

# 曹源一滴水

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From Shodo Harada Roshi, Head Abbot, Sogenji Temple

People of this Buddhist country of Japan, on this day, the Buddha's birthday put a small birthday Buddha statue in the middle of the Hondo or dharma hall, and with "amacha", a sweet tea brewed from a tree's leaves, celebrate by pouring the sweet tea with a small ladle over the baby Buddha statue's head. This ceremony is just like the Christian Baptism ceremony. The important days in the Buddha's life are the eighth of April on which his birthday is celebrated, the day on which he was born; the eighth of December, when after six years of severe ascetic training he was able to realize deep enlightenment; and on the 15th of February when at age 84 he entered Nirvana, at Kushinara in the sala grove. Buddhists honor this day of his passing as well with special ceremonies.

This is a ceremony of northern Buddhist countries; the people of the southern Buddhist countries have a ceremony called "uesakasai" - the Buddha's birthday, enlightenment day and Nirvana day as well are all celebrated on the full moon of May. If we look at the calendar for this year we can see that the full moon of May is on the 9th of that month - in India, and in other southern Buddhist

countries great celebrations will be held honoring the Buddha at that time. When the Buddha was born he immediately walked forward 7 1/2 steps and put his right hand up into the air and his left hand pointing to the earth, and said "In all the heavens and earth there is only One." There is only one of me in all the heavens and earth, he said. But why does a religion which accords with scientific understanding so well pass along such a miraculous sounding story? A newly born baby being able to walk for 7 1/2 footsteps and then crying out such words as "In all the heavens and all the earth there is only One" - there's no such unheard of thing possible. Then why is it taught this way, passed along as the truth? It's truly mysterious but those who kept the records of the Buddha's teaching, who had deeply understood what he was saying were the ones who wrote this down. When we were born from our mothers' belly, every single one of us, without exception, gave a great cry "Waaaaaaaaaaaaa! Waaaaaaaaaaaaa!" sounding and echoing throughout the heavens and earth, with a huge voice. With this cry the baby's birth is confirmed - It must be said that this cry, this voice is expressing "In all the heavens and earth there is only One" without any explanation or word needed. No matter what difficult circumstance or era it may be entering, without fear, without the slightest bit of insecurity about what will happen from now on - without any embarrassment whatsoever about not having anything at all - a baby enters with just a huge cry expressing that life energy which it's been given, filling and reverberating through the heavens and earth.

It must be said that this sound of birth of our life energy which fills up heavens and fills up the earth is a splendid expression of that energy which surges through all of the heavens and earth.

I think to realize and accept this powerful life energy with which we are all endowed equally at birth is the true teaching of the Buddha.

To say that he walked seven and a half steps - an expression of humans' freedom, no matter what circumstances we find ourselves facing, that from within ourselves, with our own energy and power to be able to stand up and

keep going. To understand this as an expression of our own self-reliant nature is what the Buddha was teaching.

Pointing his right hand to the heavens and his left hand to the earth was a proclamation that there is nothing in the heavens above humans, no absolute being that can make a slave of humans - the left hand pointing to the earth, proclaiming that there is nothing on this earth which can mar a human being's individual dignity - our individual character - our true human character - there is no god who can pass judgement on us and no devil who can corrupt us. Our human nature is truly a dignified existence in all of the heavens and earth, and to understand our life in this way is the teaching of the Buddha. This doesn't mean that the Buddha was conceitedly saying how wonderful a human being he is - all of humankind, every single person is born with this exact same precious life energy; that is what he was saying, what he was confirming, this is what the Buddha was teaching, and how it should be taken.

On the 8th of December when the Buddha looked up at the morning star and was enlightened, when he himself was awakened to his own true nature, at that time when he realized this original nature, he said "How wondrous, how wondrous, all beings in existence, every single one, without exception, is endowed with this exact same wisdom of the Tathagatha. How mysterious, how mysterious!"

"It took me six years and now I've finally understood this, but I didn't attain this just now nor did it come because of my ascetic practice, everyone has this clear nature from the moment they're born. Isn't it most mysterious?" All people, every person, all humankind, whether it is a person who can't see or a person who can't hear, or a person with only one leg - every single person has been born with the same pure and true nature.

He cried out in amazement at his realization. He was not exclaiming out loud at his own greatness at that moment, he was amazed at how all humans were equally endowed with this true nature. He was astonished at the realization that we've all been born with the exact same pure nature.

Everyone grieved as he was about to pass into Parinirvana; they gathered at

his pillow's side and everyone was in tears; the Buddha said to them "Stop crying! Don't cry about this. Everyone you meet you will at some time have to leave; all things that are born die, without exception. Haven't I been teaching you this every day? Isn't this the way of things, as they naturally are? Stop crying!"

