

The Bodhi Seal of the Patriarchs

by the Venerable Master Yün and the Venerable Master Hua

*The Thirty-fourth Generation of Patriarchs,
Dhyana Master Sying Sz (Walking and Thinking)
of Ching Ywan (Green Source)*

The Bodhi Seal of the Patriarchs series in Vajra



Dharma Master Sying Sz

Bodhi Sea generally follows the same order as the Buddhist Text Translation Society's Chinese edition, that is, the order in which the articles were lectured. In this issue however, and for the next few issues, Vajra Bodhi Sea will be presenting articles that, for various reasons, were left out of that order.

The Patriarch Ching Ywan Sz was born in Ji Jou in An Cheng. His surname was Liu. He left the home-life in his youth. Whenever people gathered to discuss the Way, only the Patriarch remained silent. When he heard about the Dharma assembly at Tsao Syi, he went there to pay his respects and bow.

He asked, "What can we take as fundamental so that we don't fall into successive stages?"

"What do you usually do?"

The Patriarch said, "I do not even take action regarding the truth of Sages."

"Then what successive stages are there?"

The Patriarch said, "Since no action is taken regarding the truth of Sages, what successive stages can there be?"

Tsao Syi said, "So it is, so it is. Take good care of yourself and protect it." Then he appointed him senior in the assembly. After the appointment, he said to the Patriarch, "It is fitting for you to depart and go teach in another place. Do not remain at this place."

The Patriarch went back to his original country, An Cheng. He founded Ching Ywan Tranquil Dwelling Monastery and spoke Dharma for over thirty years.

In the eighteenth year of the Kai Ywan reign period, in the eleventh month, on the thirteenth day, he ascended the hall and announced his intent to the assembly. Then he sat in full lotus and left. Syi Tsung bestowed a posthumous name, Dhyana Master Vast Aid, and called the stupa "Returning to the Truth."

A verse in praise of him says:

*He did not seek the truth of Sages, so what successive stages could he
fall into?
In the fire was a lotus; in the snow, a red sun.
There appeared one with great devices who tipped tradition out of its old
ruts
And established a model for thousands of generations.
He is a lofty Patriarch of the Three Schools.*

Another verse in praise of him says:

*Great devices, great functioning, great spiritual powers,
Not even acting upon the Sages' truth, what family did he have?
The path of words and language cut off, he forgot about stages.
The place of the mind's formations is gone; distinctions of east and west
disappear.
Instruct and guide the masses so they awaken to fundamental emptiness.
The traditional rules from ancient times, he transmitted to coming
generations.
Thus I have heard of such work devoid of appearances.*

Commentary:

The Master was one of **the thirty-fourth generation of Patriarchs** in China. **Sying Sz of Ching Ywan**: "Ching Ywan" is a place and the **Dhyana Master's** name is "Sying Sz." **The Patriarch Ching Ywan Sz was born in Ji Jou** (Auspicious Province) in **An Cheng** county. **His surname was Liu. He left the home-life in his youth.** When he was quite young, he left home. **Whenever people gathered to discuss the Way, only the Patriarch remained silent.** The Thirty-fourth Patriarch, Dhyana Master Sying Sz did not say anything. It didn't matter how many people were gathered together, he didn't talk. **When he heard about the Dharma assembly at Tsao Syi**: he heard about Tsao Syi (Tsao Creek) Nan Hwa Sse (Southern Flower Monastery), the Way-place of the Great Master, the Sixth Patriarch. **He went there to pay his respects and bow.** He went to Nan Hua Monastery, to where the Sixth Patriarch was, in order to make obeisance to him. **He asked, "What can we take as fundamental, so that we do not fall into successive stages?"** That is, there will be no sequence, no sections, no step-by-step.

"What do you usually do?" The great Master, the Sixth Patriarch questioned him in response to his question about how not to fall into successive stages. The Sixth Patriarch asked him, "What do you do? In the past what have you done?"

The Patriarch said, Dhyana Master Sying Sz said, **"I do not even take action regarding the truth of the Sages.** As far as I'm concerned, I do not even do the study of the principle pertaining to the Sages."

