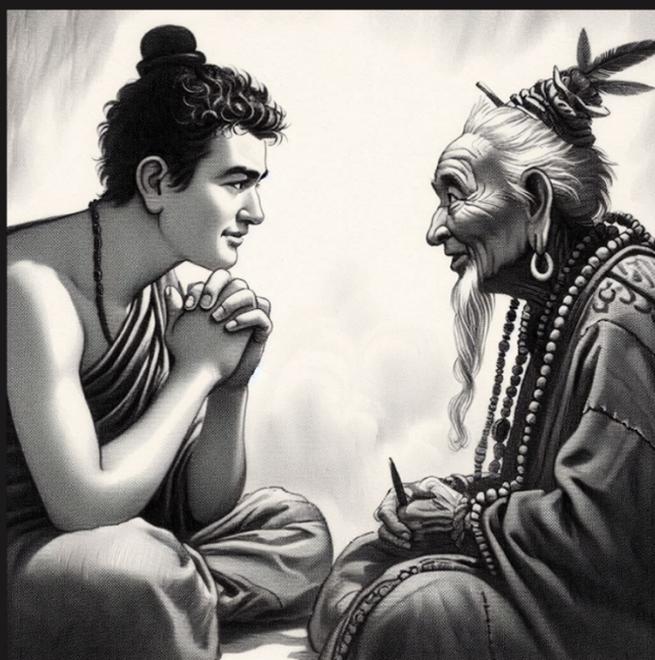


Retelling Buddha



by **Connie Zareen Delaney**

Retelling Buddha

A read-aloud story

By Connie Zareen Delaney

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2024

This is a major revision in Sept 2025

Connie Zareen Delaney

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In short:

This is a story to read aloud... to yourself... to children... to anyone. It will dismantle the old story of 'not good enough'.

About the Author

Connie Zareen is a Nonduality Teacher, Dances of Universal Peace leader, and modern mystic. She is a longtime student of Osho, Andrew Cohen, Native Wisdom, nature and Zen. She does both in-person and online events with the Mystic Dance Caravan. Zareen graduated from the Osho Multiversity in 1990 and brings that coyote energy of Zen laughter to her teachings.

Note:

I started my journey with a certainty that there is a true, healthy, nature within. I knew we were all conditioned by the modern world and that this is

what is making humanity so crazy and destructive. It only makes sense that if we are all full of conditionings then there must be a true source within, the place from before the conditionings started to form. I took every possible journey to find that inner place.

Now... let's do it together!

Who Are We?

Stories create our point of view. When we are told good stories then we know how to live. When we are told that we are not enough, that we are in illusion, that we are in sin, we lose track of who we are.

Retelling our foundational stories can change our relationship with life by knowing that we are life.

Retelling these stories can change our relationship with nature by knowing that we are nature.

I want to retell the story of Enlightenment. Let's go way

back into prehistory and put
Buddha in context.



Once upon a time, a long long long time ago, there was a land with animals, bugs, plants and people. It had tall mountains, grassy plains and clean water.

Everything was alive. The mountains talked to the water, the birds sang to the air, and the people danced and laughed.

Back then the people could hear the stars talk.

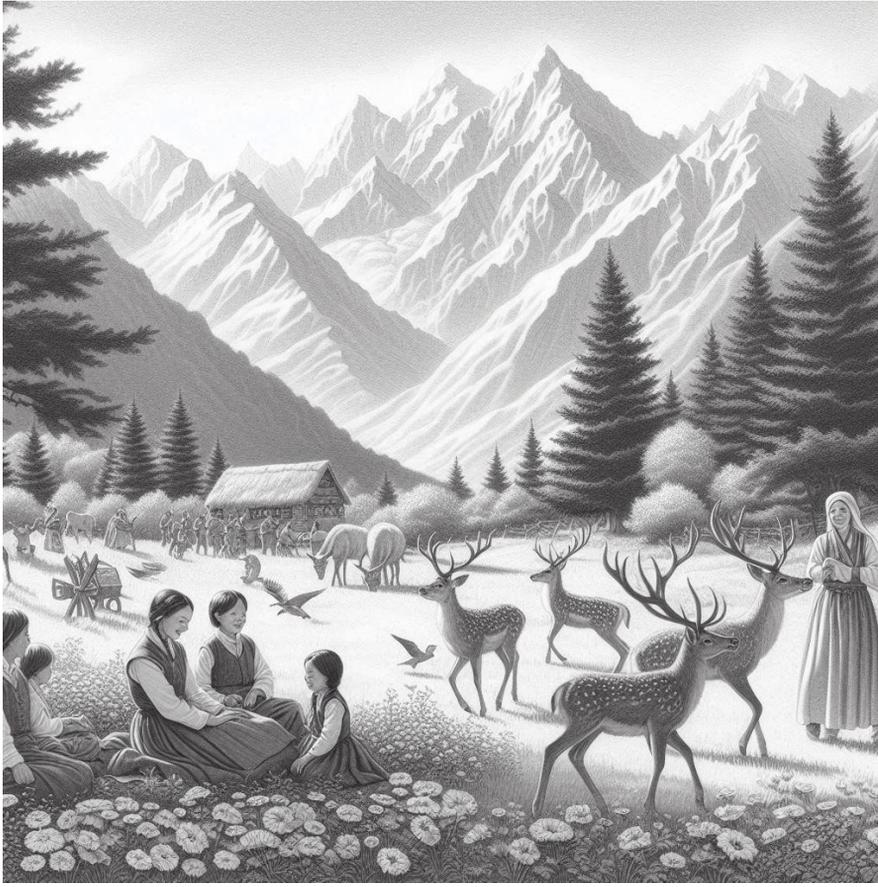
Elders taught the young so that even when times were hard the connection to all was never lost. They lived and died in this world of meaning and connection.

Their culture was conscious relating. Language was verbs of connection. Nothing was separate.

All the beings had lived together for a hundred thousand years, for a million years even... back to the time of the trees. The people were bright and satisfied and knew that they were one within their food system. They were one inside their culture.

They lived in a world of knowledge and strength.

Ancient wisdom was brought down in an unbroken line from elders to children, ancestor to ancestor. It went all the way back to the first words that sang in a song.



The people of this land had expansive minds with a vast knowledge of their surroundings. They saw how time and space lines moved through everything. Their language was not nouns and definitions, but only about the relationship of everything.

Time was the movement of the seasons, the migrations across the land, and the blowing of the wind. Space came from the landscape which held all relations together. Movement was through space and through time, which created lines of knowing.

Things came together and went apart in balance, so that whatever happened made sense.

The people in this land lived in honorable relation. There were those with four legs, those who fly, those who crept along, those who swim and those who sit still.

The people were not a dominant species.

They belonged.

Each person knew who they were and how they fit in.

Knowing who they were meant also knowing what they are not... they knew they were not separate.

