



# Journey to the West

## (31)

### Chapter 13

He falls into the tiger's den and is saved by the Planet Venus;  
On Double-Forked Peak, Boqin entertains the Priest.

Interpreter: Henry Chang  
Translator: Zhi Zhu  
Editor: Ken & Luchia Howell

( For the details of the story, please refer to Chapter 13 in Journey to the West as translated by W. J. F. Jenner, published by Foreign Languages Press, Beijing, ISBN 7-119-00653-3 )

### <<Interpretation>>

Human bodies are hard to get. As a human, you have chances to elevate. If you do not like your current image or status, you have the opportunity to cultivate and transform yourself into an immortal or Buddha. If you do not cherish your human body, you might choose to be demoted. If you are demoted, you fall to the energy level. There are some people who did not cultivate themselves in order to elevate when they were alive; after they died; they were trapped in the energy level. Staying at the energy level means that you have been bewildered. One day, you will realize the importance of enlightenment again. Once you have comprehended that, you will want to come back down again because you cannot elevate from the energy level. How does a person

gain this comprehension? Through wisdom. You can gain some wisdom at the energy level because there you can see many things. The more you see, the more you know that the level you are at now is not good enough. So you will want to come back down again, since there are no opportunities to elevate from the energy level. That is why I often say cultivation needs to go backwards, and not stay at a higher level. Let's use the story of "Madam White Snake" as an example. That white snake, if she no longer wished to have the image of a snake, could not directly move up; she would need to come down and become human again. Although she was already an immortal, she still needs to come down and go through a series of emotional obstacles, irritations, and tests. Then she will gain wisdom. With her wisdom and her compassion, then she can elevate. If she did not come back down to be human again, and stayed on the energy level, she would forever just be a white snake without a chance to elevate. You probably are asking why can't she use her magic power to change herself

into a human; but that wouldn't count. She has to become a real human being in order to elevate.

### **Moving beyond the energy level and getting to the idea level**

Therefore, a person in the human world has opportunities either to go back to the energy level, or directly elevate himself to a higher level. When he elevates, his form will also change. He might get to the idea level. That is why we say, on the contrary, the lower form level might lead us to the idea level. This is our way of cultivation. It is called "Moving beyond the energy and getting to the idea level." Many people have cultivated themselves and reached the energy level. If you have attained the energy level, it means you have a firm conviction. This firm conviction is a personal business. If you do not have enough wisdom, it does not matter how strong your conviction is, it will not help you move up. Why not? If you only know the best thing in the world is to be a human, then you can only be a human. Your firm conviction is based on what you like the most.

Let me give you an example. We have often heard stories like this: There is a child. He meets an immortal. The immortal tells him that he can make a wish and no matter what kind of wish it is, it will be granted. The child thinks for a long time. If this child has great wisdom, he can make a big wish. Unfortunately, this child does not have much wisdom. He tells the immortal he wants a bag of candies. So he gets a bag of candies. What a pity! If it were me, I would not want a bag of

candies, I would want money. With money, I can buy a lot more candies. But the child did not know. The same kind of situation also applies to us. Suppose a person does not have wisdom and is on the energy level with his strong convictions; what can he eventually become? He considers all the animals in the world and tries to figure out what kind of being is the highest. He can only recognize that a human being is the highest being or perhaps something a little higher, such as an emperor. All right! So if he came down to the human world, the most he could achieve is becoming an emperor. From another point of view, he can only reach the level of a dragon.

