

News From The Dharma Realm

Third Asian Delegation * , November, 1983,
First World Delegation through January, 1984**

WELCOMING LETTERS

A delegation from the Sino American Buddhist Association is presently on tour of Europe and Asia. The following are some letters from different countries welcoming the delegation.



7-10-1983

Dear Rev. Bhikshu Heng Kuan,

I am so glad to hear the news that a delegation of five Bhikshus from Dharma Realm Buddhist University will visit Buddhist countries including Burma, our native land.

I have been to the USA last year and stayed a whole year. I came back to Burma in May 1983. I still happily remember my visit to the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas, San Francisco, Ca. and thank a lot the Venerable Master Hua's present of valuable books of Dharma.

I have already declared to the public in Pu Hup Kusulin Buddhist Assoc. that the delegation will pay a visit to Burma in December. The delegation is welcomed. We are looking forward to their arrival. We would like to know the exact time they will arrive so that we will be a able to greet them and welcome them. May the delegation bring peace and the light of Dharma to every corner of the world.

Yours in the Dharma,

U Thandra

Essential Meanings of the AVATAMSAKA SUTRA

What follows are the outlines for Dharma talks being given by the Bhikshus of the Three Steps, One Bowing pilgrimage from Los Angeles' Gold Wheel Monastery to the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas. These Dharma talks will be given throughout Southeast Asia, India, Europe, and England during the 1983-84 World Delegation.



*OUTLINES BY Bhikshu Heng Sure, Ph.D.
Bhikshu Heng Ch'au, Ph.D.*

Recognizing Ancient Wisdom in the Modern World

A. Ancient wisdom recognizes the spiritual world.

Life before the rise of mechanized urban society and scientific disbelief was alive, vibrant, connected matter and spirit.

With ancient wisdom of Buddhadharma we can return to the harmony between the visible and invisible worlds. We can regain the sense of man's proper place between heaven and earth.

B. The pilgrimage passed through downtown Los Angeles.

It took us under freeways where the air was polluted and unbreathable. Water came to us chemically ionized, in plastic jugs. Bathrooms were unavailable, "out-of-order" signs on locked doors. No living thing could walk the freeways, no shade trees were available from the heat of the sun. Only cars, trucks, machines and people with money to buy them. "Keep out," "Private Property," "No Trespassing" signs were on every side. No spirit, no humanity, no way to find anything real about the matter of birth and death, suffering and impermanence, no kindness and no compassion.

C. Pilgrimage passed through drought.

It's just like the King of Trees growing in the rocks and sand of a barren wilderness. When the roots get water, the branches, leaves, flowers, and fruit will all flourish.

-Avatamsaka Sutra

Passed through the drought in Southern California. Saw big tree standing tall in a dry, arid field. Underneath the three, cows, birds, rabbits, deer, sheep, insects, and people all found space to share and avoid the sun's glare. The tree shaded all equally, the space was

alive with living beings; nature harmonized all differences. Easy to see reality of the world here: impermanent, and yet kindness and compassion helped sustain the life and allow survival in the world.

D. Pilgrimage reached the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas.

Arrived at the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas. Saw trees with signs posted on them:

In order to make room for a new refectory and dining hall, this tree will be cut down in ten days. All spirits, insects, birds, and other beings are hereby notified to change their residence. Notice is given in advance to give adequate time for moving house.

-by order of Abbot: Ven. Hua

The Bodhi-tree king growing in the wilderness of birth and death is the same. All living beings are its roots; all Buddhas and Bodhisattvas are its fruits and flowers. By benefitting all beings with the waters of Great Compassion, one can realize the flowers and fruits of the Buddhas' and Bodhisattvas' wisdom.

-*Avatamsaka Sutra*

At the City, where daily life moves according to the ancient wisdom of Enlightened Sages, the worlds of spirit and material mix and intertwine. There is no sense of private greed, or fighting among people. No one seeks anything apart from benefitting the world; there are no selfish individual actions and no personal benefits to particular people. Public-spirited giving and kindness to all sentient creatures are the rules at the City.



Actual Practice:

Introduction:

The *Avatamsaka Sutra* explains how to become the very best possible people. It explains how we can develop our human roots to the highest goodness. The place to do this work is in the Buddha's field of blessings. The Sutra speaks to the gardeners of the Buddha's field: Bodhisattvas, gods, and humans like you and me. The tools we use to till the field are the Five Rules of wisdom: no greed, no fighting, no seeking, no selfishness, and no self-benefit.

Title:

FIVE RULES: TOOLS FOR TILLING THE BUDDHAS' FIELD OF BLESSINGS

A. How Buddhism has taken root in the West:

1. Americans like do-it-yourself effort and ingenuity.

2. On pilgrimage we received offerings from many people who had never before seen Bhikshus but recognized in the bowing a chance to plant blessings.

3. Many notes accompanying fruit, vegetables, juice, good-will offerings expressing support of world peace goal of bowing and sharing a sense of similar roots (give example of note from Pt. Arena).

