

The Bodhi Seal of the Patriarchs

by the Venerable Master Yun and the Venerable Master Hua



*Dhyana Master Jing Sywan
("Alert to the Mysterious") of Tai Yang ("Sun") '*

ESSAY:

THE MASTER CAME FROM THE JANG FAMILY OF JYANG SYA. AT NINETEEN, HE BECAME A FULLY-ORDAINED MONK. HE WENT TO STUDY UNDER MASTER LYANG SHAN, AND ASKED THE LATTER, "WHAT IS THE WAY-PLACE OF NO MARKS?"

LYANG SHAN POINTED AT AN IMAGE OF GWAN YIN BODHISATTVA, AND SAID, "THIS IS A PICTURE PAINTED BY THE RECLUSE WU."

THE MASTER WAS IN THE PROCESS OF THINKING UP A REPLY, WHEN LYANG SHAN PUSHED HIM, SAYING, "THIS IS THAT WHICH HAS MARKS. WHAT IS THAT WHICH HAS NO MARKS?"

THE MASTER HAD AN AWAKENING, AND BOWED TO LYANG SHAN. LYANG SHAN REMARKED, "WHY DON'T YOU UTTER A SINGLE WORD?"

THE MASTER REPLIED, "IT'S NOT THAT I AM DECLINING TO SPEAK, BUT I AM AFRAID THAT WHAT I SAY WILL BE RECORDED ON PAPER."

THEN LYANG SHAN LAUGHED AND SAID, "WHAT YOU'VE JUST SAID MERITS BEING INSCRIBED ON A STONE TABLET!"

THE MASTER HAD A MAGNIFICENT AND AWE-INSPIRING STATURE. FROM EARLY YOUTH, HE ADHERED TO THE PRACTICE OF EATING ONLY ONCE A DAY. WHILE LIVING AT TAI YANG ("SUN") MONASTERY, HIS FEET NEVER STEPPED OVER THE THRESHOLD, AND FOR OVER FIFTY YEARS HIS RIBS NEVER TOUCHED THE MAT. ON THE NINETEENTH DAY OF THE SEVENTH MONTH, IN THE CYCLICAL YEAR *DING MOU*, THAT IS, THE FIFTH YEAR OF THE TYAN SHENG REIGN PERIOD OF THE EMPEROR REN DZUNG OF THE SUNG DYNASTY, THE MASTER SENT A VERSE TO THE MINISTER WANG SHU, THE CONTENTS OF WHICH READ:

IN MY EIGHTY-FIVE YEARS,
THE CAUSES I HAVE CULTIVATED
HAVE BROUGHT ME TO THIS POINT.
YOU ASK ME WHERE I'M ABOUT TO
RETURN TO:
THE APPEARANCE OF THE SUMMIT IS
NOT EASILY VISIBLE.
AT THAT POINT, HIS BRUSH STOPPED,
AND HE PASSED INTO THE STILLNESS.
HIS STUPA WAS ERECTED ON THAT
MOUNTAIN.

COMMENTARY:

THE MASTER CAME FROM THE JANG FAMILY OF JYANG SYA. Master Jing Sywan was born in the Jang family of Jyang Sya County, Hu Bei Province.

AT NINETEEN, HE BECAME A FULLY-ORDAINED MONK. He received the complete precepts. HE WENT TO STUDY UNDER MASTER LYANG SHAN, AND ASKED THE LATTER, "WHAT IS THE WAY PLACE OF NO MARKS?"

LYANG SHAN POINTED AT AN IMAGE OF GWAN YIN BODHISATTVA, AND SAID, "THIS IS A PICTURE PAINTED BY THE RECLUSE WU."

THE MASTER WAS IN THE PROCESS OF THINKING UP A REPLY. Dhyana Master Jing Sywan was pondering how to respond, WHEN LYANG SHAN PUSHED HIM, SAYING, "THIS IS THAT WHICH HAS MARKS. WHAT IS THAT WHICH HAS NO MARKS?"

THE MASTER HAD AN AWAKENING, AND BOWED TO LYANG SHAN. He became enlightened at that very moment, and so he bowed to Dhyana Master Lyang Shan. LYANG SHAN REMARKED, "WHY DON'T YOU UTTER A SINGLE WORD? Why don't you say something?"

THE MASTER REPLIED, "IT'S NOT THAT I AM DECLINING TO SPEAK, BUT I AM AFRAID THAT WHAT I SAY WILL BE RECORDED ON PAPER." Dhyana Master Jing Sywan said, "If I had something to say, I would not leave." His bowing meant that he was about to take his leave. He said, "I am afraid that if I were to say something, it would be recorded on paper, and traces would be revealed."

