The patriarch, a native of southern India, being the third son of King Most Fragrant, was of the Kshatriya class. At first the king made offerings to Prajñātāra, because of being tested with a precious pearl. Patriarch Bodhidharma understood the mind ground. Thereupon, Prajñātāra transmitted the Dharma to him, as he spoke this verse:

From the mind all seeds arise,  
Specifics bring forth principle;  
The fruit of Bodhi can be perfected.  
The blooming flower can expose the world.

A long time after the Patriarch had obtained the Dharma, knowing that China's conditions were ripe, he boarded a ship to the Liang Empire. When he reached Canton, a provincial governor named Xiao'ang sent word to Emperor Wu, who issued an imperial command that he be seen. The emperor asked him, “What is the sage's truth in the primary sense?” The Patriarch replied, “Obviously, there is no sage.” “Then who is before me?” The Patriarch said, “I don't recognize him.”

The Emperor still did not connect. Because of that, the Patriarch crossed the Yangzi River and, passing through the Wei Empire, stopped at Mountain Shao Shi in the Song Mountains. Afterwards he met Shenguang and transmitted the great Dharma to him. Then they went together to Thousand Sages Monastery in Yumen. He departed while seated. He was buried at Bear's Ear Mountain.

During the Tang dynasty, Emperor Dai Zong conferred the posthumous name Great Master Perfect Enlightenment upon him. The name on his stupa reads: Contemplator of Emptiness.
「初，王供養般若多羅，因試以寶珠」：最初，第二十七祖般若多羅尊者行化至南印度，香至王崇信佛教，尊重供養第二十七祖，又施以無價寶珠。第二十七祖知道達摩祖師的密意，就用寶珠來試驗他。

「祖發明心地」：菩提達摩發明心地法門，般若多羅尊者就傳法給菩提達摩。本來這個般若多羅尊者，有的又說是菩提達摩的徒弟，有的又說是他師父；所以佛教裡很多事情都查不清楚。那麼因為有的書上是那麼寫，有的書上是這麼寫，所以書上寫的東西，有的時候也靠不住的。

「般若遂付法」，般若多羅就付法，第二十七祖是般若多羅。

Commentary:

Great Master Bodhidharma was the twenty-eighth patriarch in India; the first patriarch in China. The patriarch, a native of southern India, being the third son of King Most Fragrant, was of the Kshatriya class. Great Master Bodhidharma was the third son of a king in southern India whose name was Most Fragrant. As such, he was a Kshatriya—of the royal caste—thus a nobleman.

At first the king made offerings to Prajñātāra, because of being tested with a precious pearl. To start with, the twenty-seventh patriarch Prajñātāra traveled and taught until he reached southern India. There, Most Fragrant King, who believed in Buddhism, venerated and made offerings to the twenty-seventh patriarch. Among other gifts was an invaluable precious pearl. The twenty-seventh patriarch knew patriarch-to-be Bodhidharma’s secret intent and used that invaluable precious pearl to test him.

Patriarch Bodhidharma understood the mind ground. Bodhidharma discovered the mind-ground Dharma-door. Venerable Prajñātāra transmitted the Dharma to Bodhidharma. Some accounts say that Venerable Prajñātāra was Patriarch Bodhidharma’s disciple, and others say he was Bodhidharma’s teacher. So in Buddhism there are many details that cannot be determined precisely because of the fallibility of historic records.

This text says Prajñātāra transmitted the Dharma to him. Thus, we will consider the Venerable Prajñātāra to be the Twenty-seventh Indian Patriarch as many accounts do. He spoke this verse: This is the twenty-seventh patriarch’s verse. “From the mind all seeds arise”: The mind-ground produces all seeds. “Specifics bring forth principles”: Through a given specific phenomenon, a principle is revealed. “The fruit of Bodhi can be perfected”: If the result comes to fullness, awakening will be perfected as well. “The blooming flower can expose the world.” Or it could be that when the flower opens, all the problems in this world come to be.

A long time after the Patriarch had obtained the Dharma, knowing that China’s conditions were ripe, he boarded a ship to the Liang Empire. Patriarch Bodhidharma had obtained the Dharma for a long time before he recalled that China’s conditions were ripe, and so he sailed by boat to see the reigning Emperor Wu of Liang.

When he reached Canton, a provincial governor named Xiao’ang sent word to Emperor Wu, who issued an imperial command that he be seen. When the patriarch reached Canton province, Governor Xiao’ang became aware of his presence and sent word to the emperor, whereupon Emperor Wu of the Liang dynasty demanded to see him.

The emperor asked him: “What is the sage’s truth in the primary sense?” Emperor Wu of Liang asked him, “What is meant by the primary principle of noble truth?”

The patriarch replied, “Obviously, there is no sage.” Patriarch Bodhidharma answered him by stating quite clearly “there is no sage.” But Emperor Wu did not understand his meaning.

“Then who is before me?” Emperor Wu of Liang exclaimed, “There is no sage? Who is the person addressing us now?” His meaning was “You are a sage!”

The Patriarch said, “I don’t recognize him.” Patriarch Bodhidharma replied, “I don’t know who he is.”
The story of how the Twenty-seventh Patriarch used an invaluable precious pearl to test the Great Master Bodhidharma is told in the second roll of the *Transmission of the Lamp* composed during the Jingde Era:

He traveled until he reached southern India. There, King Most Fragrant venerated Buddhism and made repeated offerings to him for rescuing living beings. He also offered him a priceless pearl.

At that time the king had three sons. The third son was awakened. The Venerable One wanted to test them and so, holding the precious pearl, he asked the three sons: “Among the seven gems, is there any that can surpass this pearl’s illumination?”

The first son, named Purity (jing-duo-luo), and the second son, named Virtue (gong-de-duo-luo) said: “This pearl is the epitome of the seven gems, and cannot be possessed by anyone who does not have the Venerable One’s strength in the Way.”

The third son, named Bodhi (pu-ti-duo-luo) said, “This mundane gem is not the epitome; among gems, the Dharma Gem is supreme. This mundane light is not the epitome; among light, the light of Wisdom is supreme. This mundane brilliance is not the epitome; among brilliance, the mind’s brilliance is supreme. This pearl’s light and brilliance cannot shine on itself; but add the light of wisdom and that light can explain this. Since it can explain this, then we know it is a pearl. Since we know it is a pearl, then we understand it is a gem. We cannot understand it is a gem; a gem cannot know itself to be a gem. We can explain it is a pearl; a pearl cannot know itself to be a pearl. For a pearl that does not know itself to be a pearl, we must add the pearl of wisdom to explain that it is a mundane pearl. For a gem that does not know itself to be a gem, we must use all the gem of wisdom to understand the gem of Dharma. Since the Master had the Way, his gem is apparent. When beings have the Way, the mind of their gems are like that too.”

The Venerable One praised his eloquent wisdom and further asked: “Among all things, which thing has not appearance?”

He answered: Among all things, none lacks an appearance.

He again asked: Among all things, which thing is supreme?

He answered: Among all things, I am supreme.

He again asked: Among all things, which thing is the greatest?

He answered: Among all things, the Dharma nature is the greatest.

The Venerable One knew he was his Dharma successor. But as the time had not yet come, he remained silent and let it pass, until Most Fragrant King became weary with the world and passed away.

Only after the third son Bodhi (pu-ti-duo-luo) had entered samadhi for seven days beside his father’s casket, had then entered monastic life, and had received the complete precepts did the Venerable One finally say to him, “The Tathagata bestowed the Treasury of the True Dharma-Eye on Great Kashyapa. Likewise, it was transmitted to me. Now I give it to you.”