

The Inner Pilgrimage

On the Buddha's path



Pali Quotes and Translations

S.N.Goenka | Shravasti Dhammika | Bhikku Bodhi

Concept and Photography

Viren Desai



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Pali quotes and translations

Sayagyi U Ba Khin

S.N.Goenka

Shravasti Dhammika

Bhikhu Bodhi

Vipassana Research Institute

Nekhor Team/ Samye Translations

Thanissaro Bhikkhu

Sister Vajira & Francis Story

John D. Ireland

Piyadassi Thera

Sithani Jayatissa

Concept and photography

Viren Desai

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Email: virendesaiphotography@gmail.com

Website: www.virendesaiphotography.com

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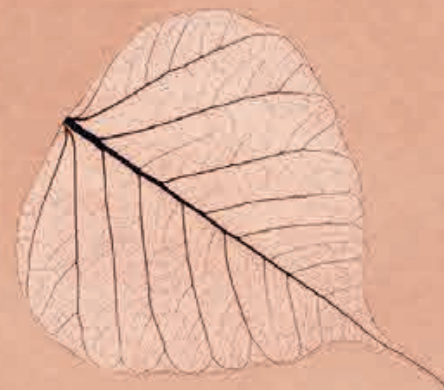
I dedicate this book to my beloved wife and Dhamma partner Hina.

Thank you for being a part of my life.

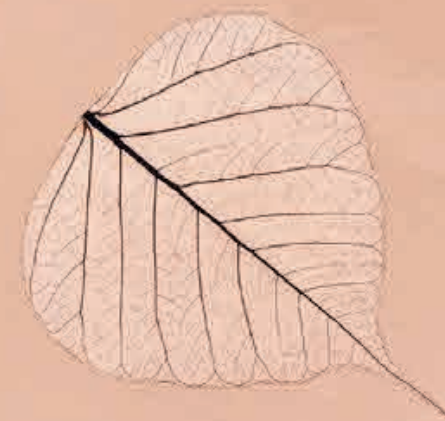
*May You be Happy
May You be Peaceful
May You be Liberated*



*Namo tassa, Bhagavato, Arahato,
Sammā-sambuddhassa*



*Homage to him,
the Blessed One, the Worthy One,
the fully self-Enlightened Buddha*





