

# Buddha's Enlightenment Day Talk 2015

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## **Raise stick. Hit table.**

If you attain this point you are completely free, alive in the realm of no self, and therefore no pain, no fear, no delusion, desire or disappointment.

## **Raise stick. Hit table.**

If you attain this point you are subject to all troubles known to the cosmos, completely exposed, including pain, fear, delusion, desire and disappointment.

So which of these two enlightenments did Buddha attain 2500 years ago?

**KATZ!**

Today we celebrate Buddha's Enlightenment Day, and usually this is associated with Siddhartha's moment of looking up at the pre-dawn sky and seeing the North Star. But actually, he experienced enlightenment 84,000 times during the course of his life. For the sake of brevity and clarity I will distill these experiences down to three.

Shakyamuni Buddha already attained his first enlightenment when he was six months old. Sitting under a jambu tree, he folded his legs in full lotus position and while his nurses were away, Siddhartha and all sentient beings became one. Even the natural world acknowledged the infant's attainment by refusing to burn the boy's delicate skin. The tree refused

to move its shade from above the boy's head, even though many hours had passed. While this was going on, the whole world swayed in complete wonder.

What does this mean?

Without thought, the self is forgotten; and therefore the troubles ascribed to the self are gone too. No self. No sun. No shade. No problem. No pain. No fear. No delusion, desire or disappointment! The whole world is energetic wonder! This is first enlightenment, a place we know cognitively from the zen circle as 180. A place we can attain, intimately, from time to time...for a moment, an hour, or even a few days.

How long did it last for six month old Siddhartha? No doubt, it lasted at least a moment or two, maybe until his nanny returned and picked him up.

Siddhartha's second big enlightenment took place when he perceived true reality, unclouded by ideas and distractions, when, for the first time, he saw squarely the naked realities of old age, sickness and death. Completely exposed! According to the legends handed down to us, he was probably a little old to be having his first big reality check, but then, he was a very, very sheltered child. In our current world, children perceive the truth of impermanence, of cause and effect at a much more tender age.

Here, Siddhartha attained the Truth World, 360 on the zen circle. It isn't always pretty, or even calm. On seeing old age, sickness and death for the first time, these truths, as basic as they are, are profound and elemental.

How long did Siddhartha sustain this mind that is completely exposed to the elements of truth? If we attach to any one of these truth world experiences, enlightenment is quickly lost to such things as fear, ignorance and hatred. Siddhartha's whole sheltered life went into a tailspin on encountering old age, sickness and death! But he *persisted*,

and finally enquired deeply enough to attain his third enlightenment, when, after sitting under the Bodhi tree for some time, he looked up and saw the North Star. Boom!

In the first micro-instant, this enlightenment was the same as the first, but this time, Siddhartha, now Buddha, saw with the eyes of his experiential, mature insight, with the wisdom of his lived experience. At first, he hesitated. How calm and perfected everything was! He knew, intuitively, that if he moved from that seat of enlightenment, the whole mish-mash mayhem of everyday suffering would come rushing in. He hesitated. This is the bardo realm personified. How could he possibly communicate this to others? How could he possibly help others attain this clarity and truth? What to do?

Just then, he saw a passing merchant on the path, and with that one look, Buddha could see the suffering in the man's face and demeanor. Without thinking, Buddha rose to meet him. At once, he began quite naturally, right there. This is, we know from the Zen Circle, Moment World, finding our perfect function at the pivotal moment.

From that point forward until his dying breath, he taught realization, the emancipation of love and compassion, according to circumstance and to who he was addressing.

**Raise stick. Hit table.**

A short while ago I presented two episodes of enlightenment from the Buddha's life and then added a third. So I ask you now, "Which one will you attain?"

**KATZ!**

May we, all together, go drink tea, and eat a good meal! May it be for the benefit of all beings.