B. Where do blessings show?

1. Give examples

2. *Avatamsaka* explains highest field of blessings is the pure mind.

"For example, a bright pure mirror
Reflects whatever image appears before it.
The Buddhas' field of blessings is like this:
As one thinks, so one receives in return."

3. How to till that mind: no greed, no fighting, no seeking, no selfishness, no self-benefit.

C. Five Rules defined and how the Five Rules stabilize good roots.

D. How opposites of Five Rules damage good roots.

E. Illustration of good roots well cared for.

Story of Dharma Master Ch'au's grandfather's garden.

F. Conclusion: Actual practice of giving and holding Five Rules nurtures the mind and nourishes good roots of the highest field of blessings. This is wisdom ecology, the study and practice of integration of one part of the whole system of related parts. Therefore, one person's tilling of the Buddhas' field of blessings benefits the entire realm of living beings by increasing wisdom and by decreasing the sum total of greed, fighting, seeking, selfishness, and self-benefit in the world.



Trading Worlds Center: the Fragrance of Precepts

A. On the pilgrimage through streets of Los Angeles, we mixed with two worlds of smells: traffic exhaust, Chinatown butcher shops, beauty parlors, road construction, tobacco smoke, sanitary disinfectant: the smells of broken Precepts and the sweat and hustle of the modern world.

Contrast with the fragrance of Precepts: a pure world-transcending perfume.

B. Entered the World Trade Center modern office building to find a bathroom. Struck by the sudden contrast. We were grimy and dirty after bowing on the streets. The building was sanitized, color-coordinated, with piped-in music, carpets, electric lights by designers, security systems. Smells were all chemical: perfume, after shave lotion, disinfectant, mouthwash. No human smells, no natural fragrances. Everything manmade and tightly budgeted.

The building housed a group that traded in worldly commodities. Yet people seemed forgotten, extra, unimportant. Saw few people; building was nearly deserted. We felt alien, as if we had stepped onto another planet in our ragged robes, with our dirty hands. We had nothing but our humanity. Bhikshus renounce all material; goods and trading. But we felt richer than this most progressive building where money was king but the real world was totally forgotten. The real world meaning the world of the purified human mind, the world of Precepts, the world of pure fragrance that comes from renouncing the world of material concerns.

Quote:

Bodhisattvas vow that all living beings may be universally perfumed with the fragrance of giving, and that they may be able to graciously renounce everything in the world.

-Avatamsaka Sutra

C. Arrived at the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas.

Entered the "Trading Worlds Center." Toured the Vajra Jeweled Light Precept Platform. Saw novice monks and nuns bowing 108-day preparation and purification ceremony to receive complete Precepts of the Thousand Buddhas. Special fragrance perfumed, neither worldly like the highways and streets, nor inhuman and chemical like the modern office buildings. Rather the "Trading Worlds Center" was redolent with pure fragrance of hard working people who gave up material concerns, renounced the search for happiness from trading in the world. These were people intent upon transcending this world while still in the world: we smelled the fragrance of Precepts, a universally pervasive scent that rises spontaneously wherever living beings refrain from greed, hatred, and stupidity, and strictly observe the basic rules of humanity: no killing, no stealing, no sexual misconduct, no polluted speech, and no intoxicants of any kind.

D. Quote:

Bodhisattvas vow that all living beings' Precept fragrance will universally perfume, and that they will obtain the Thus Come Ones' ultimately pure Precepts.

-Avatamsaka Sutra



Should You Be Filial To Your Parents?

*-by Venerable Master Hua
-translated by Bhikshuni Heng Chu
-edited by Upasika Susan Rounds*

Today we'll investigate the topic, "Should you be filial to your parents?" From a worldly point of view it is easy to answer this question. Of course we should be filial to our parents. We should naturally express our gratitude to our parents by practicing filial compliance. To be filial like that is the very least that any person in the world can do to repay the kindness of his parents. But there is another kind of filiality which is greater than this. Because you young friends here have not heard this kind of filiality explained before, I will explain it for you now.

From a transcendental point of view, true filiality is practiced through true cultivation. If you are truly cultivating the Way, you are being truly filial. Now this doesn't mean that while you are cultivating, you are constantly having false thoughts about your parents and feeling very emotional about them. You shouldn't be "sticky" even with your parents and relatives. Instead, you should cultivate vigorously and bring for the Bodhi resolve. In this way, you can become an outstanding person, an extraordinary person; you will be a person who can transcend the mundane world. Then you are practicing a kind of filiality which goes beyond, and surpasses ordinary filial piety. For it is said,

If one person can achieve Buddhahood,
Nine generations of ancestors are reborn in the heavens.

This transcendental filiality is filiality on a vast scale. You are being filial toward heaven and earth. You are repaying your parents in life after life--that is magnanimous filiality!

