

Water-Mirror Turning Back the Tide of Destiny

Essays and Verses by the Venerable Tripitaka Master Hua

In Memory of General Jang Yi-de

The General Jang was born in Jwo Prefecture (present day Hobei province) during the end of the Han Dynasty. His name was Fei, his other name was Yi-de. Throughout his life he honored upright and superior men but could not tolerate petty and mean persons. He swore with Lyu Bei and Gwan Yu to be as brothers. The three of them mutually shared the deep affection of blood brothers, without harboring any feeling of self and others. They vowed to undergo good fortune and disasters together. That was the famous oath they made at the Peach Garden. To this day people are still inspired to emulate the spirit of those three men.

At that time China was in a state of utter chaos. Military leaders rose from all corners, each staking out his own territory in one part of the country. These three men formed an alliance and swore, with one heart and united strength, to revive the crumbling Han Dynasty.

It was the time of the Yellow Turban Rebellion, and the people could not live in peace. Together with his comrades, General Jang was successful in quelling the rebellion of the "Yellow Turban" bandits. He was enrolled by the imperial court and given full opportunity to develop his military prowess. He made conquests to the east and north, repeatedly establishing distinguished military service for the Western State of Shu. He then became one of the Five Tiger Generals and the title of Marquis of the Western Realm was conferred upon him.

Later, General Gwan Yu, because of his heedlessness, lost Jing Jou District to the enemy and was murdered by those from the Eastern State of Wu. General Jang, determined to avenge his brother's death, waged war on the Eastern State of Wu. In order to commemorate the death of General Gwan, General Jang ordered every soldier among the three armies to don the plain clothes of mourning. He made repeated commands and injunctions to this effect, allowing his troops only one day to carry out the order, threatening any offender with punishment by execution. That night he was assassinated by one of his officers.

The loyalty and righteousness of the general is admirable indeed, but his violent temper should act as a warning to us all.

A verse in praise says:

Valiant, brave and undaunted in war,
He found no match on the battlefield.
A single yell at Dangyang, ,
Was enough to stir up doubts in Tsau Tsau's mind.
Within his coarseness, there was also finesse:
He managed to fool General Yan Yan.
He avenged his brother's death.
The populace were amazed by this event.

Another verse says:

He had a leopard's head, round eyes and a chain-like beard.
Emitting the lion's roar, he startled the hundred beasts.
The battle at the bridge of Dangyang -- how magnificent was he!
The incident at Rush Flower River attests to his extreme loyalty and righteousness.
What an outstanding and remarkable man:
He aided the oppressed and supported the imperiled, and was a true hero indeed.
The general was endowed with a vast, magnanimous spirit.
Unchanging and straight like vajra, he will be remembered forever.

COMMENTARY:

"In memory" means this piece was written in remembrance of General Jang Yi-de of the Three Kingdoms Period (A.D. 222-265). His name was Fei and his other name was Yi-de. "Fei" means "to fly," and "Yi-de" means "winged virtue." He lived during the end of the Han Dynasty, in Jwo Prefecture (present day Hobei province). Throughout his life he honored upright and superior men, but could not tolerate petty and mean persons. He liked to be in the company of superior people, but could not see eye to eye with petty people. If he laid eyes on petty and mean people, he would want to kill them. He swore with Lyu Bei and Gwan Yu to be as brothers. The three of them, though they had different last names, mutually shared the deep affection of blood brothers, as if the other two men were their own hands and feet, indispensable in their lives. They did this **without harboring any feeling of self and others**. They shared a bond of righteousness. **They vowed to undergo good fortune and disasters together**. They would enjoy blessings together and also undergo disasters together. **That was the famous oath** in which the three men swore as brothers **at the Peach Garden**. Their reputation has thrived from ancient times to the present, and **to this day people are still inspired to emulate the spirit of those three men**. Their righteousness is known throughout the past and present, and people who came later also followed their style of pledging themselves as brothers.

At that time China was in a state of utter chaos -- it was very turbulent. Military leaders rose from all corners, each claiming to be king or warlord, each staking out his own territory in one part of the country. These three men formed an alliance and swore, with one heart and united strength, to revive the crumbling Han Dynasty. They were determined to revive the Han house.

