CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE (Dai nijūgo shō 第二十五章)

ROOT CASE【本則】

The Twenty-fifth Ancestor was Venerable Vasiṣṭa. The Twenty-fourth Ancestor [Simha] instructed him, saying:2

如來正法眼藏、今轉附汝。汝應保護普潤來際。
“I now bequeath to you the Tathāgata’s treasury of the true dharma eye. You should preserve it for universal benefit in the future.”

The Master [Vasiṣṭa]3

師顯 発 宿 因 、密 傳 心 印 。
discovered the causes from previous lives and there was a secret transmission4 of the mind-seal.

PIVOTAL CIRCUMSTANCES【機縁】

The Master [Vasiṣṭa]5

1 Root Case (C. benze 本則; J. honsoku). The block of Chinese text that appears here is pieced together from separate passages that appear in two different biographies in the Jingde Era Record of the Transmission of the Flame. For details, see the two following notes.

2 saying (C. yue 日; J. iwaku). The block of Chinese text that follows is nearly identical to one that appears in the Jingde Era Record of the Transmission of the Flame under the heading “Twenty-fourth Ancestor, Simha Bhikṣu” (T 2076.51.215a2-3).

3 The Master (C. Shi 師; J. Shi). The block of Chinese text that follows is nearly identical to one that appears in the Jingde Era Record of the Transmission of the Flame under the heading “Twenty-fifth Ancestor, Vasiṣṭa” (T 2076.51.215a27-28).

4 secret transmission (C. michuan 密傳; J. mitsuden). According to Tiantai (J. Ten-}
dai) school tradition, based largely on the Record of the Transmission of the Dharma Collection (translated in 472), the special transmission of the dharma from Śākyamuni down through a line of ancestral teachers ended with the death of the Twenty-fourth Ancestor, Simha. Because that text makes no mention of Simha transmitting the dharma to a successor, proponents of the Chan/Zen Lineage felt compelled to explain his transmission of the dharma to Vasiṣṭa as something carried out in secret.

5 The Master (Shi wa 師は). The block of text that follows is a Japanese transcription (yomikudashi 読み下し) of an identical Chinese passage that appears in the Jingde Era Record of the Transmission of the Flame under the heading “Twenty-fifth Ancestor, Vasiṣṭa”:
was a man of the Country of Kashmir. His clan was *brahmaṇa*. His father was Tranquil Conduct and his mother was Ever Relaxed. In the beginning, his mother dreamed that she obtained a divine sword, and as a result became pregnant.

師子尊者、

The Venerable Simha,¹

遊方して罽賓国に到る。波利迦と云ふ者あり、本より禪観に習り。故に禪定と知見と執相と捨相と不語の五衆あり。

wandering about, arrived in the Country of Kashmir. There was a man named Parika, who from the beginning had practiced *dhyāna* contemplation. As it happened, there were five congregations:² *dhyāna* concentration, knowledge and views, clinging to marks,³ abandoning marks,⁴ and not speaking.

footnotes:

¹ Venerable Simha (Shishi Sonja 師子尊者). The block of text that follows these words is a Japanese transcription (yomikudashi 読み下し) of an identical Chinese passage that appears in the *Jingde Era Record of the Transmission of the Flame* under the heading “Twenty-fourth Ancestor, Simha Bhikṣu”.

² five congregations (C. *wuzhong* 五衆; J. *goshu*). This evidently refers to five groups of ascetics who practiced different modes of religious discipline, but it is not clear from the context whether they were Buddhist monks or not. Except for *dhyāna* concentration, moreover, the practices they are said to have engaged in are unknown in Buddhist literature.

³ clinging to marks (C. *zhixiang* 執相; J. *shusō*). The practice or school to which this refers is unknown. It is possible, though not especially likely, that the reference is to monks who are concerned with the “marks of dharmas” (C. *faxiang* 法相; J. *hossō*; S. *dharma-lakṣaṇa*), either in the metaphysical sense of the Abhidharma analysis of the basic elements of existence, or in the ethical sense of striving to conduct oneself in keeping with the restraints imposed by the Vinaya.

