

The Bodhi Seal of the Patriarchs

by the Venerable Master Yun and the Venerable Master Hua



Great Master Hwei Neng
The Thirty-Third Patriarch
(The Sixth Patriarch in Junggwo)

THE PATRIARCH WAS originally a Northerner, but since his father moved to Gwan Dong in the South, he became A NATIVE OF THE SYIN JOU area, AND HIS FAMILY NAME WAS LU. AT THE AGE OF THREE HE LOST HIS FATHER, AND HIS MOTHER REMAINED A WIDOW with no other people in the family who could take her son. WHILE HE WAS GATHERING FUEL TO MAKE A LIVING FOR THEM, when he went to a certain shop, HE ENCOUNTERED A CUSTOMER. UPON HEARING HIS RECITATION OF THE line in the *Vajra Sutra* which says, "One should produce that thought which is nowhere supported," HE BECAME ENLIGHTENED. IN THE BODY OF A LAYPERSON, HE WENT to East Mountain AND BOWED TO "HWANG MEI," The Great Master, the Fifth Patriarch. At the Way-Place of Hwang Mei, HE ENTERED THE THRESHING ROOM AND ENDURED BITTER TOIL FOR EIGHT MONTHS pounding rice. THE FIFTH PATRIARCH KNEW THE TIME HAD COME TO TRANSMIT THE DHARMA TO HIM, since, as he worked, he applied effort with singleminded concentration and did no polluted thinking. AND SO THE FIFTH PATRIARCH HAD THE ASSEMBLY COMPARE GATHAS. Shen Shou stealthily wrote a gatha that said:

The body is a Bodhi tree,
The mind like a bright mirror stand.
Time and again brush it clean,
And let no dust alight.

As soon as THE SIXTH PATRIARCH got there and saw it, he COMPOSED THE WORDS of the gatha that said:

ORIGINALLY BODHI HAS NO TREE,
The Bright mirror has no stand.
Originally there is not one thing:
Where can dust alight?

It was a critique of Shen Shou's gatha which described the period when one is still cultivating and so has to "time and again brush it clean." The Sixth Patriarch was already someone who had been through that, being like someone who has crossed a river and has no further need of the boat. That's why he said there basically is no tree to Bodhi or stand to the bright mirror. Fundamentally there is nothing whatsoever, and so what could dust settle on? "HWANG MEI" didn't say anything but RECOGNIZED HIM IN SILENCE, FEARING THE ASSEMBLY'S JEALOUSY. That's because the people then were also jealous and obstructive of each other, each afraid someone else would obtain, the position of Patriarch. They all wanted to get the robe and bowl. It was like now, when this person wants to get enlightened, that person wants to become a Buddha, and someone else is after something else. There's always a "something" in the way, and so their skill never reaches the point of a response. UPON TRANSMITTING THE ROBE, bowl, AND DHARMA, of the principles of cultivation TO HIM, HE HAD HIM FLEE AT NIGHT. The Fifth Patriarch advised the Sixth Patriarch to secretly leave the monastery. See how it was in those days; and it's even worse now!

HIS, the Fifth Patriarch's, VERSE SAYS:

WITH FEELING COMES THE PLANTING OF THE SEED.
BECAUSE OF THE GROUND, THE FRUIT IS BORN AGAIN.
WITHOUT FEELING THERE IS NO SEED AT ALL.
WITHOUT THAT NATURE THERE IS NO BIRTH EITHER.

"Feeling" here refers to how the potential for production and transformation is necessary for there to be planting of the seed. Fruit being born again is the same thing as the multitudes of flowers growing because of the ground. However, without the potential for production, no seed will be planted in the earth, which will be of no use on its own. "Without feeling" also refers to the fact that a person is needed to do the planting. Otherwise there's no nature and no chance of future production. In addition this refers to how, when you cultivate and apply effort, you don't need to fear having polluted thinking, as long as you aren't turned by those polluted thoughts but continue to cultivate. It also doesn't matter if you have desire, as long as you don't follow after that desire. If you gather in your body and mind, without any nature of production there won't be the motive force for production, and vice versa.

ONCE THE PATRIARCH HAD OBTAINED THE robe, bowl, and Proper DHARMA Eye Treasury, HE HID WITH A TROOP OF HUNTERS FOR SIXTEEN YEARS. When he saw the time was right, he went to Gwang Jou where Dharma Master Yin Dzung was lecturing the *Nirvana Sutra*. Two Sangha members were discussing a problem. One said the flag moved, and the other said it was the wind that moved, even though the wind was not visible whereas the flag could be seen. Each person has his own reasons for his position. The Sixth Patriarch said, "The wind is not moving, nor is the flag. Your minds, Kind Sirs, are moving. If your minds did not move, there would be nothing at all." ONCE HE HAD RESOLVED THE WIND AND FLAG DISPUTE, FOR THE FIRST TIME HE BROUGHT OUT THE ROBE for people to see. HE LET FALL HIS HAIR and left home. THE ASSEMBLY REQUESTED THAT HE MAKE TSAU SYI (the monastery at Tsau Creek) flourish by going there and establishing a Way-Place. It was exactly one hundred seventy years after the time when the Venerable Jnana-bhaishajya had predicted that one hundred seventy years later a flesh body Bodhisattva would

