

Excerpt from *The Buddha Speaks*

One day a bright and intelligent student of the Buddha asked if he could fetch his younger brother to join the order. Delighted, the Buddha agreed. But the younger brother, although kind and gentle, turned out to be slow and dull witted. He could understand nothing of his studies and asked to go home so that he wouldn't waste the Buddha's time or let down his brother. "There's no need for you to give up," said the Buddha. "You should not abandon your search for liberation just because you seem to yourself to be thick witted. You can drop all the philosophy you've been given and repeat a mantra instead - one that I will now give you."

He gave the young monk a mantra and sent him away affectionately. But soon the monk was back, this time even more humiliated. "My beloved Buddha, I can't remember the mantra you gave me and so I can no longer practice." The Buddha kindly repeated it for him. But twice more he came back, having forgotten it each time. So the Buddha gave him a simplified form. But when this too slipped completely out of his mind, he hardly dared visit the Buddha again. "There's an even shorter version," the Buddha told him, with a smile, "It's just one syllable. See if you can remember that." But he could not.

In his hut, he broke down and wept. His brother found him and was furious, feeling that his own reputation was now sullied. He told the young monk to go home, and so the boy left the hut and sadly made his way along the path. As he neared a grove of trees, he met the Buddha coming from it. The Buddha smiled and took his hand. Together they went to a temple where two old monks were sweeping the floor. The

Buddha said to them: "This young monk will live here with you from now on.

Continue your sweeping, and as your brooms move back and forth, listen and be aware of the sound of the broom as you sweep. "Don't stop until I come back." The young monk sat down and listened to the movement of the brooms, to and fro over the floor. He heard the whispered rhythm of the mantra as it was repeated over and over again. This went on for many weeks, and before the Buddha came back, the young monk had found full enlightenment and so had the two old monks (47).

Reference:

The Life of Gotama Buddha

Work Cited:

"The Buddha Speaks"

A new translation by Anne Bancroft

Author of 'Zen: Direct Pointing to Reality.'

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Chapter on Clarity

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