

# 曹源一滴水

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In the blue sky of the dawn, solemnly soaring upward, the 76-foot high great tower looms in front of our eyes as we raise our gaze to look at it. We put our hands palm to palm in gassho, "Daion Kyoshi Shakamuni Butsu"--"Honor to Shakyamuni Buddha"--as if the Buddha were sitting right in front of us on the diamond lotus seat. When we prostrate, we honor that which we have put our whole life into realizing. We have finally arrived at the place from where the Dharma first came forth. This is how we feel as we arrive in this place. Those people of old who walked the way taught by the Buddha also prostrated to this great tower. We find ourselves in tears of deep emotion at the sight and at the thought. For those who have actually walked the Way of Truth, to be able to reach the holy site of the Buddha's enlightenment is a most profound moment. We feel every drop of the life of the Buddha with our very own bodies. We comprehend the living holiness of the Buddha.

For those who believe deeply in the Way of the Buddha and who have actually walked their lives in that way, we believe that it is a place we must visit at least once during our lifetime. When we visit this place we feel that sense of being the Buddha's disciple. That teaching which has liberated countless beings throughout history came from this very place. When we see it in this light we can only continue being deeply moved by the significance of this place.

At the time when the Buddha was born, he raised his right hand into the air and pointed to the sky. He pointed to the earth with his left hand and said, "In all the heavens and all the earth there is only one." "In all of the heavens and in all of the earth I am one, alone." This is what he said at this time. But even though it was the Buddha, I don't think that this is exactly how it was. It is said that as soon as he was born he walked seven and a half steps and that he started talking in human language. But even if Buddhism has been able to make great discoveries that science has since been able to prove true, there is a little too much decoration added on here. People who know well the character of Buddhism, when they write the history of Buddhism they just assume how it must have been. That strong vital birth cry of a newborn baby then becomes those words, "In all the heavens and on earth, only one." This is how it was heard when expressed in the terms of Buddhism.

When it is said that he raised one finger and pointed to the heavens it was to say that humans were not to be made slaves of by some god far away up in an imagined heaven. When with the other hand he pointed to the ground he was saying that there is no devil of the

earth that can destroy or spoil humans' clear and dignified, pure nature. This is what I think he was saying. His walking seven and a half steps is about the freedom of humans as they walk the earth--that the world is the place of humans. I think that Buddhism used the occasion of the birth of the Buddha to illustrate its most basic teachings. He wasn't saying that there was only one in all of the heavens and earth in order to say how superior he was. He wasn't saying it to call everyone else but himself a fool. As the representative of all humans he was saying that the human being is the most splendid of all creations of heavens and earth. He was saying that humans are free. This is an expression of the way of looking at things in the spirit of Buddhism.

After strict ascetic training during six long years, when he realized his deep experience of awakening--it wasn't him saying that he was wonderful or had done something special--he said without hesitation and self conscious awareness, "How wondrous, how wondrous! All beings are endowed from the origin with this same clear Mind to which I have now been awakened. How mysterious, how mysterious!" This clear and original nature to which he had just awakened after six years of severe training, all people, all beings, were born with this very same state of Mind. They all are endowed with this same bright Mind from the beginning. All humans, all living and non-living things without exception, all of them have an equal and clear Mind. All of them are Buddhas! In giving this great cry of joy and understanding he said nothing about himself in particular whatsoever. All of the Ten Thousand Things--the rivers, the mountains, the birds, the trees, all of them--are endowed with this same clear nature from the origin. This deep awareness of the freedom and dignity of all beings was the profound awakening of the Buddha.

In India in the olden times the caste system was begun and those of the servant and lower castes, from the ancestors to the great grandchildren and on down could never be liberated from the caste into which they were born. No matter how hard they worked, they were labeled irrevocably. In this very time when the caste system was most strictly established and observed the Buddha was teaching, "In human beings there are no levels and castes as these." He refused to recognize the ranks and system. The story is well known of how he left his home country and after strenuous training was deeply enlightened. From that time on he covered the country giving teachings of what he had understood. No matter where he went he was the Buddha, Shakyamuni, Sesson. No matter where he went his reputation was excellent. The people of his own home country were impressed and since he had become so well known they wanted him to come and teach them there.

