

## Drawing

# Gautama Buddha: Illustration of a Patient's Vision

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## Abstract

### Description

As a psychiatrist in training, I often have the privilege to connect with the unique thoughts and visions patients may be experiencing. The descriptions shared by one patient during my early psychiatry inpatient rotations stuck with me and eventually inspired me to pursue a residency in the field. While interviewing, she expressed a deep spirituality and often finding solace in the mindfulness teachings of Gautama Buddha whenever she was distressed. She would strengthen this coping mechanism by contemplating him sitting and meditating deeply, within a naturalistic setting, however struggled in describing exactly what she was imagining. I further gathered this was a symbol of peace and stillness, an antithesis to the restless worrying thoughts and ruminations that colored her depression and anxiety. As someone who always found nature and drawing as restorative outlets for myself, I felt compelled to put that vision to paper.

The vivid multi-color palette along with flowers and vines evoked a sense of life and levity, representing how her imagination painted a brighter outlook upon her overwhelming darker, grayer thoughts. Eastern philosophies often challenge our ideas of separateness between ourselves and the environment, therefore blurring the lines on where the outlines of the Buddha ended and where the natural elements began seemed appropriate. The nature imagery feeds into this, a butterfly and feathers for the fragile beauty of her mental state. In Eastern mythos, foxes were often depicted as creatures of transformation, guiding humans through duress with their wit and cleverness; which for me represented the mind as her companion, sublimating negative thoughts with creativity and imagination in order to guide her along her journey. This exercise reaffirmed my interest in psychiatry, for such interactions offered a window into the unique proclivities of the mind to protect itself in any way possible, even as an artist painting on an unseen canvas.

### Keywords

psychiatry; buddhism; mindfulness; art; meditation; adaptation, psychological; depression; anxiety

### Conflicts of Interest

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