

三十二祖弘忍大師

(東土五祖)

The Thirty-second Patriarch, Great Master Hong Ren (The Fifth Patriarch in China)

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比丘尼恒持 修訂

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English Translation Revised by Bhikshuni Heng Chih



祖，蘄州黃梅人。先為栽松道者，托生於周氏之女，父母逐惡之。女無所歸，乞食里中。及長，里人呼為無姓兒。

路逢信祖，問曰：「子何姓？」

祖曰：「姓有，不是常姓。」

曰：「是何姓？」

祖曰：「是佛性（姓）¹。」

曰：「汝無姓耶？²」

祖曰：「性³空故無。」信默識之，乞為侍者。

女以夙緣捨之，無難色。

祖與剃度，後付衣法。

偈曰：「華種有生性，因地種花生。大緣與性合，當生生不生。」

遂以學徒委之。咸亨間，轉付衣法於大鑿。至上元元初化去，代宗謚大滿禪師，法雨之塔。

這位弘忍大師是第三十二代的祖師，在中國是第五代。

「祖，蘄州黃梅人」：這位祖師是湖北黃梅縣的人；他們一般

The Patriarch was a native of Huang Mei in Qi Zhou. In the past, he had been a cultivator of the Way who planted pine trees. In his next life, he chose the womb of a maiden of the Zhou clan. Her parents expelled her. The maiden, having no place to reside, begged for food in the village. When he was growing up, the villagers called him “the boy with no family name.”

On the road he met Patriarch Xin, who asked him: “What is your family name?”

The Patriarch-to-be replied, “I have a family name, but it’s not an ordinary family name.”

Master Xin asked, “What family name is it?”

The Patriarch-to-be replied, “It is the Buddha-nature.” [note: This can be heard as meaning: “It is the Buddha’s family name.”¹]

Master Xin asked, “You don’t have a family name?”

The Patriarch-to-be replied, “The nature³ is empty, so, no, I do not have a name.” Master Xin secretly remembered this boy with no name. He begged that he could have the lad be his attendant.

Because of conditions from past lives, the maiden gave up her son without difficulty.

The Fourth Patriarch had Master Hong Ren’s head shaved, and later he transmitted the robe and bowl and the Dharma to him.

A verse says: Flower seeds have a living nature. / When those seeds are planted in the earth, flowers will come to life. / When great conditions combine with the nature, / It should be born, however, being born is actually non-birth.

Then he entrusted his own disciples to Master Hong Ren. During the Xian Heng Reign Period, Master Hong Ren transmitted the robe and bowl and the Dharma to Da Jian. At the beginning of the 1st year of Shang Yuan Reign period, the Master entered the stillness. Emperor Dai bestowed upon him the posthumous title of Magnificent Fullness Chan Master and called his stupa Dharma Rain.

人就稱他「黃梅」，不稱他名字。所以在黃梅那兒得來的法，不說是弘忍大師什麼的，不講這個；這古人說那地名不說人名，就是尊重這個人。

「先為栽松道者，托生於周氏之女，父母逐惡之」：他大約前生是栽種松樹的一個老修行，投胎於周氏女。周氏女的父母因為自己的女兒沒有丈夫，就生了個小孩子；所以很不高興，就把她攆出去了。你看，這弘忍大師是個私生子。這個女的因為她沒有丈夫，也不知道到什麼地方去，就在那個鄉村裡頭要飯。

「及長，里人呼為無姓兒」：等這個小孩長大了，因為他沒有姓，村裡的人都叫他「無姓兒」。因為中國都隨父姓，他沒有父親，當然就沒有姓了。這若現在，也姓周了。他那時候，還很死腦瓜骨，不像現在這麼開通，現在給他安個姓都可以的嘛，或者姓李、姓王、姓趙。他沒有姓；所以在這個鄉村裡頭，都說他是沒有爸爸的私生子。

「路逢信祖，問曰：子何姓？」：他在路邊上遇著道信禪師了，道信禪師就問他：「你姓什麼？」

「祖曰：姓有，不是常姓。」：弘忍大師就說了，我姓是有，但不是一般人所有的這種姓。他本來沒有姓，他說姓有，這小孩子也是很狡猾的。

「曰：是何姓？」：道信禪師就問：「那你有姓，這是個什麼姓呢？」

「祖曰：是佛姓（性）。」：他說是佛性。（編按：這原是用同音字說雙關語，故在此作佛性。）

Commentary:

Great Master Hong Ren is the Thirty-second Patriarch, the Fifth in China.

The Patriarch was a native of Huang Mei in Qi Zhou. This Patriarch came from Huang Mei County in Hubei Province. Most people called him Huang Mei rather than saying his name. Out of respect, they would say that the Dharma came from Huang Mei, rather than say it came from Great Master Hong Ren, because in olden times people used the place name rather than the person's name.

In the past, he had been a cultivator of the Way who planted pine trees. In his next life, he chose the womb of a maiden of the Zhou clan. Her parents expelled her. Most likely in his previous life, he was an old cultivator who planted pine trees; in this life, he chose to come into the womb of a girl in the Zhou family. When her parents found out that she gave birth to a child out of wedlock, they were furious and kicked her out. Look at that! Great Master Hong Ren was an illegitimate child!

The maiden, having no place to reside, begged for food in the village. Since the maiden had no husband, she had no idea where to go, so she just hung around the village there and begged for food.

When he was growing up, the villagers called him the “the boy with no family name.” As the child grew up, since he had no family name, the villagers called him “nameless boy.” That's because in China, one's surname comes from one's father. But he didn't have a father, so of course he didn't have a surname. In this day-and-age, he would take the surname Zhou. But back then, people were quite inflexible about such things, not open-minded like they are today. Nowadays, he could be given any surname at all; perhaps taking the family name Li, or Wang, or Zhao. But this boy had no family name. All the villagers said he didn't have a father—he was illegitimate.

On the road he met Patriarch Xin, who asked him, “What is your family name?” Once on the road he met Chan Master Dao Xin, who asked him, “What is your family name?”

The Patriarch-to-be replied, “I have a family name, but it's not an ordinary family name.”

Great Master Hong Ren said, “I have a family name. But it's not the kind of family name most people have.” He didn't have a family name, but he said he did. This child was quite cunning.

Master Xin asked, “What family name is it?” Chan Master Dao Xin asked, “So you have a family name. Well, what is it?”

The Patriarch-to-be replied, “It's the Buddha-nature.”

He said it was the Buddha-nature. [note: This is a play on words, since “family name” and “nature” sound the same in Chinese.]

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To be continued

1. This is a play on words. The Chinese character for “family name” is pronounced xìng. The Chinese character for “nature” is pronounced xìng—same sound, same tone. So the Patriarch-to-be was saying both “Buddha's family name” 佛姓 and “Buddha-nature” 佛性 in his reply.

2. Master Xin asked about “family name” 姓 xìng.

3. The Patriarch-to-be answers about the nature 性 xìng.