Filiality on a small scale is being filial only to your parents in this present life. In practicing this small-scale filiality, you try to make your parents happy, even if you have nothing to offer them but plain water. You care for their hearts and minds, as well as their bodies, and you do it with the utmost reverence. Not only do you look after your own parents, but you treat all elders with respect. Treating everyone as you treat your own parents is practicing ordinary filiality.

To practice filiality on a vast scale means that you are filial not only to your own parents, but to all the ancient sages and worthies of the past. A person who is able to emulate the sages and worthies of old is known as one who practices far-reaching filiality, filiality

which transcends the worldly. But ordinary people of today aren't even practicing the ordinary worldly filiality of providing for their parents, to say nothing of practicing far-reaching filiality. Instead, people today are busily at work committing offenses! As a result, the world is getting worse day by day. People's hearts are growing more and more corrupt and their minds are full of doubts and problems, all because they are not being filial.

The men and women of today who kill, commit arson, indulge in sexual promiscuity, tell lies, steal, and have vulgar characters. They believe that they should be doing such things and that being filial to one's parents is wrong, that they should learn to be mean and rotten. This is a very grave mistake.

Now while we are young it is important for us to make a good, healthy start in learning to do what we should do in order to be good human beings and good citizens of this world."

LETTERS FROM THE DELEGATES

Jakarta, Indonesia
November 3, 1983

Dear Shih Fu,

Cultivation changes us deep within. On board the jumbo jet across the Pacific, a movie played on the screen in each cabin. The blinds drew shut, the lights went out, and everybody except our delegation plugged headsets into their ears and like wide-eyed kids hearing grandfather tell a story of the old days, they totally entered into the wrap-around world of the film, called "Flashdance."

Heng Ch'au and I threw blankets over our heads, as the lights went out, but we were not fast enough. Even without hearing the music or dialogue, we picked up ten seconds of the screenplay: a defiled, brutal story full of ideas and values that nobody in our parents' generation discussed, much less bought tickets to see in the public theatre. And here were more than three hundred passengers absorbing mind poison through every sense-faculty. In the depths of their minds the movie printed bigger-than-life pictures of broken precepts, corrupted ideas, and demonic behavior that animals do not stoop to. How many people made this "entertainment"? How many people's psyches will be scarred by its inverted, evil, heartless lessons?

I saw a ten-second passage--200 frames. I couldn't avoid it before I averted my eyes. A picture of a high-speed dancer shocked and hurt and saddened my heart, just as seeing dead does lying in road shoulders in the mountains during hunting season.

My heart longed for clean air, for the humane, compassionate, solid, and true images of the Buddha's statues and wisdom texts.

The Good Knowing Advisors' teachings are like the bright sun that nurtures all wholesome dharmas' sprouts and roots. The Good Knowing Advisors' teachings are like a round full moon that cools and refreshes everything it touches. The Good Knowing Advisors' teachings are like a mountain of snow in summer, fully able to relieve the heat and thirst of all the forest animals.

-Avatamsaka Sutra

Standing this morning on the steps of an ancient stone stupa in Borobudur, in West Java's rain forest, I felt more at ease and at home than I did in the 747 speeding at 600 mph 30,000 feet above the ocean. The giant stupa was carved with images of pure Bodhisattvas, devas, elegant adornments, and scenes of meditators, cultivators, and Dharma-gatherings. The place calmed the soul and nourished the heart's wholesome roots. I felt grounded, strengthened in humanity, inspired to simplify and to purify my conduct as a person and as a Buddhist disciple. The scenes on the stone walls in subequatorial Java were almost like a movie as they displayed stories of the Buddha's past lives and Pure Youth Good Wealth's pilgrimage to Bodhi. The in-flight movie, however, wounded my spirit and shocked my mind. Motion pictures are neutral; stones are originally blank. The human mind can create gross evil and it can transform into Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, and good people. The teachings of wisdom are not secret, they belong to the true heart of all living beings.

PHOTOS OF THE TOUR IN PROGRESS



evening lecture 11/9/83



Kuan Yin Temple, Jakarta



Pancasaka School, Jakarta



Sarawak Buddhist Association,
Kuching 11/10/83



Sarawak Buddhist Association
evening lecture 11/2/83



Vihara Buddhayana, Purworejo, Indonesia

The Good Knowing Advisors' teachings are like the sun on a fragrant pond, as they bring to blossom the lotus flowers of all wholesome thoughts.

*-Avatamsaka Sutra
"Entering the Dhama Realm"*

P.S. Shih Fu, we were expecting the heat below the equator to knock us down. Funny thing. The day we arrived, Jakarta's weather cooled off by 8-10.

"We're experiencing an unusually balmy spell of cool weather," said the Singapore Airlines captain as we landed. "We can't explain it, but we're sure you all will enjoy the relief during your stay in Indonesia."

Disciples Kuo Chen & Kuo T'ing
(Heng Sure) & (Heng Ch'au)
bow nine times in respect



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