⁴ abandoning marks (C. *shexiang* 捨相; J. *shasō*). The practice or school to which this refers is unknown, although the referent is clearly the opposite of the “clinging to marks” (C. *zhixiang* 執相; J. *shusō*) that is mentioned just before it. If the latter refers to Abhidharma analysis of the basic elements of existence, then perhaps “abandoning marks” means regarding the “marks of dharmas” (C. *faxiang* 法相; J. *hossō*; S. *dharma-lakṣaṇa*) as empty concepts. Or perhaps “abandoning marks” refers to some kind of antinomian rejection of moral rules and ritual procedures.
When the Venerable [Simha] had gathered together the five congregations, his name was heard far and near. While searching for a dharma heir, he encountered an elder. The latter brought his son to the Venerable [Simha] and inquired of him, saying: “My son is named Sita. He was born with his left hand curled into a fist. Now he has grown, but he still cannot extend his fingers. Please, Venerable, reveal what causes from a previous lives account for this.” Venerable [Simha] gazed at [Sita], then reached out his hand and said, “You must return the jewel to me.” The youth immediately opened his hand and offered up a jewel. Everyone in the assembly was astonished. The Venerable [Simha] explained: “In a previous life, I was a monk. There was a youth whose name was Vasi. When I traveled to a maigre feast across the western seas, I received the jewel as a donation and bestowed it on him. This is definitely the reason why the jewel was returned to me now.” The elder accordingly gave up his son, having him go forth from household life. The Venerable [Simha] then had him receive the full precepts. Because of his previous karmic conditions, he named him Vasiṣṭha.¹

¹ The Venerable (Sonja 尊者). The block of text that begins with these words is a Japanese transcription (yomikudashi 読み下し) of an identical Chinese passage that appears in the Jingde Era Record of the Transmission of the Flame under the heading “Twenty-fourth Ancestor, Simha Bhikṣu”:

² he named him Vasiṣṭha (Bashashita to nazuku 婆舍斯多と名く). That is to say, Simha combined two names: (1) that of the name of the boy with the jewel in his clenched fist, Sita; and (2) that of the youth he had given a jewel to in a past life, Vasi.
Finally, he was made heir and perpetuator by [Simha], who said,¹

如來の正法眼藏、今汝に授く。善く保護して來際に及ばすべしと。

“I now bequeath to you the Tathāgata’s treasury of the true dharma eye. You should preserve it well, so that it reaches the future.”

Investigation【拈提】

宿因を顕発すと云は、謂ゆる前生既に婆舎童子と云ふ。尊者の珠を預け、今胎内に入り、及び長者の家に生るるまで、尚ほ之を保持し、卒に尊者に奉る。

The expression [in the Root Case] “discovered the causes from previous lives” refers to the fact that in a previous life he [Vasiṣṭha] had already been the youth Vasi. The Venerable [Simha] had given him the jewel. From his entrance into the womb this time² until he was born in the household of the elder, he still held on to it, and eventually offered it up to the Venerable [Simha].

之に依て知るべし、此因縁必ずしも肉身破れ、唯眞身のみありと謂ふべきに非ず。若し此身是れ壞身となるならば、珠、如何が今保持せん。然も知るべし。捨生受生、本より是れ壊身に非ず。此に到りて、百骸倶に潰散して、一物を通して長靈なりと謂ふべからず。是如なる者か長靈なるべきぞ。唯捨身を現じ受身を現ずるのみなり。故に謂つべし、前後兩箇に非ず、古今別異なしと。然れば是れ身と謂ふべきに非ず。是れ心と謂ふべきにも非ざるなり。身心と分れざれば、古今と分つべきに非ず。故に恁様なり。

