



Journey to the West

(32)

Chapter 13

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

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(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>>

Then what does seeing the true nature mean? It means knowing other people's hearts, or knowing the same heart that we all have. Are our hearts all the same in some way? Yes, in fact, the part of our hearts that is the same is called nature. Nature helps hearts to work together. So partaking in true nature means your heart is in unison with others. Or conversely, the union of hearts is true nature. If you wish to become Buddha, you need to see your true nature, because Buddha is true nature, and true nature is emptiness. When will you become empty? When there is no obstacle in you.

When will you have no obstacles? When you are able to think the same as others. How come you are not Buddha now? That is because there are obstacles between your heart and others hearts. What you see is different from others; and what others see is different from what you see. They are not able to have the same mind as you, and you are not able to have the same mind as them. You don't understand them, and they don't understand you. When one day you know all about other hearts, even though others have not become Buddha yet, you will have achieved Buddhahood. Buddha has the ability to know other hearts. We don't have that ability.

If you wish to have the same mind as others, it does not mean that you should always submit to others. You need wisdom. How do you gain wisdom? You need to get rid of all your ten thou-

sands methods. Your old ten thousand methods came from different hearts. Your previous hearts generated methods that differ from the true way since they were not enlightened. Any thoughts that came before enlightenment are vain hopes. Because your heart is not in unison with others, so your thinking is for yourself, or for your physical body.

In the Buddhist scriptures, these are called vain hopes or fantasies. We must not only get rid of all these fantasies, but also the methods that were created by these fantasies.

Existing and Not Existing

The other question I want to address is the difference between substance and emptiness. As we normally understand it, emptiness is different from feelings, perceptions, impulses, and consciousness. But at a certain level, the difference disappears. We can say that substance and heart are the same. Of course there is no problem in saying that, because substance came from the heart. The heart can create substance.

Let's use an example: H₂O is water, and we

have no problem saying that water and H₂O are the same. But the concept of substance and emptiness not being different is a very difficult one. Because if we say substance equals emptiness, it is similar to saying that H₂O equals emptiness.

Normal people usually won't be able to accept this idea. How could H₂O

equal emptiness? It is obvious there is something. It is water. When would it become nothing? When the nucleus of H is broken up and transformed into energy and the nucleus of O is also broken up and transformed into energy. From the view of the material world, all the matter then disappears and becomes zero, or nothing. But it

became energy. So from the perspective of the energy world,

the atoms still exist. So H₂O equals emptiness only when it is described from the material level. On the material level, there is no way you can see them as equal. But they are equal from the viewpoint of the law of conservation of energy. In this sense, H₂O can equal emptiness because it has transformed into energy. If we only say that matter is conserved, that doesn't make any sense - for then when H₂O



splits and the atoms H and O also split, water becomes nothing on the material level. It is undoubtedly water; how can it become nothing? There is only one possibility - when the molecule of water breaks up and transforms into energy, then its material existence becomes nothing. In the material world it no longer exists anymore, but its energy still exists and is on another level. Only with regard to this material world has it disappeared.

Similarly, we say a person is gone. Where did he go? He went to the spirit world. In the Image world, this person no longer exists. We say people become ghosts when they die. This means people no longer exist in the material world, but still exist in the spirit world. Since we are unable to see the spirit world, some of us don't believe in it. Likewise, if our physics could not detect energy, then the H₂O would be perceived to transform into nothing. In olden times, this could fool or scare people - thought it was using a magic trick to make the H₂O disappear. It actually became energy. If you have no way to detect the energy, you will think the water really disappeared. But now we have the instruments to detect energy, and know if it exists.

