

The Bodhi Seal of the Patriarchs

by the Venerable Master Yun and the Venerable Master Hua

The Forty-sixth Generation of Patriarchs, Dhyana Master Tz Jywe

(Kind Awakening) of Dzung Dse (Profound Purport Monastery)



The Master was a son of the Sun family of Mingjou prefecture. He obtained the Dharma from Dhyana Master Gwang Jau (Vast Illumination), and assumed the position of Abbot after Master Chang Lu. Once a monk asked him, "What is the principle behind Bodhidharma facing the wall?" The Master remained silent for a long time. Then the monk bowed.

The Master commented, "Today on being questioned by this monk, I became a virtual mute!"

One day he entered the Dharma hall and said,

One hundred and five days after the winter
solstice

Is the festival during which food is eaten cold.

On the road of living people, dead people are
countlessly many.

They burrow their heads into a thicket of
thorns; ah! the suffering that living beings
undergo!
What is the meaning behind sweeping your
ancestor's graves? It's merely piling dirt
upon mounds of bones.
Only those who have left the home-life no
longer traverse the road of non-birth.
Great Assembly, speak up! Which way should
we go?
Tyan Tai Mountain in the south, Wu Tai
Mountain in the north— investigate!

A verse in praise says:

His way issued forth from a single strand:
The Chan and Pure Land schools stood face to
face.
Which is provisional? Which is actual?
Even a thousand sages would not be able to
discern this.
The Great Being teaches in response to the
opportunity;
Adverse or favorable states cannot be fathomed.
At Dung Lin (Eastern Grove) Monastery, the
Master established a Buddha-recitation
association.
At Bear's Ears Mountain, Bodhidharma sat
facing the wall.

Another verse says:

Jye Dz-twei was burned in a fire at Myan
Mountain.
A series of accidents led to this end; even at
death he did not submit.
To commemorate him, Prince Wen Gung of
Tsin set aside a day during which food had
to be eaten cold.
The enlightened one speaks the Dharma, "This
is just piling dirt onto a pile of bones."
Those who have set forth from the home-life
look lightly on fame and profit.
Only one who has transcended the ordinary can
freely fly about.
You ask, "What does this ultimately point to?"
Green pines, lush bamboo, plum blossoms
blooming on the mountain range.

COMMENTARY:

Dharma Master Tz Jywe of Dzung Dse is the forty-sixth patriarch of the Tsau Dung Chan School. **The Master was a son of the Sun family of Mingjou prefecture.** after leaving the home-life, **he obtained** the mind-seal **Dharma** door **from** Dhyana **Master Gwang Jau** (Vast Illumination), **and assumed the position of abbot after Chang Lu.** After the former abbot, Dharma Master Chang Lu, resigned, Dhyana Master Tz Jywe took on the position.

A monk asked him. One time a monk came to ask the abbot a question: "What is the meaning of the Patriarch Bodhidharma facing the wall? What is the meaning of the Patriarch Bodhidharma sitting in Bear's Ear Mountain for nine years facing the wall?"

The Master remained silent for a long time, without talking. Since the monk asked him for the principle behind sitting facing the wall, the Master answered him with silence. He was simply acting out the meaning behind "facing the wall" -- it means not talking at all. **Then the monk bowed.** The monk understood, "Ah, it means not talking, it means acting like a dead person."

The Master Tz Jywe commented, "Today, on being questioned by this monk, I became a virtual mute! I have been rendered speechless." Actually this is a hidden allusion to their interchange. He did not want others to know about the true meaning of their dialogue. The monk understood. Master Tz Jywe had spoken Dharma without words, this kind of speaking was without shape or form.

One day he entered the Dharma hall and said, "One hundred and five days after the winter solstice / is the festival during which food is eaten cold. Cold Food Festival (寒食節 han shr iye) takes place one hundred and five days after the winter solstice. It is a day set aside in memory of Jye Jr-twei (介之推), during which food is eaten cold. During the Spring and Autumn Period, the prince Wen Gung (Chung Er 晉文公重耳) of the state of Tsin was ousted by his elder brother. He lived the life of a refugee, drifting from one state to another. He didn't have anything to eat or drink. As the saying goes, "A phoenix that has run out of luck is worse off than an ordinary chicken."

