

## **Retelling Buddha**

Once upon a time, a long long long time ago, there was an ancient land. The people there saw everything as sacred.

Their language was verbs that painted how reality moved rather than nouns that name and divide ‘things.’ Everything had spirit and spoke in its own way.

They knew who they were.

Then, one day, conquering hordes came. They conquered the people, took the land, and tied up the food system.

Now everything was separate and owned.

The conquering hordes turned the people into slaves, which made the conquerors rich. The conquerors had divided minds and saw the world as things.

They lived in luxury in large homes surrounded by walls, while the people they had conquered were in poverty and agony.

Centuries passed. The people forgot who they were.

They started believing in the gods of the conquerors.

They worshiped enlightened persons from the conqueror class.

Life lost its purpose. Now disease and death caught them by surprise because the big picture was lost.

In this society, where everyone had forgotten who they were, there was a young man who was born into a rich family. He lived in a big house, and everything was taken care of for him.

Then one day, he decided to go outside.

He saw the incredible poverty the people were living in.

It was the first time he had experienced this level of agony and horror at life itself. It broke him.

Enlightenment seemed the only escape. He left his home and went into the forest. He fasted and prayed until finally, he was eating one grain of rice a day and was on the verge of death.

He went over and sat by the river, watching the river flow. He saw a boat come down the river; it avoided a rock, went around it, and floated on down.

Suddenly, he realized, "There is a middle way!" You can live within the river of life and go in this middle way. He was having a glimpse of the natural inner soul of the long-ago ancestors.

So, he started searching for this middle way.

Then one day, he sat down by a tree and decided, "This is it. I am not going to move until I figure this thing out." He sat there. The moon rose, the stars rose and then he relaxed and for one second forgot about seeking. The loops of definition that had hypnotized his mind broke.



He located himself. He saw who he was—a natural being vibrating within the middle way.

Boom! Enlightenment.

He was Siddhartha, the Buddha.

He was thirty four years old. He had discovered the awake nature that exists in the human heart when the language of things stops.

For him it was complete silence  
because he had no elders to show  
him that everything has spirit and  
speaks in its own way.

He didn't know that this natural  
state was still available in the  
human heart because it's the place  
underneath language.

To Buddha his awakening felt natural, but he had no idea that this was the ancient way. He didn't know that mothers and elders could teach it.

It felt like something new. It felt like something *inside* his head.

Something to be seen with eyes closed instead of a flowing relation with all things.

But now we can open our eyes.

We can be right here and now.

This is a good place to be.