From this we know that this episode is not necessarily saying that the physical body is destroyed and that only a true body exists. If this body is a destructible body, then how could he [Vasiṣṭha] have preserved the jewel until now? Moreover, you should know that what relinquishes life and receives life is, from the start, not the destructible body. Arriving here, we should not say that “when one’s hundred bones are all broken up and scattered, the single thing preserved is the eternal spirit.” What kind of thing could possibly be “eternal spirit”? This is simply the appearance of relinquishing a body and the appearance of receiving a body, nothing more. Therefore,

¹ said (iwaku 曰く). The quotation that follows is a loosely rendered Japanese transcription (yomikudashi 読み下し) of the Chinese words attributed to Simha Bhikṣu in the Root Case of this chapter.

² entrance into the womb this time (ima tainai ni iri 今胎内に入り). “This time” (ima 今) refers to Sita’s entrance into the womb of his mother, Ever Relaxed.
what we should say is that before and after are not two separate things, and that past and present have no differentiation. This being so, there is no reason to call it “body,” and there is no reason to call it “mind,” either. When body and mind are not distinguished, there is no need to distinguish past and present. Therefore, it is “such.”

It is not only Vasi who is like this. In reality, every single person, each and every one, is like this. Hence, there is nothing that is born and nothing that dies. It is only that, as time goes by, “heads are exchanged, and faces turned over.” It is not necessarily the case that the four primary elements are exchanged, or that the five aggregates are renewed. Never has a single lump of meat¹ come as a covering, nor yet the tiniest bit of bone come as a support. Granted, there are a thousand types of phyla and myriad classes of species, but they all are the radiance of the original mind.

Not knowing this principle, you think that this one is young and that one is old. But on the whole there are no aged bodies, and fundamentally there is no such thing as youth. When things are like this, on what basis could we possibly distinguish birth from death, or divide before and after? It was on this account that [Simha] indicated that the Vasi of a previous life and the Sita of today are not two separate persons. This is what is meant by “causes from previous lives.” Therefore, [Simha] “transmitted the Tathāgata’s treasury of the true dharma eye,” so that it would benefit the future.

¹ lump of meat (C. routuan 肉團; J. nikudan). The flesh of the body. → lump of red meat.

² “transmitted the Tathāgata’s treasury of the true dharma eye” (Nyorai no shōbōgenzō wo denpu shi 如來の正法眼藏を傳付し). This is a quotation, in Japanese transcription (yomikudashi 読み下し), of a line from this chapter’s Root Case.
然れば知るべし、一切諸佛諸祖、本より曾て悟らず、一切の愚痴諸人、卒に迷はず。有時は修行し、有時は發心す。菩提發心、本と終なく始なし。衆生諸佛、本より劣に非ず勝に非ず、只恁麼縱横なるのみなり。然れば曠劫以来、曾て是の如く保任して、宿因を忘れざるのみなり。
What we should learn from this is that all buddhas and ancestors, from the beginning, have never been awakened, and that all ignorant people, in the end, are not deluded. Sometimes they engage in cultivation, and sometimes they arouse the thought of bodhi. Bodhi and arousing the thought, fundamentally, have no end and have no beginning. Living beings and buddhas, fundamentally, are neither inferior nor superior. It is only “such,” in every direction. That being the case, it is simply that [Simha], after vast kalpas had gone by, then took responsibility in this manner and did not forget the “causes from previous lives.”

今朝、又這箇の因縁を指注するに、例に依て卑語あり。
This morning again, to comment on this episode, as is customary I have some humble words.

**VERSE ON THE OLD CASE** 【頌古】

開華落葉直彰時。藥樹王終無別味。

Blossoming flowers and falling leaves directly manifest the passage of time. The plant that is king of medicines, after all, has no distinctive flavor.

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1 Bodhi and arousing the thought, fundamentally, have no end and have no beginning (bodai hosshin, moto owari naku hajime nashi 菩提発心、本と终なく始なし). Conventionally speaking, arousing the thought of bodhi is the starting point or “beginning” of the bodhisattva path, while bodhi is the culminating point or “end.”