Although he was a prince, he assumed a very lowly position during his exile. A member of his retinue was the minister Jye Jr-twei, who, once when Prince Chung Er was on the brink of starving, cut off some flesh from his own thigh, cooked it, and served it to the prince. Jye was that sincere in aiding his prince.

Later Wen Gung returned to his own country and was restored to the throne. The ministers who had served him loyally during his years of exile all came to claim benefits for their merit, and they were generously rewarded with fiefs and high offices -- all except Jye Jr-twei, who, resolute and stubborn, refused to go before the prince.

Prince Wen Gung, in his newly regained glory, probably forgot his old friend and did not offer an official position to Jye Jr-twei. Jye Jr-twei probably thought, "Since I served you my own flesh, you couldn't possibly forget me." But Prince Wen Gung simply forgot about the incident. Jye Jr-twei was displeased. He took his mother to Myan Mountain and lived there in seclusion.

After some time passed, Prince Wen Gung suddenly remembered Jye Jr-twei and sent his men to look for him. Then he sent an envoy to Myan Mountain and asked Jye Jr-twei to come back. But Jye Jr-twei did not pay any attention to the prince and refused to come out.

The prince, determined to make Jye Jr-twei an official, sent another envoy to bring him to the palace. Jye Jr-twei retreated further into the mountain to a place where people could not reach him. There he lived a very quiet and rustic life with his mother.

But Prince Wen Gung thought of a wicked plot: he ordered the mountain to be burned, thinking that this would certainly drive out Jye Jr-twei. His men set fire to three sides of the mountain and left one side open. They waited for Jye Jr-twei to come out, but did not find him. After the fire died down, they went onto the mountain to look for him. They found Jye and his mother burned to death, hanging on to a large tree.

Prince Wen Gung of Tsin was filled with remorse. Actually the prince's plot was very stupid. Jye Jr-twei had to carry his old mother on his back; how could he possibly escape from the flames? Even if he had wanted to, he would not have managed to get out of the forest. In the end, both parties were harmed. Prince Wen Gung thought he could force Jye Jr-twei to come out by setting the forest on fire, but the result added to his remorse.

This took place two days before the Ching Ming Festival (the festival for sweeping one's parents' graves). The prince set aside that day in memory of Jye Jr-twei. On that day, the citizens were not allowed to use their stoves to cook their food; they had to eat their food cold. Wouldn't you say that Prince Wen Gung was a foolish ruler? He had already managed to kill Jye Jr-twei, and now, by issuing this edict, he was trying to show off his authority and power. "I have burned Jye to death, and now you common citizens are not allowed to use your cooking stoves!" Of what use was this? He wanted to commemorate his burning of Jye Jr-twei.

Dharma Master Tz Jywe's verse continues: **On the road of living people, dead people are countless many. / They burrow their heads into a thicket of thorns; ah! the torment that living beings undergo!** Living beings drive their heads into brambles and thorns and cut themselves until they are bleeding all over. How they torture themselves!

What is the meaning behind sweeping your ancestor's graves? It's merely piling dirt upon mounds of bones. It's simply dumping some earth on piles of rotten bones. This is just another facet of living beings' upside-downness. One person alleges this is right, another person alleges that is wrong, and they spin around in the cycle of rights and wrongs.

Only those who have left the home-life no longer traverse the road of non-birth. Only those who have set forth from the worldly life no longer walk on the road of non-birth—a state of no production and no extinction, no coming and no going.

Great assembly, speak up! Which way should we go? If left-home people do not walk on the road of non-birth, which way are they heading?"

Just as everyone was dumbstruck and speechless, the Master continued, **"Tyan Tai Mountain in the south, Wu Tai Mountain in the north—investigate!"** He emphasized the word "investigate." "Think it over as you meditate."

A verse in praise says: His way issued forth from a single strand: There was only a tiny opening, a very slight crevice. **The Chan and Pure Land schools stand face to face.** Each school proclaims its own merits and the other's faults, thus they mutually disagree. If you truly understand, you'll discover that Chan does not obstruct Pure Land, and Pure Land does not obstruct Chan. To truly investigate Chan is to truly recite the Buddha's name. To truly recite the Buddha's name is just to investigate Chan. These two schools are not pitted against each other.

