

Journey to the West (37)

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Chapter 14

The mind ape returns to truth;
 the six bandits disappear without a trace.

<<Original Text>>

Buddha is heart; heart is Buddha.

This chapter is a special one. We all know the main character of Journey to the West is Sun Wukong. The first few chapters of the book are all about him. The chapters in which he wrecked the Heavenly Palace are especially fascinating. Once he was fixed beneath the Five Elements Mountain, he disappeared from the book. Starting with this chapter, he is back again. That is why I say it is a new beginning. The Sun Wukong that is out this time is not the same Sun Wukong as before.

We have mentioned before that Sun Wukong represented the heart. The purpose of fixing him beneath the Five Elements Mountain was to teach him how to keep his heart still. That is why when he was hungry, he was fed iron pellets. When he was thirsty, he was given molten copper to drink. The goal was to make his heart strong like iron and copper. As we see in the book, he was fixed

beneath the Five Elements Mountain for five hundred years. In other words, he was left to settle his heart for five hundred years. Last time, we described how Tang Sanzang went through many severe tests, all set to test his sincerity. From the principles of The Great Learning [four classics of Chinese literature], we know that moral cultivation starts from investigating things and proceeds to complete knowledge, sincere thoughts, and a rectified heart. You must first possess sincere thoughts and then will be able to reach a rectified heart. How does a heart become rectified? First your heart must remain still. Only when your heart is still will you be able to attain a rectified heart. For example, there is a sign that reads: “Grand Middle Extreme Rectification” in the memorial hall of Chiang Kai-Shek in Taiwan. The Grand Middle here refers to the very middle of a cross, or being still in the middle of a Cross. When you are in the middle, then you are rectified. So the words “Grand Middle Extreme Rectification” mean stay fixed in the middle. The heart of Sun Wukong was fixed beneath the Five Elements Mountain. The truth is that the Five Elements Mountain is the Cross (Gold, Wood, Water, Fire, and Earth). He was buried in the middle of the mountain, and his heart was particularly in the middle. When he reached the point that his thoughts were sincere and his heart rectified, he was then ready to move to cultivate himself, regulate his family, and rightly govern his country. Then the whole kingdom could be made tranquil and happy. In other words, he was ready to walk

on the path of Tao. The reason he was ready to take off is that his heart was rectified.

High warden Liu gathered up his great courage and strode over to where Sun Wukong was buried. He pulled away the grass that was growing around his face and asked him, “What do you want?” “I don’t want anything,” said the monkey. “Just tell that monk to come over here so that I can ask him a question.” When Tang Sanzang inquired what the ape wanted, he said: “Were you sent to the Western Heaven by Tang Taizong to fetch the sutras?” When Tang Sanzang affirmed that he had been sent on this mission, the ape burst forthwith this speech: “I am the Great Sage Equaling Heaven who wrecked the Heavenly Palace five hundred years ago. Buddha put me under this mountain for my criminal insubordination. The Bodhisattva Guanyin went to the East on Buddha’s orders to find someone suitable to fetch the sutras. When I saw her pass by, I asked her to save me and she told me that I was to give up evil-doing, return to Buddha’s law, and do all I could to protect the traveler as he was going to the Western Paradise to worship Buddha and fetch the sutras. She said that there would be something in it for me at the end. Ever since then I’ve been waiting day and night with eager anticipation for you to come and save me, Master. I swear to be your disciple and to protect you on your way to fetch the sutras.”

When Sun Wukong said “I’ve been waiting

day and night with eager anticipation for you to come and save me, Master,” the waiting with eager anticipation referred to his heart and courage. Then he said he was waiting to be saved. We have just mentioned that sincere thoughts lead to a rectified heart. Only when the heart is rectified, will there be a possibility for self cultivation. To cultivate yourself, first you must be free. That is why he wanted the Master to save him and set him free.

Tang Sanzang was delighted to hear this, so he said, “Your intentions are laudable, but how am I to get you out?” The monkey replied, “There is no trouble about that. As long as you are willing to save me, it is easy. Just climb this mountain to the top you will find a declaration by Buddha written in letters of gold. Tear it off, and I will be out directly.” So Tang Sanzang persuaded Liu Boqin to help him to the summit of the mountain. There they saw a large, square rock on which was pasted a paper seal bearing the six golden words: Om ma ni pad me hum .

(To be continued)

