

The Bodhi Seal of the Patriarchs

by the Venerable Master Yun and the Venerable Master Hua

*The Forty-fourth Generational Patriarch, Dhyana Master Dau Chi
(Consonant with the Way) of Yun Jyu (Cloud Abode)*



TEXT:

THE MASTER WAS A SON OF THE JIN FAMILY OF HUNGJOU. HE WENT TO ALL THE DIFFERENT CHAN ASSEMBLIES OF HIS TIME, AND YET HIS CRAVING FOR LEARNING HAD NOT BEEN SATIATED. LATER HE MET DHYANA MASTER FA DENG (DHARMA LAMP), AND THERE WAS AN INSTANT MESHING OF THEIR CAUSES AND CONDITIONS. THE MASTER COMPOSED A VERSE:

GREET LIVING BEINGS AND BENEFIT SENTIENT
ONES WITH SUPREME MASTERY.
A SON BORN OUTSIDE DOES NOT RESEMBLE THE
FATHER.
OTHER FAMILIES ALSO HAVE THEIR SONS AND
GRANDSONS.

IN THE FUTURE THEY WILL SERVE THEIR
PURPOSES MOST PERFECTLY!

THE MASTER TOLD HIS ROOM-ENTERING DISCIPLES, "PATRIARCH BODHIDHARMA SAID THAT IN THIS REGION, ONLY THE LANKAVATARA SUTRA CAN BE USED TO SEAL AND CERTIFY THE MIND. IN READING THIS SUTRA I HAVE COME UPON THE VERSE THAT SAYS:

ALL DHARMAS ARE WITHOUT A DHARMA
SUBSTANCE,
AND SO WE SAY THAT ALL IS MADE FROM MIND
ALONE.
BECAUSE OF NOT SEEING ONE'S OWN MIND,
ONE GIVES RISE TO DISCRIMINATION!

THIS IS INDEED THE MOST TRUE AND UTMOST DISCOURSE OF OUR GREATLY COMPASSIONATE FATHER!"

A MONK ASKED, "WHAT IS THE BUDDHA?" THE MASTER REPLIED, "WELL, WHO ARE YOU?"

THE MASTER PRESIDED AS ABBOT OVER THREE WAY-PLACES: DUNG CHAN (東禪 EASTERN DHYANA); SHWANG LIN (雙林 TWIN GROVE); AND YUN JYU (雲居 CLOUD ABODE). HIS WORKS INCLUDE ESSENTIAL SAYINGS (語要), PROBING THE MYSTERIES (搜玄) AND SELECTED TOPICS FROM SUCCESSIVE GENERATIONS OF THE ANCIENTS (占古今), ALL OF WHICH ARE WIDELY DISSEMINATED IN THE WORLD.

A VERSE IN PRAISE SAYS:

WHAT IS THE BUDDHA?
WELL WHO ARE YOU?
THE MIND DOES NOT PERCEIVE THE MIND;
WHERE WAS THERE EVER A SEPARATION?
A SON BORN OUTSIDE DOES NOT RESEMBLE THE
FATHER.
MY WAY HAS NO SONS.
SELECTED TOPICS FROM THE ANCIENTS:
GREAT KINDNESS AND GREAT COMPASSION.

ANOTHER VERSE SAYS:

CLOUD ABODE IS LOFTY AND STEEP;
THE LION MAKES IT HIS ABODE.
THROUGHOUT SUCCESSIVE GENERATIONS,
DRAGONS AND ELEPHANTS FLOURISHED IN
JYANGSYI PROVINCE.
MASTER DAU'S DHARMA ASSEMBLIES
TRANSFORMED BOTH LEFT-HOME AND
LAYPEOPLE.
THE BRIGHT LAMP ILLUMINED PAST AND
PRESENT, PIERCING THE DARK VOID.

THE LANKAVATARA SUTRA SEALS THE MIND,
AND OPENS THE PROPER "EYE."
PRAJNA, APART FROM MARKS, TAKES ACROSS
STUPID BEINGS.
KINDNESS, COMPASSION, JOY, AND GIVING ARE
THE FOUR MEASURELESS MINDS.
BEINGS FROM THIS AND OTHER REGIONS ALL
TAKE REFUGE.