Ven Ledi
1890-1900
1846-1903



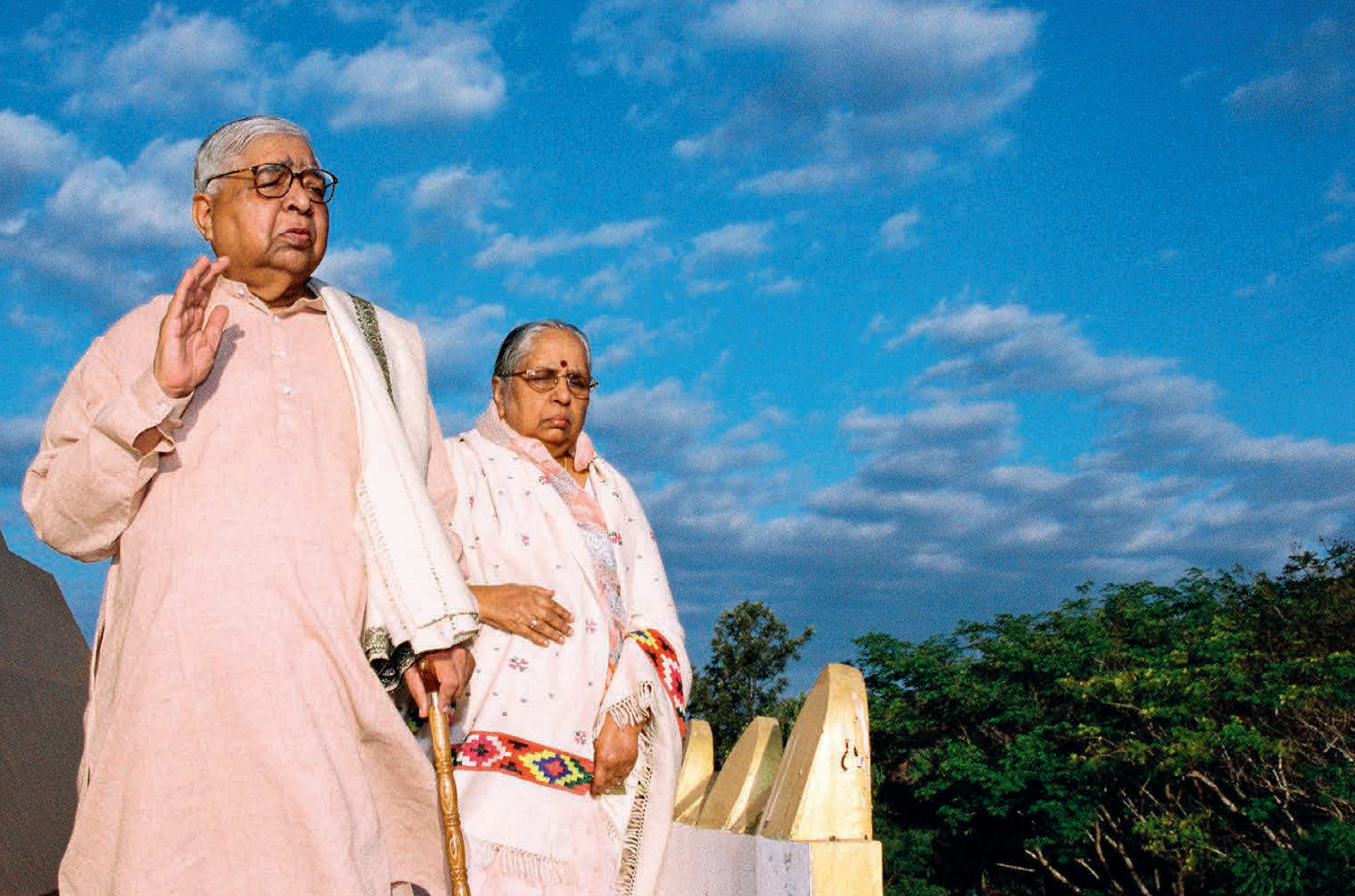
Ven Saya-Thetgyi
1873-1945



Sayagyi U Ba Khin
1899-1971



S N Goenka
1924-2013



Foreword by Bhanteji S. Dhammika

Pilgrimage, the journeying to a place of religious significance, has a long tradition in Buddhism, going back to the Buddha himself. In the days before his passing the Buddha encouraged his disciples to try to visit at least once in their lives, the places where the pivotal events in his life took place. These places are Lumbini where he was born, Bodh Gaya where he awakened to the truth, Sarnath where he proclaimed his Dharma to the world for the first time, and Kusinara where he would end his life's mission, passing into the eternal peace of Nirvana. He then added the promise that should anyone die while undertaking such a journey with a devote heart, would have a favourable rebirth. The first record we have of someone going on pilgrimage concerns King Asoka who in 256 BC went to Bodh Gaya and eight years later to Lumbini. Inscriptions found in all these sacred places and memoirs written by pilgrims of their return home, show that in the centuries after Asoka, devotees came to India from Sri Lanka, Myanmar and Tibet, from central Asia, China and Korea. Today they come from all over the world, drawn to and enriched by the palpable spiritual energy in all the sacred places. After Buddhism died out in India the sacred places were abandoned, then fell into ruin and were forgotten. But starting in the second half of the 19th century they started to be rediscovered, excavated and restored and now people are visiting them again in greater numbers than ever before.

One of these visitors is the well-known photographer Viren Desai whose affinity with Buddhism has been awakened by his practice of the meditation taught by Venerable S. N Goenka, which together have prompted him to make a second trip to Bodhgaya, made sacred by the Buddha's presence. Subsequently, he also went to Sri Lanka where Buddhism has had a profound influence on every aspect of that country's culture. Combining his mastery of photography, his love of ancient Buddhist scriptures and the words of his Guru, Venerable S.N.Goenka, with his considerable contemplative experience, Viren has compiled all the photos he took during his journeys into the book you now hold in your hands.

As you turn each page of this beautiful book you will see images to please the eye and uplift the heart – the golden spires of temples and stupas, serene monks, ancient ruins, tranquil gardens, and much more. So as to give context to some of the photos, Viren has included extracts from the Buddhist scriptures relevant to each place as well as some of the sermons the Buddha taught in them. I hope you enjoy this visual pilgrimage as much as I have.

Bhanteji S. Dhammika
Queensland, Australia

Preface

My journey on the “Path”, started with my first 10 day Vipassana course in 1997. I recall the extremely difficult time I had in dealing with first the physical pain/discomfort of sitting, and later the mental garbage that the mind began throwing at me, in an attempt to stop me from working on purifying my mind.

Luckily I perserved and have since stuck to walking on the path as described by Pujya Guruji, Shri S.N.Goenka.

No words can express the deep gratitude I feel towards Pujya Guruji and Mataji for restarting the the wheel of Vipassana in India.

Since my college days I was listening and reading to J.Krishnamurthy, Tao Te Chin, Alan Watts, Osho amongst others. But none could provide me with a practical tool to work on purifying my mind. Sure they helped in quieting the surface level of my mind but at a deeper level there was no real change. I still was living life like a YOYO. Happy when things were fine and down in the dumps when things were not going right, or when someone said or did things to me which I felt were unfair or just not right. Thoughts used to run like a train without brakes or even a driver.

Slowly over the many courses taken, the daily sittings and advice and conversations with many senior teachers, have clarified many things about the practise itself and more importantly the ability to watch ones “reactions” to situations, whether desirable or undesirable. I have taken kindergarden steps and have a long way to go on this wondrous path.

One item on my bucket list was to undertake the Pariyatti Pilgrimage of all the important places from the Buddha’s life in India and Nepal. From his birth place- Lumbini, to Bodhgaya- the seat of his enlightenment, to Sarnath- where he gave his first discourse after enlightenment, to Kushinagar- where he passed away into Mahaparinibbana. And off course other important places from the Buddha’s life like Nalanda, Rajgir, Vaishali & Shravasti.

In October of 2022, myself and my wife Hina did go on this pilgrimage- one of the first tourists to visit these important sites post Covid. Our tour guide Jorn Mattern said “ you are the lucky group, I have never seen these places as quiet and empty like this time”

Post Covid, many of the international faithfuls and Buddhists had still not started their tours, and yes we were the lucky group. My fellow pilgrims were

from Australia, Vietnam, Singapore, Canada, and we had a wonderful meditative tour together.

This book is about my experience on this Pilgrimage. As I took Diploma classes in Pali, and on the Suttas of the Buddha (Patipatti), I decided to merge my images from this pilgrimage with the actual Suttas which the Buddha gave in these various places. (as per the texts available)

This can give an observer not only a feel visually for these places where the Buddha shared his wisdom and the Eightfold Noble Path to monks and laypeople, to Kings and mendicants, to brahmins and soldiers, to prostitutes and singers, but will also be able to read the actual Suttas, which have been so eruditly translated by various monks like Venerable Shravasti Dhammika, Bhikku Bodhi, VRI amongst others.

I have taken the translations directly verbatim from sources like, “Footsteps in the Dust”, “Gemstones of the Good Dhamma” (both by Venerable S.Dhammika), Suttanipata by Bhiku Bodhi, accesstoinight in some cases, and VRI (Vipassana Research Institute). Some of the information has also been sourced from Wikipedia and other sources on the net. I have detailed the credit lines and sources I have referred for the text as diligently as I could, but in case I have missed out, kindly forgive me.

