

# One Bright Pearl

by Dogen Zenji

The great master Gensha had the religious name Shibi; his lay surname was Sha. In lay life he enjoyed fishing and used to ply his boat on the Nandai river, following the ways of the fishermen. No doubt he did not expect the Golden Fish that comes of itself without fishing for it.

At the beginning of the Kantsu era of the Tang dynasty (860-873), he suddenly wished to leave the world; he left his boat and went into the mountains. He was then thirty years old. Having awakened to the uncertainty of the transient world, he realized the Buddha Way's eminence and nobility. He finally climbed Snowy Peak Mountain, called on the great Zen master Seppo, and worked on the Way day and night.

One day, to visit masters widely in other areas and perfect his practice, he took up his traveling pouch and was leaving the mountain when he struck his toe on a rock. As it bled in intense pain, he had an abrupt self-realization and said, "This body is non-existent. Where does pain come from?" He immediately returned to Seppo.

Seppo asked him, "What is this ascetic Shibi?" Gensha answered, "I will never deceive others." This answer greatly pleased Seppo, who then said, "There is no one who does not harbor those words. Yet no one could utter them." He continued, "Ascetic Shibi, why aren't you traveling to study?" Gensha replied, "Bodhidharma did not come to China, the second patriarch did not go to India." This gained Seppo's special praise.

Because he had up to then been a fisherman, he had never seen the various scriptures and treatises even in his dreams, yet nevertheless because the depth of his aspirations was paramount, a determined spirit beyond others had appeared. Seppo thought him outstanding in the community and praised him as being a standard among his disciples.

He dressed in plain muslin, and because he never replaced his one robe, it was all patched. He used paper for his underclothing, and also wore mugwort plants. He didn't call on any teacher except Seppo. Nevertheless, he had attained the ability to inherit his teacher's way.

After he had finally attained the Way, he would say, in order to instruct people, "All the universe is one bright pearl."

Once, a monk asked him, "I hear you have said all the universe is one bright pearl. How can I gain understanding of this?" The master said, "All the universe is one bright pearl. What need is there to understand it?"

The next day the master himself asked the monk, "All the universe is one bright pearl. What is your understanding of it?" The monk answered, "All the universe is one bright pearl. What need is there to understand it?" "I know now," replied Gensha, "that you are living in a ghost cave in the mountain of darkness."

The saying of *All the universe is one bright pearl* first appeared with Gensha. Its essence is that the entire universe is not vast, not small, not square or round, not balanced and correct, not lively and active, not distinct or standing out. Moreover, because it is not birth and death, coming and going, it is birth and death, coming and going. This being so, it is the past gone from here; it is the present come from here. As for its ultimate negotiation, who can ascertain it as being fragmentary or immovable?

*All the universe* is the unceasing process of pursuing things and making them the self, pursuing the self and making it things. The utterance "separated" in response to "when sensations arise one is separated from wisdom," is a turning of the head or a changing of the face, a laying open of things and a seizing of opportunity. Because of the pursuing of things and making them the self the universe in its entirety is unceasing. And because its own nature is prior to such activity, it is beyond grasp even through the essence of the activity.

*One bright pearl* is able to express Reality without naming it, and we can recognize this pearl as its name. One bright pearl communicates directly through all time; being through all the past unexhausted, it arrives through all the present. While there is a body now, a mind now, they are one bright pearl. That stalk of grass, this tree, is not a stalk of grass, is not a tree; the mountains and rivers of this world are not the mountains and rivers of this world. They are one bright pearl.

*How can I gain an understanding of that?* This utterance makes it seem as if this monk's karmic consciousness is at play, yet it is the great function manifesting which is the great law. Proceeding, you can raise up steep foot-

high water, foot-high waves; that is to say, a ten-foot pearl, a ten-foot brightness.

What Gensha says—a case of uttering an utterance—is, *All the universe is one bright pearl. What need is there to understand it?* This is an expression whereby buddha succeeds buddha, patriarch succeeds patriarch, Gensha succeeds Gensha. Were they to try to escape this succession, they would not be without places to escape. Yet even if they did clearly escape it for a while, the very fact of their utterance is the unmitigated occasion of one bright pearl's manifestation.

*The next day the master himself asked the monk, "All the universe is one bright pearl. What is your understanding of it?"* This expresses "Yesterday I spoke the established Dharma. Today I breathe using two. Today, nodding and laughing, I speak the unestablished Dharma, thrusting aside yesterday."

*The monk said, "All the universe is one bright pearl. What need is there to understand it?"* We could say this is mounting the robber's horse to chase the robber. In the case of the old buddha [Gensha] preaching for his disciple's sake, it is a matter of practicing within a different species. Just turn your light inward and reflect, how many "What need is there to understand it?" can there be? I might, provisionally, say seven pieces of cheese or five beancakes, but this is teaching and practice south of *Sho* and north of *Tan*.

*Gensha said, "I know now that you are living in a ghost cave in the mountain of darkness."* You must be aware that sun face and moon face have not changed since remote antiquity. Since the sun's face appears together with the sun's face, and the moon's face appears together with the moon's face, if I say in the sixth month [my name is] "Right Now" that does not mean my name is "hot."

Therefore, the reality and beginninglessness of one bright pearl are beyond grasp. *All the universe is one bright pearl*—we do not speak of two pearls or three pearls. The whole body is one right Dharma eye. The whole body is the Real body. The whole body is One Expression. The whole body is light. The whole body is Mind in its totality. When it is the whole body, the whole body knows no hindrance. Everywhere is perfectly round, turning over, rolling smoothly. Since one bright pearl's quality is thus manifested, there is, here and now, Kannon and Miroku seeing forms and hearing sounds; there are old buddhas and new buddhas bodily appearing and expounding the Dharma.

Just when it is thus, it is suspended in emptiness, it is attached within the lining of your clothes, it is found under the chin, and in the topknot—in each case it is the universe-encompassing bright pearl. It is its character to be attached within clothing. Do not say you'll have it on the outside. It is its character to be found within topknots and under chins. Do not attempt to sport it on the surface. When you are intoxicated, there is a close friend who will give one bright pearl to you, and you, without fail, must impart one bright pearl to a close friend. When one bright pearl is attached to someone, he is, without exception, intoxicated. Being thus, it is one bright pearl—all the universe.

Thus, though its face seems to keep on changing, turning, and stopping, it is one bright pearl. Knowing that one bright pearl is indeed like this—that is one bright pearl. The colorations and configurations of one bright pearl are encountered in this manner. When it is thus, there is no reason to worry that you are not one bright pearl because in confusion you think, "I am not the pearl." Worrying and doubting, grasping and rejection, action and inaction are all but temporary views of small measure. Moreover, this is only one bright pearl appearing as small-scale notions.

Should we not cherish such infinite colorations and brilliance? Each of the many facets of its radiant variegations are the quality of the entire universe—who can take them away? There is no one casting a tile in the marketplace. Do not trouble yourself about not falling into or not being blind to the cause and effect of mundane existence. Being essentially unobscured from first to last, one bright pearl is the original face and the enlightened eye.

Yet both you and I, not knowing what one bright pearl is and what it is not, have had a great many thoughts and non-thoughts about it which have come to form positive notions. Yet, when thanks to Gensha's words it is made known and clarified that even our bodies and minds are one bright pearl, then the mind is not I. Should anyone be troubled with accepting generation and extinction as being or not being one bright pearl? Even if there is worry and confusion, it is not apart from one bright pearl. It is not a deed or thought produced by something that is not one bright pearl. Therefore, both coming and going in the ghost cave in the mountain of darkness are themselves nothing but one bright pearl.