



45. *Gathering*

Gathering is developmental. The king comes to have a shrine. It is beneficial to see a great person; this is developmental. It is beneficial to be correct. It is good to make a great sacrifice. It is beneficial to go somewhere.

EXPLANATION

Gathering means assembly. As for the qualities of the hexagram, above is lake ☱, joyful, and below is earth ☷, amenable: When one accords with others, they are joyful; so it is called *gathering*.

This hexagram represents gathering the medicines together; it follows on the previous hexagram *parting*. In *parting*, one parts from mundanity by celestial energy. The path of parting from mundanity is a task to be done after obtaining the elixir. Before the elixir is obtained, if not for the work of gathering together the medicines, the elixir will not form.

After people are born, habit estranges them from what is essentially near; they forget the original reality and pursue external artificiality. So their mind and spirit are unstable, their vitality and energy are dissipated. It is not possible to immediately recover and concentrate the dissipated vitality and energy; it is important to be obedient and act harmoniously, progressing gradually in an orderly manner, not deviating from the process, applying the will single-mindedly, the longer the stronger, so that what was lost may be naturally recovered, what has gone may be restored.

This is like a king coming to have a shrine for spirits. Ancestors are people's roots; if they forget their roots, people are disrespectful and inhuman. When the king comes to have a shrine for spirits, this is how to let people know there is a basis to be grateful to. People's original natural reality is like their ancestral roots: When people abandon reality and accept falsehood, that is like forgetting ancestral roots. If people can gather in their spirit and energy, cultivate essence and life, and restore the original natural reality, that is like not forgetting ancestral roots.

When the king does not forget ancestral roots, he can unite the hearts of the people in the land; when practitioners of the Tao do not forget the fundamental, they can gather the great medicines of essence and life. But this matter of not forgetting the fundamental requires a great per-

son to carry it out; it cannot be done by lesser people who do not know essence and life. Therefore "it is beneficial to see a great person; this is developmental."

A great person is one who corrects self and corrects others. Correcting oneself, there is no ego; spirit and energy do not dissipate, and rectitude becomes the self. Correcting others, there are no personalities; character and constitution are sublimated, and rectitude becomes people. Correcting self and correcting others, inwardly thoughts do not arise, and externals do not enter: Inside and out are one single rectitude—benevolence, justice, courtesy, and knowledge are all based on truthfulness. When the primordial is gathered together, essence is stabilized and life is solidified.

Indeed, the benefit of development by gathering what is right is no small matter. What heaven enjoins on humanity is rectitude alone, and it is only by rectitude that humanity can answer heaven. Responding to heaven with rectitude, not forgetting the fundamental, is like making a great sacrifice to offer to heaven; it will not fail to bring about good fortune.

But the way to make a great sacrifice and bring about good fortune cannot be accomplished simply by a moment of emptiness; it is necessary to tread the ground of reality step after step before one can achieve it. If you know but do not act on it, it is the same as not knowing—how can you then attain good fortune? So "it is beneficial to go somewhere." The value of knowledge is only in its application.

- **First yin:** Having sincerity that is not conclusive, there is disorder and mobbing. If you cry, in a moment it'll turn to laughter; don't grieve. To go is blameless.

EXPLANATION

When negative, weak, indecisive, not distinguishing right from wrong, sometimes believing one thing, sometimes another, people become disorderly and form mobs, believing what they shouldn't, rallying around what they shouldn't. Luckily there is correspondence with the positive yang in the fourth place; if you know disorderly mobbing is of no benefit, "cry" in regret, and approach true teachers, once you are guided by them and given direction in the darkness, you will understand that the Tao is not far from people, but what people do for the Tao estranges people. First you cry, then you laugh. Directly attaining understanding, you need not grieve; going right ahead to assemble the five elements and combine the four signs, why worry that you will not reach the state of impeccability? This is gathering in the sense of reforming error and returning to correctness.

- **2 yin:** Drawing in brings good fortune; no blame. If one is sincere, it is beneficial to perform the spring ceremony.