I hope this inspires a few to start walking on the path and those who are already Vipassana meditators to undertake this Pilgrimage (on their own or in a group).

For me personally, my Dhamma partner and wife, Hina’s passing away this August 2025 has been a stark reminder of life’s impermanence(Anicca), urging me to cultivate equanimity amidst the constant waves of sensory experiences and to gently release my attachments to loved ones, wealth and possessions.

I express my deepest gratitude to all the Doners who make possible to purchase the land for the Vipassana Centres, the facilities within the centres, all the Teachers, Assistant teachers and Acharyas who selflessly serve on these courses, to all the Dhamma Sevaks and Sevikas, who tirelessly serve on these courses and help the teachers in running the courses smoothly.

May all of you be Happy,
May all of you be Healthy,
May all of you be Peaceful,
May all of you be Liberated, Liberated, Liberated!!!



Manopubbaṅgamā dhammā;
manoseṭṭhā manomayā.
Manasā ce pasannena
bhāsati vā karoti vā,
tato naṃ sukhamanveti
chāyāva anapāyinī.

Mind precedes all things;
mind is their chief, mind is their maker.
If one speaks or does a deed
with a mind that is pure within,
happiness then follows along
like a never departing shadow. ^{*1}

Hitānukampī sambuddho
yadaññaṃ manusāsati,
anurodhavirodhehi
vip̐pamutto tathāgato.

When the Buddha teaches others he
does so out of compassion, because the
Tathagata is wholly freed from both
favour and aversion. ^{*2}

^{*1} Dhammapada 1.2 Gemstones of the Good Dhamma, compiled and translated by Ven. S. Dhammika

^{*2} Saṃyutta Nikāya 1.150, Gemstones of the Good Dhamma, compiled and translated by Ven. S. Dhammika

Taṃ nadihi vijānātha:
sobbhesu padaresu ca,
saṇantā yanti kusobbhā,
tuṇhīyanti mahodadhī.

Learn this from the waters:
in mountain clefts and chasms,
loud gush the streamlets,
but great rivers flow silently.*¹

Sambādhe vāpi vindanti,
dhammaṃ nibbānapattiyā
ye satīṃ paccalatthaṃsu
sammā te susamāhitā.

Even when obstacles crowd in, the
path to Nibbana can be won by those
who establish mindfulness and
bring to perfection equipoise.*²

Dānañca, peyyavajjañca,
atthacariyā ca yā idha,
samānattatā ca dhammesu,
tattha tattha yathārahaṃ;
ete kho saṅgahā loke
rathassāṇīva yāyato.

Generosity, kind words,
doing a good turn for others,
and treating all people alike:
these bonds of sympathy are to the world
what the linchpin is to the chariot wheel.*¹

Sududdasaṃ sunipuṇaṃ,
yatthakāmanipātiṇaṃ;
cittaṃ rakkhetha medhāvī,
cittaṃ guttaṃ sukhāvahaṃ.

Difficult to detect and very subtle,
the mind seizes whatever it wants;
so let a wise one guard one's mind,
for a guarded mind brings happiness.

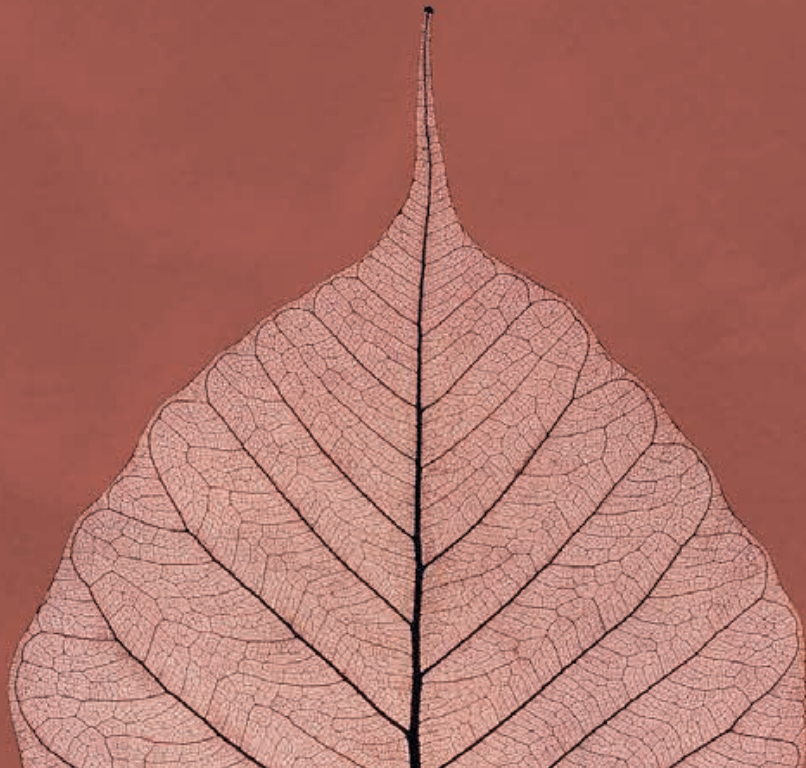
*1 Sutta Nipāta 3.725 Gemstones of the Good Dhamma, compiled and translated by Ven. S. Dhammika
*2 Saṃyutta Nikāya 1.88 Gemstones of the Good Dhamma, compiled and translated by Ven. S. Dhammika

*1 Jātaka 20 Gemstones of the Good Dhamma, compiled and translated by Ven. S. Dhammika
*2 Dhammapada 3.36 Gemstones of the Good Dhamma, compiled and translated by Ven. S. Dhammika



Lumbini

The Birthplace of The Buddha



My lineage is Ādicca, I am Sakyan by birth,
and it is from this family I have gone forth.