propagate the Buddhadharma at that place. The Sixth Patriarch went there and renovated Nan Hwa Monastery and the Way-Place at Tsau Creek. OVER THIRTY PEOPLE INHERITED HIS DHARMA, CHING YWAN AND NAN YO BEING two of THE LEADERS among them.

IN THE SECOND YEAR OF THE SYAN TYAN REIGN PERIOD (713 A.D.) of the Tang Dynasty, HE MANIFESTED completing THE STILLNESS, AT THE AGE OF SEVENTY-SIX. The Tang Dynasty EMPEROR SYAN DZUNG BESTOWED THE POSTHUMOUS TITLE OF "DHYANA MASTER GREAT MIRROR" UPON HIM, AND HIS STUPA IS CALLED "EFFICACIOUS SHINING OF PRIMAL HARMONY." A VERSE IN PRAISE OF HIM SAYS:

ONE SHOULD BE WITHOUT A DWELLING—
PESTLE AND FIREWOOD GREW A FLOWER.
ORIGINALLY THERE IS NOT A THING,
YET HE WAS STILL DEFICIENT.
HWANG MEI FROM THAT MIDNIGHT ON,
NEVER TOOK ADVANTAGE OF THE KASHAYA.
THE TRANSMISSION FLOWS THROUGHOUT THE WORLD,
WITH FIVE PETALS TO ONE FLOWER.

The line in the *Vajra Sutra* said not to have any attachments. It was as if a flower grew while he was pounding rice and gathering firewood, since he was cultivating that whole time. His verse said that basically there isn't anything whatsoever--but he was still off a little bit. Dhyana Master Hwang Mei transmitted the Dharma to him in the middle of the night, and the Great Master, the Sixth Patriarch, obtained the kashaya. The robe and bowl were transmitted in the world, as one flower bloomed with five petals, referring to the transmission to the present day of the Five Great Lineages of the Chan School--Yun Men, Fa Yen, Lin Ji, Tsau Dong, and Wei Yang.

ANOTHER VERSE IN PRAISE OF HIM SAYS:

WITHOUT ESTABLISHING TEXTS OF WRITING,
THERE WAS TRANSMISSION OF THE ROBE AND BOWL.
ORIGINALLY THERE IS NOT ONE THING, WHICH PUTS AN END
TO WORDS AND TALKING.
ENLIGHTENING TO THE SOURCE OF THE MIND, BREAKS UP
CONFUSION AND INVERSION.
UPON FATHOMING THE SEA OF THE NATURE, ONE
ROAMS THROUGH EMPTY SPACE.
A SINGLE FLOWER WITH FIVE PETALS CONTINUES THE
WISDOM-LIFE:
FOR A MYRIAD GENERATIONS AND A THOUSAND AUTUMNS,
BUDDHAS SAVE THOSE IN THE WORLD.
THE DHARMA WATER OF TSAU CREEK FLOWS TO REALMS
MANY AS GRAINS OF SAND,
WASHING AWAY LIVING BEINGS' FILTHY, HEAVY ILLNESS.

There wasn't any document of written testimony when the robe and bowl were transmitted to the Sixth Patriarch. It wasn't like today when there are diplomas and certificates. Basically there is nothing whatsoever, so nothing can be said. Upon understanding the source of the mind, one is no longer confused or upside down. For example, we people are laden with love and emotion, which is inversion and confusion. But when one understands, one realizes that fundamentally there is none of that, so why should one be controlled by those things? If you understand that

the sea of the nature is so big there is nothing beyond it and so small there is nothing inside it:

With the Dharma Realm as substance, what could be outside?
With empty space as function, nothing is excluded.
The myriad things are level and equal,
--apart from discriminations.
When not a single thought is produced,
that puts an end to words and doctrines.

If you can be that way and fathom the sea of the nature, then you are always pure and don't have the least bit of ignorance blocking you. One flower blooming with five petals refers to how, from the time of the Sixth Patriarch on, were transmitted the Five Great Lineages of Yun Men, Fa Yan, Tsau Dong, Lin Ji and Wei Yang, carrying on the Buddha's wisdom life. For myriad generations and thousands of autumns, the activities of the Buddha's teaching and transforming of people continue. The water of Tsau Creek flows to the ends of empty space and to the exhaustion of the Dharma Realm, to as many world-systems as there are grains of sand in the Ganges River. It washes away living beings' grave illness of ignorance and afflictions.

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