

# 忍 (YEN)

聖人造字 於忍字從刃從心 蓋謂人當拂意之時 心如刀割 不得已而忍受其痛也

In creating Chinese characters, Sages made the character YEN (Forbearance, Patience) with components of 'knife' and 'heart'. Because at a time of frustration, people feel pain as if a knife cuts through their heart. Nothing can be done except to be YEN to the pain.

今人不知忍義 或以為迂 或以為懦

及至橫逆相加 因一朝之忿 小而構怨於一時 大而貽禍於終身 甚至傾家覆產 累及父母妻子 其為害可勝言哉

Today, people do not understand the meaning of YEN. YEN is misinterpreted as an attitude of not being practical or of cowardice.

When cruelty and animosity come to the surface, they break out with a sudden display of anger. This can trigger a short period of bitterness; or escalate to an entanglement with a lifetime of misfortune. Furthermore, family fortunes can be lost and family members can be agonized. The damages are incalculable!

孔子云 小不忍 則亂大謀 佛家六度萬行 忍為第一 老子教人忍難忍之事 三教聖賢 皆以忍為治身應世之法 足徵忍之一字 為人所不可忘也

Confucius said, "Being unable to YEN a tiny irritation brings a catastrophe to any strategy." In Buddhism's Six Paramitas<sup>1</sup>, YEN is the number one. Lao Tze<sup>2</sup> taught people how to YEN unbearable matters.

These Saints of the three teachings all recommended that YEN be a way to behave and a method to deal with reality. This proves that the character YEN should not be disregarded.

Note<sup>1</sup>: Six Paramitas (method of gaining salvation)

- 1) 佈施/Almsgiving and offering
- 2) 持戒/Steadfastly keeping the holy precepts
- 3) 忍辱/Forbearance
- 4) 精進/Supreme Diligence
- 5) 禪定/Zen and Meditation
- 6) 智慧/Wisdom

Note<sup>2</sup>: Lao Tze, who was a Taoist wrote Tao Te Ching.

邵康節曰 君子忍人之所不能忍

胡文定曰 人能常忍得心安

石子曰 忍字心中一個刀 不忍分明把禍招

是以張公藝九世同居 唐高宗問其故 公藝書忍字百餘以進

雲谷禪師自稱百忍頭陀  
大覺真仙自號忍辱山人  
真德秀大書忍字於室中 凡遇拂意之事 即散步徘徊其下  
秦郵王遍題忍字於四壁 人以非理相加 舉目見之而即忘  
鄧孝廉佩忍字以隨身 明彰其德  
陸處士勒忍字以勸世 陰注其功  
元自實忍一時之忿 冤仇立解  
莫氏子忍群小之侮 險難頓消  
長沙太守持忍字以化民 百姓因之而息訟  
浦江鄭氏用忍字以傳後 子孫奉之以為箴

Shao Hang Jie said, "An exemplary person exhibits YEN in circumstances where most people would find it difficult."

Wo Wen Ding said, "Steadfastness in YEN puts people's mind at peace."

Shi Zy said, "There is a symbolic knife within a heart for the character YEN. If a person be not YEN, misfortune is surely produced."

Living with nine generations within a family, Zhang Gong Yi was asked how he managed by Tang Gao Zong<sup>1</sup>. Zhang replied with a hundred words of YEN.

The Zen<sup>2</sup> master Yun Gu called himself a monk of hundred-YEN.

Da Jue, a Taoist, called himself a hermit of YEN.

Zhen De Shu wrote the character YEN on the walls of his room. Whenever he felt agony, he would pace around that room.

Qin You Wang framed the character YEN all over the walls so that whenever he was treated unreasonably, he could look at the walls and forget his unhappiness.

Deng Xiao Lian wore the character YEN all the time to honor its virtue.

Lu Chu Shi engraved the character YEN as a motto to display its merit.

Yuen Zi Shi was YEN in relation to his anger, and his rancour was dissolved.

A son from the Mo family was YEN to the insults from the villains, and the danger subsided.

The Prefect of Chang Sha region used the character YEN to educate the residents; lawsuits between the people ceased.

Zheng family from Lake Pu passed down the character YEN to their descendants, who all took it as a precept.

Note<sup>1</sup>: Tang Gao Zong was one of the Tang Dynasty emperors. (AD 618-907)

Note<sup>2</sup>: Zen is one of the Buddhist disciplines.

由此觀之 千古聖賢 言論行事 前後一轍 可見忍之有益於人 而不可須臾離也

From the above, you can see that the words and deeds of sages of different times coincide. Behold, the merits of YEN are so strong that we should not live a split second without it.

謹按涅槃經 昔有人讚佛為福德相

或曰 何以見之

曰 打而不嗔 罵而不怒 非大福德相乎

According to the Nirvana Sutra, there was a person speaking in praise of Buddha for having the appearance of bliss and virtue.

Another person asked, "From what would you conclude that?"

The answer: "Buddha feel no hatred for being attacked and feel no anger at insults. These give him the appearance of the greatest bliss and virtue."