Sutta Nipāta 423

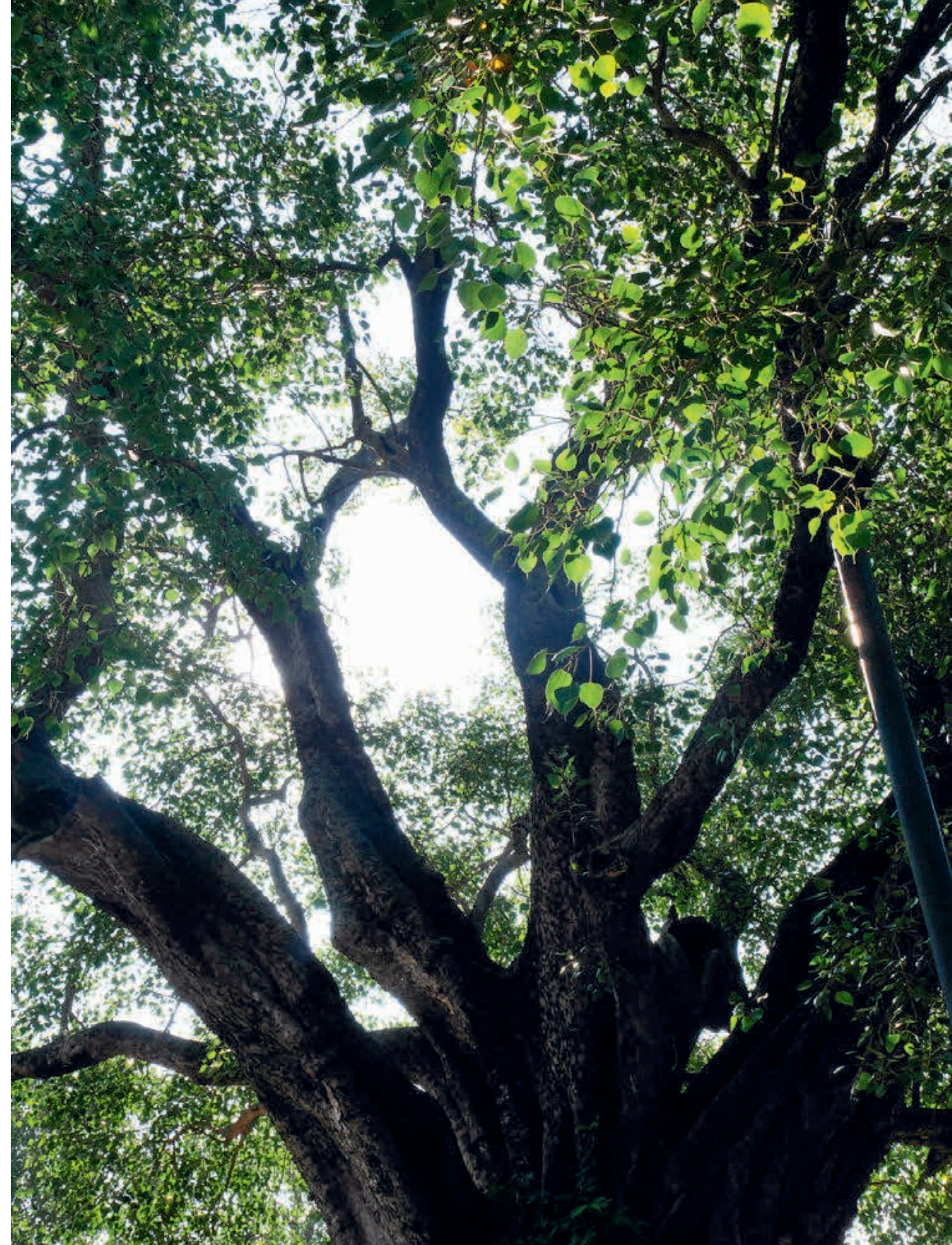
Almost every account of the Buddha's life recounts the incidents that supposedly occurred at his birth: his mother dreaming of a white elephant before or as she conceived; giving birth to him while grasping the branch of a tree; and he emerging from her right side. Some later accounts even add that Mahāmāyā was a virgin when she gave birth. None of these stories are mentioned in the Tipitaka. The only discourse dealing with Gotama's birth, the Acchariyābbhūta Sutta, is admittedly late, including as it does several wondrous events that supposedly occurred before, during and immediately after the event.³⁶ However, not all the details it recounts should be dismissed as fantastic exaggerations; some may have been based on fact, while others may have had a didactic purpose. For example, the discourse claims that Mahāmāyā gave birth while standing, which is by no means improbable.

Little is known of ancient Indian birthing practices, but delivering while sitting or lying down (*nisinnā vā nipamā*) was common and standing was not unknown. Interestingly, Britain's Royal College of Midwives recommends upright birthing and says that it is quite safe if the midwife and other attendants are properly trained and prepared for it.³⁷ The discourse also says that a brilliant light appeared when Gotama was born – not a star, as with the Christian nativity story, and not a light identifying a particular location, but one which allowed beings to think differently about each other. The discourse says:

“When the Buddha came forth from his mother's womb, a great immeasurable light more radiant even than the light of the gods shone forth into the world... And even in the dark, gloomy spaces between the worlds where the light of our moon and sun, powerful and majestic though they are, cannot reach, even there did that light shine. And the beings that are reborn in that darkness became aware of each other because of that light and thought: ‘Indeed there are other beings here.’”

It would seem that this story was not meant to suggest that an actual light appeared when Gotama was born. Rather, it is a literary device, an allegory, a way of saying that the advent of the Buddha would enable beings to become aware of each other, thus making empathy and understanding between them more likely.

36. M.III,119 ff. 37. In the West, giving birth while prone is a relatively recent practice. See Lauren Dundes' 'The Evolution of Mater-nal Birthing Position', in *American Journal of Public Health*, Vol.77, No. 5,1987. Ref: Footprints in the Dust by Venerable S. Dhammika



Almost the only thing that can be said with certainty about Gotama's birth is that it took place in Lumbini, which was in a district of the Sakyan lands somewhere between Kapilavatthu and Devadaha, the main Koliyan town. The birth is always depicted as happening in the open, with Mahāmāyā standing and grasping the branch of a tree, but as Lumbini was a village (gāma) it is much more likely to have taken place in one of the village houses or at least under some type of shelter.