The Sixth Patriarch said, **"Then what successive stages are there?"**

The Patriarch said, Master Sying Sz replied, **"Since no action is taken regarding the truth of the Sages, what successive stages can there be?"**

Tsao Syi said, the Sixth Patriarch replied, "So it is, so it is. Right. That's correct. Why don't you take action with regard to the truth of the Sages? It's because you already understand. If you didn't understand, you'd have to go searching. But you already understand. You have already obtained it, and so there's no need. You've already eaten your fill, there's no need to eat any more." That's how it is, and so he says, "So it is, so it is." The Sixth Patriarch said, "That's how it is, that's how it is. **Take good care of yourself and protect it.** Look after yourself well and protect your wisdom." **Then he appointed him senior in the assembly.** He thereupon told him to be the senior-seated one. **After the appointment, he said to the Patriarch,** the Sixth Patriarch said to Dhyana Master Sying Sz, **"It is fitting for you to depart and go teach in another place.** You should go to another place and become a Dharma-speaking host. **Do not remain at this place.** Don't stay here where I am. You do not belong at Nan Hwa Monastery. You should go out and, in another area, become a teaching and transforming host. Go out to teach and transform people. Do not remain here." **The Patriarch went back to his original country.** Dhyana Master Sying Sz went back to **An Cheng** county. **He founded Ching Ywan Tranquil Dwelling Monastery.** At Ching Ywan, he founded Tranquil

Dwelling Monastery, **and spoke Dharma for over thirty years.** He spoke Dharma for everyone for over three decades.

In the eighteenth year of the Kai Ywan reign period of the Tang Dynasty, in the eleventh month, on the thirteenth day, he ascended the hall and announced his intent to the assembly. He ascended the Dharma seat and spoke to everyone, saying, "I am leaving today. You should all be attentive." **Then he sat in full lotus and left.** He sat and went away. He went to rebirth. He completed the stillness. He died. Emperor **Syi Tsung** of the Tang Dynasty, because of the Master's evident skill, **bestowed a posthumous name, Dhyana Master Vast Aid, and called the stupa "Returning to the Truth."**

A verse in praise of him says:

*He did not seek the truth of Sages, so what successive stages could he
fall into?*

In the fire was a lotus; in the snow, a red sun.

*There appeared one with great devices, who tipped tradition out of its old
ruts.*

And established a model for thousands of generations.

He is a lofty Patriarch of the Three Schools.

Since the truth of the Sages was not actively sought, there weren't any successive stages at all. In the fire, a lotus flower appeared. The snow is white, but in it was a red sun. He was a person with great creativity, great transformations, great works, and great ability. He revised the old rules. He upset staid tradition. He set up new rules for left-home people. The three schools may refer to (1) the Chan School, (2) the Pure Land School, and (3) the Teaching School. He was a lofty Patriarch. He exerted a tremendous influence.

Another verse in praise of him says:

Great devices, great functioning, great spiritual powers,

Not even acting upon the Sages' truth, what family did he have?

The path of words and language cut off, he forgot about stages.

*The place of the mind's formations is gone; distinctions of east and west
disappear.*

Instruct and guide the masses so they awaken to fundamental emptiness.

*The traditional rules from ancient times, he transmitted to coming
generations.*

Thus I have heard of such work devoid of appearances.

Patriarch Sying Sz of Ching Ywan is a person of great devices and great functioning, and he attained great spiritual penetrations. He asked the Sixth Patriarch about the stages of cultivation, and the Great Master, the Sixth Patriarch, asked him what he did and what dharma he cultivated, since the Master from Ching Ywan said he didn't even act upon the truth of the Sages. The "truth of the Sages" refers to the Four Noble Truths. He didn't

investigate them. Why? Because he understood. But he really understood; he wasn't like those of us who have come after him and who, not understanding, pretend to understand; who, not knowing, pretend to know. It's not that we truly know. Since he truly knew, he said he didn't even act upon the truth of the Sages.

The Sixth Patriarch said, "Since you don't act upon the truth of the Sages, then what successive stages do you have? What successive stages do you fall into?"

Since Master Ching Ywan understood, he replied to the Sixth Patriarch, "What successive stages could there be?"

The Sixth Patriarch said, "Yes, that's how it is. Apply your effort well in that way."

And so he's called one of great devices, great functioning, and great spiritual powers. He didn't have any purport at all. He swept away all Dharmas and was apart from all marks. He understood everything. His was a great penetration, a great awakening. It wasn't that he just pretended and said, "I know everything, I understand everything." Not so.

And so, at that time, the avenue of language and words was cut off. There was nothing that could be expressed in words. Successive stages were all forgotten. He didn't even know what was meant by successive stages. That's why he asked.

The path the mind travelled also did not exist. There wasn't even any false thinking, no east or west. Everything was ended. And so Tsao Syi told him to go to a place of his own and become a Dharma host. He was to go to another place to teach and transform people.

He taught and transformed all living beings so they could awaken to fundamental emptiness--to the fact that everything is basically devoid of a nature of its own. There is no need to be attached to anything. But one must still not do any evil and must offer up all good conduct. Not being attached is one thing, but one must still do good and avoid doing evil.

The rules he established were based on the rules set forth from ancient times. Later generations use these as their model.

"I heard about this principle and recognize it as the effortless work in the Way which is without any marks." So it's said that Sages don't have a self. They don't take credit for anything or claim any merit. This is walking the Way without attaining anything. There is nothing to cultivate or certify to. This is called practicing the Way without attainment.