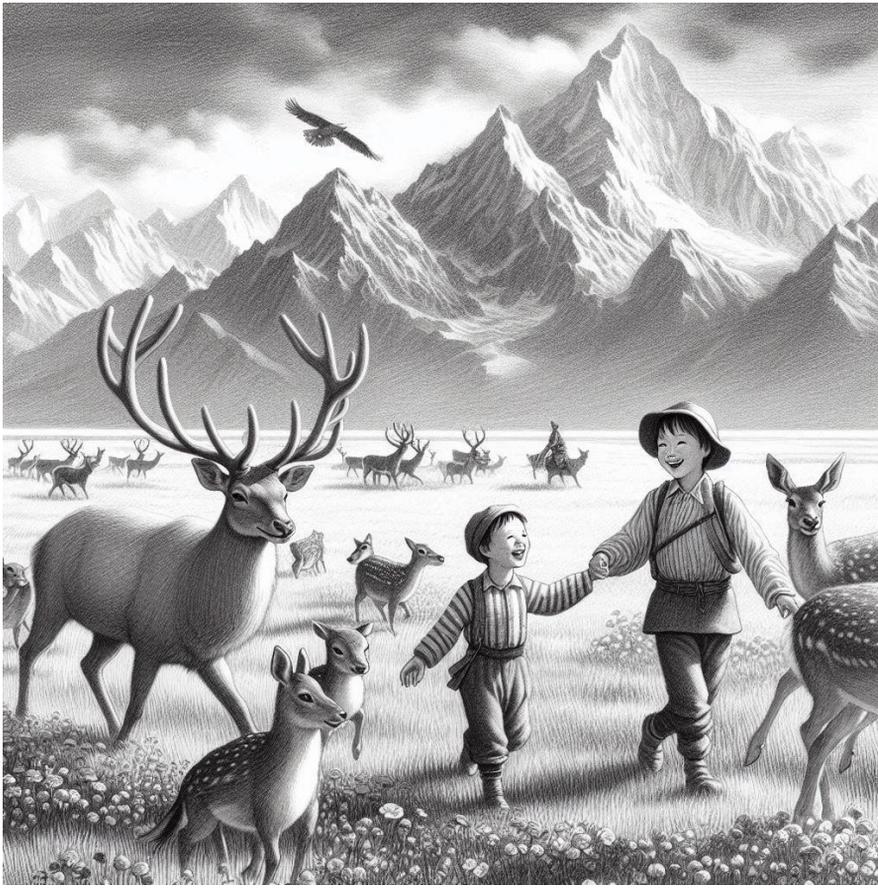
They understood that they were not the most intelligent creatures around, even though they had such big brains.

Those big brains saw relationship everywhere.

Everything had spirit and spoke in its own way. Everything had wisdom in its own way. They

believed birds could teach, so they would listen. They knew that plants and animals could teach, so they would listen.

We were surrounded by wiser relatives.



They didn't own land. They didn't own plants or animals. They moved within their food system as one. Everybody worked together to bring food, create togetherness and give thanks. They knew when things would be ripe over here, and then they could go. They knew when the

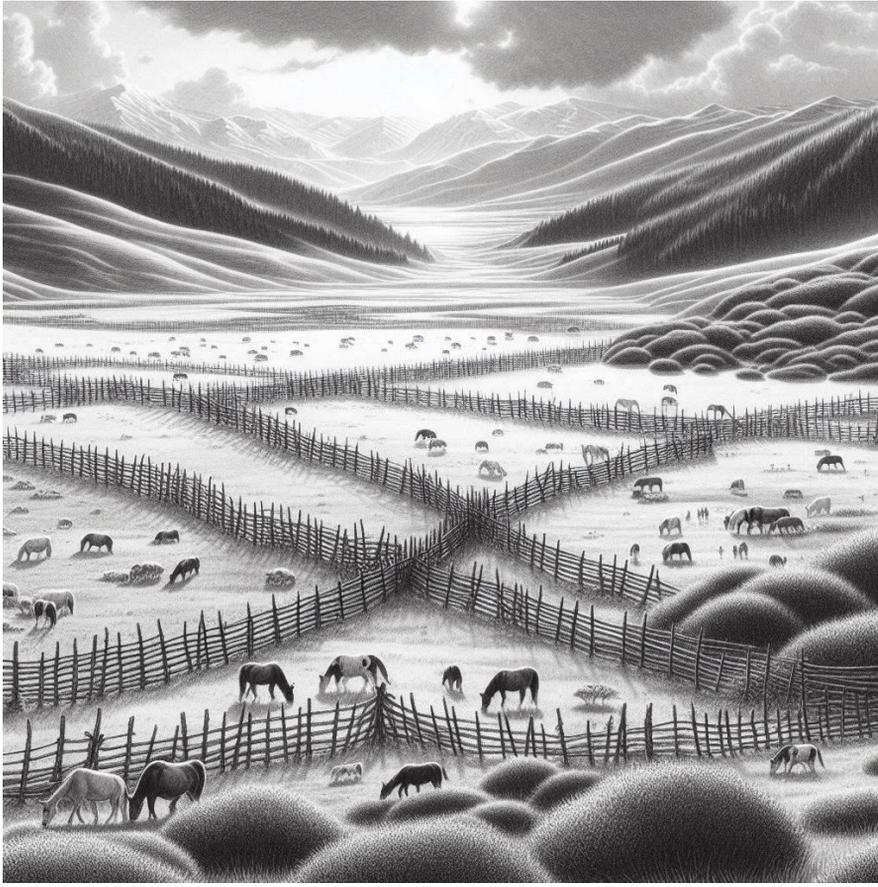
fish would be running fat and strong in the rivers, and then they could go. They knew where the animals would come and when.

They lived within their landscape with full consciousness. Every part of their mind was awake, engaged and alive with intelligence. They could see the connections that run through everything. They knew who they were—they were awakened, aware spiritual beings.

They understood that everything had spirit and spoke in its own way. They were good listeners.



They knew who they were.



Then, one day, a different kind of people swept into the land.

These people were caught up in hierarchy and the disease of “better than.” They craved owning more and more.

Their belief in separation made them strong and cruel. Their language spoke in nouns and

definitions, so they saw the world as inanimate things around them. Objects instead of life. Possessions instead of wise beings.

They conquered the open spaces with brutality. They took the land and turned it into property. They tied up the food system. Now everything was separate and owned: rice was grown over here, sweet potatoes over there, animals lived in pens.

The landscape changed because now everything was separate and owned. The land didn't stop speaking, but the people stopped listening.



The conquering hordes turned the people into slaves, which made the conquerors rich.

The divided minds of these conquerors saw everything in the world as things. These conquerors lived in luxury, built beautiful large homes, and every little thing was taken care of.

They lived in this luxury, while the people they had conquered were living in poverty and agony.

They called it civilization.



Over the centuries, the original people of this land forgot who they were.

They argued about reality.

The old language was lost so thinking could only happen through nouns and definitions. They started believing in the gods of the conquerors. These

gods told them who was who,
and that they were not good
enough.



