

# *Records of the High Sanghans*

*Great Master Fa An*

No one knows where Great Master Fa An (法安) came from or what his family name was. He left the home-life when he was very young and strictly upheld the precepts. He became expert in the Vinaya and also lectured the Sutras. His conditions with the Dharma were excellent; many people liked to listen to his explanations of the Sutras.

After he left the home-life, he followed Great Master Hwei Ywan and studied the Buddha-dharma. He drew near the Great Master Ywan for more than a decade.

After that, he traveled around to study with others until he came to Syin-yang County. It was a mountainous area inhabited by many man-eating tigers. Every night one or two people in Syin-yang County would be caught, killed, and eaten by those tigers. As a result the people of the villages would close their doors very early in the evening because they were afraid the tigers would come.

When Master Fa An arrived in this region, he looked for a home to stay in, but all the people's doors were closed. Since he could not find a house to live in, he sat down to meditate at the base of a great tree and prepared to stay there. However, the foot of that mighty tree was where the villagers placed their offerings for the local mountain spirits. The mountain spirits in this case were those man-eating tigers. But the more offerings the people made to the tigers, the more the tigers devoured the people.

At about 3:00 in the morning, he heard the roar of a tiger and saw it hauling a person's body along. It stopped near the tree and was just ready to start eating the person, when it noticed Great Master Fa An sitting there. The Master watched the tiger's reaction. It seemed both pleased and startled to see him. The tiger then became as compliant as a pet dog, knelt before the Master, and then bowed. Dharma Master Fa An spoke Dharma for the tiger and administered the Three Refuges. After bowing to the Master some more, the tiger got up and left. It ignored the body that it had been intent upon eating. The person had actually died of fright, but had come back to life and witnessed the tiger bowing to Dharma Master Fa An, and the Master speaking Dharma for the tiger. The person watched, but dared not move. After the tiger left, the person asked Master Fa An, "Master, what mantra did you recite to cause the tiger to bow to you?"

Master Fa An answered, "I didn't recite any mantra. The tiger has affinities with me, that's why it took refuge." Just then, the people of the village who had been pursuing the tiger after it had seized the man, came upon the Master and the man. The man whom the tiger had captured told the others what had happened. "I've been rescued from the jaws of the tiger," he said. Then what do you suppose happened? The entire populace of Syin-yang County gathered under the great tree around Master Fa An and requested him to stay there and live. They built a monastery right beneath the big tree and offered all the surrounding land to be monastic grounds. Master Fa An remained there and cultivated for a period of time. Later he left, but where he went, no one

knows. Maybe he went to find his tiger-disciple. However, from that time on, the threat of tigers was gone from Syin-yang County, and no one else was ever eaten by tigers after that.

In cultivation, all you need is virtue in the Way; then even such vicious beasts as tigers will be moved to take refuge with the Triple Jewel and will become compliant and obedient.

*translated, reviewed, and edited  
by members of the Buddhist Text Translation Society*