

The Bodhi Seal of the Patriarchs



TWENTY-SECOND PATRIARCH VENERABLE MANORHITA

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THE VENERABLE ONE WAS FROM NAGARA AND THE SON OF KING "CONSTANTLY FREE AND AT EASE." This Patriarch was of the royal lineage. His father, the king, was very wise. He was big-hearted and open-minded. He also was a faithful follower of Buddhism. When this son was born to him, he knew right away that the child was an extremely exceptional one. WHEN HE WAS THIRTEEN HE MET VENERABLE VASUBANDHU. The Twenty-First Patriarch Vasubandhu felt that he had special affinities with the king so he went to see him. THE PATRIARCH CAME TO HIS COUNTRY AND THE KING ASKED HIM, "WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN HERE AND THE LAND OF RAJAGRHA?"

THE PATRIARCH ANSWERED, "IN THE LAND WHERE I COME FROM, IN THE PAST, THREE BUDDHAS CAME INTO THE WORLD THERE." You could explain "three Buddhas" as referring to Buddhas of the past, Buddhas of the present, and Buddhas of the future. If explained like that then it is not only Rajagrha which has had Buddhas

appear, any country in the world can and will have Buddhas appear. The Patriarch continued, "IN THIS LAND OF THE KING'S, AT THE PRESENT, THERE ARE TWO GREAT MASTER HERE WHO WILL TRANSFORM AND GUIDE OTHERS."

THE KING ASKED, "WHO ARE THESE TWO MASTERS?"

THE PATRIARCH REPLIED, "THE BUDDHA PREDICTED THAT DURING THE SECOND PERIOD OF FIVE HUNDRED YEARS, THERE WOULD BE TWO GREAT KNIGHTS WITH SPIRITUAL POWERS WHO WOULD LEAVE THE HOME-LIFE AND CONTINUE THE TRADITION OF SAGES. They will continued the Buddha's Mind Seal Dharma as Patriarchs. THE KING'S SECOND SON MANORHITA IS ONE AND ALTHOUGH MY VIRTUE IS SLIGHT, I AM THE SECOND." The Patriarch answers the king quite modestly, saying, "I don't have any Way-virtue, but I was included in the Buddha's prediction, for I am the other one."

"ACCORDING WITH WHAT THE VENERABLE ONE HAS JUST SAID," THE KING SAID, "I MOST REVERENTLY GIVE OVER THIS SON OF MINE TO BECOME A SHRAMANANA. I know that you are not lying. I know that you are sincere in what you say, and so I now give you my son so he can become a Shramana and diligently cultivate precepts, samadhi, and wisdom and put to rest greed, hatred, and stupidity."

THE PATRIARCH SAID, "GOOD INDEED, GREAT KING. O King you are truly an intelligent person. O King you certainly are clear about principle. O King you are a person who definately has the best interests of Buddhism at heart. Very fine. Very good, King, THAT YOU CAN REVERE THE BUDDHA'S INTENT. You are able to respectfully accept the prophecy which the Buddha made so long ago. " THEN HE SHAVED THE CHILD'S HEAD, GAVE HIM THE COMPLETE PRECEPTS, AND ENTRUSTED HIM WITH THE GREAT DHARMA. He took the transmission which is beyond the teaching and using the mind to seal the mind, he bestowed it upon Venerable Manorhita.

AFTER THE HONORED ONE RECEIVED THE DHARMA, HE ENTRUSTED IT TO PADMARATNA, WHEREUPON HE SAT IN FULL LOTUS AND DISAPPEARED. He was gone just like that. He had no illness, and he left without a trace.

A VERSE IN HIS PRAISE SAYS:

BORN IN A PALACE, HE DID NOT WALLOW IN HONOR OR
WEALTH.
UPON HEARING THE MASTER'S INSTRUCTIONS HE SUDDENLY
UNDERSTOOD HIS PAST WISDOM.
BUBBLES AND REFLECTIONS ARE NOT REAL--HE BROUGHT
GREAT FEARLESSNESS TO OTHERS.
HIS BEARING REVEALED HIS DESTINY; HIS FOLLOWERS WERE
LIKE THOUSANDS OF FLOWERS WITH MILLIONS OF
PETALS.

This Patriarch was born into royalty but he wasn't greedy for glory and riches. He knew what had gone on in his past--the roots that brought him to this. All conditioned dharmas are like dreams, illusions, bubbles, transformations--they are not true. He was an upright and high-minded individual--a model for generations on end.

ANOTHER VERSE SAYS:

"Another" means that it's extra. It's not absolutely essential. Not really necessary. It's like adding a head on top of a head. It's author ate his fill and rather than simply remain idle began looking for something to do. That's because if one eats one's fill and has nothing to do, one will end up striking up much too much false thinking. But this verse is extra. Sort of like drawing a snake and then adding some legs to it. It ends up being not quite a snake and not quite a dragon. So too with this simple verse--it's like a rather unsightly appendage.

BOARDING THE BOAT OF GREAT VOWS HE RESCUES THOSE IN
THE FIVE TURBIDITIES.
WITHOUT FEAR OF DIFFICULTY AND SUFFERING HE ENTERS
THE SAHA.
BORN IN THE ROYAL PALACE OF CONSTANTLY FREE AND AT
EASE,
IT WAS BUT AN INN, A HOUSE FOR GUESTS AS THE
PATRIARCHS ALL CONFIRM.
THE BUDDHA LONG AGO SPOKE PROPHETICALLY NAMING
MANORHITA.
"NOW I'VE COME LOOKING FOR A GREAT ASCETIC."
"SO SINCERE ARE YOUR WORDS I SHOULD RENOUNCE MY
SON."
WHEREUPON HE SPREAD OUT THE DHARMA MAT AND GAVE
WITHOUT RESTRAINT.

The Patriarch Manorhita was not an ordinary person. He was special. For one thing, he was born in a palace. That in itself makes him pretty unusual. His father's name was "Constantly Free and At Ease," and so the child must have been too. I have a disciple who is always crying and so his son is always crying too. Like father, like son. But in this case, the father was content and so was the son.

Those of you who live in this world should not consider it your real home. The poet Li T'ai Pai said it well:

The world is but an overnight inn
for the myriad creatures.
Time is but a guest
of the hundred generations.

That's another matched couplet, by the way. Take a look at it. We are just guests here on vacation. That's what the Patriarchs keep trying to tell us. We are just like travelers in a hotel here in this world. It is not our true home. And we are not the owners.

So the Patriarch told the king "I am one of the two mentioned in the Buddha's prediction. That's why I've come here. I'm looking for the other one. I'm trying to find the person to whom I can transmit the Buddha's Mind Seal. Someone who will be a vigorous ascetic.

The King replied, "What you say must be true so now I'll give you my son. I'll set aside this love between father and son and offer him to you." Once the king announced that his son would leave the home-life, he invited the entire country to a feast in honor of the occasion. It was a festive Dharma gathering. The king gave lavishly. The wealthy and poor alike were invited to a vegetarian repast and served cola. It was an open invitation. No reservations were necessary. That's one way to explain the last line. But it can also mean that once Venerable Manorhita received the Dharma from the Venerable Vasubandhu, he taught and transformed vast numbers of people and in that way "spread out the Dharma mat and gave without restraint."