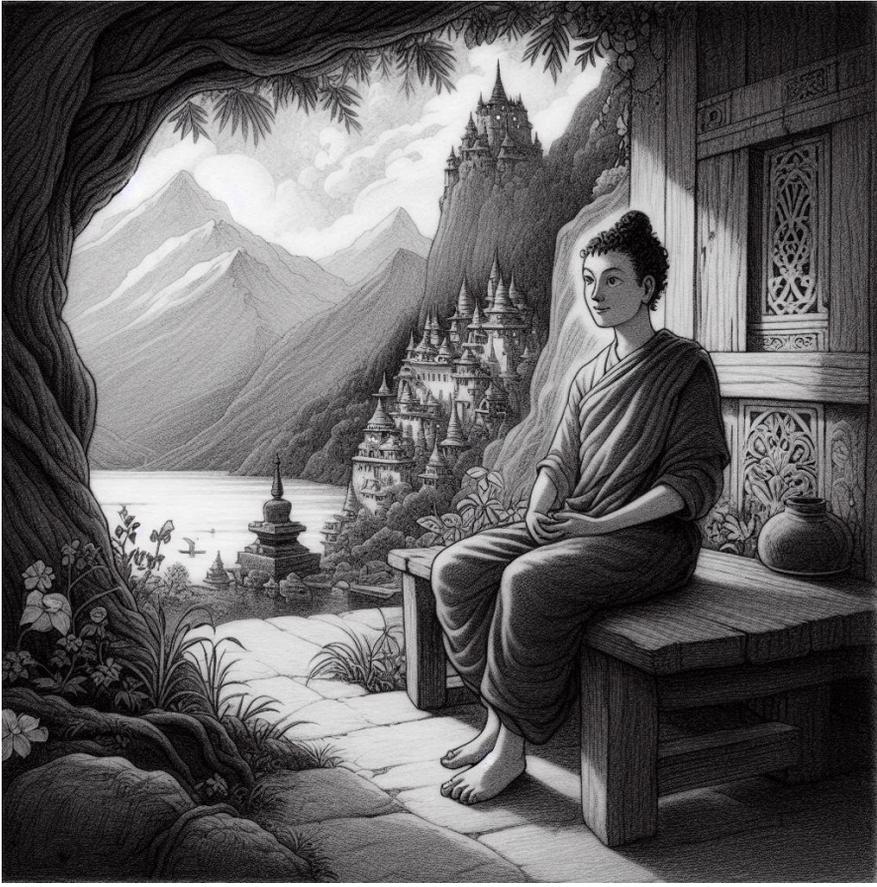
The people forgot the old ways and worshiped enlightened beings from the conqueror class. Gods and Goddesses.

Life lost its purpose and didn't make sense. The more the gods told them what to do, the more they had to ask what to do.

Disease and death caught them by surprise now because the big picture was lost.

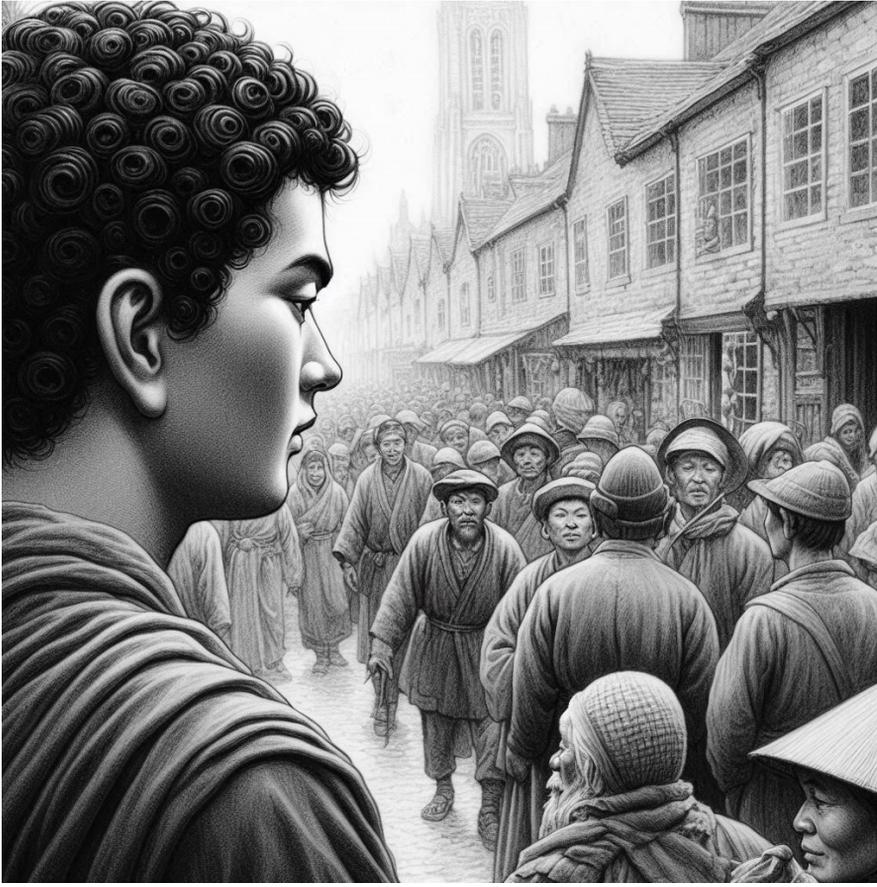
The connection to elders were lost. The ancient stories faded. Trust withered. Children cried alone.

The people no longer knew who they were.



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, beautiful house, and everything he could possibly want was taken care of for him. Then one day, he decided to go

on a trip outside of his beautiful home.



He went out and saw the incredible poverty and agony the people were living in. It shocked him because he was a sensitive and thoughtful man.

He couldn't believe it; it was the first time he had experienced this level of agony and horror at life itself.

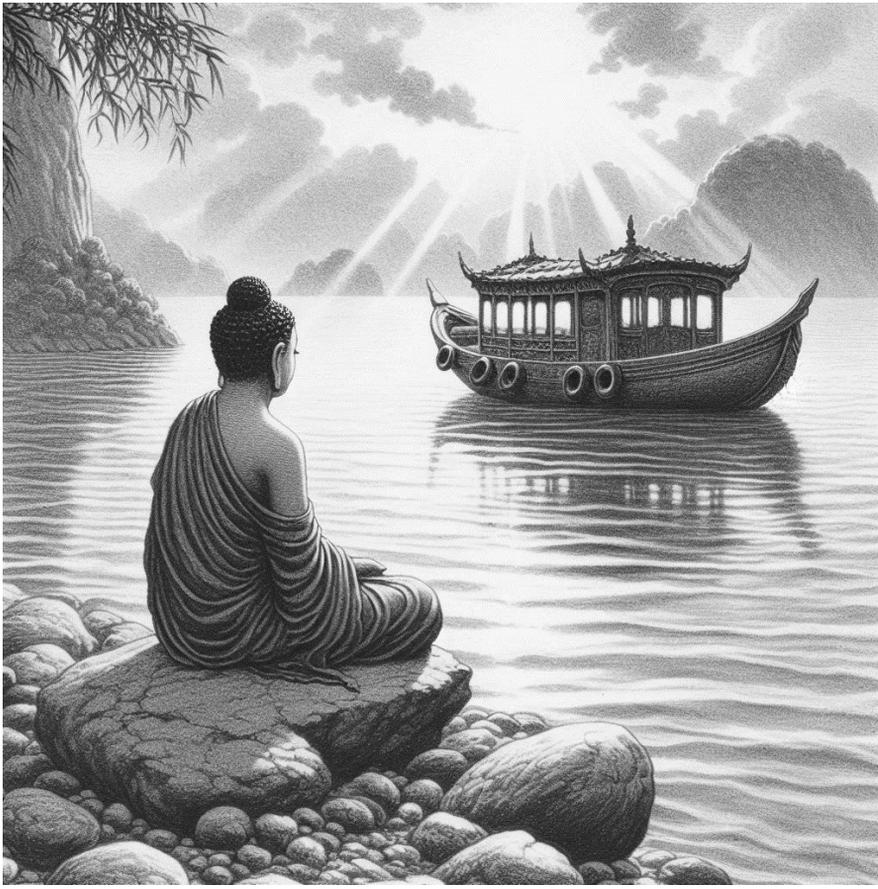
It broke him.



