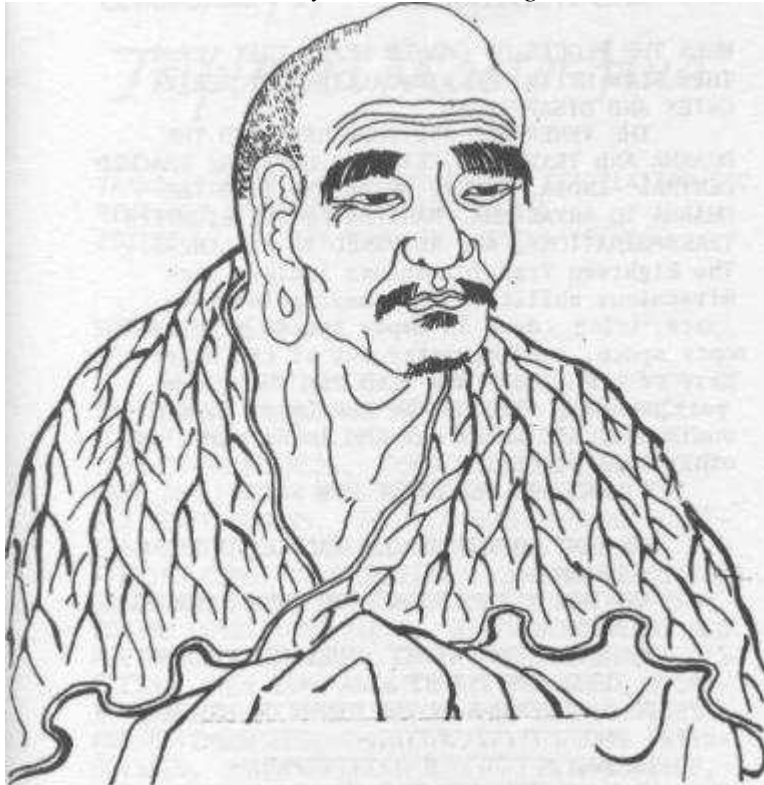


The Bodhi Seal of the Patriarchs

*commentary by Tripitaka Master Hua
translated by Bhikshuni Heng Ch'ih*



**THE TWENTY-THIRD PATRIARCH
THE VENERABLE HAKLENA**

When we hear about each of the Patriarch's adorned appearances and the ways in which they conduct themselves, we should reflect and see how we ourselves measure up. We should ask ourselves if we are emulating the Patriarchs and being their good disciples. It's just the same as the way in which sons and daughters should reflect on whether they are being filial children who are obedient to their parents. As Buddhist disciples:

When we see worthy people, we should emulate them.

When we encounter those who are not worthy, we should reflect to make sure we are not that way.

THE VENERABLE ONE WAS A NATIVE OF THE COUNTRY OF TOKHARA. That is a country in India. HE LEFT HOME AT THE AGE OF TWENTY-TWO. FLOCKS OF CRANES USED TO FOLLOW THE VENERABLE ONE CONSTANTLY. The transliteration of this Patriarch's name uses characters which mean "crane-power" because everywhere he went he was escorted by white cranes. The great birds would call, cry, and chatter, just as if they were conversing with the Patriarch "Crane-power." Strange, huh? At the City of 10,000 Buddhas there is also a flock of white cranes. But they don't follow anybody around. I bet they would for sure if Patriarch Haklena were here.

HE ASKED THE TWENTY-SECOND PATRIARCH, MAHORHITA, "WHAT METHOD CAN I USE TO LIBERATE THEM? I need some advice from the Patriarch. What expedient means should I use to help these birds gain liberation so they can leave suffering and obtain bliss?" As to liberation, basically there is nothing tying living beings up to begin with. So why aren't they free? It's because they have attachments. So living beings end up tying themselves in knots. They are like the silkworm which spins its own shroud. Fundamentally there is no such thing as liberation or a lack of it.

THE PATRIARCH SAID, "I HAVE AN UNSURPASSED DHARMA JEWEL. YOU SHOULD LISTEN TO IT, ACCEPT IT, AND USE IT TO TRANSFORM BEINGS FROM NOW TO THE ENDS OF FUTURE TIME. There is nothing higher than this Dharma. It's supreme-- unmatched. But you have to hear it and accept it and then you can save living beings throughout all of future time and still you won't use up this Dharma."

HE, the Twenty-second Patriarch, THEN SPOKE THIS VERSE:

THE MIND FOLLOWS STATES AND TURNS.
THE PLACE OF TURNING IS TRULY SECRET AND SUBTLE.
IF FOLLOWING THE FLOW ONE CAN RECOGNIZE ONES OWN
NATURE
ONE THEN HAS NO DELIGHTS AND ALSO HAS NO WORRIES.

All kinds of states appear, but the mind should learn to "turn" the states instead of being turned by them. If you can be like that, you are in a state of unmoving Suchness and are always clear and bright. The place where the mind's turning takes place is quite inconceivable and wonderful. It's a subtle point.

Seeing phenomena and awakening to phenomena, one can transcend the world.
Seeing phenomena and being confused by phenomena, one falls into
the wheel of mundane rebirth.

The eyes see forms and shapes, but inside there is nothing.
The ears hear defiling sounds, but the mind does not know of them.

When the mind moves, hundreds of phenomena arise.
When the mind stops, the myriad matters cease to be.

When the mind stops and thoughts are cut off one knows true wealth and honor.
When selfish desires are completely severed, one becomes a true field of blessings.

