

THE TRUTH SPEAKS FOR ITSELF,
IT SINGS ITS OWN SONG

© Reverend Master Myoho
The Place of Peace Dharma House, Aberystwyth, Wales

Whilst sitting quietly by the fire and contemplating the common room statue of Lord Jizo, I these assorted reflections arose into my mind and I offer them now in memory of my master, Reverend Master Jiyu-Kennett, who died 18 years ago this November.

The Jewel of Enlightenment is not restricted to any particular form or appearance. It can take all forms and appear in any way that is most helpful for us to recognise and connect with.

It is also called the Wish Fulfilling Gem because it reflects back to us what, in the depths of our being, we long for. When we see that wish, and feel the longing, we know that we can realise it, because it is already within us. The jewel can only reveal what is already there, it cannot give us something that we do not already have. By reconnecting us with our potential it affirms our purpose and reassures us that our great longing is not a fanciful dream but the work of this lifetime and that, when we willingly, gladly, undertake that work, what we long for will come to us; we do not need to fight for it or try to grab at it, when we train it will rise up from the depths of our being and make itself known. Indeed it will surpass anything we could have hoped for, imagined or dreamed of as we could never self create the wonder and depth of what we find. The realising of our True Wish takes us beyond the limitations of the mind and the life that we have known; the journey of realisation is itself the resolving of our karma, the clarifying of inner confusion and the fulfilling of our potential.

This realising of our potential is not something that we do just once, it is constantly being fulfilled because the incoming Buddha is always flowing and life is always unfolding.

As a new postulant at Shasta Abbey in the 1970's I listened to Reverend Master Jiyu give a Dharma talk and it made my heart sing, she was speaking the Truth and I knew she would help me to find it for and within myself. The way in which she spoke, the tone of her voice, was a holding up of the jewel. It reflected back to me my own true nature, it showed me what an ordinary flesh and blood being can become. It was not so much what she said, indeed most of it was far beyond my understanding, but what I did understand was the place the words came from. When a person trains deeply the Truth can manifest within and through them in an unobstructed way and has the freedom to sing Its own song. When that song is 'heard' by another it awakens something within them that has been waiting to come forth. This can also be described as 'one calls and one answers'. The movement of that awakening is the response to the call and it sends out a call of its own; I am here, I am ready, 'speak speak, give me direction'. 2

After I had been at Shasta Abbey for a couple of years the extent of my inner distress was beginning to make itself known to me. This is seldom an easy phase in anyone's training and it is essential that we not hinder the painful opening up of what has lain within us for so long. If it cannot reveal itself then it cannot be resolved. Reverend Master would say to me, "Myoho, keep your faith strong and go STRAIGHT ON" Hearing the confidence in her voice I was connected with that heart of faith within myself, which is like a bottomless lagoon. However much faith (trust in the process)we need to take that next step, to sit still when we would run, to say 'Yes' instead of 'No', it rises up like a pure clear stream that keeps coming and coming and never stops. That endless flowing flushes out the memories of our past, it heals pain, illumines and clarifies confusion and, like a mighty tidal wave, causes all obstacles to dissolve; the beauty and purity of it, the vastness and magnificence of its flowing is a wondrous thing.

Reverend Master had turned the tide of karma within herself and her example showed me what was possible. How we are is far more important than the words we say and Reverend Master had a quality of being that sang its own song. I saw the Buddhist way made real by this woman who was so fearless and so human and somehow it was the seeing of her humanity that reassured me that I too, with my quirks and foibles, could make this great journey of discovery.

When I look back now at the earlier years of my training I cannot really remember the being I was. Much has changed and my life is so very different now to how it used to be. I entered Shasta Abbey with a mass of unresolved issues, pain, anxiety and desperation all jumbled up within me. As the meditation enabled me to accept and acknowledge more of that terrible distress I felt it reach a low point that I do clearly recall. In meditation I saw myself as a barely human creature laying in the darkness of abandonment, I felt like an outcast amongst my own kind, turned away from by others. As I saw myself in this pit of darkness something caught my attention, I looked up and there was Reverend Master, standing as Lord Jizo stands, holding the staff and jewel, serenely still, at peace, content. Her body was radiant, like a beacon of light that warmed me from within. She was not waving her arms, telling me what to do or trying to make choices for me. She was just standing in meditation and that living stillness was enough, it had a sense of peace and sufficiency, a tenderness that reassured me.