Enlightenment seemed the only escape from this agony. He left his home and went into the forest to live with the aesthetic meditators there.

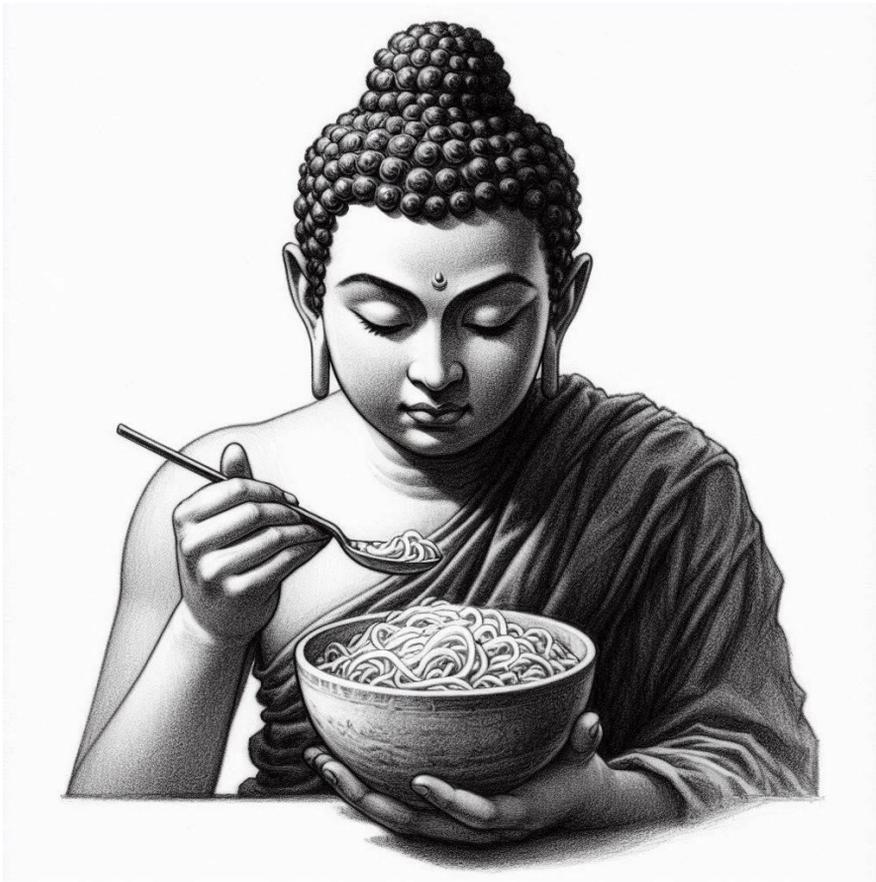
He was a bit competitive, so he became the best of them all. He did the most prayers and ate the least food until finally; he was

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.

The river spoke to him, and on that day, he had the ears to listen.



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 his long-ago ancestors, the way of seeing the timelines that run through things.

So, he left his friends, started eating actual food, and searched for this middle way.



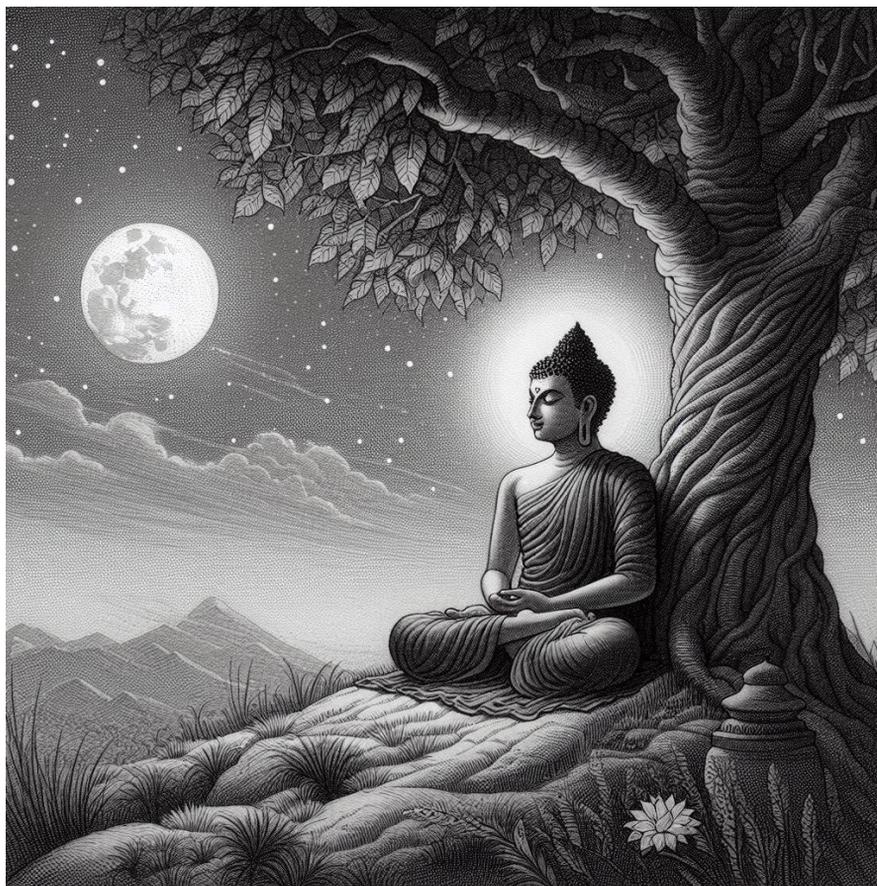
Then one day, he sat by a tree and decided, "This is it. I am not going to move until I figure this thing out."

He sat there.

The moon rose, the stars rose and then he spontaneously relaxed into his being.

In a flash, his thinking paused,
and all the definitions in his mind
fell away with a crack. Silence
was all that was left.

He located himself.



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

He saw his conditioned mind as an illusion and its hold upon him lifted, revealing him as the natural true human being within. Pure life surged within him.



Boom! Enlightenment.



He was Siddhartha, the Buddha. He was thirty-five years old. He had discovered the awake nature that exists in the human heart when the language of things stops. The natural place of knowing who you are. That quiet place where reality is within as well as without.

This was a place of silence.

He saw only silence because he came from a world where mountains and rivers did not talk. The language of his long-ago ancestors was gone. There were no stories of ancient connection. He was by himself without elders and culture.



The silence was beautiful and full.



Buddha started gathering people around him and teaching them this middle way.

What he didn't know was that this awakened state had been the natural life of people thousands of years ago. It was available for him to discover

because this is the natural way,
the place underneath illusion.