The location of Lumbini was identified with certainty in 1896 with the discovery of a monolithic pillar erected there by the emperor Asoka in 249 BCE after he made a pilgrimage to the place.

The only other details about Gotama's birth concern the ascetic Asita. This ascetic was living in the forest and had matted hair, things often associated with, but not exclusive to, Brahminical ascetics. He was also known as Kaṇhasiri, Dark Splendor, suggesting that he was from a low caste, or at least not a brahmin.⁴⁰ One day Asita noticed that the gods were particularly jubilant. When he asked them why this was, they replied it was because a very special child had been born amongst the Sakyans. Consequently, Asita went to Siddhodana's residence, where he was shown the child and given him to hold. Being accomplished in prognostication and spells (lakkhaṇa manta), Asita could see that the child would grow up to be a great spiritually accomplished individual, but then tears welled up in his eyes. Fearing that Asita had seen some misfortune in the child's future, Siddhodana asked him why he appeared upset. He replied: "This boy will attain complete awakening, the highest purified vision, and with compassion for the many he will set moving the wheel of truth, and his teaching will become widespread."⁴¹

Other than giving birth to Gotama and dying seven days later, the Tipitaka records no other information about Mahāmāyā. It does, however, tell us a little more about his stepmother, Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī. "As his mother's sister, she was his nurse, his stepmother, the one who gave him milk. She suckled the Lord when his own mother died."³³

Modern biographies usually give great attention to their subject's upbringing, the idea being that a person's formative years will hold clues to and explain their traits, behaviour, achievements or beliefs in later life. The ancient Indians did not think like this, and consequently they had little or no interest in Gotama's life until after he became a wandering ascetic. Thus we discover that, of the well-known stories about Gotama's youth, colourful and engaging though they be, few are found in the most ancient texts.

40. Sn.689. 41. Sn.679-694. Ref: Footprints in the Dust by Venerable S. Dhammika (FITD)

33. M.III,253.

The story about Gotama undergoing a name-giving ceremony; the wonderful one about him saving a wild goose from his cousin Devadatta; about him winning athletic and martial competitions; about him courting and then marrying Yasodharā; about his luxurious lifestyle, and so on, are all later creations. In fact, apart from the Asita story, there are only three brief scraps of information about Gotama's childhood, youth and early adulthood.

Once, in later life, when reminiscing about this period, the Buddha said that he was "delicately brought up, most delicately brought up, exceptionally delicately brought up" in that he wore fine silks and perfumes, had a troupe of female musicians to entertain him, an umbrella-bearer to accompany him when he went out and sumptuous food to eat. He went on to say that he had three mansions to live in, one each for the summer, winter and the rainy season, again confirming that he was from a wealthy and privileged background.¹

Another piece of information, again provided by the Buddha himself, is more significant. One day, while he sat in the shade of a jambu tree watching his father work, he had what might now be called a mystical experience. Apparently quite spontaneously, he fell into a meditative state which he would later call jhāna.²



The footprint of Prince Siddhartha on Birth, inside the Mahamaya Devi Temple

1. A.I,145, 2.M.I,246



A stone Mural in the Mahabodhi temple in Bodhgaya depicting the birth of Prince Siddhartha

This experience was to have a profound influence on his awakening years later. Gotama must have been married, probably in his early teens, as was the custom of the time, although there is no mention of either this marriage or his wife's name in the Tipitaka.³

According to tradition her name was Yasodharā, although she is only ever referred to by the epithets Bhaddakaccā or Rāhulamātā, i.e., Rāhula's mother. Whatever her name, the texts mention that Gotama had a son named Rāhula, although they include almost no information about him until he became a monk. After Rāhula ordained, the Buddha sometimes gave instructions to him, went alms gathering with him and praised him for his readiness to learn, and for his part, Rāhula described his father as "the torchbearer of humanity" (ukkādhāro manussānaṃ).⁴

In the fifth century BCE one of the ethnic groups who inhabited parts of the Terai were the Sakyans, and it was into this group that the person who was to become the historical Buddha was born. Nothing in the early texts suggests that the Sakyan homeland was anything other than a small and unimportant chieftdom, and it would never have become famous or even been remembered had the Buddha not been born there.¹ In a number of places in the Tipitaka sixteen of the main states in the Middle Land are listed, but Sakya is not amongst them. The Tipitaka also records the names of a mere ten villages in the Sakyan country, again suggesting that it covered a modest area and probably that it was sparsely populated.² The Sakyans claimed to be descendants of the sons of the semi-mythical King Okkāka, who had been driven into exile by the machinations of his second queen.³

Wandering through the forest, they came to the hermitage of the sage Kapila who invited them to settle down nearby. Out of gratitude to him, they named the settlement they established Kapilavatthu, although the name is more likely derived from 'place of' (vatthu) and 'monkeys' (kapi), and it became the Sakyan's principal town. Because this settlement happened to be in a grove of sāka trees, the exiles became known as Sakyans – at least that's what Sakyan clan history said.⁴

The name Sakya, sometimes Sākya, is more likely to be derived from śak, meaning "to be able or "capable."