Reverend Master would often say, "It is enough to know the Eternal". There is a quality of being that reveals itself when a person has found that still centre in the midst of all conditions and trains in a way that enables them to live from it. When we abide within our natural purity the physical space we occupy becomes the Pure Land. Looking at her I felt love, it was as though a beam of light reached down into that darkness and touched me, warmed me from within, bringing aching limbs back to life.

My favourite image in all of Buddhist iconography is that of Lord Jizo holding,

showing, the Jewel of Enlightenment. The tenderness and beauty of it touches our hearts, speaks to each of us in a way that we can understand, calls us forth and shows us what we need to see; the Truth. The scriptures say that the Light of Truth shines of Itself and illumines the darkness of our delusion. That day it called to me, ' come, put your hand in mine', and I knew, beyond any doubt, that I was no longer stuck in that terrible place, that, step by patient step, the light of Truth would guide my steps. It did, and it continues to do so. However this is no 'miracle cure' or quick fix.

Sometimes an image or insight comes to us as a gift of grace. It shows us what is possible, what we are capable of, we then have to do the hard work of training that will realise that potential and this may, and probably will, take many years of dedicated effort. As a young novice I once said to Reverend Master that this training we do is not easy and she replied that, if it were, it probably wouldn't be worth while. The effort that we make is our offering and our asking to be taught. It is the giving of ourselves in simple faith and trust, bowing to the Master in the Heart and asking for help, that makes possible the receiving of liberating insight and, through that, the transformation of a life.

When I saw Reverend Master, radiating sufficiency and peace in that dark and terrible place, I knew that I too could sit still in the midst of what life had given me to work with and this knowing changes everything because it changes us. It changes our relationship to what is arising within and around us. Instead of turning away from that darkness we turn towards it, instead of wanting to wallpaper over the cracks we seek genuine understanding. We no longer fear or resist the Truth and this is what opens the doors of our suffering.

The scriptures tell us that Lord Jizo opens the doors of hell by holding high the great staff of the three Refuges of Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. We can hold the staff high without making any physical movement for it is when a being can live, in an unobstructed way, from their original purity that the staff is raised high. The three great refuges are one with preceptual Truth and this Truth dissolves all obstacles, it resolves the confusion of mistaken perception, melts resistance and gently soothes all agitation. When there is no distinction between the staff and the one who holds it the doors of distress (and enlightening insight) open. This has little to do with a wooden staff and a great deal to do with the quality of training of the one who holds it. When ordinary human flesh blood and bones and the spirit of truth can merge as one the pure original essence of that human life reveals itself, it 'speaks' by showing *what* it is that we are and says, without words, yes, there is an end to suffering. Reverend Master 'spoke' to me in this way.

Sitting within the vast peace of meditation, sensing and being calmed by Its completeness, the desperation, which came from the fear of feeling utterly alone within that darkness, was able to fall away. This trusting reliance, this offering of our life to the Master in the Heart, stills and calms us, it opens our inner ear enabling a 'hearing' that is deeper than any ordinary human ear can detect. Entrusting ourselves to the refuge enables us to see in a way we could not before we sat within ' the

absolute upright' that holds all conditions. The purity of our trust combined with our wish to be shown what we need to do (and our willingness to then do it) sets free and opens our mind. This makes us more receptive to being able to see clearly, and the sufficiency we find in that sitting place means we don't panic, despair or grab at desperate self-created solutions. Relaxing into this new found faith and patience we wait for the path forward to reveal itself.

And it does.

Sitting within stillness and contentment is not a passive activity; being at ease within the unknown, or that which we find frightening, deepens faith and prepares the mind to receive the Truth. From this ' call' comes the liberating insight, the ' light that separates the murky (confusion caused by not being able to understand) from the pure' (Truth). This Light of Truth illumines our minds from within and highlights the way forward, it beckons and our feet 'hear' It's call, they move and take a step into the unknown and that step of faith connects our inner gaze with whatever we need to see as the path forward comes to meet us. Instead of feeling lost and trapped I found myself being guided by the wisdom of clarifying insight. I also learnt that waiting for conditions to ripen is as much, and as valuable, a part of the spiritual journey as are times of actual movement; indeed they are often what make that movement (change) possible. When we train there is never a time when nothing is happening, we may not be aware of it, but that is another matter.