It's the place of self-knowing and
awareness.

This place under language is
where we are connected to the
universe. Everything and nothing
are there.

It is pure and alive. It is rich and
beautiful.

Buddha didn't know about the
ancient people. His awakening
felt new. It seemed he was the
only one who saw this.

He had no elders. He had no
deep time. He didn't know about
unified living with the relations of

the earth. He didn't know rocks
could talk.

Silence was there, but it was
without history.



He missed one little thing.
Connection through our
ancestors puts awakening in
context. It's our birthright. This is
the story we used to hear. This is
the way we would live.

Living cultures have knowledge
from deep time.

In the reality of no-separation everything is entwined and moving together. Ancient culture thrived on this.

It was natural and normal.
Nothing special.

This is how we wake up to belonging again. When people know who they are they join the landscape and all our relations in consciousness.

Civilized people are taught a story that we aren't good enough and don't belong. This is sad. It makes us not know who we are.



When we don't know who we are
we feel separate.

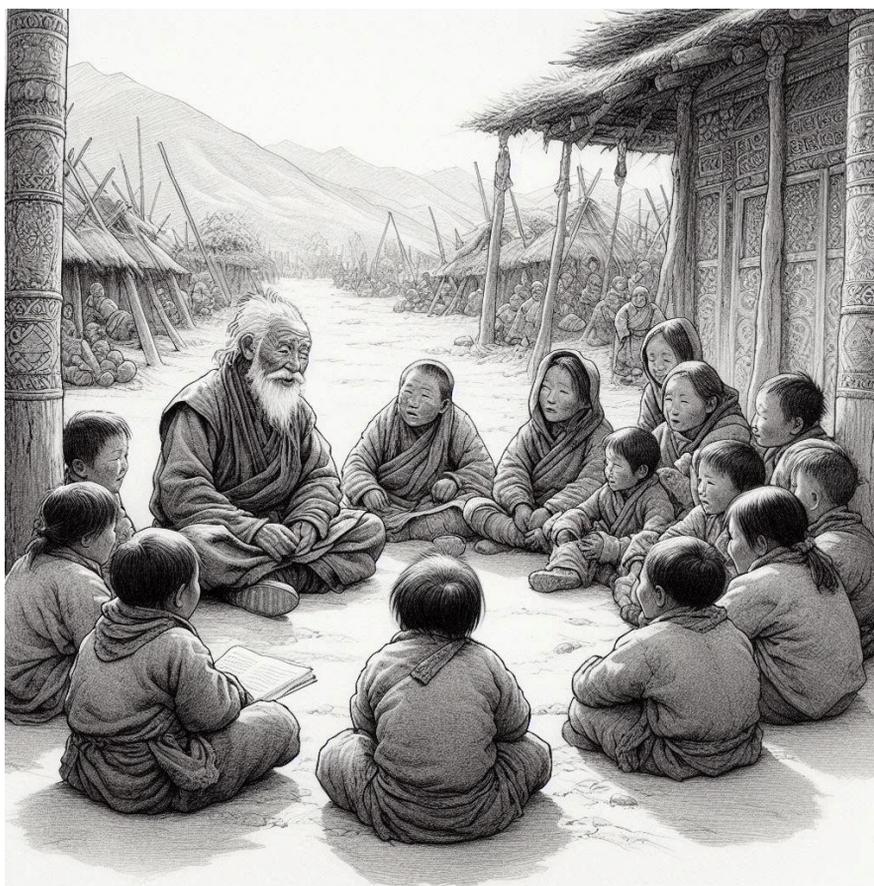
Without ancient wisdom there
are cracks in our being and we
teach children to stand alone.

Without a circle of unity people
become orphans living only in
their divided minds. It's the seed

of division that causes suffering in the human heart.

When this happens to us there is no half-way out. Each person needs to step completely out of the cycle of division into the silence of the Buddha.

Silence, peace and connection are there, fully in bloom, waiting for us. It is always beautiful and full.

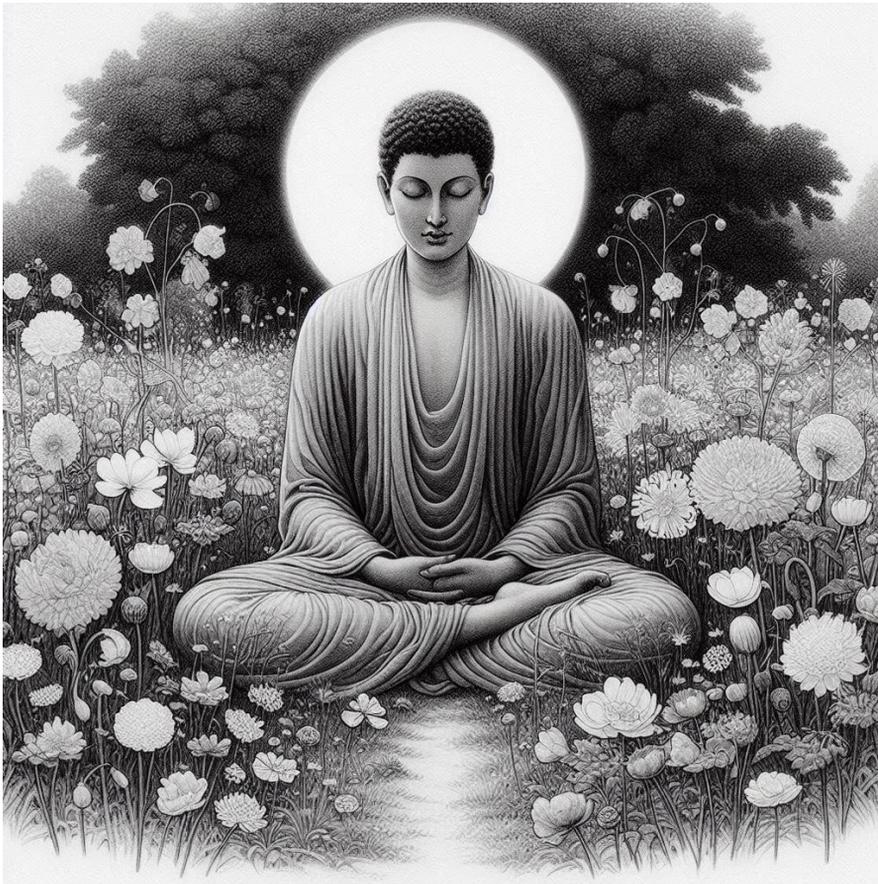


Conscious awareness is our natural state. It's how we listen. This consciousness used to be the basis of culture itself.

Our ancestors who lived in harmony with the land for almost forever... from thousands of years ago to a million years ago... lived inside this circle of

culture. They had elders and families who knew how to speak of the interaction between things. Connection went way back to forever and was known to be the natural state.

This is natural and easy for us.



Buddha didn't have this. He had no idea that enlightenment was a natural state. His awakening felt natural, but he had no idea that for hundreds of thousands of years, all of humanity had lived in this natural state.

He didn't know that this had always been the living human reality.

It felt like something new.

So, he got one little bit of the story wrong.



Buddha didn't know that when he broke with his conditioned mind, he was unraveling himself from the language of division which had caused his thinking to be stuck in loops of definition.

