



## Conversation 21: The Main Hall (Part 2)

**Sara:** *(looking into the hall by the door)* Oh look! Lots of people are prostrating in front of a statue. We were always taught that it is wrong to worship a statue.

**Sunim:** Don't stand in the doorway. It is considered not very good behavior. Please go in or stand back.

**Sara:** Sorry, Sunim. Still a lot to learn.

**Sunim:** That's all right. They are bowing in remembrance of and out of gratitude for their teacher, the Buddha. Then they bow a second time out of gratitude for the teaching, the Dharma. The third time is for the community of Buddhists, Sunims and lay-people. They all know that the beautiful statue is a piece of metal or wood or plaster.

**Sara:** I bet some people think they are idol worshipping, don't they?

**Sunim:** Many people think like that, especially those who consider idol worship to be bad. It is sad because it is completely wrong.



**Luca:** (*running up to the statue*) The statue is so beautiful! Will you teach us about it?

**Sunim:** Of course but first you need to learn how to behave in the hall according to our ancient customs. Please don't run in here and please follow me.





## Conversation 22: How to Bow

**Sunim:** Let's go out again and re-enter properly. Now watch, I do hapjang and a half bow like this when I enter and then I go in front of the Buddha, to one side and do three bows.



**Sara:** Please show us slowly.

**Luca:** And then check if we do it right.

**Sunim:** OK, here goes! Put your palms together and do a half bow. Then kneel down on the ground, put both hands down on the ground. Bend at your waist until your forehead touches the ground. Turn your hands up and raise them to your ears. Put your hands down. Sit up putting your palms together and stand up. Do it again. For the third bow, after raising your hands



to your ears, you put your palms together in front of your face. Then stand up with your palms together. Do a half bow.

**Sara:** That is quite complicated so let's practice. Sunim, please check us. (*They do a few bows.*)

**Luca:** I can feel the strain on my muscles when I get up.

**Sunim:** Yes, if you do many bows then you have pain in your legs the first few times. You are doing well, but make sure your feet are together.  
(*They sit down together at the back of the hall.*)

**Luca:** Do we always have to bow like that?

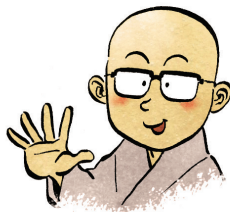
**Sunim:** I never insist on anyone bowing if they don't want to because it might be offensive to their belief system. So please do as you feel comfortable in future. When I enter a hall I always bow three times.



## Conversation 23: Why?

**Luca:** It is quite a good exercise! Do you only do three bows?

**Sunim:** As a practice we do 1,080 or 3,000 bows and sometimes even 5,000 a day for a certain period of time.



**Luca:** That sounds tough. You must lose a lot of weight! At night you must be hurting all over!

**Sara:** Why do you bow?

**Sunim:** Because we need to learn to be humble, to be grateful and not always want something.



**Luca:** What do you mean?

**Sunim:** We are all a little proud and we need to learn



to be less proud, less self-centered and to know that we are not the only one here in the universe, that we are not special, we are just like everyone else. So at least by bowing down we behave humbly and little by little maybe it helps us to learn to be less proud. It helps to teach us to respect all people and all things.

**Luca:** And why do we bow three times?

**Sunim:** Simply put, the three bows represent our respect for the Three Jewels, as they are called in Buddhism.



## Conversation 24: The Three Jewels

**Luca:** Jewels? They are something precious and temples are supposed to be simple places. What are jewels doing in the temple? Why would we bow to them and where are they? I want to see them.

**Sunim:** You are looking at them! I suppose it is a little difficult to understand but then a jewel is something precious and the Buddha, the teacher and the Dharma, the teaching and the Sangha, the group of people practicing together are precious to us. Also we respect the Sangha because they can offer the teachings to the next generation. Each time we bow like that we feel gratitude for meeting up with these three things which can help us towards emancipation and true understanding.

**Sara:** I suppose that if I respect the teachings then I listen to them better than if I am just looking for ways to criticize them. Right?

**Sunim:** Yes, that is true.





**Luca:** But, why would I bow to the group of people practicing Buddhism. Seems silly to me.

**Sunim:** The individual becomes stronger in a group. Also they give me support on my way to emancipation. As I grow and learn to be a better person, with less bad thoughts and words and deeds, I need the support of others. So I bow to them to thank them for helping me.



**Luca:** So if I practice Buddhism everyone will bow to me?

**Sunim:** I suppose you could understand it that way! But you had better deserve it!



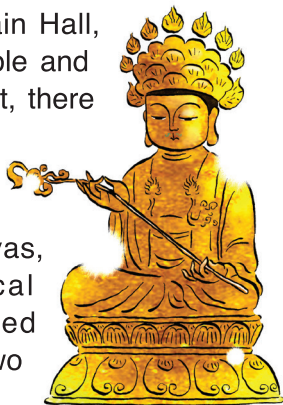


## Conversation 25: The Main Hall (Part 3)

**Sunim:** For Buddhists, respect is one of the most important values and so we learn through respect to value all things, living and not living.

**Luca:** There are quite a few statues up there on the platform. What are they all?

**Sunim:** Temples vary. In the Main Hall, according to the size of the temple and the wish of the Sunim who built it, there are different possibilities. For example, there might be three Buddhas, three Bodhisattvas, one Buddha and two Bodhisattvas, one Buddha and two historical personages (usually enlightened ones), or one Bodhisattva and two historical or mythical personages.



**Sara:** How do you tell which is a Buddha and which is a Bo... what? What is it?



**Sunim:** Bodhisattva! A Buddha is a totally enlightened being who teaches others. A Bodhisattva is a being who has given up enlightenment to help others. They are beings who help us. There are many and we will talk about them as we see the artistic representation, a statue or a painting, of each one.



**Luca:** You mean these are just statues, the bodhisattvas don't actually look like that?

**Sunim:** I suppose the answer is that we don't really know.... More later, for now let us concentrate on the Hall.



## REVIEW 5

### A. Questions

1. Do Buddhists worship the statue?  
Why or why not?
2. Why do Buddhists bow?
3. Why do they bow three times?
4. Why are the three called the Three \_\_\_\_\_?

What are they?

5. Is the Buddha the same as a Bodhisattva?

What, if any, is the difference?

### B. Try these Expressions for Yourself!

1. I bet / I'll bet
  - i) I bet you ski well as you live in Switzerland.
  - ii) I'll bet that you are going to win the race.
  - iii) I bet you can't save any money.



2. (Ok.) Here goes!

i) "Come on. Try jumping off that board!" "Ok. Here goes!"

ii) "Are you going off to your exam? Good luck!" "Yep. Here goes!"

iii) "Let's try bowing." "Ok, here goes."

3. I suppose

i) I suppose you're right.

ii) Do you suppose rich people eat caviar every day?

iii) Suppose you are right, then what?

4. Things / People vary.

i) "Why do you put soy sauce on your rice?" "Peoples' taste varies."

ii) Some people are positive thinkers, others are negative. People vary.

iii) "Oh, the last pineapple was so delicious!" "Well, things vary."

5. How do you tell which is which?

i) You have twins! How do you tell which is which?

ii) How do you know which chili is hot and which is not?

iii) How can you tell which is a rose and which is a lotus?