COMMENTARY:

This Dhyana Master was the forty-fourth Generational Patriarch of the Fa Yan (法眼 Dharma Eye) School. The Master was a native of Jyangsyi Province (江西省), and he lived in Nan Tsang (南昌), which was the capital of Jyangsyi. Nan Tsang was the old name; later it was changed to Hungjou (洪州). THE MASTER WAS A SON OF THE JIN FAMILY OF HUNGJOU District. HE WENT TO ALL THE DIFFERENT CHAN ASSEMBLIES OF HIS TIME. He had an innate fondness for investigating Chan, and so wherever there were Chan Way-places, he would go there to sit in meditation. He frequented places such as Jin Shan (Gold Mountain), Gau Min Monastery, and others. The meditators in Jin Shan Monastery were known for their legs. They could sit in full lotus for hours and not switch back and forth. Gau Min monastery was known for the precision of its Chan sits, timed exactly by sticks of incense. The sits were so well-timed that they were not off by a second. People at Hai Chau (Seaside) Monastery in Shanghai were known for their babbling and carousing. The cultivators there did not subscribe to rules. They talked and talked from morning to night. The monasteries of China each had their strong points. For example, Jin Shan Monastery was known for its cultivators who could sit for a long time with legs crossed in lotus position; Gau Min Monastery was known for the precise timing of its incense sticks; and Hai Chau Monastery was notorious for its people who rambled nonsensically.

The Master went to all the different Chan assemblies of his time. He was very humble, "alert and fond of learning, not afraid to ask from those below him." Not only was he eager to learn from those who knew more than he, he was willing to learn from those who did not know as much as he did. He was modest.

LATER HE MET DHYANA MASTER FA DENG (Dharma Lamp) in Jinling (Nanjing), AND THERE WAS AN INSTANT MESHING OF THEIR CAUSES AND CONDITIONS. The two of them got along very well. There was good rapport. If people do not have affinities, they will not bother to exchange half a sentence with each other. However, if they have affinities, they can talk a lot, feeling as if they were old friends from the instant they meet. Here, "instant meshing of their causes and conditions" does not refer only to sentimental rapport, which worldly people feel for one another. It wasn't as simple as that. Rather, it was a case of tallying, like water and milk blended together so you couldn't tell the two apart. It was a case of the mind sealing the mind. Dhyana Master Fa Deng transmitted the Dharma to him, and so he became the forty-fourth Generational Patriarch, the successor.

Thereupon THE MASTER COMPOSED A VERSE: "GREET LIVING BEINGS AND BENEFIT SENTIENT ONES WITH SUPREME MASTERY." Greeting living beings means coming into contact with the myriad things and creatures of the world. Benefitting living beings means propagating the Buddhadharma. He could deal with the myriad affairs of the world in a masterful and most appropriate way. "Supreme Mastery" means there was a true principle underlying all of his actions: welcoming guests and showing them around, coming in, going out, running back and forth; all the daily activities of rising, dwelling, drinking, and eating; in all aspects of walking, standing, sitting, and lying down—

he could do all of these things in a wonderful way. Why is it "wonderful"? Because he had perceived the Way. Once you see the Way and understand principle, then everything becomes very natural and spontaneous, very supreme and wonderful.

The verse continues, "A SON BORN OUTSIDE DOES NOT RESEMBLE THE FATHER." An adopted son will not be an exact replica of his father. In ancient China, Emperor Yau passed the throne to Shun, and Shun passed it to Yu. This was because the sons of both Emperor Yau and Shun were not like their fathers. They were not as worthy and virtuous as their fathers. Therefore Emperor Yau yielded the throne to someone worthy, to Shun. And Shun, in the same way, yielded the throne to Yu. Emperor Yu's son Chi was a very fine man, so Emperor Yu was able to pass the throne on to his own son. "Not resembling" means that the son is not like the father. Although this is the case, in Buddhism OTHER FAMILIES ALSO HAVE THEIR SONS AND GRANDSONS. Other Wayplaces also have descendents in their respective lineages. IN THE FUTURE THEY WILL SERVE THEIR PURPOSES MOST PERFECTLY! "In the future I will pick someone who will be very useful, very appropriate."

The Master had a very transcendent manner. He was not attached to some traditional attitude that he had to pass the lineage on to his own sons and grandsons. He did not harbor that kind of selfish and self-seeking viewpoint.

THE MASTER TOLD HIS ROOM-ENTERING DISCIPLES. One day, he said to his disciples, "The First Patriarch BODHIDHARMA SAID THAT IN THIS REGION, among the Sutras in the Saha world, ONLY THE LANKAVATARA SUTRA CAN BE USED TO SEAL AND CERTIFY THE MIND." That Sutra can be used for the mind sealing the mind. The Lankavatara Sutra discusses this very clearly. Other Sutras do not have such extensive theories on sealing the mind. That's what Patriarch Bodhidharma said. IN READING THIS SUTRA, I HAVE COME UPON THE VERSE THAT SAYS, 'ALL DHARMAS ARE WITHOUT A DHARMA SUBSTANCE. ' All dharmas arise from causes and conditions; all dharmas go out of being from causes and conditions. It is recorded:

All dharmas arise from conditions.
All dharmas go out of being from conditions.
The Buddha, the great Shramana,
Often explains it this way.

