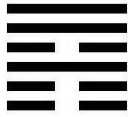


Hexagram 53 – Gradual Maturation



Slow penetration of spiritual influence.

Transformation into a sage.

Benefit from perseverance.

Structure: Penetration ☵ above and stillness ☶ below.

The hexagram images the slow growth of a tree on a mountain side, which extends its influence gradually as it grows. The firmly rooted tree grows according to the laws of its being and survives because of its adaptability. Other life benefits from the many blessings of the food, shade, and shelter the tree extends to others.

The wise emulate such a tree by abiding calmly in wisdom. Rooted firmly within the sacred, they gradually mature spiritually. The two trigrams show a penetrating wisdom and an inner calmness. Like the natural stillness of the mountain, the wise become sages through a combination of moral effort to overcome what harms within themselves and adaptability to actualize the sacred ways of Earth Interbeing¹ within the world.

When deluded by the human tendencies for self-cherishing and hostility for others, people become entangled in worldly concerns. They outwardly use intellectual brightness as a weapon rather than inwardly to discern the path that benefits all. They ravage and abandon themselves, burying the real and accepting the false. They deviously take advantage of the moment and others.

The hexagram points to our need to accept the gradual, step by step maturation of our spiritual being, a process that frees us of our harmful cultural conditioning and teaches us how to live on Earth with other beings in ways that benefit all. For millennia, the harmful culture has strengthened our willingness to harm others to have our way and has entangled us in inflicting great harms upon the Earth Interbeing. Mastering our willingness to harm others for self-benefit and restoring what we have damaged frames the fundamental human challenge.

Whatever arises in experience, sages make it part of their path. When challenged by life, the wise cultivate staying present because they know that their self-cherishing and deluded beliefs separate them from the sacred ways. Even if we do not have the capacity to always see through how our harmful culture has conditioned our self-cherishing and ill-will, we still may recognize our willingness to harm others for self-benefit and then ignore the suffering we cause others. Sometimes even a small glimpse of our complicity can break the enchantment with our harmful culture.

¹ **The Ways of the Sacred Earth Interbeing:** We worship the sacred through our care for Creation. We interbe with Creation, relating to all with equality, respect, and care so that life continues and thrives on Earth. We know the sacred ways for Creation to continue and thrive and to overcome what keeps us apart. We know and respond to the mutual neediness of life in ways that further the harmony of Earth Interbeing. We know and care for our place as the ground upon which we preserve the balance of Earth Interbeing by reciprocating for what we take through our stewardship of the Earth Interbeing. We live within interbeing's moral boundaries and Earth limits and learn from our life lessons how to overcome what keeps us apart. We live as unique beings in the ways of the Earth Interbeing to preserve Creation's harmony and balance and to overcome what keeps us apart. We respond to whatever we experience in the ways of the Earth Interbeing and hold ourselves accountable for our actions. (12/23/24)

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 to 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 warding off self-cherishing and ill-will, all goes well. In the world, the wise carefully avoid violating moral and natural limits. The greatest influence possible always comes through the patient and steady maturing of our spiritual being.

We transgress the laws of natural growth when we do not let things unfold gradually but plunge rashly into a struggle to impose our will. Such recklessness jeopardizes our path and the safety of others who depend upon us. The wise remain patient. Life often demands us to wait long for the changes we want to see in the world.

The very gradualness of overcoming our cultural conditioning and live the sacred ways makes it necessary to have a strong resolve, for that alone prevents slow growth from dwindling to nothing. Deepening the ways of interbeing within and in the world requires a great moral resolve and perseverance. It takes time and persistence for a tree to become great.

The process transforms, unfolds us in ways that we cannot anticipate. We learn how to not react unwisely to whatever we want or not want. Instead, we learn how to respond to experience in ways that benefit all.

Line 1: The line at the beginning does not yet have a firm understanding of how to respond to a confusing and dangerous situation. Without the support of others and surrounded by criticism, it moves slowly and cautiously, the correct way to proceed.

Line 2: The line overcomes its initial insecurity and finds ways to use its talents. It rests to consolidate and nourish itself before it advances further. Knowing how to move forward on the path makes the line joyous and confident in the future.

Line 3: The line goes too far and gets entangled in a situation beyond its capacity to manage well. Its actions only deepen the dangers, yet it never desists from wanting to advance itself. The wise know their limitations, retreat from what harms, and reach out for wisdom, finding the supports it needs to stay on their path.

Line 4: Within changing circumstances, the line finds a temporary place to rest by adapting to the situation while firmly holding to its great purpose.

Line 5: The line's spiritual path has reached a crisis. It must forsake its self-cherishing to further deepen its spiritual being. For a long time, it struggles with its self-centeredness, but the line at long last transforms that harmful belief. A selfless sage emerges

Line 6: The selfless sage interbes with the sacred Earth Interbeing and now serves as a bright light for others to follow.