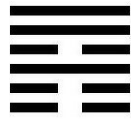


Hexagram 53 – Slow penetration of spiritual influence



Slow penetration of spiritual influence.

Transformation into a sage.

Benefit from making the effort.

Structure: Penetration ☵ above and stillness ☶ below.

Ideogram: water and cut into.

The hexagram has the image of the slow growth of a tree on a mountain side, which extends its influence by degrees as it grows. The tree stands firmly rooted as it has developed according to the laws of its being and has survived because of its adaptability. Other life surrounds it and benefits from the many blessings of the tree that it extends to others.

When deluded by self-cherishing and hostility for others, people become entangled in worldly concerns.¹ They use intellectual brightness outwardly as a weapon rather than use it inwardly to discern the path that benefits all. They ravage and abandon themselves, burying the real and accepting the false. All sorts of negative feelings and arise in full force, putting in play all sorts of schemes and wiles to take advantage of the moment and others for self-benefit.

The obstacles we experience in life are projections of our fears and self-cherishing that thwart us from having our way, marking the limits of our capacity to stay present with experience and to respond in ways that benefit all. Our inner turmoil gets externalized as an obstruction, our enemy.

The hexagram points to our need to accept the slow and incremental path that subdues our self-cherishing and hostility for others. Since people have been entangled with the separation of self and other for millennia, and we have been entangled with worldly concerns for most of our lives, it takes time to uproot patterns of negative behavior and beliefs and learn how to respond in ways that benefit all. Mastering our willingness to harm others for self-benefit and actualizing our potential for creating what benefits all within the world² frames the fundamental human challenge.

The wise emulate a tree slowly growing on a windswept mountain crag. By abiding calmly in wisdom, they gradually develop their being step by step to stand firmly rooted in the spirit. The two trigrams show an inner calm that supports the unfolding of the spiritual path combined with the outer penetration of what obstructs our path. Like the natural stillness of the mountain, the wise abide in dignity and virtue. It takes a combination of personal moral effort and adaptability to make visible the ways of the spirit.

¹ **Worldly concerns** are the amoral ways in which the selfish willingly harm others for self-benefit and then ignore the suffering they cause. Selfish individuals seek power and domination over others and willingly use violence to do so. The selfish accumulate wealth through the unlimited exploitation and ultimate destruction of people, other life forms, and the Earth. The selfish seek the attention of others. The selfish consume as much as they can and seek constant distractions from facing the harms they caused others, all life, and the Earth.

² **World** does not refer to nature but to how people live within nature. The world – civilization, culture, history, society, science, economy, education, technology – is embedded as a subsystem within the natural system. People create their world through the choices they make.

Whatever arises in experience, sages make it part of their path. When challenged by life, the wise cultivate staying present and know obstacles as projections of their difficult feelings. Even if we have insufficient capacity to always see through the emptiness of our dissatisfaction with whatever does not go our way and our self-cherishing, we still may recognize our entanglement with our “I-ness,” and sometimes that is enough to break through the enchantment of self.

Within the world, the hexagram also represents the power of a positive enduring influence emanating from a good example. Just as a tree naturally influences its surroundings, sages model how live in the world in ways that benefit all, which influences others to do the same.

The influence of an agitator has no lasting effect. If we do not willfully provoke a conflict but confine ourselves to firmly adhering to what benefits all and ward off self-cherishing, all goes well. Advancing the spiritual path in the world should be done carefully to avoid overstepping bounds and violating rights. The greatest influence possible always comes through the patient and steady refinement of our inner path.

The sage cooperates with others to find the path through the difficulties of the world. The wise keep an inner calm and adapt to changing circumstances. They persist in giving a beneficial direction to such gradual growth, a combination of developing the path and a resolve to see the process through to completion.

We transgress the laws of natural development when we do not let things develop quietly but plunge rashly into a struggle. Such recklessness jeopardizes our path and the safety of others who depend upon us. The wise remain patient, modest, and accepting. Life often demands us to wait long for some changes, but our faith in the process deepens with persistent cultivation of the inner path.

The very gradualness of spiritual development makes perseverance necessary for that alone prevents slow progress from dwindling to nothing. The principles of gradual development apply both to inner development and to manifesting the spirit within the world. Both require a great moral discipline of patience and perseverance. It takes time and persistence for water to sculpt rock.

Lines: The lines tell the story of the flight of wild geese from the water’s edge to the heights to describe the steps and the challenges of the path.

Line 1: The line has a great responsibility. Without the support of others, it commits itself to the spiritual path. Its initial steps are slow and anxious as dangers surround it, and others criticize it. These difficulties inhibit the line from acting hastily. It cautiously moves toward its aspiration to benefit all.

Line 2: By overcoming the initial insecurity inherent in any beginning, the lines finds a stable position and a field of activity opens. This first success makes the line joyous and confident in the future. It naturally wants to share this blessing with others.

Line 3: A strong line is immoderate in movement. It should maintain self-discipline and await advancement, but it grows impatient and seeks achievement. The line depicts those who

never desist from their course nor turn back. The line abandons those who depend upon it, which causes them to lose their way as well. The line creates much harm.

Line 4: The insecure line finds a temporary place to rest by adapting to the situation and firmly holding to what benefits all.

Life brings the line into an inappropriate situation in which it finds hard to hold its own. When surrounded by dangers, the wise yield and withdraw to a safe place in which life can go on.

Line 5: The line's spiritual development has reached a crisis. It must forsake its self-cherishing to further its path. For a long time, it struggles with its self-cherishing and hostility for others, but the line at long last masters them. A selfless sage emerges

The situation blocks the communication between being and the spirit, but the line gradually overcomes obstructions by holding them in the light of the spirit.

Line 6: The strong line transcends human affairs and achieves the height of balanced and orderly progress. Others regard it as an example; thus, the line exerts a beneficial influence. It no longer enters the turmoil of the world.

Life comes to an end. The sage's work stands completed, and its path becomes one with the spirit. The selfless who have benefited all serve as a bright light for others to follow. The sage has attained the path's highest advancement.