

三十一祖道信大師

(東土四祖)

The Thirty-first Patriarch, Great Master Dao Xin (The Fourth Patriarch in China)

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比丘尼恒持 修訂

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祖，生蘄州廣濟，司馬氏。年十四，禮璨祖，曰：「乞和尚解脫法門。」曰：「誰縛汝？」祖曰：「無人縛。」曰：「何更求解脫乎？」祖於言下大悟。服勤九載，璨屢試玄微；知其緣熟，乃付衣法。偈曰：「華種雖因地，從地種花生。若無人下種，花地盡無生。」

祖既得法，住破頭山；脅不至席，僅六十年。後得弘祖，以傳其法。太宗嚮其道，經三詔不起，帝彌加隆賜。永徽中，忽垂誠門人，安坐而逝。越明年，塔戶自開，儀相如生。代宗謚大醫禪師，慈雲之塔。

三十一祖道信大師，在中國他是第四代祖師，在印度算來是第三十一代。

「祖，生蘄州廣濟，司馬氏」：這位四祖，出生在蘄州廣濟那個地方，姓司馬。

「年十四，禮璨祖」：這年十四歲，禮僧璨大師作師父。

「曰：乞和尚解脫法門。」道

The Patriarch was born in Guang Ji, Qi Zhou, into the Si-ma family. At fourteen years of age, he bowed to Great Master Seng Can, saying: "I seek a Dharma-door to liberation from the Elder Monk." Master Can replied: "Who is tying you up?" The Patriarch-to-be replied: "No one is tying me up." Master Can replied: "Then why do you seek liberation?" At those words, the Patriarch-to-be experienced a great awakening. He served as Master Can's attendant for nine years. Master Can continually tested him in esoteric and subtle ways. Once Master Can determined he was ready, he passed him the robe and bowl and the Dharma. A verse says: As to flower seeds: although it is because of the earth, / That flowers spring forth from the ground where they are planted. / If no person scatters seeds, / No flowers will grow; the earth will produce nothing.

After he obtained the Dharma, he dwelled on Broken Head Mountain. His ribs never touched the mat for sixty years. Later on, he named Master Hong a Patriarch and transmitted the Dharma to him. Emperor Tai requested his presence in three successive mandates, but the Patriarch never did rise to the occasion. That only caused the Emperor to increase his offerings to him. During the Yong-hui reign period, the Master suddenly gave instructions to his disciples, sat quietly, and left. A year later, the door of his stupa opened by itself. His appearance was as it had been when he was alive. Emperor Dai bestowed upon him the posthumous title of Chan Master Great Healer and named his stupa Cloud of Kindness.

Commentary:

The Thirty-first Patriarch Great Master Dao Xin was the Fourth Patriarch in China, the thirty-first in the Indian lineage.

The Patriarch was born in Guang Ji, Qi Zhou, into the Si-ma family. The Fourth Patriarch's birth place was Guang Ji, in Qi Zhou county. His family name was Si-ma.

At fourteen years of age, he bowed to Great Master Seng Can. He was only fourteen when he bowed to Great Master Seng Can as his teacher.

信大師說：「我請和尚您教給我一個解脫的法門。」

「曰：誰縛汝？」三祖問他：「誰把你綁上了？」

「祖曰：無人縛。」道信說：「沒有人綁著我。」「曰：何更求解脫乎？」三祖說：「你現在來找這個解脫法門，既然沒有人把你綁上，你又何必要找解脫呢？」

「祖於言下大悟」：道信大師在這個時候一聽，果然沒有人綁住我；誰綁住我呢？我是自由的啊！

「服勤九載，璨屢試玄微」：他服侍三祖僧璨大師有九年，僧璨大師常常就用種種的方法來試驗他，看他智慧怎麼樣。

「知其緣熟，乃付衣法」：知道他是一個載道之器，這個機緣成熟了，把衣鉢就傳給他。

「偈曰」：給他說一說偈頌。

「華種雖因地，從地種花生」：這花種下去，雖然是因為地；可是要從地上種這個花，才能生出來。

「若無人下種，花地盡無生」：若沒有一個人給它下種，那花它也不自生，地也不自生；必須要中間有一個人來把這個種子種到地下，它才能成熟了。這是說這花種下，雖因為是有地才種上；可是這花是花，地是地，你花不種在地，花也不花，地也不地——就是說地還是地，花還是花，但是它沒有作用了，沒有用了。

因為地，你才可以種這個花，它再生長，才開花結果；若沒有人種到地下，這個花自己也不能到地那兒去，地也不能接受到那個花的種子。這就是什麼呢？就是你這個人雖然能成佛，可是你要有一個自性來支配它。你這個自性就好像那個人，這個身體就像地；那麼成佛，就像開花結果。所以你一定要人會修行，會下這個種子，才有花；那麼地也有用了，花也有用了，也能生了。

Saying: "I seek a Dharma-door to liberation from the Elder Monk."
Great Master Dao Xin said: "Please, Elder Master, teach me a method to gain liberation."

Master Can replied: "Who is tying you up?" The Third Patriarch asked him: "Who tied you up?"

The Patriarch-to-be replied: "No one is tying me up." Master Dao Xin said: "No one tied me up." **Master Can replied: "Then why do you seek liberation?"** The Third Patriarch said: "You are now seeking a method to gain liberation, but since no one has tied you up, what makes you seek a way to get free?"

At those words, the Patriarch-to-be experienced a great awakening. Great Master Dao Xin heard that and realized: "Basically no one has bound me up! Who tied me up? I am free!"

He served as Master Can's attendant for nine years. Master Can continually tested him in esoteric and subtle ways. He attended upon the Third Patriarch Great Master Seng Can for nine years. During that time Great Master Seng Can kept using all sorts of expedients to test him—to see what his wisdom was like.

Once Master Can determined he was ready, he passed him the robe-and-bowl and the Dharma. Knowing he was a Dharma vessel, Master Seng Can waited for the right time, and then he transmitted the robe-and-bowl to Master Dao Xin.

A verse in praise says. He composed a verse for him.

As to flower seeds: although it is because of the earth, / That flowers spring forth from the ground where they are planted. When flower seeds are planted, then, because of the earth, they will grow into flowers. But flower seeds must be planted in order for flowers to grow.

If no person scatters seeds/ No flowers will grow; the earth will produce nothing. If no one plants seeds, flowers do not grow naturally. The earth does not spontaneously produce them. There must be a person—an intermediary—who plants the seeds in the ground. Only then will the seeds ripen. This is saying that seeds have to be planted. Even though it is from the earth that seeds grow, if flowers are flowers and the earth is the earth, and no one plants the flowers in the earth, then no flowers will grow, and the earth will not have served as earth. Well, the earth will still be earth, and flowers will still flowers, but no function will occur between them. Nothing will happen.

It is due to the earth that you can plant a flower seed that will grow and produce a flower. If no one puts the seed in the earth, the flower cannot put itself in the ground, and the ground has no way to accept the flower seed. What does this all mean? It means that although you can become a Buddha, still, you have to nurture your own nature. Your own nature can be likened to a person; your body can be likened to the earth. Becoming a Buddha is likened to the flower blossoming. It means that you yourself must cultivate, for only then will the seed be planted. And only if the seed is planted will there be a flower. In that way the earth serves its function and the flower serves its function. It will grow.