Substance and Emptiness are Not Different Things

Today we say that substance and emptiness are not two different things, and this is only possible when we speak of what happens on different

levels. Only on these levels can we say substance and emptiness are not different things. From the normal perspective, substance and emptiness cannot possibly be the same; they are two different things. Water is water. If it no longer exists in the form of water, how can it still be equal to water? In other words, how can energy equal water? It is impossible. It is only possible when speaking of different levels. Speaking only from the material level, it is impossible. So, sometimes in the Buddhist scriptures, the content has already referred to another level. If you still only see on this level, you won't be able to explain the sentence "Substance is emptiness, and Emptiness is substance" in the Heart Sutra. There is no way you can explain it from material level. That is also why lots of people read the Heart Sutra so many times without being able to understand its meaning. "Substance is emptiness, and emptiness is substance" was spoken from two levels but expressed in one level. No matter how deeply you analyze it, you won't understand it, unless you have lived on two different levels. But the Heart



Sutra already told you that when Buddha spoke this sentence, he was intensely practicing the Prajna Paramita. What kind of state is this? This is the state of deep Zen meditation. Buddha is already in the Energy level. He is already on another level. Standing from another level, of course, he can say these two are equal. If he came back to this concrete physical world, then they would not be equal.

If you ignore that Buddha was intensely practicing Prajna Paramita when he said emptiness is substance, your explanation will definitely be confused.

When we read Buddhist Scripture and do not really understand, but deceive ourselves, saying that H₂O equals nothing, then others will hit your head, or think that your brain must have problems.

The General Ferry of Three Classes

The three classes refer to people, ghosts, and immortals. The general ferry of three classes means ferrying all three classes at same time. Ghosts and immortals are supposed to live in the energy world. If they are in the energy world, how they can move beyond the energy and get to the idea level? That would be impossible. There is only one possibility - that is if ghosts or immortals of the energy level get into a physical human

body or get into an image. Ghosts or immortals might share a human body in order to cultivate. Since ghosts and immortals know something that we don't know - they know the things in the spirit world, they can help us in cultivating Tao. There are also using us; since they don't have a human body, so they have no ability to create merits. Those with a human body can. Suppose there is a ghost or immortal that wanted to ferry a person, and suppose he wants to cultivate the Dharma of Consistence that I mentioned before, how does he do it? He has no body and is unable to ferry people. So he will borrow our body to ferry people with an affinity with him. This way is much easier. We can speak for him and help him cultivate Tao together with us. Although it is he who has ferried the person who has affinity with him, but it is our body that has helped him. Our body did merit, and so did this spirit. Using this method of doing merit, he also got the chance of being ferried. This is what the General Ferry of the Three Classes refers to.



We often see some Taoist or Buddhist temples trying to use money to allow a big immortal or a ghost to transcend. Will it work? If money could buy it, all rich people would have become Buddha. It cannot be done this way. They have to ferry people through human body. We have a lot of this kind of experience. Sometimes we did it and we didn't even know it. You may have the experience that when we were trying to ferry a person, it went very smoothly. Or that person always nods his head when he was listening, or says right, right, and right. How did there get to be so many rights? That is because there is someone else helping you. Why does he want to help you? That is because he wanted to ferry his predestined affinity. As you see, you have already started working for the General Ferry of the Three Classes; it's just that you don't know it yourself. That is how we cultivate and promote Tao. Did you ferry people? Did you participate in the general ferry of the three classes? Of course you did. If you say our temple did not participate in the general ferry of the three classes that is simply because you were unaware. If we are not part of it, that would be truly a strange thing!

This is how the general ferry of three classes works. Does it violate the principle of moving beyond energy and getting to the idea? It does not. It is still necessary to move beyond energy and get to the idea. It is just that a spirit has already found the person with whom he has predestined affinity, or he has found the physical

body that can help him. Of course this is also a kind of affinity or fate. Not every soul in the energy world can borrow our body. There are three conditions. The first condition is that the body must allow this borrowing. The second condition is that body must have energy to lend. The third condition is that the body must know people with predestined affinity. If the body does not have this affinity, there is no reason to borrow it. If all three conditions are met, then you can be part of the affairs of the general ferry of three classes. That is to say, not every one gets this opportunity. But the more people you ferry, the more chances you get. Since the more people you ferry, the more opportunities you give to spirits to look for you.

(To be continued)