That's why the Sutra says, "All dharmas are without a dharma substance." The dharma is simply a method. It does not have its own substance. A method does not have an actual nature. It does not have its own set of cause and effect. Dharmas simply arise and go out of being due to causes and conditions. It is like people's breath. If you breathe out, you might see some air, but once the breath is out it disperses. When you inhale, there is still air, but you can't see it. Why can't you see it? Because it has no substance or nature. Whereas we people have bodies, the dharma is without substance or nature. All dharmas are devoid of an inherent nature. Our breath is connected with the air in empty space. For this reason, when there is pollution in the air, we get sick. We breathe in defiled air. Now we have more and more inventions. But the more inventions we have, the more clogged up and polluted our atmosphere becomes. The atmosphere is filled with poison. When people breathe in the air, they inhale a poisonous element that cannot be seen, heard, or smelled. It's a slow process, a chronic kind of poisoning. Therefore, due to the present pollution people come down with all sorts of strange diseases such as cancer or insanity or various other diseases. They're all inexplicable and strange. Where do they stem from? They come from pollution in the atmosphere.

By the same token, defiled dharmas are also poisonous. They are demonic dharmas. You shouldn't think that the world is making progress in science. The thinker Jyang Syi-jang (江希張) early on remarked, "This kind of progress (進步) is actually retrogression—progressive poisoning (進毒)." The further they advance, the deeper they get into the poison. As the world population multiplies and

explodes, the human species will end up annihilating itself. After the human species is completely destroyed, a new strain will crop up. That's how the world is. There are the sufferings of birth, old age, sickness and death. The world undergoes the stages of formation, stasis, decay and emptiness, going back and forth. That's how the world turns. Otherwise, if the population continues to multiply and explode, eventually the whole planet will blow up and everyone will end up in the bottom of the ocean. That's why the world undergoes the period of destruction, too.

The verse in the Lankavatara Sutra continues,

All dharmas are without a dharma substance,
AND SO WE SAY THAT ALL IS MADE FROM MIND ALONE.

Everything manifests from your true mind.

BECAUSE OF NOT SEEING ONE'S OWN MIND...you do not understand and observe the workings of your true mind. Instead you apply effort on your false mind. For this reason, ONE GIVES RISE TO DISCRIMINATION. You do not perceive your permanently abiding true mind, the pure nature and bright substance. Instead you work on your false, discriminating mind.

Dhyana Master Dau Chi concluded by saying, "THIS IS INDEED THE MOST TRUE AND UTMOST DISCOURSE OF OUR GREATLY COMPASSIONATE FATHER!" By speaking this verse for us, the Buddha is expressing the greatest compassion and pity for us living beings. He is truly our Greatly Compassionate Father. And this is the most ultimate, most true discourse.

A MONK ASKED, "WHAT IS THE BUDDHA?" He did not recognize who was the Buddha. Having left the home-life and donned the sash, he ate the food of Buddhism and wore Buddhist clothes, yet he failed to recognize the Buddha. From his question you can see that the monk was very much like me. He was just as confused as I am: we don't know how many grains of rice we have eaten, nor do we know how many pieces of thread there are in our clothing. I am also someone who doesn't understand anything. This monk did not recognize his original face.

THE MASTER REPLIED, "WELL, WHO ARE YOU?" The question was, "What is the Buddha?" And the Master came back with the retort, "Well, who are you?" The meaning behind this is: "All living beings are endowed with the Buddha nature. All can become Buddhas." Every living being has the Buddha nature. Why do you fail to recognize it? Why do you miss the opportunity that is right before your face? Your own nature is the Buddha. Why do you look for it outside? Why don't you gather back your own family heritage and make good use of it?" That was the way the Master answered the monk.

THE MASTER PRESIDED AS ABBOT OVER THREE WAY-PLACES: DUNG CHAN (Eastern Dhyana) in Huangmei, Hubei Province; SHWANG LIN (Twin Grove): and YUN JYU (Cloud Abode) Mountain where there is Jen Ru (True Suchness) Monastery, in Jyangsyi Province. He was abbot of those three places.

HIS WORKS INCLUDE ESSENTIAL SAYINGS, prime selections of his sayings; PROBING THE MYSTERIES, a treatise on probing the most esoteric and wondrous principles; AND SELECTED TOPICS FROM SUCCESSIVE GENERATIONS OF THE ANCIENTS, and other works, ALL OF WHICH ARE WIDELY DISSEMINATED IN THE WORLD. They were very popular and respected works of that time.

