

[認理歸真]道是什麼?~~01

1) What Is Tao?

Tao is the Great Highway, the original nature, the Real image and the Great Truth of man. Tao endows every one of us with eternal spirits which is our true selves. Tao is also the cosmic power that creates and dominates all visible and audible objects in the whole universe! All things owed their origins to Tao, it causes them to grow and develop to the fullest extent of their utility. It is serene, tranquil, boundless, formless, and all-powerful and it brings the whole universe in a harmonious order.

According to Confucianism, Tao is the natural goodness of man's heart. Supramundane Buddha-nature in Buddhism. The 'door to the undying' according to Taoists. Although there are many definitions, they all arise from one and coverage at the same point.

Lao Tzu said, "I do not know its name, but designate it... the Tao. Arbitrarily forcing a name on it, I call it the Great."

Since Tao is invisible and shapeless, it is symbolised by an unbroken circle 'O', a forcibly limited symbol in view of the limitation of the human mind. The unbroken circle 'O' represents the Tao in quietness where as a line ' _ ' represents the Tao in action. When the Tao is in activity, the unbroken circle becomes a line and when elongated it would become the longest line. Indeed, Tao is the greatest of all because it dominated everything. But, if the line is shortened, it will become a dot. In other words, Tao can also be the smallest of all.

Tao is universal: When dwelled in Heaven, it is called the natural or Heavenly; when dwelled in earth, it is called Geography; when dwelled in material, it is called the principle of that material; and when dwelled in the form of human being, it is the 'conscience' of that person.

To follow the dictates of his nature in action is Tao (i.e. the Highway for man). If one maintains a cautious watch over oneself, one will come to be identified with Heaven and Earth. That which Heaven entrusts to man is to be called his nature. The following out of his nature is to be called the Way (Tao). The building up of the Way is to be called spiritual culture. Since man's nature is what Heaven has given into his charge, and since following the dictates of this nature is the Tao for man, it follows that the Tao of man is also the Tao of Heaven, that the Virtue (te) of man is also the virtue of Heaven. Reaching to the height of the virtue of Heaven, we many say of the man who only knows the virtue of man as the virtue of man, that his sphere of living can only be the moral sphere. But the sphere in which the man lives who knows that the virtue of man is also the virtue of Heaven, that is the transcendent sphere. There, Tao means the Tao of Heaven. All this is an attempt to state clearly the origin of man's nature and the connection of it with Heaven.

Heaven producing the teeming multitude. As there are things, there are their specific principles. This means that at the very time when a person is born, Heaven has already given him his nature. Man's nature is no-thing but principles. In the book of Confucius (The Mean) it says:" If my moral character is not adequate to overcome material force, then there

is nothing to do but to submit to material force as endowed by Heaven. If my moral character is adequate to overcome material force, however, then what I receive from the endowment is all moral character. Therefore, if I investigate principle to the utmost and fully develop my nature, then what I have received is wholly Heaven's principle." If one investigates principle to the utmost and fully develops his nature, then his nature will be in accord with the character of Heaven and his destiny will be in accord with the Principle of Heaven. Therefore, pure form and pure actuality is a god.

The original nature (Tao) of all living things is imminent, formless, invisible and eternal. It manifests itself in form and disappears again in formlessness: it does not act, it does not talk, it is fathomless and inexhaustible source of all life; it is strictly impersonal. Tao by its nature is inexplicable by words. Speech by its very nature cannot express the absolute. This is the character of Tao. Tao is so great that it is not be seen and to be named. For the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal. Tao cannot be name of and the Tao which is named is not Tao. The truth may be told is not the everlasting truth. The name given to a thing is not the everlasting name. Above all, the one important message of Tao is the oneness and spirituality of the material universe.

Tao covers Heaven and supports Earth. It is the extent of the four quarters of the universe and the dimensions of the eight points of the firmament. There is no limit to its height and its depth is unfathomable. It encloses Heaven and Earth and endows things (with their nature) before they have been formed. Compressed, it can expand. Hidden, it can be manifest. Weak, it can be strong. Soft, it can be firm. With it, the mountain becomes high and the abyss becomes deep. Because of it, animals run and birds fly. The sun and the moon shine and the planets revolve by it. Tao is also broad and level, not far from person and the seeker finds it is himself. Pressure on it will move it and touching it or feeling after it will bring a response. As a fish forgets its relative existence in the river and lakes, so men forget themselves in their relation to the Way and to Tao. After having been polished and cut, it returns to simplicity. It acts without action and is in accord with Tao. It does not speak and is identical with virtue. Perfectly at leisure and without pride, it is at home with harmony. The myriad things are all different but each suits its own nature. Its greatness combines the entire universe. Its virtue softens Heaven and Earth and harmonizes yin and yang (passive and active cosmic forces). It regulates the four seasons and harmonizes the Five Agents (Metal, Wood, Water, Fire and Earth).

Tao Te Ching: Nothingness is used to denote the state that existed before the birth of heaven and earth. Reality is used to denote the state where the multitude of things begins to have all separate existence. Tao is so great that it is actually not to be named. But forcibly, it is the name 'Tao' given to that which was originally nameless and simple. It is a creative force transcendent and independent of all things. It is the first cause and final destruction of the whole of creation. It is present in everything and yet at the same time above everything. Though small, the whole universe cannot subjugate it. It is the mastermind of all souls.