THEN LYANG SHAN LAUGHED AND SAID, "WHAT YOU'VE JUST SAID MERITS BEING INSCRIBED ON A STONE TABLET!" Dhyana Master Lyang Shan was very happy and replied, "What you have just said, 'I am afraid that it would be recorded on paper,' should be inscribed in stone."

THE MASTER HAD A MAGNIFICENT AND AWE-INSPIRING STATURE. The appearance of this Dhyana Master was unusual. He was very majestic and impressive looking. FROM EARLY YOUTH, HE ADHERED TO THE PRACTICE OF EATING ONLY ONCE A DAY. WHILE LIVING AT TAI YANG ("SUN") MONASTERY, HIS FEET NEVER STEPPED OVER THE THRESHOLD, AND FOR FIFTY YEARS HIS RIBS NEVER TOUCHED THE MAT. In his youth, he already ate only one meal a day at noon. While dwelling at Tai Yang Monastery, he never walked out of the gate—he never left the monastery. For fifty years, he never let his ribs touch the mat.

ON THE NINETEENTH DAY OF THE SEVENTH MONTH, IN THE CYCLICAL YEAR *DING MOU*, THAT IS, THE FIFTH YEAR OF THE TYAN SHENG REIGN PERIOD OF THE EMPEROR REN DZUNG OF THE SUNG DYNASTY, THE MASTER SENT A VERSE TO THE MINISTER WANG SHU, who was a great official at that time, THE CONTENTS OF WHICH READ: IN MY EIGHTY-FIVE YEARS,/ THE CAUSES I HAVE CULTIVATED HAVE BROUGHT ME TO THIS POINT./ I have lived for eighty-five years, and the causes I have cultivated are just like this. YOU ASK ME WHERE I'M ABOUT TO RETURN TO./ THE APPEARANCE OF THE SUMMIT IS NOT EASILY VISIBLE./ If you ask me where I am heading for, I am going to a place where the summit is not easy to see. Nobody can see it; I am going to the place of no-attachment.

AT THAT POINT, HIS BRUSH STOPPED, AND HE PASSED INTO THE STILLNESS. HIS STUPA WAS ERECTED ON THAT MOUNTAIN. Then he stopped writing with his brush, and passed into quiescence. His stupa was built near Tai Yang Monastery.

A VERSE IN PRAISE OF HIM SAYS:

THE WAY-PLACE OF NO MARK:
WHERE WON'T YOU SEE IT?
WITHOUT STIRRING IT,
IT REVOLVES BY ITSELF,
INSTANTANEOUSLY TRANSCENDING
EXPEDIENT MEANS.
HE FEARED WHAT HE SAID WOULD
GET RECORDED ON PAPER,
BUT HIS WORDS WERE INSCRIBED ON
STONE TABLETS EVERYWHERE.
IN THE DEAD OF NIGHT,
RIGHT IN THE MIDDLE OF THE SKY,
A SOLITARY SUN APPEARS.

COMMENTARY:

THE WAY-PLACE OF NO MARK: WHERE WON'T YOU SEE IT?/ Every place is just the Way-place of no mark. WITHOUT STIRRING IT, IT REVOLVES BY ITSELF,/ INSTANTANEOUSLY TRANSCENDING EXPEDIENT MEANS./ You don't need to stir it up; it can turn and revolve by itself. With sudden enlightenment, one can transcend all the expedient Dharma-doors.

HE FEARED WHAT HE SAID WOULD GET RECORDED ON PAPER,/ BUT HIS WORDS WERE INSCRIBED ON STONE TABLETS EVERYWHERE./ Dhyana Master Jing Sywan was afraid that what he said would be recorded on paper, but Dhyana Master Lyang Shan thought those words should be chiselled in stone. Because nobody had ever said those words before, or had ever had the insight required to say something like that.

IN THE DEAD OF NIGHT, RIGHT IN THE MIDDLE OF THE SKY,/ A SOLITARY SUN APPEARS./ The night seemed to turn into day, the sun shone brightly. That means he was an outstanding per-son among his fellow cultivators; he was different from the rest. He was afraid that what he said would be recorded on paper, and so he didn't want to leave any traces. Leaving traces behind is an attachment to marks, and not a Way-place of no marks. Therefore, he wanted nothing.