Which is provisional? Which is actual? Ultimately, which is true and which is false? Which is important and which is unimportant? **Even a thousand sages would not be able to discern this.** Even if a thousand sages appeared in the world, still they wouldn't be able to settle the argument of who's right and who's wrong.

The Great Being teaches in response to the opportunity. Great Bodhisattvas teach and transform living beings according to their potential. **Adverse or favorable states cannot be fathomed.** At times they will teach living beings by means of adverse situations; at other times they will use favorable situations. Sometimes they will comfort you with kind and gentle words, at other times they will beat you over the head and give you a rude awakening. But most common people will fail to understand the intent of the sages. Most people cannot understand the actions of a superior person. The superior person is someone who has achieved extraordinary understanding that others cannot hope to reach.

At Dung Lin (Eastern Grove) Monastery, the Master established a Buddha-recitation association where they specialized in the Buddha-recitation Dharma door. **At Bear's Ears Mountain, Bodhidharma sat facing the wall.** On Bear's Ears Mountain, there is a Way-place exclusively devoted to Chan. Since living beings' faculties are different, they are gathered in by different Dharma doors.

We should not be as eccentric as Jye Jr-twei. He was too attached to his sense of personal integrity. He would rather burn to death with his mother than come out of the forest. This led to his mother's death. Would you say this was a filial act or not? He was not filial, nor was he a loyal subject. It's not known what his motives were when he offered his own flesh to Prince Wen Gung. And when Wen Gung forgot about him, Jye must have harbored a grudge. Otherwise he would not have felt so self-righteous and fiery and left. This fiery nature resulted in the fire outside. The outcome was that both he and his mother were burned to death.

Another verse says: Jye Jr-twei was burned in a fire at Myan Mountain. / A series of accidents led to this end; even at death he did not submit. You cannot always figure out or foretell how things are going to turn out. Often things turn out in the most unexpected ways. You might have the best of intentions to do something good, but you plant an evil cause in the process. At other times you might be engaged in doing something in a totally improper way, but you obtain a good result. These matters perplex people to no end.

Just take the example of Jye Jr-twei. He was extremely loyal and sincere to Prince Wen Gung, and yet in the end he was burned to death by the prince. This was a case of repaying kindness with animosity. But was it the case that Prince Wen Gung wanted it this way? No. Was it the case that Jye Jr-twei wanted things to turn out this way? No. It was a hit-or-miss situation that resulted in a great deal of unhappiness and regret.

To commemorate him, Prince Wen Gung of Tsin set aside a day during which food had to be eaten cold. Prince Wen Gung ordered that food had to be eaten cold on the day before the Ching Ming Festival. But of what use is eating cold food; what meaning has this act of commemorating Jye Jr-twei? It has no meaning. This shows how living beings turn things all around, piling mistake upon mistake. And so we have this story from history. The way I see it, all of this took place because events have to run their natural course.

The enlightened one speaks the Dharma. Dhyana Master Tz Jywe ascended the hall and spoke a verse: "What is the meaning behind sweeping your ancestor's graves? **This is just piling dirt onto a pile of bones.**" The meaning is that everything is impermanent. Everything you do is upside-down. You may insist you're right, but what's right about it? You may think something's wrong, but what's wrong with it? People are attached and so they argue that something is right or wrong, good or bad. Actually there isn't any of that foolishness going on.

Those who have set forth from the home-life look lightly on fame and profit. Left-home people see through all this and look lightly on fame and profit. **Only one who has transcended the ordinary can freely fly about.** Only someone who has gone beyond common people and entered the sagely realm enjoys true self-mastery. He is free to come and go. **You ask me, "What does this ultimately point**

to?" If you insist on further explanation, I'll tell you: **Green pines, lush bamboo, plum blossoms blooming on the mountain range.** Evergreen pines can withstand the bitter cold. Bamboo is hollow inside. Plum blossoms must undergo the severe cold of winter before they release their fragrance. All of these plants are very natural. They have "backbone." Anyone who has spine, backbone, and wisdom is like the green pine trees, lush bamboo, and plum blossoms.