

A Surprise Encounter

Part Two of a Nine Part Series by Reverend Shindo Nishiyama

Shindo: Master, please follow me. I will take you to the Jikoen Buddhist Temple where I am the resident minister. I have a room for you. It was my son's before he left to become a nurse in Seattle. I am so sorry it is not clean and for all the surf boards that clutter the room.

Buddha: Oh, do not worry. I appreciate your help. All I need is a simple place to sleep and something to eat.

(They arrive at Jikoen Temple.)

Shindo: Master, here we are at Jikoen. This temple was established in 1938 to serve the first immigrants from Okinawa under the guidance of the late Rev. Chiro Yosemite. Jikoen Temple was moved to this location in 1964. It has been over 80 years since Jikoen first welcomed Buddhist followers and over 2,500 years since you were enlightened under the Bodhi Tree in India.

Buddha: I see. I am happy to see your monastery and meet my followers as they come for daily practice of the Dharma. By the way, what is in your hands? A sutra book? I notice you use it often.

Shindo: Oh, this is not a sutra book. It is a cell phone. I can access the internet and connect to the whole world. It is too bad you did not have this way to communicate with everyone. Master, do you want to try it?

Buddha: Oh, okay. Please show me how to use it?

Shindo: Here. Look at this. These are pictures of your birthplace, the Bodhi Tree, and Deer Park where you shared your first sermon with five followers.

Buddha: Wow! Amazing! I can see the place where I meditated under the Bodhi Tree. Oh, this is my birthplace, Lumbini Garden! Did you know my mom was Queen Maya who passed away a week after she gave a birth me?

Shindo: Yes, I know this. I am sorry.

Buddha: Shindo, I missed my mom. But what I awakened to, under the Bodhi Tree, was the truth that everything is momentary and impermanent. Our lives constantly change. Nothing is guaranteed. This is a Universal Truth. However, most people don't realize it or don't want to recognize it. When we truly awaken to this truth, we are able to fully live our unrepeatable lives with gratitude for each moment and for each other.

Shindo: Yes, Master. We know that life is impermanent, but it is hard to recognize we are a part of this truth. Whenever a Jikoen member passes away, I think it is not my death. It is someone else's.

Buddha: Shindo, I was a like you before becoming the Awakened One. Then I had experiences when I was a young man in the palace of the Shakya Kingdom. My parents, King Suddhodhana, and Queen Maya, were overly protective. They tried to keep me from seeing "Duhkha," which means dissatisfaction, impermanence, and human suffering such as desire, aging, sickness, and death. I was surrounded by beautiful things and lived in luxury. I married a beautiful woman named Yasodhara and I became a father of a child. My life was perfect and happy. However, one day, I wandered outside the palace. I saw the reality of human life. I saw the suffering that aging, sickness, and death brings. Then I met a monk in yellow robes with a shaven head and an empty bowl. I was told that he was one who was seeking universal truths. After this experience, I decided to leave the Palace and the Kingdom to become a seeker.

Shindo: Master, thank you so much for sharing about your life. I understand you are very tired tonight so please enjoy *nishime* and rice. My wife prepared the bed for you. Please have a good night!

Buddha: Namaste. Good night. I will see you tomorrow morning before sunrise.

Shindo: What? Oh, okay. See you tomorrow morning before sunrise. Good night!

End of Part Two