In this way he left them, teaching them and guiding them. He then said, "Having been born into this body I must die, and having met you all, I must leave you; but this mind, this heart, this human character, that true nature which I have realized, that pure nature to which I awakened, that Buddha nature, you must each of you, one after another realize. If you then pass this teaching along to all other beings I will live in this world of the awakened mind eternally. Teach this dharma, that the awareness of the realization of people's pure original nature should not perish. In this way he taught them. His disciples then asked further, " But when you are no longer here with us, we will of course have your teachings and do believe them to be without mistake, but when some problem arises, to whom shall we go to ask for answers, on whom can we rely?"

Having been asked this, the Buddha answered, "Go only within yourself for the light on the way, go only to yourself for refuge. Don't look for refuge in others." This he taught them clearly. "Within yourselves - find there your light and your refuge. Of course, not in your egoistic selves but in that dharma, that pure mind before the ego appears, find refuge in that mind. This is how he taught them. That pure nature which the Buddha discovered was not the ego. The ego must be respected but it is still something incomplete; each person's individual characteristics are also important but they are different for each person. That which is incomplete or that which is different for each person cannot be considered to be the truth. Not ego, and not individual characteristics, but prior to the ego, that very base from which those individual characteristics arise; that place at which all humans will arrive, without fail, if they dig within, search inwardly - that place which each

person will inevitably realize. Realizing that true basis, encountering that actual source of our humanity - this is what we are doing with our zazen or it's not really zazen.

The oriental philosopher Dr. Nishida Kitaro, named also Sunshin Koji, did zazen every day and wrote a poem about the deep mind he was able to realize.

Our true mind has a deep place

beyond where the waves of grief and joy may reach.

Deep beyond the ego, deep beyond our individual characteristics - to this deep place where even human joy and grief can't reach - an eternal location, an eternal root of the mind. From this pure clear nature all of humans' joy, grief, happiness, misery, confusion and delusion, and all other expressions of the mind are born, all of them come forth from here. This source, in psychology it's called the subconscious mind - beyond all conscious mind. This place at the very bottom, to realize this base - this is what the Buddha meant when he said to take refuge in the dharma. In Buddhism it's often said that human's original mind, that mind we have at birth is like a clear mirror, pure and uncluttered, with nothing in it whatsoever. Without shape, form or color. If something comes before it, the mirror only reflects it, but the mirror itself gives birth to nothing. If what has been reflected leaves, its image disappears, but the mirror itself loses nothing. Within the mirror there is no birth, no death; no matter how dirty a thing is which is reflected, the mirror doesn't get dirty, nor does it become beautiful because something beautiful is reflected in it. The mirror doesn't get dirty, clean or beautiful. Just because something is reflected doesn't mean anything increases in it, either, nor does anything in it ever decrease. A mirror is without increase or decrease.

Without birth, without death; not dirty, not clean; no increase, no decrease.

This is the same as we read in the Heart Sutra:

All dharmas are marked with emptiness

They do not appear, nor disappear

Are not tainted, not pure

Do not increase, nor decrease.

Bankei Zenji, an exemplary zen master about 300 years ago, said that even such a lengthy explanation was unnecessary. Just the expression "unborn" - that was sufficient. If nothing extra is created in the mind, that's enough. With just that, everything will be solved.

Humans' pure original nature is just this. Without shape, form or color; without birth and death; not clean or dirty; no increasing no decreasing; not male or female; not young not old; not intelligent not stupid; not rich not poor; - there's no words, no explanation possible, no description that will apply here; only a pure, mirror like base. This is humans' true quality, this is an actual experience. From our zazen, to cut all "nen" (nen = mind-instant), to dig down completely to the source of those nen - dig, dig, dig until we reach the place where the human character has been totally cleared. When the source point is reached, this state of mind can be touched.

~ This clear human character which is like a mirror, can accept and receive everything but nothing which is reflected can get stuck to this mirror. It reflects everything exactly as it is, but the mirror itself stays untouched. This mirror-like mind has no sense of "that's me" or "that's him, not me". It has no dualism, makes no distinctions like that. At that true base there actually is no differentiation between self and others. The world which is reflected in, reflected by that mirror is not one of self and other, it has no such separation, it accepts everything as one unified whole; it was originally one world - no division into "my" world and "his" world. There are no such two worlds, from the origin there is only one unified world.

To understand this as an actual fact, with your own experience, is the wisdom of the Buddha. From there arises the functioning, the activity of the human mind which naturally feels another's pain as one's own pain, feels another's joy as one's own joy. A warm encompassing mind naturally arises, comes from this wisdom and experience. That is what is called the compassion of the Buddha.

