

## THE BUDDHA AND WHOLENESS

**SATISH KUMAR**



One day Buddha was sitting by a pond, disciples gathered around him, everybody sitting calmly and in silence. The Buddha held a lotus flower in his hand and looked into the eyes of the monks sitting in front of him. The monks were looking into the eyes of the Buddha in return but there was a kind of blankness in their eyes. The blankness was caused by bewilderment and wonder. The Buddha kept holding the lotus. Moments later one disciple called Ananda smiled joyfully at the Buddha who returned the smile with equal joy. The Buddha placed the flower in the pond, got up and moved away.

The rest of the disciples looked at Ananda in amazement and asked him, “While we were looking at the Buddha and wondering why he was holding the lotus flower in his hand, you smiled joyfully that the master was delighted and he blessed you with his smile, with a twinkle in his eye. Please, Ananda, tell us what went on between you two.”

Ananda replied, “When I saw the lotus in the hands of our enlightened master the Buddha, I saw it as a lotus, nothing but a lotus, just a flower from the pond. Then I saw the sunshine in the flower, I saw water in the flower, I saw mud in the flower; no mud, no lotus. Then I saw the Buddha in the lotus; no lotus, no teaching of the Buddha. In that moment of great teaching I saw the lotus and the Buddha as one. I saw the whole universe in the lotus; macrocosm in microcosm. I understood the meaning of co-dependent arising – everything is made of everything else – life is one, holding many elements within it and manifesting in many forms, but totally dependent on each other. When I realised this truth, the unity and wholeness of life; I was filled with joy, so I smiled. I think the Buddha understood what I had experienced. So he blessed me.”

The disciples heard Ananda in stunned silence. They too got a glimpse of the truth of wholeness.

The Buddha’s teachings spread far and wide; even though the Buddha only went as far as his two legs could take him. He spoke few words and communicated through many gestures. More importantly he made a great impact by his living example. Even though there were no means of communication other than word of mouth, thousands upon thousands of men and women came to hear him, learn from him and follow his example. What he taught was pure truth from his heart and he taught it with profound compassion for all people irrespective of their caste, class, creed or status.

Such teachings of wholeness are most inspiring. No wonder that even after 2,600 years since he passed we still find his teachings so uplifting.



*Satish Kumar renounced the world at 9 and joined a wandering brotherhood of Jain monks. At 18, he left the monastic order and became a campaigner, working to turn Gandhi’s vision of renewed India and a peaceful world into reality. He undertook an 8,000 mile peace pilgrimage, walking from India to America without any money. Since 1973, he has been the Editor of Resurgence magazine. [www.resurgence.org](http://www.resurgence.org)*