

Being Peace

There was once a time in India, long ago, when diplomatic relations were going well between the neighboring countries of Magadha and Kapilavatthu, where Shakyamuni Buddha and his people, the Shakya clan, lived. In those days it was the custom for nobility to marry only nobility, so the king of Magadha asked the king of Kapilavatthu to send a princess to marry his son. The king of Kapilavatthu sent a woman to Magadha as he had promised, but rather than a woman of noble birth, he sent a housemaid. Not knowing this, the king of Magadha went ahead and celebrated the wedding. Later, when the prince took over his father's position and became king, someone told him of this scandal and he became very angry. He wanted to attack Kapilavatthu at any cost.

When the Shakya people realized that the king of Magadha was planning to attack them, they asked Shakyamuni Buddha to stop him and he accepted the task. Even though the Buddha was an expert in using weapons and was well trained in the martial arts, he didn't fight. Instead he tried to negotiate with the king in many ways. However, there was one person near the king who persistently encouraged him to fight and to destroy the Shakya clan. So the king couldn't hear the Buddha; the inside of his mind wouldn't stop burning and finally he decided to attack.

Shakyamuni Buddha knew the king and his army were coming, so he sat in zazen under a dead tree on the side of the road leading to Kapilavatthu. As the king traveled along this road with his army he saw Shakyamuni Buddha sitting under a dead tree. Since it was very hot, he couldn't understand why the Buddha was sitting under a dead tree; usually people sit under beautiful green trees. So the king asked, "Why do you sit under the dead tree?" The Buddha calmly said to the king, "I feel cool, even under this dead tree, because it is growing near my native country." This really pierced the king's heart and he was so greatly impressed by the message of the Buddha's action that he could go no further. Instead of attacking, he returned to his country. But the king's attendant still continued to encourage him to attack and finally he did so. This time, unfortunately, Shakyamuni Buddha didn't have time to do anything. Without saying a word, he just stood and watched his country and his people being destroyed.

There are two important points to this story. The first point is that real peace is not a matter of discussion. This is why Shakyamuni Buddha sat under the dead tree, realizing real peace, moving toward real peace, merging with real peace beyond the idea of peace or no-peace. If we look at the human world, we cannot believe there is peace. If we debate peace, the world appears as 'no-peace.' But originally the world is real peace; trees, birds, spring, winter, autumn, and we, sitting here, are already peace. We are peace before we discuss whether there is peace or not. However, if someone says, "There is no peace," and then we argue this point with him, finally we will be fighting about the idea of peace itself. This is not real peace.

Working toward world peace is not just dealing with nuclear weapons. Who created nuclear weapons? We created them. We already have the embryo of nuclear weapons in each individual mind. Remember this. It is very important. When the time is ripe and conditions are appropriate, nuclear weapons are created. They are not produced by politicians or scientists. They are produced by individual human life. We should look at this. The embryo of nuclear

weapons and everything else that human beings create is always rooted in human life.

How then can we achieve real peace? According to Shakyamuni Buddha, real peace is completely beyond whether there is a way to stop the king from attacking or not. Buddha knew how to use the weapons of those days, but he didn't use them. He just sat. Just sitting is peace - Buddha's peace. He didn't say anything, but his sitting was perfect peace, real peace that he could create from moment to moment. Even though Buddha didn't say anything, the king was very impressed because Shakyamuni Buddha manifested himself as real peace beyond any discussion of peace.

The second point of the story is no how long we emphasize the need for real peace to all beings, there are still many individuals who won't accept our peace. If people don't accept our peace, where can it be found? Peace has to be found in us. We have to digest, we have to chew real peace in our hearts by ourselves. It is pretty hard. This is why Shakyamuni Buddha just stood and watched his native country being destroyed. No one accepted his peace, so finally, real peace came back to Buddha himself. There is no other way. This is why he just tasted, chewed and digested real peace within his own life.

The more Buddha chewed real peace in his heart, the more he realized how stubborn and ignorant human beings are. Human beings are very ignorant. The nature of ignorance is to lack deep communication with nature or with the universe. It is to separate, to isolate, to create discrimination and differences, so that finally we cannot communicate as a harmonious whole. These differences we create appear as fighting, anger, hatred and war.

We are always trying to fix the surface or object-discriminating aspect of the human world. In this aspect of the world there are countless holes through which ideas are leaking - the idea of nuclear weapons, the idea of peace or no-peace, the idea of armament or disarmament. But if we want to fix some aspect of the world, if we want to have a peace movement, it is necessary to remember that armament and disarmament are the same thing in a sense; they are a principle or doctrine created by human ignorance. If we attach to the idea of disarmament we create a problem. On the other hand, if we attach to the idea of armament we create still more problems. Look at both sides. Which is better? Temporarily we use disarmament as an idea through which we can approach real peace. But this disarmament is just an idea. We cannot hold on to it as opposed to armament, because if we do, finally under the beautiful flag of disarmament we fight - about the idea of peace, we fight. What kind of peace is this? It is nothing but an idea. So why don't we see the idea of peace as just an idea that can be used temporarily in order to approach real peace. There is no other way to approach peace.

To approach real peace requires a very strong, stable, spiritual commitment, a vow. Just take a vow. Make a commitment toward real peace, just like Buddha sitting under the dead tree. But remember, even though we do make a commitment toward real peace, there will be many individuals who don't accept our way. So finally, where can real peace be found? With us. We ourselves must remain with peace. This is pretty hard, but we cannot stop. Buddha has to continue to sit under the dead tree. This is our sitting.

The more we sit like this, the more we realize the strength of human ignorance. There is no reason why we create this terrible situation, but we do, constantly. When we make a spiritual commitment toward real peace, day by day, we have to go beyond whether people accept

peace or not. This is not a political matter. It is a spiritual commitment toward peace. We have to taste it and digest it, constantly. Next we have to live it. This is pretty hard, because the more we taste and chew real peace, the more we realize human ignorance. But the more we realize human ignorance, the more we cannot stop teaching real peace, living real peace.