EXPLANATION

In the midst of three yins, all darkness, the whole body is pure mundanity: Yet if one can go along with its desires to gradually draw it into guidance in

the Tao, transmute its nature as materialized energy and gather its nature of true being-as-is, the benefit is like performing the spring ceremony to honor the spirits, communing by sincerity. One at first blameworthy can thus become blameless. This is gathering in the sense of preserving rectitude even when weak.

- **3 yin:** Gathering, lamenting; no benefit. If one goes, there is no fault, but a little shame.

EXPLANATION

When one is ignorant yet acts on one's own, clinging to one's own mundane ignorance alone and idly imagining attainment of the Tao, in vain, without reality, this kind of gathering must end in lament; obviously there will be no benefit. Luckily there are wise people in view; if one goes and associates with them, borrowing strength to overcome weakness, one can still avoid lamentable faults. However, because one could not join upright people early on, but only joined them after suffering from one's faults, it is hard to avoid a little shame. This is gathering in which the weak borrow strength.

- **4 yang:** Great fortune, no fault.

EXPLANATION

When one is strong yet able to be flexible, with yin and yang in balance, the restored elixir congeals, and the great elixir is within one's purview: Not only can one gather it at will and gain great fortune; one will surely gather it in an utterly impeccable state. This is gathering in the sense of solidifying the restored elixir.

- **5 yang:** Gathering, there is a state without fault. Not taking oneself seriously, if one is basically always correct, regret will disappear.

EXPLANATION

When strength is correctly balanced and higher knowledge unwavering, one stabilizes life in the true state; without cultivation or verification, not needing effort, the five elements are one energy. Fundamentally one is inherently without fault. However, though one is without fault, it is undesirable to dwell on joy, becoming complacent and self-satisfied, trusting what is untrustworthy—regret is sure to come. But if one knows how to fill the belly and also empty the mind, practices nondoing and incubates the spiritual embryo, ever correct and undivided, using the natural true fire to melt away the residual mundanity of acquired conditioning, such a one is called a true human without taint—how could regret not vanish? This is gathering in the sense of incubating the spiritual embryo.

- **Top yin:** Sighing and weeping. No blame.

EXPLANATION

Being foolish and ignorant, mistakenly entering into aberrant practices, taking the false for the real, even if the celestial treasure is in sight one cannot gather it oneself. Wasting one's whole life, when facing death one will finally regret it, sighing and weeping. One has done this damage to oneself—there is no blame on others. This is gathering that is careless in the beginning and ends in misfortune.

Each of the six lines indicates something being gathered, but they are different in respect to right and wrong, aberration and correctness. When we look for balance of yin and yang and unity of strength and flexibility, we find it only in the yang in the fourth place. As for using emptiness to nurture fulfillment, comprehending life and essence, it seems to be only in yang in the fifth place. It is those who accurately recognize the real who are the adepts.

45. *Gathering*

lake above,
earth below

Moisture rises onto the earth, gathering. Thus do superior people prepare weapons to guard against the unexpected.

Gathering is assembling. Above is *lake* ☱, below is *earth* ☷; moisture rises onto the earth. When moisture is in the earth and rises onto the earth, everything on the earth is nurtured by it and flourishes. But there is a limit to water; it cannot always provide moisture for things. Sometimes things flourish, and sometimes they don't. This is the image of *gathering*.

What superior people see in this is that when practitioners of the Tao get to where the five elements are assembled and have been returned to the source, when everything acquired is obedient to their will, if they do not know how to prevent danger and take perils into consideration, eventually what has been gathered will again disperse, and they will not be able to avoid the trouble of losing what has been gained.

Therefore superior people prepare weapons to guard against the unexpected. "Weapons" means the tools of wisdom, the work of silent operation of spiritual awareness. When the primordial has been congealed, it is not subject to injury by acquired conditioning, but it is still necessary to dissolve the influences of personal history before nature and life can be stabilized. If there is any remaining contamination, eventually conditioning will reassert itself and the primordial will again become fragmented. Therefore this work of guarding is indispensable.

If one can prepare the weapons of wisdom to avoid being caught unawares, one will always have autonomous presence of mind, and the jewel of life will not be damaged. After a long time, the five elements will merge and sublimate, body and mind will both be refined, merging with the Tao in reality, becoming eternally incorruptible. So the process of preserving integration is important.