Journey to the West (42)

Chapter 14

The Mind-Ape returns to truth;
the six bandits disappear without a trace.

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For the details of the story, please refer to Chapter 14 in Journey to the West as translated by W. J. F. Jenner, published by Foreign Languages Press, Beijing, ISBN 7-119-00653-3

Some people go against principles and rules to the extreme. They claim that thoughtlessness is the best state of mind, and all we need is just to follow nature. But when our mind is like the wild monkey or the running thought-horse, what can we do about it? Thus, it might not be such a bad idea to learn a few Youwei methods which will only be used when there is a need. It is better to be prepared and choose not to use any Youwei methods so as to stay crisis-free.

This chapter talks about how Sun Wukong restored his wild monkey mind to the right state and got rid of the six bandits (sight, hearing, smell, taste, feeling, and mind). It is the same as a man practicing Tao through body and mind to conquer his own dragon and tiger. Once he is able to vanquish his dragon and tiger, the next step would be to do Tao's work. Sun Wukong is called Sun the practitioner because from this point on, all things Tang Sanzang does are called walking the path or walking the Guanyin Bodhisattva's way. It's totally different now compared to before. Tang Sanzang used to cultivate the lesser vehicle in which he was limited to do certain things. Now Tang Sanzang can go with the flow by using a white lie. This means he has already conquered his own dragon and tiger in the process of walking the Bodhisattva's way.

He now needs to assist others surrounded by their dragons and tigers because he is propagating Tao. The next chapter talks about how Tang Sanzang meets a white horse and that will be the first outer dragon Tang Sanzang conquers. The white horse had been eaten by the youngest son of the Dragon King of the Western Sea, so it's not part of Tang Sanzang's true self. Tang Sanzang was able to vanquish the white horse and make it accompany him to the West to get the sutra. At

the end of Journey to the West, Tang Sanzang obtained Tao. Therefore, we get the insight from Tang Sanzang that we need to transcend our true self to another spiritual realm and make good connections with people from all walks of life in order that they may receive Tao.

Normally people bow to their masters three times when they meet. Why did Sun Wukong bow to Tang Sanzang four times? It was because Sun Wukong represents the heart, so he stays in the center and bows four times. I believe he actually bowed to the four directions. Recall that the five elements are associated with both the directions and the virtues. The five cardinal virtues are mercy, righteousness, manners, wisdom, and faith. Since Sun Wukong represents faith, which lies in the middle, he bowed to the four other directions to unite the five elements. Sun Wukong was born in a square stone, which implies that Sun Wukong was set right, and his mind was in the right place under the Five-Element Mountain. Four, or the four directions, also represent rectitude, or being in the right place. The cross is a symbol of rectitude and the heart needs to be in the right place. That's why Sun Wukong bowed four times.

I want to discuss more about the dragon and tiger. Why is there a dragon in each man? Where did it come from? It's because there is yin and yang in each man. The dragon represents the yin. If we do not separate yin from yang but consider them as the same, we view ourselves as one. Then, the "oneness" is everything. Once we become one with Tao, the dragon will move to another person's body. In other words, there is good consciousness and bad consciousness in each of us. Yang represents the good consciousness while the bad consciousness consists of the three poisons of the human heart: greed, hatred, and attachment, which are represented by yin, or the dragon.

Our goal is to conquer the three poisons in our own minds by sweeping them away. In other words, the three mind poisons are dissolved by our good consciousness and become oneness, so we will be one with Tao. Oneness means everything. However, even if we rid ourselves of our own dragons, we still need to deal with the external ones. Who will be your external dragon? The answer is your spouse. Some female practitioners think that their spouses are male, which should be yang. If it were true, would their male spouses not need to practice Tao? This is NOT how it works. One should practice Tao until there is no yin and yang in him- or herself (i.e., obtaining Tao). Such person can be called yang. His or her spouse will be yin if the spouse's spiritual level is not as high, or vice versa.

