. It's quiet and a chance to ask more personal questions. The Abbot is receptive and answers as he sits on the couch.

Then the Master told us that some of his disciples in Asia wrote to inform him that some people were slandering the Master. He told them they should bow to those who slander. He then composed a verse to send to his disciples. "How do you like it?" the Master asked us. "It goes like this:

#### *GOSSIP VERSE*

*Why must we discuss rights and wrongs?  
Truth and falsehood reveal themselves before too long.  
The wise ones see what's real and true.  
What is false the ignorant ones set out to do.  
The good ones learn from Bodhisattvas;  
The evil dare to scold the Buddhas.  
Great kindness and compassion, level and fair.  
Gathers in all sentient beings everywhere.*