3. On the marriage customs of the time see Wagle 1995, pp.127 ff, 3. D.I,92. 4. M.I, 414; 421; Sn.336. Ref: Footprints in the Dust by Venerable S. Dhammika





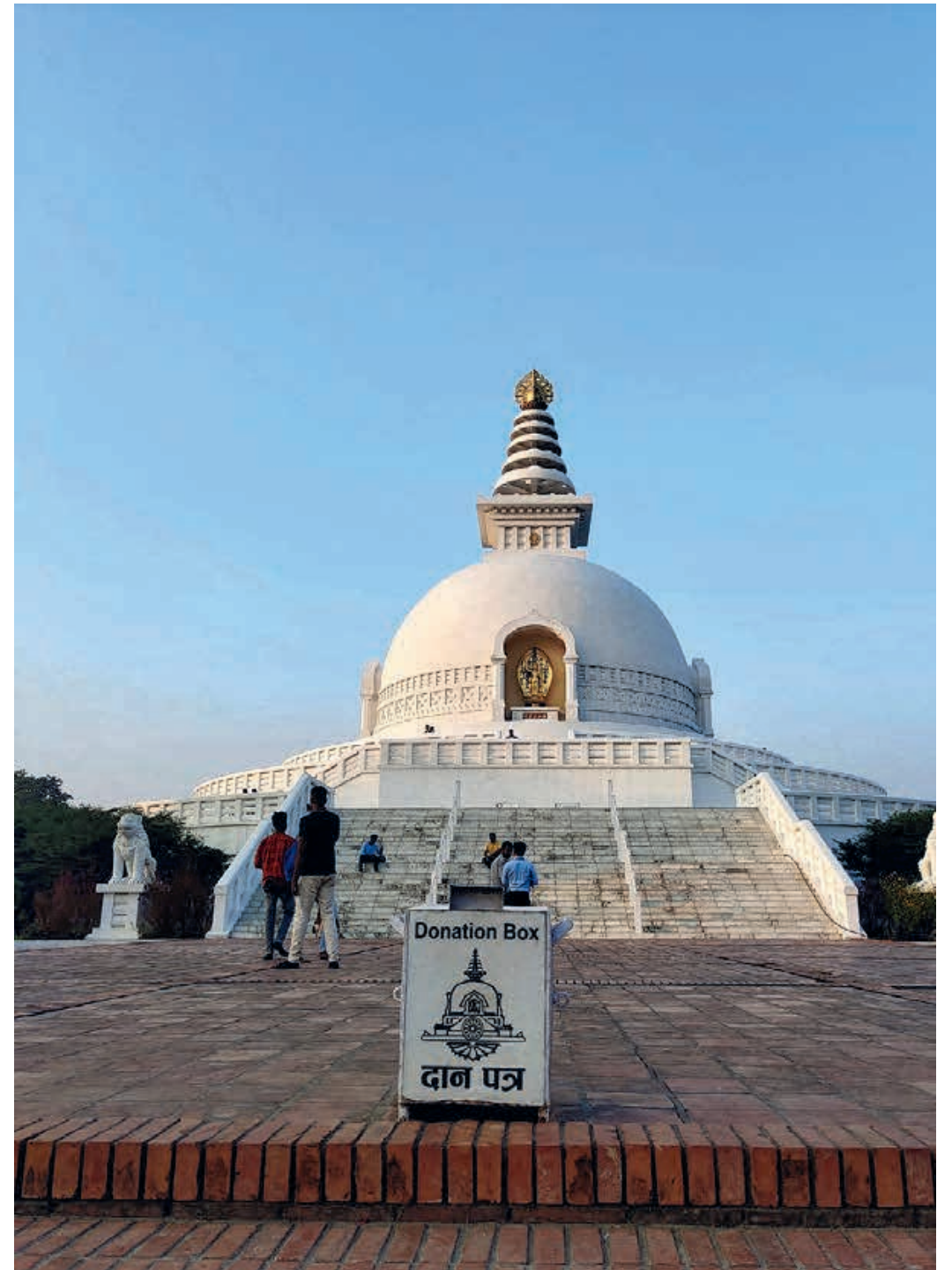
Pilgrims on the way to the World Peace Garden



Monolithic pillar erected there by the emperor Asoka in 249 BCE after he made a pilgrimage to the place.







Shanti stupa





Interior of Cambodian temple art and paintings inside the sacred garden, Lumbini
Image on the right - Buddha Statue inside the Tashi Rabten Ling Monastery, Lumbini, Nepal





Sabbapāpassa akaraṇaṃ,
kusalassa upasampadā,
sacittapariyodapanaṃ -
etaṃ buddhāna sāsanaṃ.

Abstain from all unwholesome deeds,
perform wholesome ones,
purify your mind -
this is the teaching of the Buddhas. *1

Ye dhammā hetuppabhavā,
tesaṃ hetuṃ Tathāgato āha
tesañca yo nirodho;
evaṃvādī Mahāsamaṇo.

Those phenomena arising from a cause,
of these the Enlightened One has told the cause
and also their cessation;
this is the “doctrine” of the Great Recluse. *2



*1 Dhammapada 14.183 The Discourse Summaries by S.N. Goenka
*2 Vinaya 3.60 The Discourse Summaries by S.N. Goenka



Uddhaṃ, tiriyaṃ apācinaṃ,
yāvatā jagato gati
samavekkhitā va dhammānaṃ
khandhānaṃ udayabbayaṃ.

Above, across or back again,
wherever one goes in the world
let one carefully scrutinise
the rise and fall of compounded things. *1

Suddhasaṃ sunipaṇaṃ,
yatthakāmanipātinaṃ;
cittaṃ rakkhetha medhāvī,
cittaṃ guttaṃ sukhāvahaṃ.

Difficult to detect and very subtle,
the mind seizes whatever it wants;
so let a wise one guard one's mind,
for a guarded mind brings happiness. *2



*1 Itivuttaka 4.111 Gemstones of the Good Dhamma, compiled and translated by Ven. S. Dhammika
*2 Dhammapada 3.36 Gemstones of the Good Dhamma, compiled and translated by Ven. S. Dhammika

Kapilavastu (Kapilavatthu)

Prince Siddhartha's First 29 years



Siddhartha, belonged to the Kshatriya gana(clan) of the Sakya. He was born in Lumbini near Kapilavastu in Nepal. His father was the king of the Sakya clan. After the birth of his son, King Śuddhodana called upon eight Brahmins to predict his son's future. While seven of them declared that the prince would either be a Buddha or a great king, the Brahmin Kaundinya was confident that he would renounce the world and become a Buddha. Śuddhodana, who was determined that his son should be a great king, confined the prince within the palace and surrounded him with earthly pleasures and luxury, thereby concealing the realities of life that might encourage him to renounce these pleasures and become an ascetic.

