

The Bodhi Seal of the Patriarchs



THE TWENTY SEVENTH INDIAN PATRIARCH VENERABLE PARJNATARA

-by Tripitaka Master Hsúan Hua

The VENERABLE ONE, who is the teacher of Great Master Bodhidharma, WAS FROM EASTERN INDIA. BECAUSE THE KING AND THE PATRIARCH BASIASITA WERE TOGETHER IN A CARRIAGE AND PASSED THE VENERABLE ONE, HE BOWED BEFORE THEM. THE PATRIARCH ASKED, "DO YOU REMEMBER PAST EVENTS?"

HE ANSWERED, "I REMEMBER IN A DISTANT KALPA PAST I DWELT IN THE SAME PLACE AS YOU, MASTER, AND YOU PROCLAIMED THE MAHAPRAJNA. I RECITED THE *PROFOUND SUTRA*. TODAY'S EVENTS TALLY WITH PAST CAUSES."

THE PATRIARCH Basiasita SAID TO THE KING, "THIS CHILD IS NONE OTHER THAN GREAT STRENGTH BODHISATTVA."

LATER IN SOUTHERN INDIA THE KING INVITED THE VENERABLE ONE TO A VEGETARIAN MEAL ONE DAY. THE KING ASKED, "EVERYONE PRESENT IS RECITING SUTRAS BUT THE MASTER. WHY DON'T YOU RECITE TOO?"

THE VENERABLE ONE REPLIED, "THIS ONE OF POOR ORIGINS DOES NOT FOLLOW THE MULTITUDE OF CONDITIONS WHEN INHALING, AND DOES NOT DWELL IN THE SKANDHAS AND REALMS WHEN EXHALING. I AM FOREVER RECITING SUCH A SUTRA AND IT HAS HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS OF VOLUMES, NOT JUST ONE OR TWO."

AFTERWARDS HE GAVE THE DHARMA TO VENERABLE BODHIDHARMA, the Twenty-eighth Indian Patriarch. HE RETURNED TO HIS SEAT AND BOTH HANDS EMITTED LIGHT. THEN HE TRANSFORMED A FIRE AND BURNED HIS OWN BODY.

THE PRAISE SAYS:

IN DISTANT TIMES THEY DWELT TOGETHER.
NOW WHEN THEY MEET THEY STEAL FROM EACH OTHER.
"IT'S GREAT STRENGTH WHO'S COME!"
"WE'RE JUST WAGGING OUR TONGUES."
WITH AN AMULET BEHIND THE ELBOW
THEIR LIGHT SHONE RIGHT THROUGH.
HE RECITES A SUTRA SUCH AS THIS
AS SPRING SUN MELTS THE SNOW.

ANOTHER VERSE IN HIS PRAISE SAYS:

WHAT CAUSES AND CONDITIONS BRING US HERE?
IN LONG GONE KALPAS WE DWELT TOGETHER, AND NOW
WE MEET AGAIN.
THE MASTER PROCLAIMS DEEP PRAJNA OF THE MAHAYANA;
WHILE I TURN THE WONDERFUL DHARMA LOTUS FLOWER
SUTRA.
THE EMPEROR MADE A MEAL OFFERING TO THE SANGHA
ACCORDING TO THEIR SUCCESSIVE ORDER;
WHEREUPON THE SANGHA TRANSFERRED THE MERIT AND
BESTOWED BLESSINGS OF HEALTH AND PEACE.
HIS BREATH IS NOT DETAINED WITHIN THE SKANDHAS,
PLACES, OR REALMS, AND
WITH SOVEREIGN LIBERATION HE FILLS UP ALL OF SPACE.

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HUMAN ROOTS: Buddhist Stories for Young Readers, Vol I. The first in a series of English translations of actual events recorded in the Tripitaka or in later times. Cause and effect, filiality,

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