

47. *Exhaustion*

Exhaustion develops the righteous. Great people are fortunate and blameless. If one complains, one will not be trusted.

EXPLANATION

Exhaustion means reaching an impasse. In the body of the hexagram, below is *water* ☵, in which one yang is fallen in between two yins; above is *lake* ☱, in which one yin is on top of two yangs. Both picture mundanity making inroads on the celestial, so that celestial energy does not come through. Therefore it is called *exhaustion*. As for the qualities of the hexagram, from the midst of danger (*water*) it produces joy (*lake*); joy comes out of danger—so it also has the sense of resolving exhaustion, resolving an impasse.

This hexagram represents polishing and refining body and mind; it follows on the previous hexagram *gathering*. *Gathering* involves attaining joy by accord, whereby one gathers together the medicines, goes back to the fundamental, and returns to the original. But if one can only gather in ease and cannot gather in difficulty, this is still inability to accord, inability to rejoice. People who try to practice the Tao can all keep steadfast when they are in easy circumstances, but many of them waver in determination when they are in difficult or perilous situations. They may change their minds because of the pressures of making a living, or they may slack in determination due to illness; their spirits may flag because of old age, or they may stop work because of obstruction by some obsession. All these are cases in which people do not exert the mind of Tao and are hindered by exhaustion, so they ultimately do not attain the Tao.

If the mind is not exhausted even though the body be exhausted, the path is not at an impasse even though the situation presents an impasse, and one can be joyful even when in difficulty, then there is a developmental aspect within exhaustion. But even though being able to rejoice even in difficulty is something people cannot fully attain, and there will inevitably be a point of exhaustion, nevertheless if they become exhausted where they should not, they will not attain development. This is because the developmental aspect of exhaustion lies in being correct.

Dealing with exhaustion correctly, growing correctly, while exhausted one goes along in harmony with the time. Going along in harmony with the time is possible only for great people imbued with the quality of correct balance. Great people, while being very wise, appear to be ignorant; while being very skillful, they appear inept. Random thoughts do not occur to them, and they cannot be influenced by circumstances. Their conduct is unaffected, and they are not concerned with externals. Not only do they find good fortune wherever they are, they also accord with the order of life and are blameless.

As for those whose main concern is food and clothing, they are untrustworthy in an impasse. They will take trouble in hopes of fortune, but as soon as things don't go their way they show it in their words and expressions, complaining against heaven and blaming people. So blame goes along with them—how can this bring about good fortune? Those who deal with exhaustion and impasse rightly, who are able to be joyful even in difficulty, are great people. Those who are untrustworthy in an impasse, who take trouble only to please themselves, are petty people. It may be the same trouble and the same joy, but the distinction lies in how great people and petty people relate to the trouble and the joy. So those who practice the Tao should by all means maintain rectitude when exhausted and at an impasse.

- **First yin:** Sitting exhausted on a tree stump, gone into a dark ravine, not to be seen for three years.

EXPLANATION

In the beginning of exhaustion, the exhaustion is not great. Also, being near two yangs, one should not submit to exhaustion. This is weakness and self-destruction, resigning oneself to remain below others, like "sitting exhausted on a tree stump, gone into a dark ravine." People like this, who are exhausted when they should not be exhausted, will not get out of danger even in a long time, here represented by "three years." This is making much exhaustion of little exhaustion.

- **2 yang:** Hard up for wine and food; then comes the regal robe. It is beneficial to make ceremonial offerings. To go on an expedition brings misfortune. No blame.

EXPLANATION

With yang fallen in the midst of yin, this is when sustenance is insufficient, like being "hard up for wine and food." Luckily firmness here is balanced; forgetting oneself for the Tao, though the body be exhausted the mind is not exhausted. One day bitterness will end and sweetness will arise; the great Tao completed, one then wears celestial clothing and eats celestial food. Cultivating celestial nobility, human nobility will follow. First there are hard times, then there is success. We can be sure of this principle. The image of success after hardship likens the benefit to making ceremonial offerings to reach heaven with sincerity, seeing the effect after a long time. If, when one is in hard times, one wants to get out of hardship right away, that will instead bring on misfortune, and one cannot blame anyone if one comes to an impasse and doesn't get through. This line refers to success after hardship, growth after exhaustion.

- **3 yin:** Stymied by rocks, resting on thorns, going into the house without seeing the wife—inauspicious.

