

# *Records of the High Sanghans*

*as told by Tripitaka Master Hua*

*continued from issue #189*

## *Great Master Seng Ji*

High Master Seng Ji of the Jin Dynasty dwelt at Lu Mountain. His teacher was Great Master Hwei Ywan. There is no record of what his layname was, or of where he came from. After he left the home-life under Great Master Hwei Ywan, he studied the Buddhist Sutras, as well as the worldly classics. When he was thirty, he ascended the high seat; that is, he started lecturing on the Sutras.

Every Buddhist Sanghan should study, come to understand, and then lecture on several of the Sutras. One might specialize in the Vajra Sutra, or the Shurangama Sutra, or the Amitabha Sutra, or the Heart Sutra. Every Sanghan should be able to explain Sutras; no one should be a "dumb sheep" Sanghan--someone who cannot speak. If you are a "dumb sheep," then when someone asks you a question, you will reply, "Ask someone else," because you basically don't know the answer yourself. A "dumb sheep" is mute to the point that it can't even bleat! You should certainly study and penetrate the Buddhadharmas. If you do not understand the principles contained in the Sutras, how can you be said to be a student of the Buddhadharmas? If you call yourself a Buddhist disciple but you do not understand the Sutras that the Buddha spoke, then what kind of Buddhist disciple are you?

When High Master Seng Ji lectured on the Sutras, his delivery was different from other people's. First of all his voice was clear and resonant, so that whoever heard his voice would certainly be able to deeply enter the Sutra Treasury and have wisdom like the sea. Secondly, the speaking on the principles was clear and easily understood. He was not like most people who when they talk seem to have principle in what they say but in fact do not. This is because they basically do not know what the true principle is. When they come to a place they do not understand, they gloss over it and do not explain it clearly. High Master Seng Ji distinguished the principles clearly and explained them so that they could be easily understood.

Thirdly, he could explain the principles in ways that others had never explained them before. Beside those three points, he also had many other special qualities that enabled those who listened to his lectures to obtain many advantages. There would be no way to list all his good points. That is why Great Master Hwei Ywan said to him, "Working together as we do, you and I are able to propagate the Buddhadharmas." His meaning was, "You are the one who helps me the most." A statement like that, coming from Great Master Hwei Ywan, is obviously not a casual comment. It shows that Master Hwei Ywan was particularly fond of that disciple.

High Master Seng Ji was exceptionally intelligent. But he did not enjoy a long lifespan. After living at Lu Mountain for a period of years, he became ill. He had never been ill before, but once he got sick, he did not recover. Great Master Hwei Ywan handed him a lighted candle to help

keep him from falling asleep, and instructed him to recite the Buddha's name. "Recite 'Namo Amita Buddha' and seek rebirth in the Land of Ultimate Bliss."

Master Seng Ji held the candle and recited the Buddha's name, and the people attending upon him helped him recite. After reciting for a long time, he became tired, handed the candle to one of the left-home people who was attending upon him, and fell asleep. In his sleep he had a dream in which he saw Limitless Life Buddha--Amita Buddha--holding a golden lotus disk and coming to welcome him. The Master himself was holding a lighted candle and following Amita Buddha throughout the ten directions to bow to all Buddhas. He suddenly awoke from the dream and told the people attending upon him about it. "Probably I am not going to get well. I'm going to go to rebirth." After that, he recited "Namo Amita Buddha" with all his effort. Then, while he was reciting, he gazed up into space, as if he were seeing the manifestation of some state there. After that, he was aware that in human life, the four elements themselves do not have any sickness or any pain or suffering. What we call sickness is experienced because we still have attachments. Thereupon he renounced both body and mind and did nothing else but recite the Buddha's name. After several more days of recitation, one day he got up by himself, put on his shoes, stood erect, placed his palms together, and recited the Buddha's name while gazing into space. Right then, while he was standing there, he went to rebirth in the Western Land.

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