The Buddha, who hadn't been back to his own country for six or seven years, then returned there to give a teaching. The young people of his country were all deeply moved and impressed when they gathered to hear his teaching. Many of them left home, shaved their heads and became disciples of the Buddha. To this degree the Buddha's teaching could even move the hearts and minds of the young people. It was very fresh. But he was resented by the older people of his country. They accused him of taking away their next generation of children. To this the Buddha responded by saying that he wouldn't allow anyone to become a disciple whose parents were against the idea. He even had to make a firm rule about it because there were so many who were eager to become his disciples. There were many disciples who were the children of high-ranking politicians and people of great wealth. They called the barber Upali and asked him to shave their heads. When the barber asked why it had become so popular recently to shave off their beautiful long hair he was answered, "Haven't you heard? The prince who left the country years ago has become a Buddha." To this Upali the barber answered, "If this is true then please take me to hear these teachings."

The barber shaved his own head and followed them.

When one entered the teaching of the Buddha there was a ceremony of entrance. When the ceremony was completed each person was given a place where they would henceforth always sit. At this time, Ananda, the Buddha's younger cousin by birth--and a prince--came and said that from the following day he would also receive the ceremony and become a disciple of the Buddha. They would all become mendicant beggars. They would stand on the corners of town and receive alms for their livelihood. They couldn't do this with that same state of mind which they had always lived in; from that day forward they must live with a humble heart. The barber Upali was encouraged to go first. When the ceremony was finished the barber Upali went up to the Buddha and prostrated at his feet. He then went to the person who would become his older brother disciple and received his feet as well. Then he sat in the seat to which he had been assigned. The next person to receive the ceremony was the prince, Ananda. He went and prostrated at the feet of the Buddha three times and then went to prostrate three times at the feet of his senior older brother disciple; this was Upali, who had just taken his assigned seat. The barber Upali was a slave caste member. The young prince would have to receive and raise above his head the feet of one of the dirtiest, lowest caste members. This young man was a prince and from the old days in India the other royalty and the prince were never allowed to live in the same place as the members of the lower caste. Now he had to receive and bow down to this slave's feet. No matter how he looked at it this was impossible. He had been able to go as far as having the slave class barber go ahead of him but when it came to prostrating at his feet he just couldn't do it no matter how hard he tried. He was quiet and just stood there and the Buddha saw him and said, "Ananda...Ananda, prostrate to Upali's feet. Ananda, prostrate to Upali's feet.. Ananda, prostrate to Upali's feet." Although he was told by the Buddha three times to do so, Ananda couldn't do it. Very famous words were said by the Buddha at this time as he stood by and watched Ananda just standing there: "Four rivers run to the ocean but their source is one and the same. When sentient beings are in the sea of the Dharma they are all of the same origin. In India there are the Ganges River, the Indus river and others. There are four very large rivers. When they are in the form of rivers they all have different names. When they pour into the ocean they all become the same waters of the same ocean. In society there are four large castes, Brahmin (Priest Caste), Kshatriya (Warrior Caste), Vaishya (Merchant Caste), and Shudya (Servant Caste). When these people come to me they are all equal and the same. They all share the same last name of 'Shaka'. They are all family. Ananda. Prostrate at Upali's feet."

For the very first time a prince prostrated at the feet of a slave. To this degree the Buddha stressed the truth that in humans there are no levels or caste divisions. Humans are all endowed with the Buddha-nature. All humans are becoming Buddhas. This is how he spoke and this is the teaching of the Buddha himself. This teaching of the Buddha was born from the Buddha's profound and mysterious wisdom and love. It was born from the Buddha's deep Awakening. This Awakening was, if we put it in a sentence, the awakening to the aspect of great dignity of all people--that dignified equality of all beings. This is how it has to be seen. The teaching that leads us all to being able to realize the Mind which is equal and dignified in all beings is the teaching of Shakyamuni Buddha. The world and the self, humankind and I, these are one and the same. These are one dimension. This direct perception, the awakening to this, is living religion and teaching and this is the Dharma of the Buddha.

The Buddha saw the morning star and was Awakened, so it is said. Shakyamuni had been full of great doubt about life and followed his older friends who were doing severe

ascetic training. He followed that belief that to be without a self was to be the True Self, and practiced the ascetic training ways for six years. His Mind became ripened and clear like the autumn's high blue sky. Deep like the bottom of the ocean and clear, full and taut; quiet like ashes which are all burned up; free from any extraneous speck whatsoever--nothing to think about at all; like a mirror, clear and transparent; clear and serene--he suddenly, without thinking, saw that morning star and his consciousness was reborn. On the spot he was functioning--not an empty, inactive mind that couldn't work--and suddenly and clearly the absolute emptiness of Mu was broken through. The absolute emptiness of Mu was exploded through. For six years he was developing that consciousness where there was nothing to be thought about, nothing extraneous to be concerned with, free from even the slightest obstructing shadow. This clear consciousness was broken through and reborn. "That's it! That's it! That's it! It's not just empty, it's shining!" This he directly and spontaneously perceived.