Therefore, there are two dragons. One is within each person while the other is within their spouse. When one conquers his own dragon and unifies themselves with Tao, one needs to move

on to help the spouse to vanquish the dragon and so on. We just discussed how Tang Sanzang conquered the dragon in himself first, then the tiger, before he could move on to deal with his spouse's. At this time Sun Wukong was his other half (or spouse). Once he took care of Sun Wukong's dragon and tiger there will be another dragon, which will be the white horse in the next chapter.

The following article was translated by Chao-yi Lee

Chapter 15

On the Coiling Snake Mountain,
deities give secret help;
In the Eagle's Sorrow Gorge,
the Thought-Horse is reined in.

PREFACE

The last chapter is about the Mind Ape returning to truth and the disappearance of the six thieves. Sun Wukong acknowledged his master and went with the master to the West to get the sutra. On the road, he met six thieves (which represent eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and thought) and killed all six of them. This signifies that he had found his true heart. The Heart Sutra reads "no eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and thought." When one has no eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and thought, one knows that the heart is the master. When a person has eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body and thought, each of these senses often tries to take the role of the person's master. For example, sometimes we only focus on out sight and act along with the saying, "To see is to believe,"and think what we see must be the truth. In fact, we are deceived by the eyes. In other words, we let the eyes master us. However, we should let the heart be our master. Similarly, too often we believe what we hear, or let the ears be the master. We do the same thing with the other senses. Without being aware, we are often deceived by these six thieves and consider ourselves very scientific and objective, while we in fact are very subjective and terribly deceived by these six thieves. Therefore, to return the Mind Ape to the right way, we must eliminate the six thieves.

In this story, the Mind-Ape returned to the right state and the six thieves disappeared. If we want to cultivate Tao, we must first be sincere and rectify our heart, so that we can cultivate ourselves, harmonize our family, govern the country, and pacify the world. However, first we must avoid deception by the eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and thought before we find our true heart.

In the previous chapter the fierce tiger appeared where the Mind-Ape returned to the right state. Sun Wukong killed the tiger for Tang Sanzang. Because of the tiger, Sun Wukong had clothes in which to cultivate himself. The stories in this chapter take place in the Coiling Snake

Mountains. When we talk about snakes, we think about dragons and the saying, "Dragons and snakes live together." They belong to the same category. What is a dragon? A dragon is a longer snake and a leader among snakes. Chinese people respect dragons very much. An emperor is called the real dragon because he has Heaven's Mandate. Therefore, only the emperor can wear the dragon robe. In Chinese culture dragons are honorable. Snakes and dragons are of the same family. Although snakes are not as honorable as dragons, we should not take them lightly. The Bible tells us that humans came first, then the snake. Now humans were expelled from the Garden of Eden because of the snake. Satan used the snake to trick Eve into eating the forbidden fruit and then persuade Adam to eat it as well. As a result, they were expelled from the Garden of Eden. From this we can see that the snake had a very important mission. Its wisdom level is very close to that of humans.

In all cultures serpents have supernatural power. Therefore, human beings were deceived by them. The only way for humans to avoid being deceived by the snake is to have faith in God. According to the Bible, had humans believed in God and not eaten the forbidden fruit, they could have still lived in heaven. Humans doubted God's words, so they were deceived. Today, when facing either a snake or Satan, you cannot depend on your mundane wisdom. You might think things over and try to determine whether what the snake said is true or not. However, by doing this you are still in the snake's trap. So, the only way out is to have faith in God. Adam and Eve did not follow God's rules, so they were expelled from the Garden of Eden for committing the original sin of human beings. This is also why humans must cultivate Tao.

On one hand, the snake is harmful to human beings. On the other hand, it also offers all human beings an opportunity to cultivate Tao. Viewed this way, the snake has great merit. At the same time, the snake also represents the Devil. We often mention the challenges posed by the Devil by saying, "No challenge, no progress." We make progress through challenges. It is like studying and taking academic exams. If we do not pass an exam, we cannot upgrade ourselves. If we fail an exam, we cannot move up to the next academic level. Exams represent a chance to upgrade. Therefore, the snake is not terrible. Nor is the dragon. Dragons and snakes are somewhat the same. What is the difference between them? When a snake returns to the right way, it is no longer a snake but a dragon. (To be continued)