ANOTHER VERSE SAYS:

THE MARKLESS WAY-PLACE IS
VAST AND EMPTY.
THE HUMAN MIND IS DANGEROUS:
HOLD TO THE MIDDLE.
THINKING ABOUT PLUMS TO TRY TO
QUENCH ONE'S THIRST IS JUST
CHEATING ONESELF;
DRAWING CAKES TO SATIATE ONE'S

HUNGER IS ONLY FIT FOR PLACATING
CHILDREN.
FEARING LEST WHAT HE SAID WOULD
BE RECORDED WITH BRUSH AND
PAPER, HE PUT AN END TO
SPEAKING.
WISHING TO SERVE AS A MODEL,
HE ATE ONE MEAL A DAY AT NOON.
IN EIGHTY-FIVE YEARS,
IT WAS STILL HARD TO SEE IT:
AFTER SITTING STILL AND DEPARTING,
AFFAIRS UNFOLDED LAYER AFTER
LAYER.

COMMENTARY:

THE MARKLESS WAY-PLACE IS VAST AND EMPTY./ Way-places all have marks. "The Way-place with no mark" is just a term, and basically there is no such place. Therefore, here it says "vast and empty". Basically, there is no Way-place that is markless.

THE HUMAN MIND IS DANGEROUS:/ HOLD TO THE MIDDLE./ In Confucianism, it is said that "the human mind is dangerous; the Way-mind is subtle. Concentrate and be singleminded: sincerely hold to the Middle." This is (a translation of) the sixteen characters mind-dharma of the Confucian School. "The human mind is dangerous," it cannot be trusted. If you don't want to be caught in a dangerous situation, then you should not try to seek what is subtle and wonderful. You should stick to the Middle Way. Why is that? THINKING ABOUT PLUMS TO TRY TO QUENCH ONE'S THIRST IS JUST CHEATING ONESELF;/ When we feel thirsty, if we think about sour plums, lots of saliva will be produced in our mouths. Then we will no longer feel thirsty. However, although it is possible to alleviate our thirst temporarily by thinking that way, we are cheating ourselves. This refers to an incident that occurred during the Three-Kingdoms Period. Tsau Tsau was leading his troops in battle. After walking for a long distance, his men became hungry and thirsty; they had no water to drink. At that time, Tsau Tsau told his troops: "Very soon we will arrive at a plum orchard, and then we will eat sour plums and will no longer feel thirsty." The moment his troops heard that, they started to imagine the taste of sour plums, and so they forgot their thirst. That is known as "to quench one's thirst by imagining plums." In fact, this is just cheating oneself.

DRAWING CAKES TO SATIATE ONE'S HUNGER IS ONLY FIT FOR PLACATING CHILDREN./ Children like to eat cakes. You may draw the picture of a cake on paper and tell them, "Eat it and you will not be hungry," but that is a child's game. This principle applies to one who is looking for that which has no mark. Actually, you do not need to look for it, because there is no markless Way-place after all.

Dhyana Master Jing Sywan asked about the markless Way-place. Dhyana Master Lyang Shan pointed to the image of Gwan Yin Bodhisattva, painted by Wu Dau Dz. When Dhyana Master Jing Sywan was about to say something, Dhyana Master Lyang Shan quickly said, "Since this

has marks, you should know what has no mark." Upon hearing that, Dhyana Master Jing Sywan immediately became enlightened. He did not need to "quench his thirst by imagining plums," nor did he need to "draw a picture of cakes to satisfy his hunger."

FEARING LEST WHAT HE SAID WOULD BE RECORDED WITH BRUSH AND PAPER, HE PUT AN END TO SPEAKING./ Then Dhyana Master Jing Sywan was about to leave Dhyana Master Lyang Shan. The latter asked him, "Why didn't you say anything?" Dhyana Master Jing Sywan answered that he was afraid to leave traces on paper, and so without saying anything, he left. Why did he leave? Because he understood; he was enlightened, and so he said nothing.

WISHING TO SERVE AS A MODEL, HE ATE ONE MEAL A DAY AT NOON./ Because he wished to be an example of one who holds the precepts, he ate one meal a day at noon. IN EIGHTY-FIVE YEARS, IT WAS STILL HARD TO SEE IT:/ He wrote a verse saying, "In my eighty-five years, I have reached my present state of cultivation. But the summit is not easily seen."

AFTER SITTING STILL AND DEPARTING, AFFAIRS UNFOLDED LAYER AFTER LAYER./ He sat there and went off to rebirth. Specifics unfold layer upon layer; principles open up layer after layer as well. Specifics and principles both expand layer upon layer and are inexhaustible.

