



pagodians

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image info



THE GIANT PAGODA TREE BEGAN AS A cutting from the one first planted on the south side of the street after a ship's captain brought the potted young tree home from China in the 1800s. The cutting was planted on the north side of the street by an island teenager who later opened a landscaping company and a large nursery in town where lots of people seasonally purchased their plants, flowers, and trees. Everybody who passed by the pagoda had to look at it, and while their responsive thoughts varied, they included to some extent an appreciation of its presence. The better a person was doing with their own existence, through the practice of virtues, the more a person appreciated the giant pagoda—one reliable gauge of how a person's journey through life was going at that particular moment in time. They could improve the quality of their thoughts by sitting on one of the four benches around the tree—preferably one of the three I wasn't sitting on when I was there—and meditate upon it; they'd achieve a high yield of pagoda-inspired thoughts, what they'd never think by merely passing by it.

Thinking is like that; there are all sorts of different ways for the mind to think. Yes, they could walk by on the cement sidewalk, look at the

tree, and have initial thoughts. Those thoughts would have different worth depending on the person's condition when they came across the tree. But if the person stayed and thought more on the tree, the thoughts about the tree would improve. They themselves would gain a greater value by achieving a better quality of thought and that would benefit not only themselves but others, even if they didn't talk about the experience since the benefits accrued by the individual would emit an influential radiance, just from spending a little more time thinking about the tree. As they thought about the mighty pagoda, they would travel through a series of phases. From the get-go, they were instantly brought into intimacy with the tree. The pagoda was not an indifferent companion. The pagoda was there, existing the way it does, year after year, going through its life cycle of bloom and leaf fall, and winter, bare branches, and spring, buds, no need to improve and all the while widening its tree consciousness. For an analogy of what transpires for pagodian initiates, it is as if their initial thoughts are like tuning guitar strings until they all sound perfectly, or close enough. Once they were, the person and tree played a song together through

which the person became the beneficiary of the tree's instructive consciousness.

The tree roots were deeply buried, not one protruding upwards out of the surrounding grass or impacting the brick walkway stretching from the street past the tree's trunk and the four benches, two benches on either side, to the entryway brick steps of the Carnegie library. The trunk of the tree had thick bark in intricate patterns, deep grooves creating fine lines up and down, which, when looked at, displayed a flow of energy within itself. A person couldn't hug the tree and clasp their hands together on the other side, but come up short at some point depending on their arms' length. At five feet or so, the trunk gave way to branches, the initial ones were about as thick as the trunk itself, and those branched off higher up, and all the branching spread out and reached higher than the rooftops of the

surrounding homes and inns into the awesome blueness of the sky. The branches up there in the blueness formed a network of arms and hands, praying in order to acknowledge existence. The tree reached into the heart of the sun during the day, and the tree reached for the bath of the cool light-alternating stars and planets by night. The branches were full of the sun's influence and they were full of the stars' and planetary influence. They brought down into itself these influences much like the roots of the tree brought up from the soils the chthonic influences below. Within the heart of the tree, these forces were alive, and the beating organ presented them to the mind thinking of the tree from the bench, soaking in the tree's consciousness, like soaking in a clay and mineral bath, the properties of the substance working their magic upon the flesh and the soaker's insides.

Up a slight incline from the waterside a block long, the pagoda faced the heavy winds that gathered strength from across the water, battering the tree limbs relentlessly; they also faced the downpours and lightning strikes, the wet snow fall weighing the branches down, yet impregnable in the spot where it was planted, having outlasted people's lifetimes. The wise teacher was there for several generations, and I could only hope it would be there for many more generations in its good health and vibrancy. I could only hope other people would sit on the benches like me or better than me and learn the pagoda lessons, become better for it, the pagoda disciples spreading the pagoda benevolence wherever they went, returning for a reinvigoration and a honing of the scholarship from time to time and once again setting off into the world to serve as the beacons of the pagoda, the illumination palpable like a sweet morning dew on the lawn—and irresistible. 🌿

