

Water-Mirror Turning Back the Tide of Destiny

Essays and Verses by Venerable Master Hua

An Evaluation of Ywan Shr Kai

The person who gives an evaluation is an onlooker who makes an appraisal of the people who are involved. The people who are involved are like actors in a play. The onlooker is like a person below in the audience. When the audience watches a play, they usually give evaluations of the actors' performances.

The people who were in power at any given time were like actors in a play, and that is how we who come after them look at them--as if they were actors in a play. We also pass judgment on them if they performed criminal acts, just like a judge sentencing criminals. We are all like judges, and those who were formerly in power and committed criminal acts are like people on trial. However, when we make our evaluations, we must have some foundation for them.

THE AUSPICIOUS KNIGHT IS GENTLE. The Chinese character ywan (袁), of Ywan Shr Kai's name, is composed of two parts. On top is the character 吉, which means "auspicious," and the bottom part is a radical similar to 衣 ("clothes"), but it is not the complete character. So the line says, literally, "harboring gentleness," which means it resembles the character for "clothes," which are very flexible and gentle. The whole line is a description of the character ywan (袁).

IN THIRTY YEARS, THERE WILL BE A CHANGE. The "thirty" here can be written this way: 卅. Fill in the line at the bottom, and it becomes the character shr(世). This way of writing the word "thirty" (三十年變) refers to the first character of Ywan Shr Kai's personal name. This prediction was made by someone in ancient times, before the Chinese Republic was ever founded. These few lines refer to the thirtieth year of Gwang Syu (光緒) reign period of the Ching Dynasty .

HOW COULD IT BE A COMMON PERSON? The character that means "How could it be," is the left part of the third character of Ywan's name (凱). "Person" in Chinese is "ren" (人). If you add the Chinese character for "person" to the right part of the character "豈" it becomes "凱" which is the third character of Ywan's name. Therefore, these few lines are simply talking about Ywan Shr Kai 袁世凱.

The following lines are a pronouncement on his crimes. It says, THE UDUMBARA FLOWER MANIFESTS BUT FOR AN INSTANT. He planned and dreamed of being emperor for so many years, but when he finally became emperor, his reign lasted only eighty-some-odd days. If you add the Coronation Day and the Day of his abdication, it was eighty-three days. So it says, "like the appearance of the Udumbara flower."

IN THE SOUTH, NORTH, EAST, AND WEST.... After his reign as emperor, in China, to the north, south, east, and west, DRAGONS AND LIONS VIED IN FIERCE BATTLE. All the people with power in the various regions were fighting and struggling with one another. There were Dwan Chi-rei (段祺瑞), and Feng Gwo-Jang (馮國璋), and others. One was nicknamed "dog," and others were nicknamed "dragon," "tiger," and so forth. People of that time were all very familiar with those nicknames, and so it says, "dragons and lions vied in fierce battle."

WITH SEVEN PLUS EIGHT, THINGS WILL BE SETTLED. Add seven to eight, and it becomes fifteen. This means not until the fifteenth year of the Republic (1926) did the struggle for power among the warlords come to an end. After the Hung Syan Reign Period ended (1915), the Republic continued, but it took a good many more years for the problems left over from Ywan Shr Kai to be settled.

THE MOUNTAINS AND THE RIVERS WILL BE PUT IN ORDER. Around the fifteenth year of the Republic, political order was restored, and to a certain degree, peace came to China. This prediction was made by someone during the Swei (隋) Dynasty (581-618 A.D.). At that time, China was in a state of great turmoil, and so an official went to Tyan Tai Mountain (天台山) to cultivate the Way. After he achieved success in his cultivation, someone asked him what China would be like in the future. He gave predictions concerning China's fate by hundred-year periods. The part about Ywan Shr-kai was in the lines covering that particular period. That is why the text says, "these words of prediction concerning the fate of China were made by an ancient cultivator."