### **Combining Compassion and Wisdom**

With all his efforts, all he can achieve from the energy level is to become a dragon with his one granted wish. Some day, he will still need to come back down again, since so far he does not have the wisdom to know there is something even better. In other words, if today we cultivate ourselves on the energy level, and focus on cultivating our strong convictions, the end result will be that we can only achieve what is in the range of our wisdom. It is a very pitiful thing for those people who do not have enough wisdom. But, would it be possible for a person to be born with enough wisdom? It is not very likely. If a person already has sufficient wisdom, he will not cultivate this Dharma gate. He will cultivate in the human world so he will move beyond the energy level and get to the idea level. Anything that you do should start with basics, or from the fundamentals. The basis is the idea level. You do not

need to go looking for energy elsewhere. Once you have the idea, you can generate the energy yourself. If you want to get to the idea level, your form should also move up directly. We call this upgrading directly from the form level. So here, we are not talking about strong convictions. We are talking about combining both compassion and wisdom. These few sentences tell us to take the Bodhisattva path. A person who wants to become a Bodhisattva must walk on the Bodhisattva path. Do his actions need to be both compassionate and wise? Was the meaning of combining compassion and wisdom the same as moving beyond energy and getting to the idea? A Bodhisattva is a person who is both compassionate and wise. A person who knows how to combine compassion and wisdom in his actions will be able to move directly to the idea level from the form level without passing through the energy level. If you are not cultivating the Bodhisattva path, you will have no choice but to fall to the energy level. You will need to practice Zen stillness, and then move into a stage of holding a strong conviction. Through your strong convictions, slowly you will transform your form. But if you lack wisdom, it doesn't matter how strong your convictions are, your form will not move beyond your imagination. Since all you can imagine is at this level and you still believe that the current status is the highest, with all your strong beliefs, you will still come back down to be a human again. The most you can achieve is to become an Emperor, or a dragon.

Someone using strong conviction to gain the status of emperor would need to use his energy in exchange for this position, since he only has this

much wisdom. Compassion and wisdom should be one. Now he has used his wisdom to become an emperor, or in other words, he has used the merits and virtue that he had earned through compassion and wisdom in exchange for an emperor's position; thus he would no longer have any energy anymore. He used to have compassion. His compassion matched his wisdom in the beginning, but was consumed in his becoming emperor. Once he becomes an emperor, his compassion disappears, or is used up. Let me give you an example. Suppose today I want to become an emperor and to become emperor requires one hundred thousand Yuan and one diamond. If I have already become an emperor, will I still have the one hundred thousand Yuan? No, I will have spent it. Will I still have the diamond? No, I will have spent it too. As we can see in history, many emperors were very foolish; that was because they used their compassion and wisdom in exchange for imperial status, and thus became not very bright. Will he be able to give back anything to the people? No, he is no longer able to. He can only protect himself as emperor. Although he is not very bright and not capable, people still respect him; and still address him "Long live our Master. Long live the Emperor. Long life to him." Why? He has exchanged everything for blessing and good fortune. Where can you find his wisdom? He no longer has any. How can you fulfill the duty of an emperor without wisdom? That is why we say the situation of all such emperors is illusory. The reason is that this kind of emperor has the mandate of Heaven, but this is the result of making an exchange. When he has used up all his blessed good fortune, the mandate of Heaven will disappear, and so will he.

## The Consistency of Idea, Energy, and Form

This is the result of becoming emperor by exchanging compassion and wisdom for position, instead of unifying idea, energy, and form. If imperial position had come directly from the unification of idea, energy, and form, the mandate of Heaven would not disappear because the emperor's compassion would not be used up. Ideas can generate energy by themselves. To receive the position of an emperor starting from the idea level is the true mandate of Heaven. This mandate of Heaven carries energy with it. When this energy isn't enough, the emperor is able to generate energy himself. The only thing he needs to do is to think - Heart can generate ten thousand Dharmas! But if he is here in the human world and uses up his ability to think, he lives on a different level. A person whose level is here cannot connect to the idea level. You can say he was cultivating his energy. But the problem is he cannot connect himself to the idea level. If he is able to connect, then he was not cultivating energy. He was actually cultivating the unification of idea, energy, and form, or the consistency of idea, energy, and form, or the Dharma of Consistency. In this Dharma, the idea, energy, and form are definitely connected. One cultivating in this way would not just cultivate either the energy and the form, or the form and the idea. That is why I always say we should move beyond the energy and get to the idea level. Is there still any energy when we move beyond the energy level and get to the idea level? Of course. Why? Because ideas can generate energy. The only difference is that the energy comes in a new way - it is his own energy not

