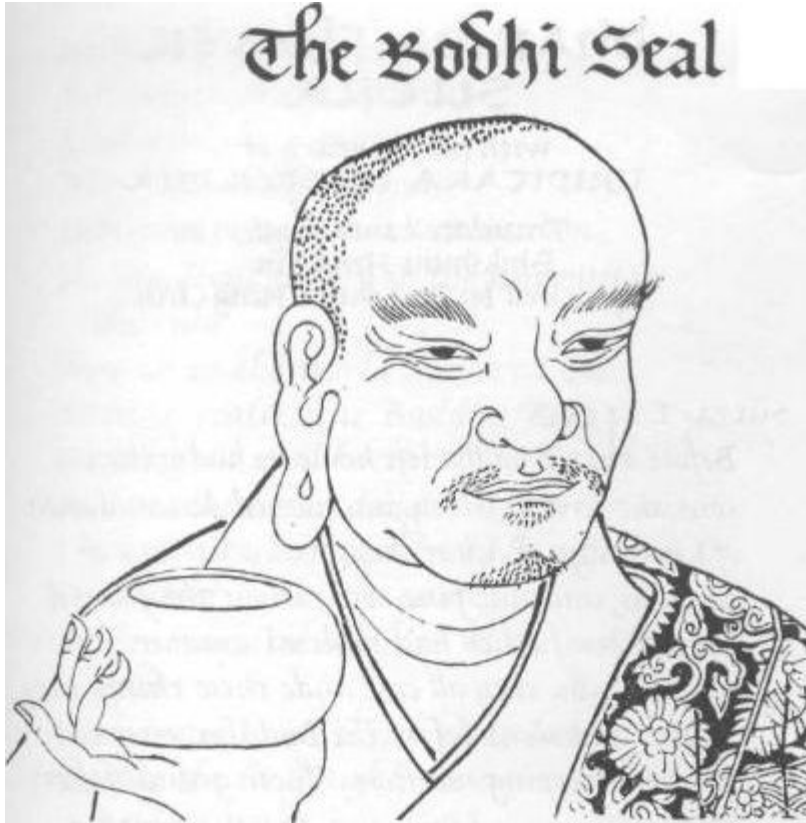


# *The Bodhi Seal of the Patriarchs*



## ***THE VENERABLE RAHULATA, SIXTEENTH PATRIARCH FROM SHAKYAMUNI BUDDHA***

THE VENERABLE ONE WAS FROM THE REGION OF KAPILA. HIS FATHER WAS NAMED FAN MWO CHING TE. OUTSIDE THEIR HOME WAS A garden and in the garden was a certain TREE ON WHICH GREW MUSHROOM-LIKE FUNGUS THAT WAS DELICIOUS. But although it was so good to eat, ONLY CHING TE AND HIS SECOND SON, RAHULATA, COULD PICK AND EAT IT AND STILL HAVE THE FUNGUS GROW BACK, THE MORE THEY HARVESTED IT. Every time they picked it, even more grew back in that place. Since this kept happening, the tree turned into a special treasure.

One day WHEN THE FIFTEENTH PATRIARCH Kanadeva CAME TO THEIR HOUSEHOLD, HE SAID to Fan Mwo Ching Te, "WHEN YOU ARE EIGHTY-ONE YEARS OLD, THIS TREE WILL BEAR NO MORE FUNGUS." CHING TE HEARD THIS AND BECAUSE OF HIS FAITH HE DEEPLY RESPECTED THE PREDICTION. He felt great respect for the Patriarch because he deeply believed what the Master said. IN RESPONSE TO HIS COMMENT, CHING TE SAID TO THE PATRIARCH, "THIS DISCIPLE IS OLD AND DECREPIT AND WOULD BE OF NO SERVICE TO THE MASTER. BUT I'D LIKE TO RELINQUISH MY SECOND SON WHO CAN FOLLOW THE MASTER AND LEAVE THE HOME-LIFE."

THE PATRIARCH SAID, "IN THE PAST, THE THUS COME ONE PREDICTED THAT IN THE SECOND FIVE HUNDRED YEARS THIS CHILD WOULD BECOME A GREAT TEACHING HOST." The Fifteenth Patriarch then revealed that more than a thousand years prior to that day Shakyamuni Buddha had spoken of their meeting and of the child, Rahulata. The Buddha knew back then that the child would become an important figure in the propagation of the teaching. So the Patriarch notes: "THIS MEETING CONFIRMS THAT PROPHECY. This is no coincidence. It has to do with past lives and former causes and conditions that I now meet with you." THEN THE CHILD'S HEAD WAS SHAVED AND HE ATTENDED UPON THE MASTER. LATER, after he served the Master to the point that the Patriarch saw he could cultivate, then HE WAS ENTRUSTED WITH THE GREAT DHARMA. He transmitted the Mind Seal Dharma to him.

