

Shou Hei / Stay with the Darkness

By Zhixing Wang



This is an abbreviated concept from the Daoist classical book *Dao De Jing* by Lao Zi, meaning ‘...stay with the darkness’ literally. The context is, to quote more of the *Dao De Jing*: ‘Knowing the masculine, stay with the feminine...; knowing the brightness, stay with the darkness...; knowing the glory, stay with the humbleness....’

It is in the core of Lao Zi’s teachings, to advise people to stay on the lower, weaker and softer side of things rather than to be on the higher, stronger and harder, etc., even for the purpose of getting higher, stronger and harder, and so on. The lower is inviting, the weaker is enduring, the softer is permeating; while the higher, stronger and harder has less or no potential and is soon to decline, fail, or break.

The valley is in the lowest position of the mountain. All lives generate and sustain there; while on the mountain top, there are only rocks and snow. The sea is at the lowest position of the earth, while all waters gather there. A rock falling into the water causes no damage to the water, while water can erode rocks.

While in brightness everything is exposed and obvious, and therefore exhausted; in darkness we see nothing and there can be anything. There is a full potential. Above all darkness contains brightness, not the other way around.

‘Stay with the darkness ‘ teaches us to be humble, simple, still, stable, tolerant, content, nurtured, centred, observant, fearless, original, creative, enduring, encompassing, consistent, persistent, and so on.

When we are mistreated, don’t have to protest. When we are misunderstood, don’t have to explain. When we are considered stupid, don’t have to prove we are intelligent. ‘Stay with the darkness.’