He had no one to tell him how ancient this reality was, or to welcome him home.

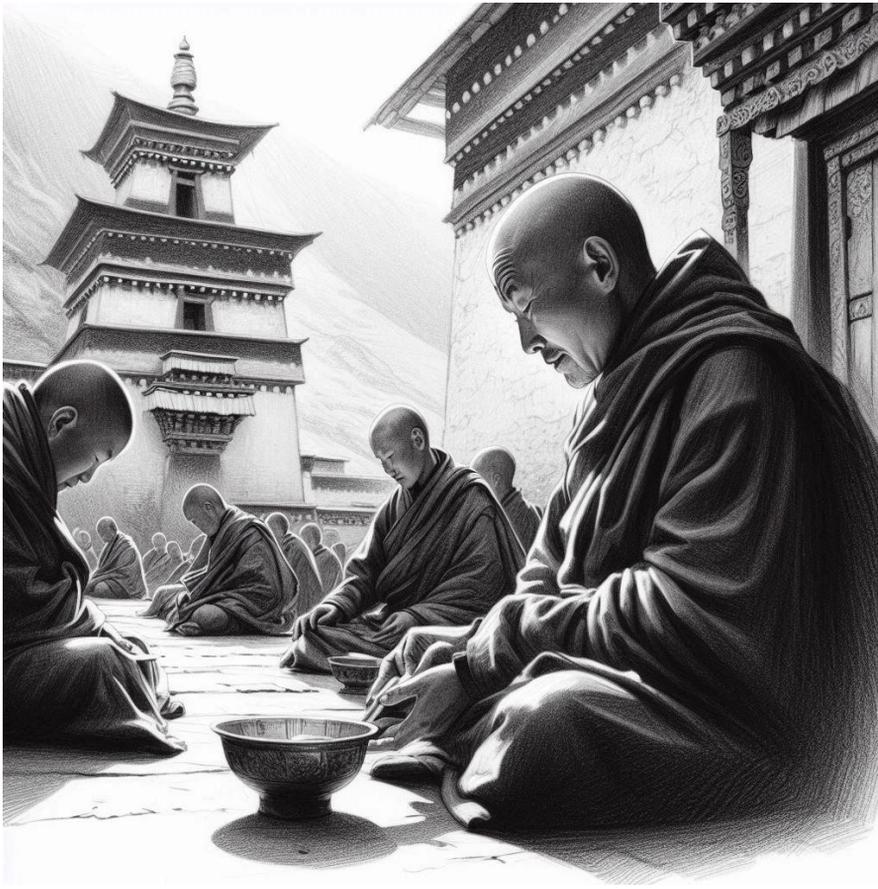
The only thing he knew was how this state felt because that was the only perspective he had.

Buddha discovered the key but not the full story.

The key is that the divided mind can drop completely because it is illusion. When truth is seen, un-truth disappears.

Native cultures have the full story but not the key to the divided mind, because they were never divided.

Buddhism started with one piece missing.



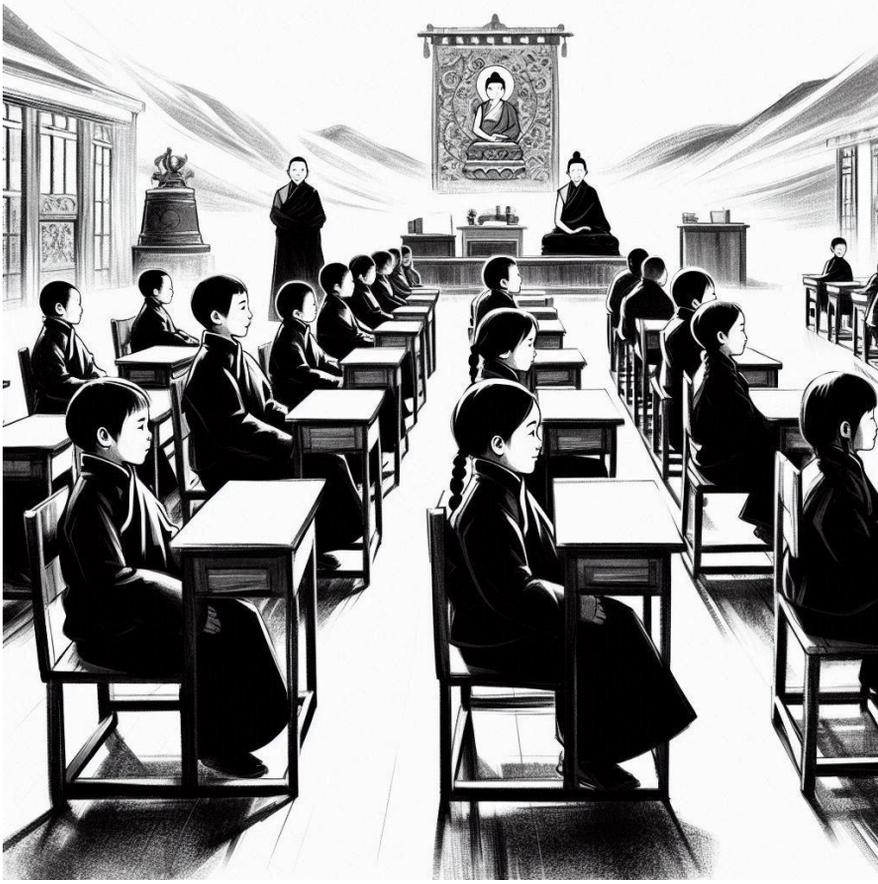
Buddhism grew within a culture of hierarchy. Consciousness was seen as something that only humans have. The enlightened state was seen as a rare individual accomplishment for the select few.

And yep. It was only for men. Women were seen as a

distraction. They forgot about the children. They assumed children were born in samsara. Illusion was seen as the natural state of mankind. Getting out of it was seen as nearly impossible.

Come to think of it... this was a pretty serious piece of the story to miss!

All the men who wanted to become enlightened isolated themselves inside monasteries so they could be free from the divided world and come to this inner space.



People lived divided in their heads. They taught their children how to feel content with separation, and nobody knew who they were except a few isolated monks.

No one remembered to talk to the trees.

They also forgot to dance.

Buddhism grew as a philosophy that set enlightenment as an accomplishment many lifetimes away rather than the experience of our natural consciousness reality.



Meanwhile... Division spread around the earth like wildfire. We were very busy creating what we called civilization everywhere. It was us versus the world.