At the discovery of the morning star he simultaneously was able to directly perceive and taste the flavor of his own existence. At the discovery of that consciousness that was completely one with the morning star, he was able to realize that which perceives everything--that very existence itself. After six years in the intense severity of his struggle he was able to break through that world of ominous darkness to where all of the Ten Thousand Things are illuminated and radiating brightly: a turn of 180 degrees. Every single thing vividly revealed exactly as it is. At the same time it was not anything separate but his very own life energy, perceived directly--the framework of subjective and objective division falling away. It was the whole universe and society and oneself seen from the same source, as the very same thing--all of humankind and oneself are not in the slightest way separated or divided. He realized this directly. This is the source of the Buddha's awareness of the Dharma--the dignified aspect of the deep and profound truth of all humankind. The world is One and we all are from the origin the same. From this awareness that originally there is only One--from that comes the awareness that there is no boundary between a self and an other whatsoever--that direct perceiving that all is your very own life energy. All things are one's own energy. With that realization a great love and compassion for all things is brought forth. This is a huge great love that can't stop nor can it be stopped--a boundless and limitless great love which is born, an eternal reality which moves the world and by which we are moved. This is the true energy which is realized.

The Buddha, when he entered this great realization and then looked back in retrospect, saw from the essence of that realization--with wisdom and the compassion. These were not something he received from training--these are things which all beings have without exception. He was able to realize this with his own Mind. "How wondrous! How wondrous! All beings are endowed from the origin with this clear bright Mind to which I have just been Awakened!" He was moved and joyful. From that time on he was always aware of that clear Mind with which we are all born and that dignity with which we are lived through--an awareness of humans' greatest quality beyond their differences. In this world everything that exists will flow and change. All the Ten Thousand Things are, without exception, following a path of evolution. The final goal of all of these things in their evolution is that place which the Buddha realized and taught. The eyes of his realized Mind saw that all things develop toward this most dignified and high quality character. It has to be said that we are all continuing that journey. This is the realization beyond dualism--that place of true wisdom, that love beyond limits.

The Buddha completely realized the meaning and dignity of being alive, of existence

itself. Not relying on some external god or conceptualizing some destiny or being fascinated and intoxicated by an idea of fate, nor belittling the role of humans within the work of nature--he taught of human Awakening. He clearly touched that life energy directly. Whether we live in a dark world or in a bright world, whether we're fortunate or unfortunate, whether we live our life in laughter or in tears, it is not about relinquishing this life to some external god or fate. All of it comes from our own realization. The importance of using our will freely is one of the basic teachings of the Buddha.

Nevertheless, even following the passing away of Shakyamuni Buddha, while Buddhism was still flourishing, there were still caste lines being observed, although it wasn't so rigid. As time passed, the political power changed hands and people who held the money were those of upper caste levels. They refused to live with people who were of castes lower than themselves. From here on Buddhism gradually lost favor. In the 13th century the Islamic religion came to India. From that time on the downfall of Buddhism proceeded. The holy sites were destroyed. The people who were practicing Buddhism and its practice of nonviolent resistance fled to Nepal, Burma, Sri Lanka. People left the country and Indian Buddhism was destroyed.

After a long winter period, two large flows brought back to life the nearly extinguished Indian Buddhism. One of them was the restoration of the Buddhist holy sites. Especially active in this movement was Anagarika Dhammapal. When he made a pilgrimage to Bodhgaya he was forbidden to enter inside the temple. Following that incident he formed the Maha Bodhi Society, which was especially active in Sri Lanka. This group is active even today in protecting the holy sites of the Buddha's teaching and even today is making branch offices. In ways such as these the Buddhist disaster was alleviated. Sri Lankan and Burmese priests were also still teaching. Nevertheless, while the Maha Bodhi Kai group's people may be active, in that country where the Buddha lived it was truly a pitiful situation which continued over a long period of time. And the Buddha's great place of enlightenment, Bodhgaya, was not preserved as a Buddhist holy place but was taken over as a Hindu holy site. This is because the land is also of the Mahanta, the Hindu high priests. The Buddhist priests of various Buddhist sects all over the world have gathered there and rented the land from the Mahantas. Burma, Sri Lanka and Japan--from all the various countries--Buddhists have gathered together in this interest. They've made a small group of Buddhists there, but nevertheless this is still the land of the Mahanta.