今人不知忍為福德相 本身恥之為受辱 旁人笑之為懦弱 此嗔心所由起也

不知辱不辱在人 受不受在我

People today have no idea that being YEN is regarded as having the appearance of bliss and virtue. They associate being insulted with a feeling of shame; they associate cowardice with being laughed at by others. This is how a heart of hatred is created.

We must understand that to insult or not is under the control of others; accepting that insult is under our own control.

聞諛言而喜者 是受諂也 聞詬言而怒者 是受辱也

心能不受 耳聽何傷 如火燒空 如風吹地

One who feels good when he hears flattery is flattered. One who feels angry when he hears insults is insulted.

As long as our hearts don't accept flattery or insult, mere listening does not hurt us any more than an isolated fire or the wind blowing on the ground does any harm.

人當受打受罵時 但起念曰 彼來成就我之福德相而已 榮孰甚焉

如此則忿戾之氣 消於烏有 寬容之度 出於自然

融融渾渾 藹然如在春風和氣中

When we are attacked or yelled at, we should think that the attack affords an opportunity to achieve the appearance of bliss and virtue.

Then our spirit of resentment will vanish and our leniency surface unwittingly. We advance to a happy and harmonious state filled with breezy weather of Spring.

此等境界 祇向度量寬弘處 便贏得自在快活來 人能領略 則一生受用不窮矣

If we realize that attending to leniency wins us peace and happiness, our lives will benefit endlessly.

然上所述 皆吾人處世接物之法

The above sayings are all disciplines for us to live as we are buffeted by reality.

若言乎佛 則更有進焉 何者

昔如來佛 被哥利王割截身體 節節支解

當是時 佛無人相 無我相 無眾生相 無壽者相 不生嗔恨之心

Regarding Buddha, their concepts show themselves even more advanced. How?

Long ago, Tathagata Buddha was dismembered alive by a king in India.

During that time, the Buddha already had attained a state of containing neither "Other" (an object to patience), "Self" (a subject to patience), "Other ways of being" (praise or insult), nor "people of longevity" (rash desire to cause an everlasting karma) images so that the Buddha was free of hatred and resentment.

夫人以辱施於我 而我能忍之 是猶有人我之見 榮辱之分也

而佛則無人無我 無榮無辱 有何忍耐之可言

吾輩能修到如此境界 豈非今日之如來乎

Hence, when people insult me, then I am YEN about it. Under this circumstance, I still have a sense of myself and other, and a sense of praise and insult.

However, Buddha have neither "Other", "Self" nor "Praise or insult", nor do they even have to use the word "YEN".

If we can comport ourselves to reach such realms, we become the Buddha of the present.

且吾之所謂忍者 凡人所難能之事 我能不畏艱苦而為之 是亦忍也

Furthermore, whenever tasks are considered to be difficult, but yet we are not afraid of them, we live yet another meaning of YEN.

方今吾創斯道 流離辛苦 捨身救世 即孟子動心忍性 增益其所不能之意也

Currently, establishing this Religion, I have to endure the tiring effort of going from place to place to rescue people. What Mencius said, "enthusiasm with the characteristic of YEN," emphasizes that it is not an easy mission.

是故能忍則能柔 能忍則能弱

老子曰 弱勝強 柔勝剛

Thus, being YEN is being soft. Likewise, being YEN is being weak.

Lao Tze said, "Weakness overcomes strength; softness overcomes hardness<sup>1</sup>."

Note1: Lao Tze always demonstrated the TAO with natural phenomena. For instance, A corpse is hard but a living body is soft. So, the hardness represents only a dead end for living things. Water is weak; stone is strong but which one is eroded?

是可知天下之事 皆成於忍 而敗於不能忍也

From this, everything in this world is accomplished by being YEN and fails by not being YEN.

嗚呼 自世之衰 人皆習於驕橫暴戾之行 而無忍讓謙和之德

Alas, our world is degenerating. We are inured to the behavior of arrogant and cruel people. We hardly know or practice the virtues of YEN, giving, humility, and harmony.

任其情 使其氣

非獨鄰里宗族鄉黨之間 每因一言肇釁

We either let our mood dominate, or are driven by our temper.

Not only among neighbors, clans, villages or factions, people resort to tactics of power and retribution upon very little provocation.

即父母兄弟妻子之類 常以小事生離 是豈尚有人心哉

Even though they be bonded as parents, brothers, husband and wife, they are estranged from each other just because of a mere argument. Do those people even still have feelings towards each other?

吾故揭忍字以警之 俾入道諸子 縱不為如來古佛之人我兩忘

亦或如以上前人之勛業彪炳焉 豈不幸甚

Therefore, I purposely make known this character YEN to serve as a motto to people. People who live this TAO may not be able to reach the realm of "neither self nor other" like Buddha. But they can still comport themselves following the examples of the people I have described, who made outstanding contribution to society. And in so living this TAO, comes a prospect of the greatest good fortune for all of us.