If we can realize the source point of our human character naturally all of the world becomes One, not divided, but one unified whole. A great expansive and huge world of One. Wisdom works here and humans' suffering, joy and sadness becomes our own suffering and sadness. It is not somebody else's joy, it's my very own joy as well. A warm encompassing mind will naturally be revealed there. This is what the Buddha meant when he said "Seek the light within yourself". When we encounter this true mind, touch our original nature, we also realize that infinite creative possibility in the deepest reaches of our mind. We feel an urge to create something, a positive functioning energy is born. In our activity - when making things - we feel the joy of just being alive, then when we finish what we are making, see our work completed, we feel another sense of joy, then when someone appreciates what we've made still another sense of joy. Life's purpose is discovered in doing this. Becoming this kind of lively, energetic human being is the rebirth into that which the Buddha meant when he said "Look for the light within yourself, find refuge within yourself. Look for the light in the dharma, find refuge in the dharma." This is a very important teaching of the Buddha.

Today so many people are dying of cancer, of AIDS, these people are facing death, dealing with dying; this must be one of the major concerns of society. For this reason in the world now there are many books of people's actual cancer experience, of people's experience of their last days before death, dying of AIDS or cancer, writing about it in detail.

Reading what authors of these books have to say we find many similarities in what they write. In one book it tells of how anyone who approaches death finds their daily life becoming simpler; when they become very aware of the fact that life is limited, social success, material affluence, and noisy parties are clearly realized as meaningless. For WHAT are you living - what should be done with the remaining time you have left - these questions become important to consider.

For those who have known that their remaining days are limited to a certain

number, no matter how unpleasant the weather is, they are thankful for it - because they are alive and present in it. In the minds of those whose lives length has been extended, no matter what inconvenience or what deep uncomfotability they might have to endure, the very fact that they are alive, JUST THAT being alive is wonderful.

Another author writes that when someone knows that they only have this many days, weeks, or months to live, they truly live everyday completely and fully doing that which has the greatest importance for them. Making this kind of resolution for one's last days makes every single day very precious, infinitely satisfying and productive. No matter how seriously ill a person is they can still listen to the music that they love, there are some people who spend their time just doing that. Some people choose to spend it talking quietly with their family and close friends. Another person may find comfort for their mind in spending time alone reflecting over what they've done in their lifetime. Someone else may, until the very very last moment enjoy being surrounded by lots of friends making conversation and fuss. The way of life of each person until now is expressed and honored at this turning point. Even if all hope is given up for someone, in a way amazing to people in the medical field, some patients continue living for a long time. Even if it's not for such a lengthy period of time, most of the people live their days fully. In those people who see death right in front of their faces, this present moment is the truth. In this very moment, the wish to put everything into it that we can is the same for every person nearing death. This is the world of zazen. In zazen, making use of our healthy bodies, we must experience that ultimate place - that razor's edge. Doing this, while our bodies are still healthy and can work, awakening to humans' true way of living - then with this awakening, putting it to work, going into society. This is the way of zen, a very important part of the teaching of the Buddha.

Rinzai Zenji taught us in this way , there are very important words in the Records of Rinzai "Don't add on extra thoughts to the first nen, don't produce

thoughts of the future."

To accomplish this practice will bring you more than ten years of pilgrimage. Those thoughts which naturally arise - don't associate other thoughts to them, don't add onto them. Don't continue inquiring into each thought. Don't twist around and work over every thought that comes along, with ideas of this and that. This is not to say "Don't see, don't hear, don't speak." See with your eyes, use them fully - but cut the thoughts on the spot as soon as you're finished. Even if it's something good, don't add onto it - no matter how bad it is, don't continue thinking about it. Cut it on the spot - use your inventive powers to do this. Don't be concerned and anxious over what hasn't even occurred yet. Our life is not happening in the already finished past, nor is it happening in the future which hasn't even arrived yet. Only in this very present moment is our life happening, in this moment, with this moment using everything we are, putting our whole selves into it - this is the living function of zazen.

This world of those at the end of their life, they don't have the experience of zazen - but they enter the same state of mind as those who do zazen. What this means is humans' most important state of mind. When humans take off all of their decorations, really face in the direction of and dig down to what's truly necessary, what's finally remaining is the purest place of the original nature. There is in fact ONLY this instant. The person who 2000 years ago taught us about this life, this human character, this actual experience, this functioning, was the Buddha Shakamuni. Today, especially we should remember that we have received this body as a human being - so difficult to receive; and we have encountered the teaching of the Buddha, so difficult to encounter. If at this very time, we don't clarify this truth, then when, WHEN ARE we planning to do it?

When we think of the birth of the Buddha, we think how important it is that even one person more can know of this teaching of humans' true source, of this true path to realizing that mind which he taught - then we vow to realize our own true nature, and vow to never stop until we do.