

## THE WOODCARVER

Khing, the master carver, made a bell stand  
Of precious wood. When it was finished,  
All who saw it were astounded. They said it must be  
The work of spirits.  
The Prince of Lu said to the master carver:  
"What is your secret?"

Kh'mg replied: "I am only a workman:  
I have no secret. There is only this:  
When I began to think about the work you commanded  
I guarded my spirit, did not expend it  
On trifles, that were not to the point.  
I fasted in order to set  
My heart at rest.  
After three days fasting,  
I had forgotten gain and success.  
After five days  
I had forgotten praise or criticism.  
After seven days  
I had forgotten my body  
With all its limbs.

"By this time all thought of your Highness  
And of the court had faded away.  
All that might distract me from the work  
Had vanished.  
I was collected in the single thought  
Of the bell stand.

"Then I went to the forest  
To see the trees in their own natural state.  
When the right tree appeared before my eyes,  
The bell stand also appeared in it, clearly, beyond doubt,  
All I had to do was to put forth my hand  
And begin.

"If I had not met this particular tree  
There would have been No bell stand  
at all.

"What happened?  
My own collected thought  
Encountered the hidden potential in the wood;  
From this live encounter came the  
work Which you ascribe to the spirits."