UPON THE FALL OF THE MANCHU GOVERNMENT, when the last emperor of the Ching Dynasty abdicated, and the Ching Dynasty of the Manchus ended, YWAN SHR-KAI TOOK THE OPPORTUNITY TO RISE TO POWER. After Dr. Sun Yat-Sen succeeded in the revolution, Ywan Shr-kai competed with him for the Presidency (of the Republic). Sun Yat-sen yielded the presidency to Ywan Shr-kai, but being a president was not enough for Ywan. He was afraid that someone else might be elected president, and so he changed the Republic back to a monarchy and installed himself as the Emperor. He named his reign period Hung Syan. But it was overthrown after eighty-some-odd days. The first year of that reign period was also its final year.

There were additional circumstances behind Ywan's ambition to become an emperor. Rumor has it that Ywan was a big frog-spirit. That's because during the term of his presidency, he took his tea in a special jade teacup. One day, when his attendant was bringing him tea in his jade cup, Ywan was asleep on the couch, and in his sleep he had returned to his original shape and become a huge frog. Seeing the huge frog on the couch, the attendant was so startled that he dropped the teacup, which broke. Needless to say, he was frightened out of his wits, because he could be beheaded for breaking the President's favorite jade cup. Out of desperation, he sought help from Ywan's old family servant, hoping the latter would say a few kind words on his behalf and come to his rescue.

The old family servant said, "Don't tell him you saw a big frog; say that when you brought the tea in to him, instead of the President, you saw a great golden dragon lying on the couch, baring its teeth and menacing with its claws, as if it were going to bite you, and so you dropped the tea cup. Everything will be okay if you tell him that."

And so the attendant went to confess to the President. He said, "Mr. President, I broke your cup, because I saw you as a golden dragon lying on the couch. I was too scared, I dropped the cup."

When Ywan heard that he was a dragon, he said, "It doesn't matter, it doesn't matter." From then on, he had the idea that he really ought to be Emperor. So you see, he was ruined by the words of the old family servant. If it hadn't been for that, he would never have dared become Emperor. But from then on, he looked upon himself as a true dragon, the bona fide son of Heaven, and acted upon it. From this incident, you can see that many things in the world are false, and start out with a misconception. Since he was phony himself, he could be deceived by others. Basically, the whole point in establishing the Republic was to not have an Emperor, but he went on to make himself Emperor. Probably the spirit of the Empire had not yet wholly dispersed.

HE WAS DECEPTIVE, CRAFTY, HAUGHTY, AND OVERBEARING, NOT HESITATING TO EMPLOY FOUL TRICKERY. He had played up to the Empress Syi Tai-hou, but afterwards betrayed

her, and he deceived many other people, too. HE WAS A SCHEMER AND A PHONY, ONLY PLOTTING FOR HIS OWN BENEFIT. He would only do something if it was beneficial to him personally. If there was nothing in it for him, he wouldn't do it. HE WAS AS TREACHEROUS AS TSAU TSAU AND AS DECEPTIVE AS WANG MANG. His behavior was like theirs. HE WAS A WICKED MAN OF HIS TIME, AND AN OFFENDER FOR TEN THOUSAND GENERATIONS. He was the person who least followed the rules of his era, and, among the people of China, he was pronounced a criminal for ten thousand generations to come.

AT THAT TIME, IN CHINA, IT WAS DARK, AS IF THERE WERE NO SUN. WISE PEOPLE WENT INTO RETIREMENT. For example, Tsai Sung-pwo (蔡松坡) pretended that he was given over to licentiousness, spending all his time with women and acting as if he didn't understand anything. Ywan Shr-kai figured he was finished, that he was totally given over to debauchery, and so he didn't pay too much attention to him. He didn't lock him up, although he did keep him under detention. So Tsai was able to disguise himself and escape to the railroad station, where he boarded a train and got away. Later he led the punitive expedition that overthrew Ywan's imperial reign.

