

# Buddha's Birthday Poem 2014

Zen Master Bon Hae



Photo: Barry Briggs JDPSN

The baby walks! 7 steps, no waiting,  
each step a flower/field of flowers/universe/multiverse.

Pavilions springing up and flowers  
always flowers springing up raining down  
(who can keep up with this)

Within each pavilion a Buddha. Within each flower a Buddha.  
Within each moment a Buddha. In all the vast Mahayana sky: Buddha!  
Buddha Buddha Buddha Buddha  $\times 27 \times 1,000$  and I'll raise you several powers . . .

Little chubby-faced gold-diapered miracle baby 7 steps—  
yes, you got it! You always had it! You never lost it!  
(wait, that's us)

(wait, what is this "got"/who is there to get anything  
& what is there to get)

Oh, and dead mother.  
Please do not forget dead mother.

Do not forget dead mother/elephant dreams/  
bloodless exit = entry from a bloodless hole in a bloodless side.  
And always a convenient tree appearing—what a trope!

"This very body is"  
what? whose? where is it going? & for whom?

Complete complete always complete & never ending.

[25

## Notes

1. The baby walks: When Siddhartha Gautama Shakyamuni was born, he immediately took, according to some sources, seven steps north and spoke (see note 6 below); other sources say he took seven steps in each of the four cardinal directions and spoke.

2. Each step a flower . . . Pavilions . . . : In each of his footsteps a lotus flower bloomed. In the more elaborate Mahayana sutras, on auspicious occasions flowers and jewels cover everything and rain down from the heavens, upon innumerable pavilions in innumerable worlds, with Buddhas in every one.

3. Buddha Buddha Buddha Buddha  $\times 27 \times 1000$  . . . :  $4 \times 27$  is 108, and then there is the fondness for ridiculously large numbers found in many Sanskrit Buddhist texts. (Ancient Indians loved number theory).

4. Gold-diapered: the standard baby Buddha statue.

5. You got it . . . : One version of what Buddha said when he awakened—all beings have this Buddha nature but they don't know or remember or believe it.

6. Wait that's us: One version of what baby Buddha said upon being born and taking his seven steps: "In the heavens above and the earth beneath only I am holy." (Which makes sense if all beings are Buddha. Also, see note 11 below.)

7. Dead mother: His mother Queen Maya died seven days after giving birth.

8. Elephant dreams: She dreamed that a white elephant's tusks pierced her side to impregnate her.

9. Bloodless exit . . . : Baby Buddha sprung from his mother's side—no vaginal delivery or even Caesarian section for him.

10. Convenient tree . . . trope: About to give birth while on the road to deliver in her parents's house, Queen Maya grabbed onto a sala tree. Her son attained enlightenment under the bodhi tree. (You can think of this as the helpful tree trope.)

11. "This very body is": Hakuin's "Song of Zazen" ends: "This very body is the body of the Buddha."

12. Complete: Another version of what Buddha said when he awakened—how wonderful, each thing in itself is already complete.