It was the time of the Yellow Turban Rebellion, during the reign of Emperor Syan of Han, and the people could not live in peace. Together with his comrades, General Jang was successful in quelling the rebellion of the "Yellow Turban" bandits, and established merit for himself. He was enrolled by the imperial court and given full opportunity to develop his military prowess. He was given a chance to employ to the fullest his military talents. **He made conquests to the east and north, repeatedly establishing distinguished military service for the Western State of Shu.** He achieved considerable military merit. **He then became one of the Five Tiger Generals and the title of Marquis of the Western Realm was conferred upon him.** There were five tiger generals in the state of Shu: Gwan Gung, Jang Fei, Jau Yun, Ma Chau and Hwang Jung. Hwang Jung was an old general, a very capable individual.

Later, General Gwan Yu, because of his heedlessness, lost Jing Jou District to the enemy and was murdered by those from the Eastern State of Wu. Gwan Yu was murdered by the men of Sun Chywan, leader of the state of Wu.

General Jang, determined to avenge his brother's death, waged war on the Eastern State of Wu. He wanted to take revenge on the enemy. **In order to commemorate the death of General Gwan, General Jang ordered every soldier among the three armies -- the left, right and center divisions -- to don the plain clothes of mourning.** Basically, it was appropriate to order the troops to don the white clothes of mourning, however, his command was too severe and too quick. **He made repeated commands and injunctions to this effect, allowing his troops only one day to carry out the order.** He allowed them only one day to do this, which was an impossible task because there were so many troops. He could not wait, but made repeated injunctions, **threatening any offender with punishment by execution.** He was going to kill whoever did not meet his order. Because he was too hasty and oppressive and did not think things over, not allowing his men some time to carry out the command, the army officer could not fulfill his order. And so, **that night he was assassinated by one of his officers.**

The loyalty and righteousness of the general is admirable indeed, deserving our respect, **but his violent temper should act as a warning to us all.** He was hot-tempered and rash, without bothering to think things over. He would rush ahead and do whatever he said he was going to do.

A verse in praise says: Valiant, brave and undaunted in war, / he found no match on the battlefield. Everywhere he was peerless in battle. At all times he could defeat his enemy. **A single yell at Dangyang.** One time Tsau Tsau was hot in pursuit of him in the battle of Dangyang. General Jang let out a loud cry, and the bridge fell over. Tsau Tsau was taken aback. He did not know what spiritual penetrations or skill Jang Fei had used to cause the bridge to collapse. Thereupon Tsau Tsau did not dare pursue him anymore. **This was enough to stir up doubts in Tsau Tsau's mind.**

Within his coarseness, there was also finesse. Sometimes he also had strategy. Once in a battle with General Yan Yan, General Fei devised certain schemes and defeated Yan Yan. **He managed to fool General Yan Yan. He avenged his brother's death.** He wanted to avenge the death of his elder brother Gwan Yu, but as a result, he was murdered by one of his officers, with his eyes open. **The populace were amazed by this event.** The people did not know what to think of it; they thought this was very strange.

Another verse says: He had a leopard's head, round eyes and a chainlike beard. He had a very prominent head, round eyes and a beard that was chain-like. **Emitting the lion's roar, he startled the hundred beasts.** One time in a fit of anger he let out a loud yell. Tsau Tsau's general was so alarmed that he fell down from his horse and met his death. And so Jang Fei's yell was like a lion's roar, striking fear into the hearts of the hundred beasts. **The battle at the bridge of Dangyang -- how magnificent was he!** The yell he emitted at Dangyang Bridge tore the bridge down. Tsau Tsau got so scared that he didn't even dare pursue Jang Fei.

The incident at Rush Flower River attests to his extreme loyalty and righteousness. At Rush Flower River he snatched the young child emperor A Dou from the Lady Mei. This was because if Lady Mei took off with the child, Lyou Bei would be without an heir. **What an outstanding and remarkable man -- he was exceptional, a very rare breed. He aided the oppressed and supported the imperiled, and was a true hero indeed.** He liked to help people who were in need and solve their problems for them. He was a great hero. **The general was endowed with a vast, magnanimous spirit.** He had a righteousness, a vast spirit, much like that of General Gwan Gung. **Unchanging and straight**

like vajra, he will be remembered forever. He was like a vajra spirit who glared with his eyes. To this day, most people are still very respectful and admiring of Number-Three Lord Jang.