After leading a sheltered existence surrounded by luxury and pleasure in his younger years, Prince Siddhārtha ventured out of his palace for the first time at the age of 29. He set off from the palace to the city in a chariot, accompanied by his charioteer Channa (Sanskrit: Chandaka). According to the more elaborated accounts such as the Lalitavistara Sūtra, a Mahayana text originally in Sanskrit, probably from the 3rd century, the Four Sights were placed on his route by the gods, to encourage the development of Siddhartha's thinking.

1st sight: Sight of an Old man

On this journey he first saw an old man, revealing to Siddhārtha the consequences of aging. When the prince asked about this person, Channa replied that aging was something that happened to all beings alike.

2nd sight: Disease

The second sight was of a sick person suffering from a disease. Once again, the prince was surprised at the sight, and Channa explained that all beings are subject to disease and pain. This further troubled the mind of the prince.

3rd sight: Death

The third sight was of a dead body. As before, Channa explained to the prince that death is an inevitable fate that befalls everyone. After seeing these three sights, Siddhārtha was troubled in his mind and sorrowful about the sufferings that have to be endured in life.

4th sight: Asceticism

After seeing these three negative sights, Siddhārtha came upon the fourth sight, an ascetic who had devoted himself to finding the cause of human suffering. This sight gave him hope that he too might be released from the sufferings arising from being repeatedly reborn, and he resolved to follow the ascetic's example.

After observing these four sights, Siddhārtha returned to the palace, where a performance of dancing girls was arranged for him. Throughout the performance, the prince kept on thinking about the sights. In the early hours of morning, he finally looked about him and saw the dancers asleep and in disarray. The sight of this drastic change strengthened his resolve to leave in search of an end to the suffering of beings.

Some time after this incident and realizing the true nature of life after observing the four sights, Siddhārtha left the palace on his horse Kanthaka accompanied only by Channa.

This is known as the Great Departure. He sent Channa back with his possessions and began an ascetic life.



Re: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Four_sights



There are only a few scattered references to what the main Sakyan town Kapilavatthu was like. There was some kind of school and a council hall (santhāgāra) where the elders of the clan would meet to discuss matters pertaining to the running of the chiefdom. The texts mention that after the construction of a new council hall and the Buddha was invited to inaugurate it by spending the night in it: “the floor was spread;¹² seats were arranged; a large pot of water was put out; and an oil lamp was hung up.”¹³

Within walking distance of Kapilavatthu was the Nigrodhārāma, a park where the Buddha would stay during his occasional visits. From there he could walk to the Mahāvana, the Great Forest, indicating that the town was surrounded on some sides by this extensive forest which reached into the Himalayan foothills and stretched all the way to Vesālī and probably beyond.¹⁴ Another place where he would sometimes stay was the mango orchard owned by the Vedhañña family, of whom nothing else is recorded.¹⁵ Although Kapilavatthu was almost certainly a small town, one of the few detailed references to it describes it as being “rich and prosperous, crowded and full of people, its streets busy,” which seems to suggest that it was something more than a small place.¹⁶

Excavations conducted at the site of Kapilavatthu in the early 1970s confirm the impression that it was a modest place. They revealed that the area it took up was small, although the whole site could not be explored because some of it was under cultivation. All structures dating from the Buddha’s time had mud walls, while those made of baked brick were from a much later period. Kapilavatthu was nothing like the grand royal capital as described in later Buddhist legend.¹⁸ Numerous contemporary biographies of the Buddha repeat the inaccuracy that Kapilavatthu was in the Himalayan foothills. In fact, the terrain around it is as flat as it is possible to be; the first line of hills only starts about thirty kilometers further north.¹⁹

Legend claims that the Buddha’s father Suddhodana was a king, although there is scant evidence in the Tipitaka to back up this claim. Nowhere is the Buddha called a prince (rājakumāra), nowhere is he or his family said to live in a palace,²⁴ and only once is his father called rāja, a word usually translated as King.²⁵

Image on the right - A view of the Eastern Gate

Ref: 12. Vin.III,16 , 13. S.IV,182-183. 14. S.III,91.15.D.117. 16. S.V, 369

17. See Lal, 1984 a and b, 19. Sn. 422, 20. 2500 Years of Buddhism, edited by P. V. Bapat, 1956, p. ix.

21. S.I,184. See Pandey, pp.119-120, 23. A.II,196.

24. Pāsāda could also be translated as mansion, villa or manor house. At Sn.685 Suddhodana’s abode is referred to simply as a bhavana, a residence.

25. D.II,7. At Vin.I, 82 he is referred to as just Suddhodana the Sakyan.



Even in the very places where one would expect the Buddha to call his father a King or himself a Prince, he did not do so. For example, when asked by King Bimbisāra about his birth and kin, he simply replied that he was from a Sakyan family.²⁷ The Tipitaka says that the Sakyans had a body of men called ‘chiefmakers’ (rājakattāra). Such groups are mentioned in other early Indian texts, and it is clear they elected a chief to rule over them, either for a set period or for as long as he had their confidence.

So while the Buddha was almost certainly from a ruling class family, he was not royalty in the sense that came to be understood in later centuries, or as it is today.

Neither the Tipitaka nor early tradition mentions Gotama having any brothers or sisters, but the Tipitaka does refer to six of his half-brothers and cousins. Ānanda, Anuruddha and Mahānāma were sons of his father’s brother; Devadatta was the son of his mother’s brother; Tissa was the son of his father’s sister (pitucchāputta); and Nanda was the son of his father’s second wife Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī (mātucchāputta). All these individuals eventually became monks except Mahānāma, and Nandā.

