

Water-Mirror Turning Back the Tide of Destiny

Crown Prince Syau Jau Ming

Essays and Verses by the Venerable Tripitaka Master Hua

Text:

The Crown Prince had the family name of Syau, and the personal name of Tung, and his style-name was De Shr. He was the son of Emperor Wu of the Lyang Dynasty. His natural disposition was humane and filial, and his conduct was upright and straightforward. Born bright and alert, he was fond of literature and was especially knowledgeable with regard to Lyu Sye (劉勰)'s work. [Lyu Sye was the author of the treatise in literary criticism: *The Literary Mind and Carving of Dragons* 文心雕龍.] Lyu Sye first slandered Buddhism but later believed. Eventually he left the home-life and became Dharma Master Hwei Di (慧地).

The Crown Prince was deeply influenced by his father, so he became a devout Buddhist. He liked to recite the Vajra Sutra, and he divided that Sutra into thirty-two sections. His entire life's energy was devoted to classical and contemporary literature. He collected samples of the poetry and prose from the Chin and Han Dynasties, all the way through the Chi and Lyang Dynasties, and he compiled them into an anthology. This was known as the *Jau Ming Anthology* (昭明文選) to posterity. Among all collections of ancient and modern works, this anthology is considered the very best and a standard for literary trends of later ages.

It is a shame that the prince died when he was only thirty-one. His posthumous title was Jau Ming. Both the Syaus, father and son, achieved great distinction in the field of literature. They were particularly innovative in the area of palace-style writing. A verse in praise says:

*Born into a family of wealth and honor,
He compiled an anthology of literature.
Naturally endowed with roots of wisdom,
He brought prominence and recognition to the door of the Dharma.
His writings are left to posterity;
His virtue stems from the distant past.
Buddhas of the future,
Neither increase nor decrease.*

Another verse says:

*He entered the imperial palace to fulfill his past wishes.
Not having renounced fame and wealth, he ran from west to east.
Attached to literature, he compiled an anthology on the odes.
Enamored with poetry, he adored the Carving of Dragons.*

*Jau Ming's liberation should have been without dwelling.
A lofty and refined scholar should not be insatiably greedy.
He manifested a body to speak Dharma. Do you recognize it?
Change from evil to good, do not be muddled.*

Commentary:

People in the world give rise to delusion, create karma, and undergo the retribution. We flow back and forth in the sea of karma and cannot find its shore. Some people are attached to wealth; some are attached to sex; some are attached to fame; some are attached to food, and some are attached to sleep. Some people will not give up sleep no matter what you offer to them. These are the five great matters—wealth, sex, fame, food, and sleep. Even many old cultivators fall into these five deep, bottomless pits and find it hard to get out. There is no end and no limit to these pits.

Crown Prince Jau Ming's personal name was Tung (統), which means "completely," "unite," or "in general". There were many states that thrived during the South and North Dynasties Period (Sung, Chi, Lyang, Chen, Swei (宋,齊,梁,陳,隋) A.D.420-589), and many people wanted to be emperors. Emperor Wu of Lyang (梁武帝) could not unite the entire kingdom, and so he hoped his son would bring the kingdom under one rule. That was why he named his son Tung, "to unite." The Prince was also named De Shr (德施), "bestowing virtue." His father gave him this name with great expectations, hoping that he would unite the kingdom, bestow virtue upon the people, and rule the country with a humane government.

His natural disposition was humane and filial, and his conduct was upright and straightforward. Humane means being kind and not wishing to kill.

Being filial means not to forget one's roots. It is said, "Filial respect and brotherly subordination are the roots of being human." "Upright" means not being biased, but having firm, moral integrity. "Straightforward" means to have backbone. **Born bright and alert**—that was his natural endowment. It means his natural endowment was superior because he had cultivated blessings of wisdom for many lifetimes, he was very intelligent, sharp, and alert.

He was fond of literature. That was his attachment. The Prince **was especially knowledgeable with regards to Lyu Sye's work.** Lyu Sye (劉勰) was the author of the treatise in literary criticism, *Wen Syin Dyau Lung: The Literary Mind and Carving of Dragons* (文心雕龍). Lyu Sye was the Prince's favorite author. The Prince also studied his writings. **His entire life's energy was devoted to classical and contemporary literature. He collected samples of the poetry and prose from the Chin and Han Dynasties,** founded by Chin Shr-huang (秦始皇) and Han Kau-tzu (漢高祖) respectively, **all the way through the Chi and Lyang Dynasties.** This was the Five Dynasties Period, which included the short dynasties Lyang, Tang, Jin, Han, and Jou (梁,唐,晉,漢,周), A.D.420-618. The Crown Prince studied poetry, odes, songs, and verses, and achieved great distinction in them. Then, based on his entire life

experience, he compiled an anthology of literary works known as the *Jau Ming Anthology* (昭明文選). This anthology was a collection of the best, the most popular and admired, literary works by the ancients, on through his contemporaries. As the saying goes, "Collecting little bits of fur from under the fox's armpits to make a fur coat." (集腋成裘). This means collecting a lot of good fur to make an expensive fur coat. People will buy it and wear it. **Among all collections of ancient and modern works, this anthology is considered the very best, and a standard for literary trends of later ages.** The Chinese compound for "standard" is made up of two characters *jwun sheng* (準繩). It means criterion; also a carpenter's marking line.