EXPLANATION

When one is ignorant and acts arbitrarily, not knowing enough to honor teachers and respect companions, one will be despised by upright people; this is like being stymied by rocks, resting on thorns, getting into an impasse by one's own doing. People like this have no real learning, but they pretend to have attained the Tao. They strive for externals and lose what is within. This is also like going into the house but not seeing the wife. After all they will perish. These are people who exhaust themselves unnecessarily, creating an impasse where there really is none.

- **4 yang:** Coming gradually, exhausted in a golden cart; shame has an end.

EXPLANATION

Leaving the state of danger (*water* ☵) for the body of joy (*lake* ☱), this is when exhaustion is to be overcome, but as firmness rests on weakness (☵) one cannot overcome it quickly. It is almost as if weakness is injuring firmness. One comes gradually, as it were, "exhausted in a gold cart," and there is shame. However, while one cannot proceed directly on the path, having long been in a state of exhaustion and impasse, if one comes gradually, one will eventually achieve one's aim. This is being exhausted, at an impasse, yet gradually overcoming it.

- **5 yang:** Nose and feet cut off, at an impasse in minister's garb, gradually there will be joy; it is beneficial to make ceremonial offerings.

EXPLANATION

When positive strength is balanced correctly, but one does not meet an enlightened ruler who will employ one, one has great ability but not the opportunity to use it; it is difficult to carry out both spiritual and temporal work, and one cannot do as one wishes, like having one's nose and feet cut off, at an impasse in minister's garb. This is the great impasse of those who embrace Tao. Once in an impasse, they cannot forcibly seek a way out; they should dress themselves in humility and hide their treasure, suffer alone and work alone. Then gradually there will be joy. The benefit of gradual joy is like making ceremonial offerings, entering with sincerity. After a long time of deepening one's attainment, a time will naturally come when the great Tao is fulfilled. This is fidelity in an impasse, gradually getting out of the impasse.

- **Top yin:** Exhausted at an impasse, in distress, is called regret over action; there is regret. It is auspicious to go on an expedition.

EXPLANATION

Ignorant, lacking knowledge, yet pretending to be brilliant, indulging in arbitrary guesswork and private speculation—this is like having stopped at an impasse; trying to figure out the path of sages, believing oneself to have attained reality, one flutters about, suffering damage as time goes on, unable to advance yet unable to withdraw, trapped in distress. This is called regret over action; there is regret along with the action. It is better to repent and seek out teachers and helpers, to act only after understanding. Then though one may have gotten sidetracked at first, and thus reached an impasse and regretted it, after all one will hear about the great Path, and go on it to attain happiness. This is experiencing regret and ultimately getting out of an impasse.

Among the various kinds of exhaustion and impasses represented by the six lines, there is the exhaustion, or impasse, of great people, and the exhaustion, or impasse, of petty people. That of great people involves being joyful even in trouble, being faithful when exhausted and ultimately being impeccable. That of petty people is courting danger for their own happiness, not being faithful in hardship and winding up with regret. The way to succeed after hardship is to be able to rejoice even in trouble, to wait for the proper time and preserve rectitude.

47. *Exhaustion*

lake above,
water below

A lake with no water is exhausted. Therefore superior people use life to the full and achieve their aim.

Exhaustion means coming to an end. Above is *lake* ☱, below is *water* ☵; this is the lake leaking, the water flowing away, so that there is no water in the lake. This is the image of *exhaustion*.

What superior people see in this is that just as a lake without water is empty, when people lack purpose their path is at an end. Therefore they use life to the full to achieve their aim.

There is a life that consists of a quantity of energy, and there is a life that consists of meaning of the Tao. The life that is a quantity of energy is created by the universe, and is conditioned; the life of meaning of the Tao creates the universe, and is primordial.

The primordial life is fundamentally something celestial, associated with *heaven* ☰; because of mixture with acquired conditioning, it enters the realm of *earth* ☷ and changes into *water* ☵: this is the one yang in the center of *water* ☵. Once this celestial yang falls, the jewel of life is hidden, and the whole body is completely mundane. There is no exhaustion more exhausting than this.

Using life to the full means to get to the end of conditioned life; achieving one's aim means to achieve the primordial life. Establishing this aim to use life to the full, using life to the full to achieve this aim, while the amount of energy depends on something else, creating life depends on oneself. Using the temporal to restore the primordial, ending false life and establishing real life, producing being in the midst of nothingness, seeking life within death, getting through an exhausting impasse, is like a lake without water again being filled with water.