A VERSE IN PRAISE SAYS:
WHAT IS THE BUDDHA?

WELL, WHO ARE YOU?

That was the Master's answer to the monk's question. "All living beings are endowed with the Buddha nature. All can become Buddhas." Why do you fail to recognize this? Don't you recognize your original face? That is just the Buddha. Therefore, Buddhism is the most egalitarian teaching. Anyone can become a Buddha, even mosquitos and ants, even someone as tiny as me. THE MIND DOES NOT PERCEIVE THE MIND. Most people cannot perceive their true minds. Instead they use their false minds. WHERE WAS THERE EVER A SEPARATION? Where did the rift arise, wherein relying on the true, one gave rise to the false? You should take good stock of this.

Confused, one is a living being. Enlightened, one is a Buddha. The Buddha is one with great wisdom. He is not that special. He's simply endowed with great wisdom. The Buddha is someone who is replete with great wisdom, who can know things in advance and things of the past. Above, he knows the myriad ages past; below, he knows the myriad generations to follow. If someone reaches the place where there is nothing that he does not know and nothing that he does not understand, then he is a Buddha. The Buddha knows what most people do not know, and understands what most people do not understand. If you can recognize your own mind, then you can become a Buddha.

A SON BORN OUTSIDE DOES NOT RESEMBLE THE FATHER. An adopted son will certainly not be like his father. MY WAY HAS NO SONS. I don't want sons or grandsons. SELECTED TOPICS FROM THE ANCIENTS—that's the name of his work. GREAT KINDNESS AND GREAT COMPASSION. This Dhyana Master was also very kind and compassionate.

ANOTHER VERSE SAYS: CLOUD ABODE IS LOFTY AND STEEP; THE LION MAKES IT HIS ABODE. The cliffs of Yun Jyu Mountain are precipitous, and lions dwell in them. "Lions" refers to lofty sangha members with great virtue. THROUGHOUT SUCCESSIVE GENERATIONS, DRAGONS AND ELEPHANTS FLOURISHED IN JYANGSYI PROVINCE. True Suchness Monastery is known to have brought forth unique talent within the Dharma's door. The geomancy (literally "wind and water") of that area in Jyangsyi Province is supreme. There are many ancient relics and historical sites. The area is very scenic and beautiful. MASTER DAU'S DHARMA ASSEMBLIES TRANSFORMED BOTH LEFT-HOME AND LAY PEOPLE. When Dhyana Master Dau Chi presided as abbot at Yun Jyu Mountain, the Dharma assembly was especially splendid, and he taught many left-home and lay people. THE BRIGHT LAMP ILLUMINED PAST AND PRESENT, PIERCING THE DARK VOID. "Bright Lamp" refers to his teacher, Dhyana Master Fa Deng (Dharma Lamp). From past to present, the Dharma-pulse of Dhyana Master Fa Deng also sheds brilliant rays, illumining all dark places.

THE LANKAVATARA SUTRA SEALS THE MIND AND OPENS THE PROPER EYE. This Sutra is dedicated to "sealing" the mind, and discusses principles of Chan. The Sutra has a verse which reads:

All dharmas are without a dharma substance,
And so we say that all is made from mind alone.
Because of not seeing one's own mind,
One gives rise to discrimination.

This verse can help people get greatly enlightened. Proper Eye refers to the eye of wisdom. People lacking the Five Eyes and Six Penetrations cannot say they don't believe. There are now people who stretch the argument, insisting that television and radio are forms of the heaven-eye penetration. That's ridiculous. It's pathetic. They claim that present scientific progress is the modern version of the Five Eyes. Those people are scratching their boots, hoping to relieve the itch on their feet. They do not know what they are talking about. Yes, everyone is endowed with the Five Eyes and Six Penetrations.

However, they do not know how to develop and use them, and therefore that potential is buried. But if everyone can study the principles of the Lankavatara Sutra, their proper eye will open.

PRAJNA, APART FROM MARKS, TAKES ACROSS STUPID BEINGS. Prajna is Sanskrit, and it means wisdom. If you have wisdom you will no longer attach to marks, and you will no longer be stupid. If you lack wisdom, you will be stupid. If you have wisdom, you won't have any more attachments and you will separate from all marks. KINDNESS, COMPASSION, JOY AND GIVING ARE THE FOUR MEASURELESS MINDS. If we are able to expand those four measureless minds, we will become identical to the Buddha. BEINGS FROM THIS AND OTHER REGIONS ALL TAKE REFUGE. All beings, from this world and that world, whether they are sentient or insentient, should take refuge with Great Good Knowing Advisors, take refuge with the Triple Jewel, and bring forth the Bodhi resolve.