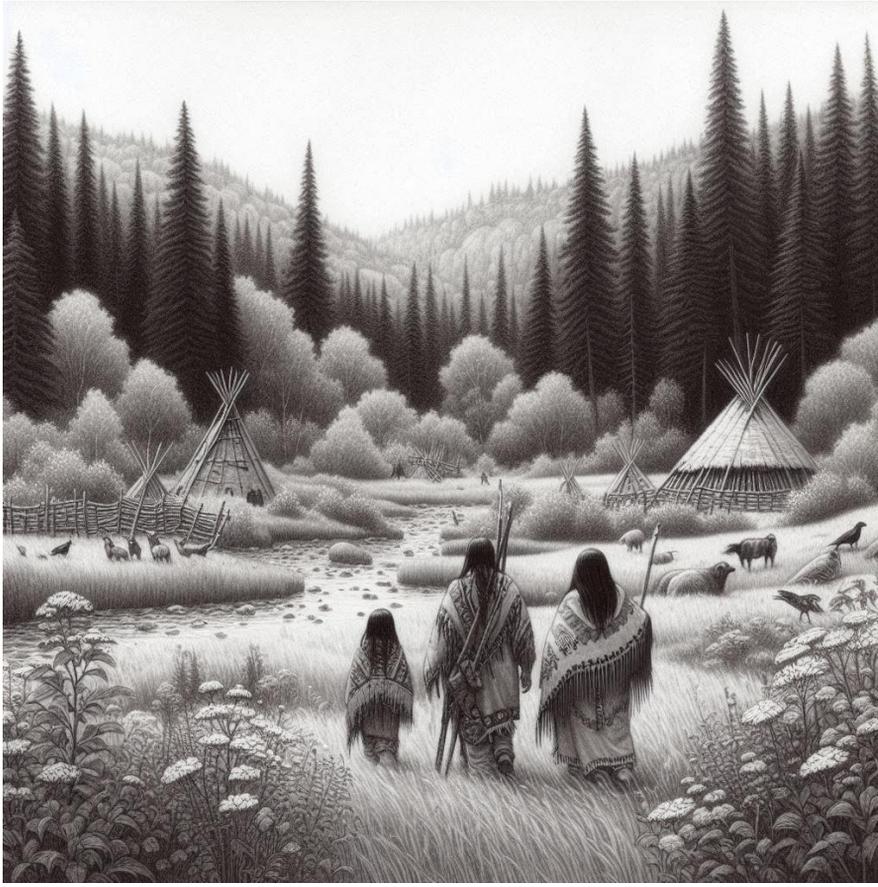
Many strategies were invented to deal with our sense of separation.

Some conquered cultures labeled their division as original sin and invented heavens and hells to dwell in. The idea that you have original sin, or the idea that you are born in illusion. Both are based on separation from reality.

It's this division that turns us destructive. This is how we have all been taught.

The conquerors spread everywhere. Each land they conquered became conquerors themselves.

This is us, whether we like it or not.



But that's not the end of the story.

Everywhere conquering people went they found human beings living within nature as fully awake, conscious beings.

The conquerors didn't have silence inside so they couldn't listen. They grabbed the land,

turned it into private property,
and enslaved the people.

The native people of every land
were shoved to the side and
stuck in poverty. The conquering
rulers did everything in their
power to wipe out the ancient
teachings.



But... the teachings still live.

We can listen to them now if we find that place of silence. Divided minds can't understand. We get confused.

We need to fall out of our division first. No halfway measure will work.

No halfway measure will work.



We were never meant to be broken. We were never meant to feel separate. The seed of our awakening lies in knowing that the silence of the Buddha is available to us every moment. It's the ancient wisdom of the ancestors of everyone.

You are reading this story and now you know.

Humanity can, once again, touch inner unity. It's how we began. The ancient story of life is the key to opening consciousness. We need this story to understand that awakened being is our birthright.

We are meant to be here. We are meant to be free.

The vast majority of human time has been as awakened beings. Our very nature is the silence of the Buddha. We don't have to wait.

This story fits us into our millions of years of evolution. It's the obvious story of humanity.

This is what makes awakening possible for you right now.

Tell yourself. Tell the spider on your wall.



The natural human heart is not lost. It was never lost. It is a deep flower of connection. There is no need to argue or define.

Silence has the answer. At any moment we can listen for that.

Just listen.

The way is easy. Enlightened masters point to the silence of unity. They show us that we don't need to pretend.

There is no need to create silence because it's always there. Even as the worried mind chatters away silence is always in the background. If you pay attention it grows.

With silence there is no division.

Halfway measures are still separation. A person is either coming from a place of unity or a place of division. We are conquered or free... it's that simple.

When you know who you are
then you also know what you are
not. You know you are not
separate. You know you are not
alone.

A unified person does not look
for unity.



Buddha shows us how we can collectively snap back into it... even if we don't have elders or a tribe.

His awakening was instant. Your awakening can be instant. Any second, even right now, we can step into this place of silence.

Don't settle for anything less than full awakening.

Our inner core is always available.

Silence is always there. We are surrounded by awakening. Step into your inner core with full confidence that everything needed is there. You'll find emptiness, and emptiness is enough for this moment in time and space. It's the way we listen. It is beautiful and full.

We are always human beings.

We are the people.

Locate yourself. See with your eyes. Hear with your ears.



At every moment wisdom is speaking directly to us.

Enlightenment simply means knowing who you are. Knowing who you are locates you in time and space.

This is “the now.”

It's not a rarified experience. It's the easy natural state of humanity.

Relax with that certainty.

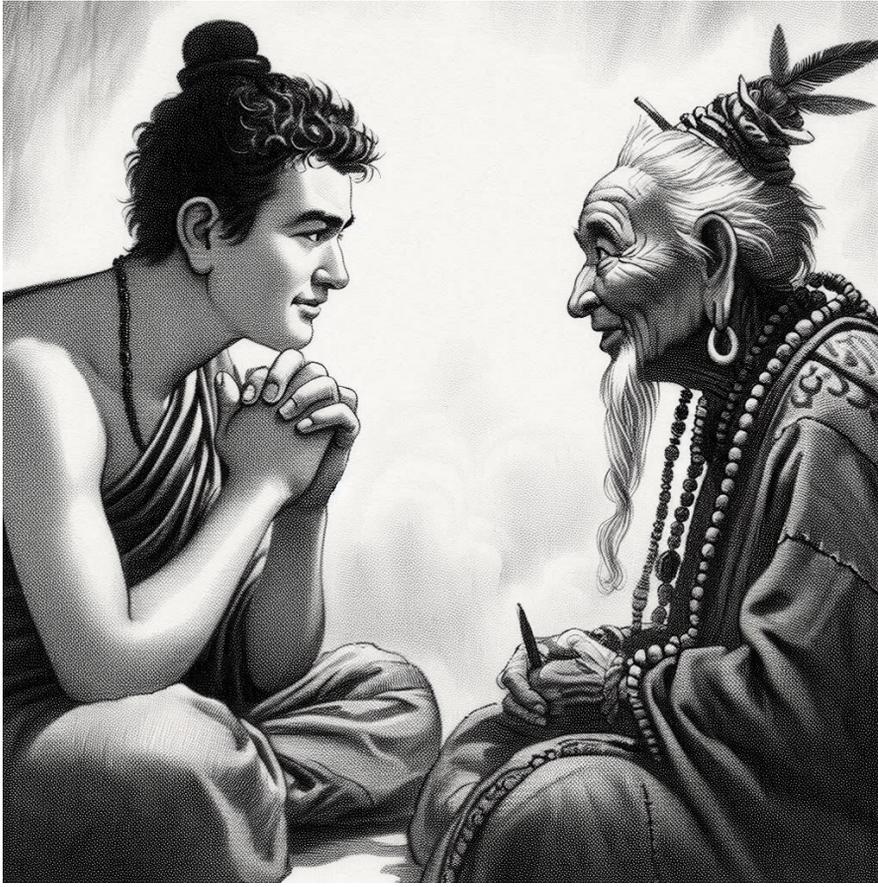
With this awakening we are no longer conquered. We are free.