energy that comes from Yama King of Hell or somewhere else on the chi level. That's why we call it moving beyond the energy and getting to the idea. If you do not understand this Dharma, there is no reason for you not to use energy from the chi level, and probably you have no choice. Since you get your energy from the King of Hell, you must go back to Hell. If you do not want to go there, then you will need to use the Dharma of Consistency. Only by those means will you be able to move beyond energy and get to the idea level. Once you get to this level, you will know that you don't have to go through them. If you do not know, you have to go through them.

Let me give you an example. Let's say you are a very wise person, and suddenly one day you find yourself in a new country. This country uses one kind of currency; let's say it is called "Tu Bi". Although you are very wise, and have lots of money at home, suppose that you do not have any "Tu Bi". Can you buy anything? Of course not. You do not have any of the right kind of money. You can only engage in barter. Otherwise, you won't be able to buy anything. You have to use your merits and your energy to exchange for the local money. But if your mind is in the state of consistency of idea, energy, and form, then you can use ideas to create "Tu Bi". You do not need to exchange anything with the residents of the new country. The money you create this way is not counterfeit. You have created exactly the same thing. The energy that comes from ideas can be exactly the same. Then, of course, the money you created will be accepted. This way, you do not need to exchange anything with the people of the new country. The method of exchange is not

called moving beyond energy and getting to the idea level. It is the usual method of starting from form, then getting to the energy level, and finally to the idea level. This cultivation method must pass through the territory of Yama King of Hell. Only the cultivation method of consistency in the idea, energy, and form can be called moving beyond the energy and getting to the idea level, and allows one to move beyond the control of the energy world. It sounds very arrogant and self-important. It is actually because you have already understood this Dharma that you act this way. If you do not understand, you will not act this way. If you do not understand the meaning of this sentence, but repeat what other people are saying, you will not know how to answer when you are questioned. Will other people be convinced? Of course not. But if you believe in it, will it be useful? It will still be useful to know this Dharma, and believe in it, even though you do not understand the logic. You can still move beyond the energy and get to the idea level. The only difference is that you can not help others to succeed. Will this be a problem? It won't be any problem if there is no one trying to stop you. It sounds very mysterious. If there is no one trying to stop you, you certainly can achieve Buddhahood through the Dharma of moving beyond energy and getting to the idea level.

### **Understanding Your Heart and Seeing Your True Nature**

The meaning of “Emptying your heart is to reach the Home”, is that your heart become empty, not that you become a fool. For example, I have this book Journey to the West in my hand.

Before I read it, I do not know the contents of the book. One day, I finished reading it, and understood what the content was telling us. Do I still need to hold this book in my hand? No, there is no longer any need, because everything is now in my brain. In a certain sense the book is empty. What have you gotten from this book? You got the wisdom of the book and the book no longer needs to be in your possession. Or the form of the book no longer touches your body, but the idea is still with you. This is called moving beyond the energy and getting to the idea. So we should not be tricked by the word “emptiness.” If you cultivate the Buddha path, will you eventually become a fool - having nothing in your head? Who would like to cultivate in this manner? No one would be willing. The purpose of cultivation is not to make your head empty. It is to put all things into your head. If you think, then you will understand everything. By that time, you will no longer need any books and scriptures. You will need nothing. Every thing will already be in your head. Ten thousand ways come from the heart - this is the heart dharma. When you knew this heart dharma, it is called understanding your heart. You will know that your heart can generate ten thousand dharmas, and you will already know your heart which will be very clear - then you will have chance to see your true nature.

(To be continued)

