

Good Teachers are Hard to Find

-selection from the writings of Ming Dynasty Great Master Han Shan
("Silly Mountain")

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In the past, when the Ch'an movement really flourished, there were bright-eyed Good Knowing Advisors everywhere. The monks who investigated were many and in a great number of places there were instances of real revelations. So it's said that it isn't Ch'an which is lacking, but rather, that good teachers are hard to find. By now, the home of Ch'an has become lonely and desolate. It's been that way for a long time already. Sure, there are those who on impulse bring forth the resolve to investigate Ch'an. They may even have the fortune to meet Good Knowing Advisors who employ provisional techniques to help their students make progress according to their propensities, and to seal and certify them according to their potential. Nonetheless, these students have shallow faculties, and easily jump to the conclusion that they have already gained some attainment. Moreover, they do not believe in the Sagely Teachings of the Thus Come One, do not seek the true and proper path, and insist on muddling along in their own confusion. Consequently they settle for cheap imitation seals of approval. Not only do such people delude themselves, they misguide others as well. Isn't this something to be apprehensive about?

Moreover, prime ministers and others among the laity, who had some level of attainment as recorded in the *ANNALS OF THE TRANSMISSION OF THE LIGHT* were just a handful. And yet, within the wearisome dust of this present age, there are those who can't even uphold the major precepts, and whose false thinking is wild and turbid. And yet, relying on their worldly intelligence, they read a few of the records of the virtuous ones of old and start believing that they themselves have unsurpassed superior roots. Thereupon they become extremely conceited. Whenever they see left-home people they engage them in Ch'an banter, thinking themselves to have enlightened to the Way. This is a sickness of the times; it's a case of one blind person leading a multitude of blind people.

Today this old monk has pointed out some essential aspects of applying effort as were practiced by the Buddhas and Patriarchs. Those of you who are clear-headed and intelligent should rectify yourselves according to these standards.

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