These all describe the meaning of the Patriarch's verse. The essential point is that the mind should not be turned by any of the myriad states that arisen, The myriad phenomena and infinite number of creatures are all speaking the Dharma for us. There isn't anything in this world that isn't a Dharma-lesson. It just remains to be seen if we are able to hear what's being expressed and to understand what we perceive. If we understand our minds, then we can "turn" states. If not, we will be turned.

Fame and profit is what people like. No one wants to deal with the
big matter of birth and death.

Purity is wealth, but no one thinks of that.
Afflictions create offenses, but everyone is greedy for more of them.

Every household has its afflictions and difficulties--quarrels, problems, arguments, worries, hassles, and struggles. They're all part of a big noisy mess. But if we can be clear about what's going on while right in the midst of it, knowing, "Ah! The myriad creatures are speaking the Dharma!" then all these bothersome things become expedient Dharma-doors to help us "confront states without a mind," so that we "turn the states" and don't let ourselves get turned instead. With true and proper wisdom and samadhi-power, we can do this. It's at the place of the mind's turning that one can enter an inconceivable state of mind. If one can understand ones own self-nature while in the midst of according with mundane dharmas, then one will truly know that the self-nature is not produced and not destroyed, not defiled and not pure, and that it does not increase or decrease. The self-nature is pure and unhindered. But one can't just mouth such dharmas while indulging in "intellectual zen banter." One must truly reach that level of understanding. One has to get the news and be able to decipher it. As the Gold Mountain Motto says:

Freezing to death, we do not climb on conditions.
Starving to death, we do not manipulate conditions.
Dying of poverty, we do not seek conditions.
According with conditions, we do not change, and yet
While not changing, we accord with conditions.
These are the three great guidelines we embody.
We practice renunciation as a way to do the Buddha's work.
We take building our lives as our own responsibility.
We advocate revolution as a means to rectify the matters of the Sangha.
Just within phenomena we understand noumenon;
Understanding noumenon is just phenomena.
In this way we perpetuate the continuous pulse of the Patriarchs' Mind-
Transmission.

WHEN THE FLOCKS OF CRANES HEARD THAT VERSE, THEY FLEW UP IN THE AIR
CALLING OUT THEIR CRIES AND DISAPPEARED.

THE VENERABLE ONE THEN OBTAINED THE DHARMA AND TRAVELLED, TEACHING
UNTIL HE REACHED CENTRAL INDIA. THERE HE TRANSMITTED THE DHARMA TO
ARYASIMHA, MANIFESTED THE EIGHTEEN TRANSFORMATIONS, AND RETURNED TO
STILLNESS. The Eighteen Transformations include such miraculous abilities as standing in
empty space, lying down in empty space, sitting in empty space, sending water out of the upper part
of one's body and fire out the lower part, sending fire out of the upper part of one's body and water out
the lower part, and other such powers.

A VERSE IN PRAISE OF HIM SAYS:

HE WENT TO THE DRAGON PALACE TO SPEAK DHARMA
AND HIS WAY PROVIDED FOR THE FEATHERED FLOCKS.
WHEN DIRECTED TO IT, THEY RETURNED TO THEIR OWN
SOURCE.

AT AN OPENING IN THE CROWN OF HIS HEAD ANOTHER EYE
OPENED.
HE HAD A LION FOR A DISCIPLE,
AND CHANTED THE SONG FOR RETURNING HOME.
THE COUNTRY OF TOKHARA HE CAME FROM
WAS PERFUMED WITH THE INCENSE OF FAITH.

The Venerable Haklena went to the Dragon Palace to explain the Dharma and his Way-Virtue taught and transformed the birds as well. Upon hearing a verse, they found their way home. The "lion" disciple was the Twenty-fourth Patriarch, the Bhikshu Lion--Aryasimbha. When the people of his native land heard this Patriarch's Dharma, a rare fragrance filled the room and they were blessed with the pure flavor of Dharma. This faith-fragrance continued unbroken as a memorial to this Patriarch.

ANOTHER VERSE IN HIS PRAISE SAYS:

THE CREATURES THAT COME TO BE IN HEAVEN AND ON
EARTH ARE RARE AND INCONCEIVABLE.
THE CRANES FOLLOWING THE VENERABLE ONE STARTLED
THE STUPID AND CONFUSED.
IF THE MIND IS TURNED BY STATES ONE IS NOT FREE AND
AT EASE.
WHEN THE NATURE IS OBSCURED AS IF BY CLOUDS
ONE IS OBSTRUCTED FROM BODHI.
THE SEA OF SUFFERING IS BOUNDLESS
BUT A TURN OF THE HEAD IS THE OTHER SHORE.
THERE IS A WAY TO THE LOTUS LAND: TAKE ONE STEP AND
YOU WILL BE THERE.
THOSE SUCCESSFUL FROM OF OLD TO NOW ALL RELY ON
PATIENCE.
SO BE COURAGEOUS AND VIGOROUS AND DO NOT HARBOR
FOX-LIKE DOUBTS!

The birds accompanied the Patriarch so as to give people something strange to see to help wake them up. After all, if even cranes recognize the Patriarch, isn't it about time people came to study the Buddhadharma? The "clouds" that cover the nature are the confusions that result from emotions and love. One can go to the Land of Ultimate Bliss by reciting the Buddha's name and resolving to cultivate. So don't worry! The accomplishments of all the worthy ones are due to their power of patience. So we should take a lesson and not allow ourselves to get caught up in a lot of calculated thinking--trying to be smart and figure everything out. That just leads to lots of doubts.