WHILE TRAITORS GRABBED POWER--Ywan Was surrounded by people whose minds were immersed in greed and desire, and who wanted to rise to power hanging to his coattails. HIS REIGN PERIOD, HUNG SYAN, BLOOMED FOR AN INSTANT, LIKE THE UDUMBARA FLOWER. Ywan changed the Republic back to a monarchy and named his reign period Hung Syan. But it was very short-lived, like an udumbara blossom. THIS WHOLE AFFAIR REALLY MAKES THOSE WHO COME AFTER HIM SIGH IN ENDLESS REGRET. What he did was certainly pitiful, and it makes one sigh in lamentation. It can serve as a mirror for future generations.

A VERSE SAYS:

THE WAY OF HEAVEN HAS NO FAVORITES, BUT AIDS THOSE
WHO ARE KIND AND GOOD.
HE WHO CHEATS THE WORLD AND SCHEMES AGAINST HIS
COUNTRY WILL NOT ENDURE.
ADOPTING THE REIGNING TITLE "HUNG SYAN," HE
DECLARED HIMSELF KING,
BUT IT WAS LIKE THE BRIEF BLOSSOMING OF THE
UDUMBARA FLOWER;
TSAI SUNG PWO'S REVOLT BROUGHT HIS RULE QUICKLY TO
AN END.
HE LOST HIS LIFE AND HIS REPUTATION, BECOMING THE
SHAME OF A THOUSAND AGES.
THOSE WHO REVILED HIM IN SPEECH AND CONDEMNED HIM
WITH PEN AROSE FROM THE MYRIAD DIRECTIONS.

COMMENTARY:

THE WAY OF HEAVEN HAS NO FAVORITES, BUT AIDS THOSE WHO ARE KIND AND GOOD./ The "Way of Heaven" refers to the heavenly truth; not Lord God, in this case. The truth does not take sides with anyone. It does not draw near to anyone or stay away from anyone. That is what's meant by the line: "The Way of Heaven knows neither nearness nor distance." It only protects the good, but not the evil. This is especially so when it comes to the heavenly truth protecting countries. A saying goes, "People with virtue will be protected. Those without virtue will be lost." Only if one has virtue can one remain the ruler of a country.

HE WHO CHEATS THE WORLD AND SCHEMES AGAINST HIS COUNTRY WILL NOT ENDURE./ If by schemes one gets to rule, one cannot keep one's power for long. One can only last for an instant, like the blooming of an udumbara flower.

ADOPTING THE REIGNING TITLE "HUNG SYAN," HE DECLARED HIMSELF KING./ BUT IT WAS LIKE THE BRIEF BLOSSOMING OF THE UDUMBARA FLOWER:/ TSAI SUNG PWO'S REVOLT BROUGHT HIS RULE QUICKLY TO AN END./ Ywan was an emperor for a very brief period of time. When Tsai Sung-Pwo revolted, his Hung Syan reign period was overthrown. HE LOST HIS LIFE AND HIS REPUTATION, BECOMING THE SHAME OF A THOUSAND AGES./ THOSE WHO REVEILED HIM WITH SPEECH AND CONDEMNED HIM WITH PEN AROSE FROM THE MYRIAD DIRECTIONS./ Ywan succeeded in becoming Emperor, but in the end, he lost his life and his reputation. The Chinese of many future generations will feel ashamed because of him. Some of them condemn him verbally, others denounce him in writing. People of all directions know of the offenses he committed.

HERE ARE A FEW WORDS OF EXHORTATION TO ALL WORLD LEADERS: DO NOT DISGRACE THOSE OF LATER GENERATIONS SO THEIR FACES ARE ROBBED OF LIGHT./ I have a message for all the world leaders, all those in power and position in the world: Do not, for the sake of your own personal desires, fail to pay attention to the consequences of your actions and make people of future generations curse you the moment your name is mentioned. Don't make the people of your country lose the light from their faces, or make their sons or grandsons have even less face.