The other great flow which has brought back life to Buddhism in India was the work of Dr. Ambedkar. He worked for those lowest caste members who were deprived of any political power or rights. For their sake, and coming from among them, his whole life was spent regaining their rights and dignity. He formed a society to work on their behalf. He himself was at one time Law Minister and was the father of the Indian Constitution. This is the person who began another flow of Buddhism. Dr. Ambedghar saw that there would be no resolution to the problem of the caste system while the Hindu religion was at its base. Seeing that there would be no liberation as long as this was the case, he took the teaching of the Buddha and, declaring that there was no possible road to reform otherwise, he passionately supported the renewed development of Buddhism. Dr. Ambedkhar, in 1956 on October 14th in the town of Nagpur, made a great conversion from the Hindu religion to the Buddhist religion. At the same time 300,000 to 500,000 people joined him in doing this. The people of the lowest caste became Buddhists, and in doing so threw off the caste system. Making the teachings of the Buddha his base, Dr. Ambedghar had the great ideal and hope to return India to its Buddhist base. With this purpose he made efforts to spread and propagate Buddhism.

Unfortunately, a mere two months after that gathering he died. Many tens of thousands of newly resolved Buddhists were left in the dark like travelers lost on their way. These people had lost their teacher and guide.

Guided by a dream of Ryuju Bodhisattva, Sasai Shurei then came forth. He is also the teacher of Bodhi, a monk who is currently in training at Sogenji. When Sasai Shurei first arrived in the city of Nagpur he could find not one single Buddhist temple. He started, completely alone, to once more introduce Buddhism to India. Piling up efforts continually, he worked tirelessly to lead and uplift the untouchables and bring them into society. The first temple of the town was built and the town's citizens were all invited. From that time on up until today, 25 years later, thousands of temples have been built all over India. Sasai Shurei of Nagpur City in the middle of India--when he walks through the Buddhist areas of the town he is greeted everywhere with the call of "Jai bhim! Bhanteji!" The people greet him everywhere. Bhanteji left behind his own country and went beyond anything any of us can even imagine to share this new faith with everyone possible. Enduring difficulties and poverty beyond which we can imagine as well, he would rouse people's support and enthusiasm with one look.

At this very time the existence of Sasai Shurei is known all over India. Among the Buddhist population there is not one person who doesn't know the name of "Bhanteji". At this very time Sasai Shurei has become the popular symbol of Indian Buddhism. But still, Indian Buddhists are not even allowed to prostrate freely to that great tower which marks the place where the Buddha was enlightened. This matter should be resolved as soon as possible. The present caretakers of the tower at Bodhgaya, the landlords of the place, take money from any one wanting to enter there. But none of this entrance fee paid by pilgrims from all over the world is used for the Buddhists of India, but for the Hindu people and its religious groups. The Buddha's awakening which is symbolized by this great tower--this profound and historically significant awakening--cannot be left behind as some remnant of the past. Even today the awakening of the Buddha should be realized, remembered and inspired by this place. Especially because people are still practicing this Path at this very time, this great tower has meaning for today's people and for those of the future as well. It is a legacy left for everyone. For this reason as well this great tower should be returned to all Buddhists of the world even one day sooner. For those Buddhists who vow for the rebirth of the high quality of the human spirit this tower needs liberating. Sasai Shurei actualized this possibility by sending four disciples to Japan. One of them is Bodhi who is now training at Sogenji. Eight years ago, at the great tower of Bodhgaya under the Bodhi tree where the Buddha was enlightened, Sasai Shurei ordained Bodhi, giving him the name Bodhi Daruma so that he would train and bring the true understanding back to India. With this vow and hope Bodhi was sent to Japan. One day he will without fail build a zendo in India and once again raise true Buddhism. Please, I ask for all of you who seek the Dharma and hold precious your religious Path, please listen seriously to these circumstances and with your own judgment to please support this and petition to the Indian government in order to even one day sooner change the present situation in Bodhgaya. It can become a true symbol for the Buddhists of the world. That they may take care of it as they should, I ask you for your support in helping realize this.