AFTER RECEIVING THE DHARMA, HE TRAVELLED AND TAUGHT UNTIL HE REACHED THE CITY OF SHRAVASTI WHERE HE TRANSMITTED THE DHARMA TO SANGHANANDI. THEN HE SAT AT EASE AND RETURNED TO STILLNESS. He sat in full lotus, said goodbye to everyone, and completed the Stillness--went to Nirvana.

A VERSE IN HIS PRAISE SAYS:

PAST CAUSES PRESENTLY CONFIRMED,  
ESOTERIC MATTERS SILENTLY MESH.  
ERECTING THE GREAT DHARMA BANNER,  
IT FILLS THE SKIES AND SURROUNDS THE EARTH  
TWO THOUSAND YEARS LATER  
THIS SECT CONTINUES UNBROKEN.  
UNFORTUNATELY FOOLISH GENERATIONS TO COME  
WILL SEVER IT'S VERY ARM.

The past causes mesh now in the present-- the Buddha predicted this meeting long ago. Now the wonderful opportunities tally in an imperceptible way. Master Rahulata erected a Great Dharma Banner which fills up the three thousand great thousand worlds. Now, more than 2000 years after him, the Dharma of the Mind Lamp is still burning--its transmission continues unbroken. Too bad that the generations to come will act foolishly and end up cutting off its arm. That means they will mess things up--they will not cultivate well.

ANOTHER VERSE IN HIS PRAISE SAYS:

CHING TE'S SEED OF THE WAY BEGOT AN UNUSUAL  
OFFSPRING.  
IN THE GARDEN WAS A RARE TREE THAT GREW  
MUSHROOM-LICHENS.  
WHEN THE VENERABLE ONE PICKED THEM, THE FUNGUS  
ALWAYS GREW BACK.  
THE THUS COME ONE MADE A PREDICTION ABOUT THE  
SECOND FIVE HUNDRED YEARS.  
PAST CAUSES NOW MESH AND MYSTERIOUS OPPORTUNITIES  
TALLY.

THE PRESENT FRUITION BRINGS ABILITY AND  
CERTIFICATION AS THE WONDERFUL WHEEL IS SET IN  
MOTION.  
THE CONTINUATION OF THE BUDDHA'S MIND LAMP-- A  
LIGHT THAT NEVER GOES OUT  
HE WILL BE CHERISHED IN OUR MEMORIES FOR MYRIADS  
OF AEONS AND THOUSANDS OF SEASONS.

Because the Elder Ching Te had good roots and virtue amassed from the past, he bore a very special son. The child was exceptionally talented. Long ago the Buddha said that the Venerable Rahulata would be a Great Teaching Host in Buddhism. The meeting of the Fifteenth and the Sixteenth Patriarchs was inconceivable and yet came from invisible past conditions. This life the child was destined to certify to the fruition of the Patriarchs, turn the wonderful Dharma wheel and open the Dharma Eye in order to teach and transform living beings. The transmission of the Mind Seal is a mutual illumination of lights that never ceases. It doesn't matter how much time goes by, people will continue to remember this Patriarch.

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As to the mushrooms only growing back when the father and his son picked them--this is an example of "the myriad things in the universe all speak the Dharma--who understands?" This tree was protecting this Patriarch. It did this by manifesting something so unusual that it became known all around and in this way spoke the Dharma in a special way. By doing this, it caused people in the world who did not believe in cause and effect, who did not believe in the Buddha--conservative people who could only be convinced by the method of "seeing with their own eyes," and stupid people--to give rise to faith when they met up with this unusual event. That's how this tree protected the Dharma.

Another example of such a manifestation is when the Venerable Elder Master Hsu Yun was transmitting the precepts at Yun Nan, the trees blossomed with white lotus flowers. And on the tips of every blade of grass and the ends of every leaf were transformation body Buddhas. How did this come about? It was that the Elder Master's virtuous practices moved the vegetation--the trees, grasses, and flowers--to speak the Dharma in their own way. So there was such a special response--an inconceivable manifestation. You should not consider events such as these as being just "strange." In Buddhism there are many such unusual happenings--too many to relate. But even though that is the case, still people in the world don't believe in the Buddha. They still say that Buddhism is superstitious and illogical. Some people approach Buddhism with the attitude of "just shopping around." But even though they have this attitude, still, it's better than not looking into it at all. If you really look into it, gradually you will come to recognize in a real way what is proper Dharma and what is deviant dharma; what practices should be undertaken and what ones should not. Eventually one will come to understand for oneself. That's why Buddhism is totally open--it's available for anyone and everyone to investigate. You can test it out yourself. As to whether you believe or not, that's still up to you.