Prince Jau Ming ate his fill and looked for something to do while he had nothing to do. He ended up giving people a lot of trouble. Many people of later ages have become infatuated with the *Jau Ming Anthology*, and as a result a great deal of their time has been wasted on investigating that work. Some people start out with the desire to cultivate, but soon their thoughts turn to the Anthology. When they are bowing to the Buddhas they cannot concentrate, and then run out to read the Anthology. While reciting the Sutras, they are distracted by thoughts of studying the Anthology. Even if they cultivate, they cannot achieve Buddhahood in this way. Would you say this was giving people trouble or not?

When he was cultivating, he didn't know how to cultivate properly. Prince Jau Ming began projects but did not see them through to their completion. He was not constant. On the other hand, Lyu Sye, although he had written against Buddhism and slandered it in the beginning, later returned from this stray path. He deeply believed in Buddhism and left the home-life, and he became Dharma Master Hwei Di (慧地法師 "Wisdom Ground"). Prince Jau Ming **liked to recite the Vajra Sutra, and he divided that Sutra into thirty-two sections.** Although he was extremely intelligent, he died at the age of thirty-one. **His posthumous title was Jau Ming.** Jau means "prominent," brilliance that is exposed. He was very bright. **A verse in praise says: Born into a family of wealth and honor.** In the past he cultivated blessings and wisdom. But he did not cultivate to the ultimate point, and so he was born into the royal family. He took a wrong road. **He compiled an anthology of literature.** Born into the royal household, he had nothing to do, so he looked for something to do. He became engrossed in study. He studied literature, and compiled a literary anthology. **Naturally endowed with roots of wisdom:** Because he had cultivated blessings and wisdom in the past, he was intelligent and wise, and **he brought prominence and recognition to the door of the Dharma.** Because he had roots of wisdom, he was able to bring about a marked development in Buddhism. **His writings are left to posterity.** His essays have been disseminated in later ages, and they have always been favorite topics of discussion to many people. **His virtue extends to the distant future.** From the virtue that he had amassed, we can tell that he had cultivated blessings and wisdom in the past.

Buddhas of the future, neither increase nor decrease. Prince Jau Ming is also a Buddha of the future. He also can reach a state that is neither produced nor destroyed, neither defiled nor pure, neither increased nor decreased.

Another verse says: He entered the imperial palace to fulfill his past wishes. When he cultivated in his past lives he was greedy for glory and riches. He longed for the easy life of an emperor, where all he had to do was open his mouth and the food would come. He wanted to enjoy a life of ease and comfort in the palace. That is how he ended up in the palace in this life. But, after ending up in the palace, he still did not want to be a Buddha. He indulged in fancy and refined writing, laboring over expressions and working, and collecting literary essays from ancient to his contemporary times.

Not having renounced fame and wealth, he ran from west to east. He had not forgotten fame and wealth. West and east here does not refer just to the directions of west and east. Here it means running around in the world, amidst the revolving wheel of the six paths. Suddenly he is up in the heavens; suddenly down on earth; suddenly he goes south, suddenly he goes north. He drifts and wanders about aimlessly in the sea of karma.

Attached to literature, he compiled an anthology on the odes. He was attached to literature, also to talent, and so he wanted to be innovative. **Enamored with poetry, he adored the Carving of Dragons.** The idiom *lyau lyan hwang wang* (流連荒亡) is used in this line of verse. The idiom has the following definition:

Lyau (流) means flowing downstream and forgetting to return. *Lyan* (連) means going upstream and forgetting to return. *Hwang* (荒) means hunting with insatiable greed. *Wang* (亡) means being insatiably fond of wine. *Lyau, lyan, hwang* and *wang*: flowing with, working against, debauchery, and getting lost—these are the unavoidable mistakes of many princes. Prince Jau Ming adored the treatise called *Literary Mind and Carving of Dragons*. He also studied the author Lyu Sye's writings and afterwards compiled his own anthology.

Jau Ming's liberation should have been without dwelling. If Prince Jau Ming were truly liberated, he would not have compiled an anthology. For other people to do that might have been all right, but for him to compile an anthology shows that he still had an attachment. He should have been without dwelling. **A lofty and refined scholar should not be insatiably greedy.** People with pure and lofty character should not be greedy for glory and riches. They should not run towards a palace. Those who have truly understood are without thoughts of wealth and honor, poverty or lowliness.

He manifested a body to speak the Dharma. Do you recognize it? Prince Jau Ming personally appeared to explain the Dharma, to give us a warning so that we can break all our attachments. **Change from evil to good. Do not be muddled.** We should select what is good and follow it, and we should rectify what is not good. Do not be like the blind leading the blind, perpetrating and passing on mistakes so that other people follow you. Those of us who study the Buddhadharma must understand the cycle of cause and effect. We must know how to recite this individual's sutra and know what his life is about. If we know how to recite this sutra, we will find out that this person's life is a living sutra. Everybody has a share in this sutra. We should study a person's living sutra. We should not study dead sutras.