

# *The Bodhi Seal of the Patriarchs*

*The Forty-seventh Patriarch Dhyana Master Hwai Shen (Cherishing the Profound) of Tz Shou (Reception of Kindness) Monastery*

*by the Venerable Master Yun and the Venerable Master Hua*



*Dhyana Master Hwai Shen*

**The Master was the Dharma heir of Dhyana Master Jyu Syu of Bau Fu. Once a monk asked him, "What is the Buddha?"**

**The Master replied, "Assigning someone a job according to his capacity." The monk asked further, "After he is assigned to his job, then what?"**

**The Master replied, "The staff at Tyan Tai."**

**Another question was asked, "What is the true and actual substance?"**

**The Master answered, "It's very cold today!"**

**The monk asked, "What does this mean any way?"**

**The Master replied, "Snow covering thousands upon thousands of mountains."**

**A verse in praise says:**

*The three enlightenments have reached ultimate perfection.  
Assign him a job according to his capacity,  
The staff at Tyan Tai.  
Travel and eat while complying with conditions.  
Today it's very cold,  
Mountains shrouded in snow.  
The true and actual substance:  
To be reminisced over a thousand ages.*

**Another verse says:**

*The Chan School puts an end to intellectual discernment and mental  
discrimination,  
Thus eliminating extraneous thinking.  
The reply does not answer the question; his speech seems upside-down.  
The specifics contradict the principle; his words are jumbled up.  
The true substance: "It's very cold today!"  
The ultimate purport: "a pool amidst snow-capped mountains."  
His ambiguous answers transcend the common rule.  
Words perish, deliberations are destroyed, and even thoughts are lost.*

**Commentary:**

**The Master was the Dharma heir of Dhyana Master Jyu Syu of Bau Fu.** He was a very virtuous person. **Once** while the Master was the abbot at Bau Fu, **a monk asked him, "What is the Buddha?"**

**The Master replied, "Assigning someone a job according to his capacity."** Give him a job that is suited to his ability. That was the Master's reply to the monk's question concerning who the Buddha is. The meaning is that one should not look for the Buddha in profound or esoteric matters. If you understand ordinary affairs, you also understand the Buddha. You have to weigh the situation in your mind: whatever position a person is suited for, that's the position you want to give him.

**The monk asked further, "After he is assigned to his job, then what?"** What do you do after that?

**The Master replied, "The staff at Tyan Tai."** This staff is used to strike people. Basically this answer is a non sequitur, not a straightforward reply to the question. The question and answer seem to have nothing to do with each other. However, this is the style of Chan. You aren't supposed to find a clue; you have no way to exercise your discriminating consciousness.

Another question was asked, "What is the true and actual substance?" What is our true and basic substance?

The Master answered, "It's very cold today!" Look at that kind of reply.

The monk asked, "What does this mean anyway?" The Master replied, "Snow covering thousands upon thousands of mountains." Again the answer seems to be totally unrelated to the question. The message is: don't discriminate. Don't think so much.

A verse in praise says: *The three enlightenments have reached ultimate perfection.* The three enlightenments are (1) enlightenment of self, which is different from common people who are unenlightened; (2) enlightenment of others, which is different from those of the Two Vehicles who do not wish to enlighten others. Arhats only want to finish their own business and do not want to bother with other people's business; but Bodhisattvas benefit themselves and benefit others. They enlighten themselves and enlighten others; they save themselves and save others. And (3) perfection of enlightened practices, which is not the same as Bodhisattvas. This is the position of Buddhahood, in which enlightened practices are complete and full. Although the Bodhisattvas enlighten themselves and others, they have not perfected their enlightened practices. In this case, all three enlightenment's are perfected; they have reached their ultimate point.

*Assign him a job according to his capacity. / The staff at Tyan Tai*, the Chan staff at Tyan Tai Mountain. *Travel and eat while complying with conditions.* Accord with conditions as they arise. *Today it's very cold.* This was the Master's reply to the monk's question, "What is the true and actual substance?" And when the question was further pursued, the Master answered, *"Mountains shrouded in snow."* All the mountains are covered with snow.

*The true and actual substance:* what is it? It is *to be reminisced over a thousand ages.* In a thousand years, people should think it over. There will be someone who will be able to understand this principle.

Another verse says: *The Chan School puts an end to intellectual discernment and mental discrimination.* In the Chan School, "The path of languages is cut off; the place of the mind's workings is destroyed," *thus eliminating extraneous thinking.* You do away with discrimination and cognitive activity. "Sweep away all dharmas, and separate from all marks." Empty out everything. *The reply does not answer the question; his speech seems upside-down.* He has swept clean the thought of wanting to know things. Because he has emptied everything out and no longer knows anything, the Master's reply does not fit the question. A monk asked him, "What is the Buddha?" and the Master replied, "Assign someone a job according to his capacity." In what way are these two connected? His speech seems to be upside-down. *The specifics contradict the principle; his words are jumbled up.* Events and principle seem to go against one another, and his words seem all mixed up, disconnected.

**The true substance:** *"It's very cold today."* A monk asked him, "What is the true and actual substance?" The Master answered, "It's very cold today." Again, the reply was incongruent with what was asked. **The ultimate purport:** *"a pool amidst snow-capped mountains."* The question was about heaven, and the answer was about the earth. The question was related to the sun, and the answer was about the moon.

**His ambiguous answers transcend the common rule.** It seems as if he was dodging the issue and not meeting the question head on. He was removed from the language and thinking patterns of most ordinary people. **Words perish, deliberations are destroyed, and even thoughts are lost.** Words are dismissed, conscious effort is obliterated, and even thoughts are gone. In the Chan School, you "sweep away all dharmas and separate from all marks." Words are not established, and the transmission is outside the teaching. It is an inconceivable Dharma-door that defies description by words.

### *The Kind Hearted Hermit*

*by Lu Pu-hwang (Tang Dynasty)*

*Around this lonely mountain-top a myriad  
peaks revolve.*

*I've come to cultivate ascetics' disciplined  
resolve.*

*With broom in hand I sweep away  
The deer tracks in the snow;  
They passed my hut, but by morning,  
Hunters will not know.*