Reverend Master would say to us, do not worry if you wobble or fall over, just get up and keep going. How right she was; I have lost count of the number of times I fell over and I know there were many days when I found the 'going on' so very hard. This is a slow and exquisite journey that cannot be hurried and we must be prepared to let faith take us where we need to go. The process of the unfolding of our inner pain and confusion is also the process of understanding what has made us the way we are, which in turn leads to freedom from fear. The fear that we cannot look, cannot cope with looking at what lies within us. From this comes great gratitude, relief and inner ease as layer upon layer of stress (caused by seeing only part of the picture) falls away. This is all made possible by the choices we make. We humans have a remarkable ability to bow and choose to take Refuge in Truth, choose to let the practice help us, which makes possible a life that is beyond compare.

The Truth reveals Itself within the stillness, it calls to us, it beckons, but it does not insist; we have to want it and then train ourselves to be one who can receive it. We find that the Dharma of true insight can only be received, it cannot be taken or held on to, it does not belong to anyone, it is not 'my Truth' or 'your Truth'. It flows forth and training enables us to be always becoming it. Training with Reverend Master showed me that indeed our very existence is the unfolding of the Buddha's Teaching and that unfolding will sing its own song; I do not have to try to make anything happen, I just need to live in a way that makes real my wish to always be one with that unfolding.

They say that when the time is right the Master appears. 3 Who is the Master? The Master is what lays within the unfathomable depths of meditation, we use different words for It as seems right to us. Our human Master is the person within, and through whom, this great mystery (that I call the Master in the Heart) can call to us in a clear and direct way.

Throughout the ages beings have trained closely with those who could practice more deeply than themselves. They have sat beside them and learnt from them. If we read in a book that we can find the source of our suffering and lay to rest all that grief it is hard to comprehend what that means (it was for me) but when we see it as a living reality within and how another fellow human is then we can know it is possible. Reverend Master taught me by *how* she was. The way she moved, the purity of her training, the tone of her voice and by what I saw when I looked into her eyes.

What she was, is and always will be, (which is what you and I were are and always will be), took the transient form and figure of a human being; Buddha Nature manifesting as a monk who taught the Truth. 4 One who, with great generosity of spirit, showed us by example how we too, through training within the limited nature of a human lifespan, can find that which is without limit. She showed me how to take the ordinary and do something extraordinary with it.

For that I bow in gratitude.

Foot notes:

1 *This statue shows Lord Jizo who appears in human form as a monk. He / she stands in meditation whilst holding the staff of the three great Refuges in the right hand and the Jewel of Enlightenment in the left hand. Lord Jizo is the patron Bodhisattva of The Place of Peace. Among other things, he leads beings out of darkness into the light and watches over those who need protection.*

2. *This is a line from The Litany of The Great Compassionate One, which is sung twice daily in our temples and can be found on Page 78 in The Liturgy of The Order of Buddhist Contemplatives For The Laity, (Shasta Abbey Press 1990) p.78.*

3. *We need to be ready to meet our Master whose presence will both reassure us of what is possible and call forth, or draw to the surface, our karma (inner confusion that we find hard to look at and still influences our actions) and so being around them may not always be a comfortable experience because it brings us face to face with our own unresolved issues. At first this might seem disturbing. By allowing ourselves to be disturbed by the Truth we have the opportunity to do something about*

those issues and this can save us lifetimes of distress.

4. What Reverend Master, like Shakyamuni, was is and always will be, is in the flow of every breath and in the meeting in the heart. There is a place beyond space and time where all the true masters have, do and will come from. They teach reliance upon what flows forth from that great mystery, not upon themselves. Human beings appear and undertake many years of devoted practice so that the Truth can speak through them, they grow old and die, and the Truth speaks through that too. Physical forms / manifestations change but the Truth of what they are remains a constant; its song goes on as beings come and go within and as that eternal flowing.