



弄花香滿衣

Hana o rō sureba, ko e ni mitsu



Toy with flowers
and their fragrance scents your garments

These lines are a continuation of the couplet:

Scoop up water
and the moon is in your hands.

Toy with flowers
and their fragrance scents your garments.

These couplets come from the records of Master Kido. It is said that when the emperor Saga (786-842) saw a wild chrysanthemum in his garden and offered it to the Buddha, this was the origin of flower arranging (*ikebana*). Another famous emperor who lived from 513 to 553 was reigning when for the first time a Buddha statue and sutra books were brought from Korea to Japan. We can trace Buddhism in Japan back this far. When the emperor saw what the king of Korea had sent, he was so impressed that he asked the royal messengers if he should make an offering to the statue and how to display it. This was the first Buddha statue to come to Japan.

The emperor was so astonished at the old peaceful statue because it had been made by an excellent craftsman who created it with burning deep faith, working with reverence and great respect. When people stood in front of it, they could feel this reverence and respect. Those who create great music and works of art guide people naturally to the religious world with their creations. What they create is always peaceful and always fresh. This is a peace that is beyond all conflict and friction, a peace that is not found in the day-to-day world of people. It is a splendid, clear, and pure state, and people have to gassho to it; they cannot help but honor it with the deepest respect.



What is it that is being expressed in this type of creation? That splendid wonderful thing which cannot be found in the usual world around us, what is that? Is there another world from which it comes? No. People cannot make things that are not in their mind. What is being expressed is from humans' highest state of mind. It is the depth of the profoundest truth that gives birth to true peace. Through these consummate creations people are able to know this state of mind and its world of prayer. It is this high level of human character that is called *Buddha*.

In the words of Zen it is said, "In all the boundless realms of space not a single hair can be inserted. From the ancient past through to the limitless future we are never separated from this very moment." This is where that which is looking and that which is being looked at come together as one; this is the true joy of the Dharma. This state of mind knows no obstructions.

Of course all beings are unified in this Great Mind, as is all time, the past, future, and present, as well as all of the Buddhas and Patriarchs. We are also one with the great joy of the abundant Dharma, this gratitude and joy and that which we today feel like offering; this is the samadhi of delightful play beyond time and space. There is no joy beyond this endless Dharma joy, and this realm is what forgives everything.

When we offer the Buddha a flower, light, and tea, this is the mandala of no self and other, an offering to that splendid dignified One Self of no separation, that to which we prostrate spontaneously, that oneness of samadhi. That flower we offer to the Buddha is always showing its back to the Buddha while showing to us its beautiful, living face. In this way all beings are one living body. This is the natural expression of our true Mind.

The sound of the Gion Shoja bells
Echoes the impermanence of all things;
The color of the Sala flowers
Reveals the truth that the prosperous must decline.

So it is written in the *Heiki monogatari*; after living for only one or two days, this sala flower dies, showing the transience of life. In this flower we find eternal joy and the life of the Buddha as well. This flower, whose fragrance scents our garments when we toy with it, is also this abundant Mind.