We can drop the broken story that tells us we are different; this thing everyone calls civilization.

We don't need the illusion that we are separate. We don't thrive with the idea that we need to become. We can step out of that, into our true being.

Dropping the story of the conquerors puts us again into the unity of life.

Spiders are smiling.



Now we can hear and understand.

When we are located, we can listen.

Touching silence brings us to our natural self. Touch the silence one time and you are there forever because it is your natural being.

Touch the silence and we touch
the living earth. Now we have
relations.

Everything is consciousness,
including ourselves.

Now, fully awake, integrity
becomes possible.



Always tell the story that full awareness is available. It's our birthright.

We can live undivided. From this single point of knowing, truth and wisdom blooms.

Fully open we can share.

With the divided mind gone
everything is conscious unity.
We start to give back. Inner
silence is the gift.

Each person can find this.
Silence is available to each of
us, no matter who we are, no
matter where we are.

We don't need to take from
native cultures to get this.
Ceremony won't get you there.
Ceremony is what we do once
we *are* there.

We don't need an indigenous
identity to find ourselves. We
don't need blood or DNA. That
would be finding someone else.

We have everything we need to know who *we* are... to locate our being.

The teachings of the buddhas are how to come to silence.

Understanding that this is your ancient birthright makes it easy.



When we are able to tell children who they are, we will create a sustainable world. Then we will build a future that will lift the grandchildren up to become the elders for their grandchildren.

Deep time goes both ways.



Your conditioned mind is an illusion. It can drop.

Silence is pure being. It's the first step for those of us who have been broken. Touch it every day until it becomes full truth.

Buddha fell into his being by relaxing. The silence is always there.

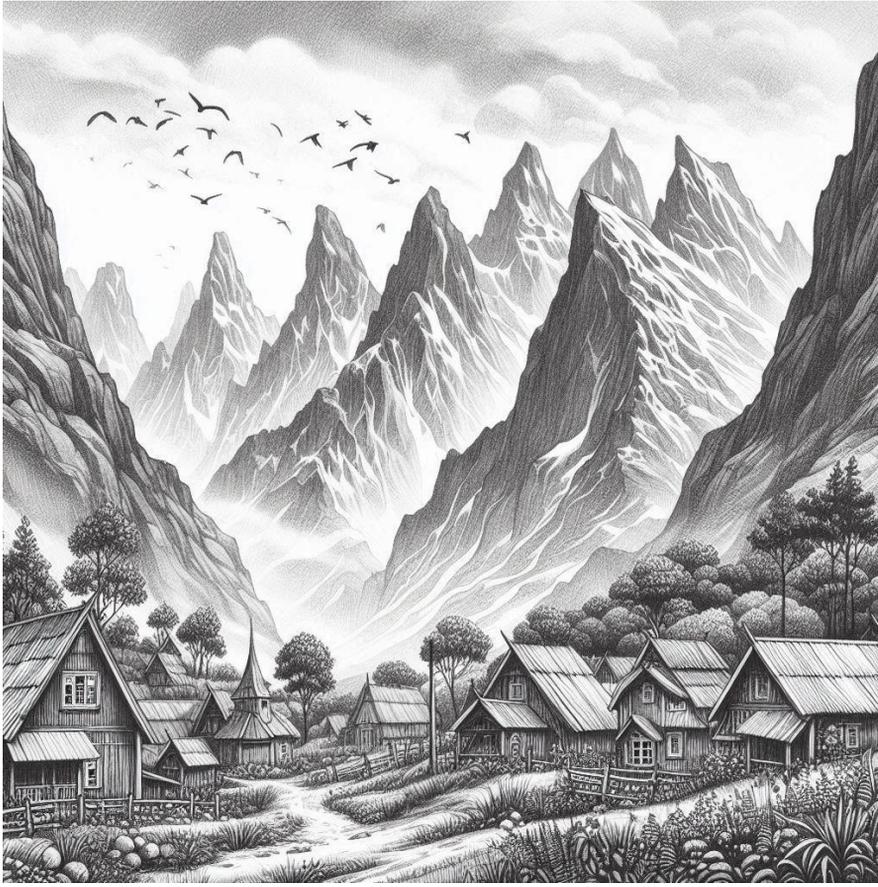
We don't create silence but let it bloom and grow. It's always there if we listen. It is the place from which we listen.

Until the pure deep silence of the buddha is encountered we are still divided.

Stepping into the silence is stepping into unity itself. Buddha proves it is possible. Native wisdom proves it is possible.

It's possible.

We can live and relate to the world as the integrated consciousness that is our nature.



Nature holds us and speaks to us.

Listen.

Listen from the silence within.

This is life itself. Let the silence of knowing break open any sense of division and we will find

a way to always create harmony
and balance.

We are the people.

Ancient wisdom is the story.

Enlightenment is the key.

Reading List

You can see my ever-expanding list of great books on my website mapremzareen.com. But get started with these books, all available on Amazon.

I recommend reading with the Kindle app on your phone to save paper, and because it's easy and always available. Read in this order and you'll gently move your consciousness out of the upside-down world.

The Dawn of Everything: A New History of Humanity

By David Graeber and David Wengrow.

These two Davids have turned our idea of history upside down. This new way of looking at humanity puts us in the real timeframe of life and shows how we can again join nature.

Braiding Sweetgrass

By Robin Wall Kimmerer

A fabulous description of living in the nondual state as told to us by plants.

Sand Talk:

By Tyson Yunkaporta

Aboriginal wisdom is non-dual. This book takes us into a glimpse of the depth of aboriginal knowledge.

Warrior Spirit

By Diana Good Sky

This is a story of one man's journey back to his natural self as told by his daughter.

Voices in the Stones: Life Lessons from the Native Way

By Kent Nerburn

A story of a white teacher who has the silence to learn from the native community where he worked. A fabulous journey into awakening from this other side.

Wisdom Keeper

By Ilarion Mercurieff

One man's journey to honor the untold history of the Unangan People.

Restoring the Kinship Worldview:

by Darcia Narváez, Wahinkpe Topa

Indigenous Voices Introduce 28 Precepts for Rebalancing Life on Planet Earth

This book is an in-depth conversation on how we change our thinking and being and change the world.

American Indian Liberation

by Native American philosopher Tink Tinker

A deep dive into how our language frames our perspective.

Video List

This list changes regularly so it's best to see on my website:

<https://mapremzareen.com/video/>

You'll get direct links to each video which makes navigating easy.

Books by Connie Zareen

See all at:

<https://www.amazon.com/stores/author/B0CQTN Y6DJ>

- Why Sufis Whirl: When Mysticism is no Longer a Mystery
- Retelling Buddha
- A Daily Book of Awakening
- Die Before You Die: Sufism for the Modern Mystic
- Nonduality and Native Wisdom
- Cracking Nonduality: You are not two
- Zen Stories & Mulla Nasrudine
- Walking Without Footprints: Going Native in America
- You Are Wonderful: illustrated children's book

Dance with us!

See our events at MysticDance.com