According to the tradition, the turning point in Gotama’s life was his encounter with what is known as the four signs (catu nimitta). The story goes that, to prevent the young Gotama from knowing anything of the ugly realities of life and thereby becoming a renunciant sage, as Asita had predicted, his father had him confined in a beautiful palace, provided with every means of sensual gratification. One day, however, with the help of his page Channa, he managed to slip out of the palace and drive through the streets of Kapilavatthu, where he saw a man bent with age, another suffering some hideous disease, and a corpse being taken for cremation.

Having never seen such things before, he was deeply shocked, and even more so when Channa told him that such things were an inevitable part of life. As the two drove back to the palace, they passed an ascetic clad in a yellow robe. Gotama asked what he was, and Channa explained that he was one of those individuals who had given up everything in order to search for a state beyond old age, sickness and death. It was these four encounters, legend says, that triggered Gotama’s decision to take the momentous step that he did. Joseph Campbell rightly called this episode “the most celebrated example of the call to adventure in the literature of the world,” and as a metaphor it certainly is.⁸



A Pilgrim meditating on the event of Siddhartha leaving his home to find the truth through the Eastern gate.

Ref: 27. Sn.422-4, 8. Joseph Campbell, The Hero with a Thousand Faces, 2008 p.46.

Unfortunately, it does not appear in the Tipitaka as having happened to Gotama, but rather to one of the former Buddhas, Vipassī.⁹

It would seem that the story was later grafted onto the Buddha's post-Tipitaka legendary biography. In the traditional version of this episode, Gotama left his home stealthily, disappearing into the night while the palace slept. But as the passage just quoted shows, his parents were aware of his decision, and they reacted badly: as well as the tears, it is possible that there was also raised voices, pleading and recriminations. At some point after this, no doubt after a period of adjusting to being homeless and learning the etiquette and mores of the *samaṇas*, Gotama began looking for a teacher. He met with and asked to become a student under Ālāra Kālāma, who must have had some renown, although he is not mentioned in the lists of well known teachers of the time.

Furthermore, other than what can be deduced from the goal of the meditation he taught, we do not know what other things he taught or what philosophy he espoused. Kālāma maintained that the goal of the ascetic life was to attain a state of consciousness he called the sphere of nothingness (*ākiñcaññāyatana*), that he had realized this state, and he taught his students that, under his guidance, they could attain it too.¹⁴ When Gotama requested to become a disciple, Kālāma said to him: "This teaching is such that an intelligent man can very soon experience what the teacher has, attain it and abide in it through his own direct knowledge." First Gotama had to learn the theory, the foundation of the practice.

"Very soon I mastered this teaching so, as far as lip-service, repeating and the opinion of the elders were concerned, I could say with confidence and certainty that I know and see, and I was not the only one."

Having done this, Kālāma now initiated him into the actual practices that would lead up to the sphere of nothingness. Again, within a short time Gotama had attained this state. When he went to report this, Kālāma examined him and was satisfied that he had in fact attained it: "You know the teaching that I know, and I know the teaching that you know. As am I, so are you, and as are you, so am I."

Pleased with such an accomplished student, Kālāma invited Gotama to become his co-teacher, but the young ascetic declined the offer: he was not convinced that being reborn into this sphere of nothingness was the highest state, and he would not be satisfied with anything short of complete awakening.

Ref: 9. D.II,24.

14. Wynne 2007 pp.108 ff, has attempted to reconstruct Kālāma's philosophy.

Ref: All from FITD

So he left and proceeded to seek out another teacher, this time one named Uddaka Rāmaputta.¹⁵ Uddaka was the son of the *samaṇa* teacher Rāma and had apparently taken over his father's community after the latter's death. Rāma had taught meditational practices which led to a state he called the sphere of neither perception nor non-perception (*nevasaññānāsaññā*). While Uddaka taught and practiced what his father had bequeathed to him, he had not actually attained this state himself.

As before, Gotama mastered the theory and the practice within a short time and went on to attain the actual goal of it, which must have astonished Uddaka as well as been an embarrassment to him. In fact, Uddaka actually offered to step aside and allow Gotama to become the teacher of both himself and the other disciples but, as before, Gotama declined the offer.



Pilgrims Listening To A Tourist guide

15. M.I,163-66. T chubring p.44.



Excavated remains of a monastery at Nigrodharam



This Stupa marks the spot where The Buddha first met his father King Suddhodhana, after he achieved enlightenment.



Pilgrims circumabulating the stupa at Nigrodharama



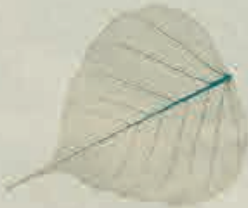
Garden and pond which is thought to have been built ahead of the Buddha's arrival for the first meeting between King Siddhodhana and the Buddha, at Nigrodharama.



Pilgrims meditating near the Pond



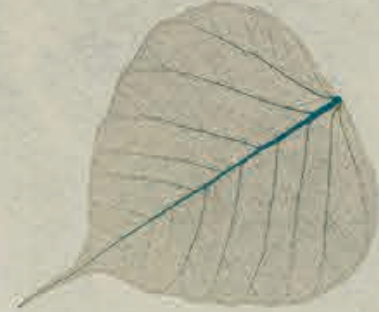
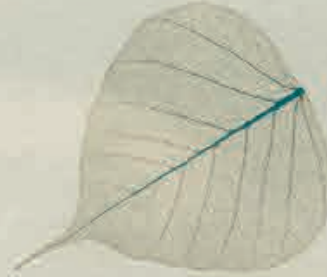
Image on the right : The Rahula Stupa marking spot of the ordination of Rahula into the Sangh.
The Rahula Stupa has an octagonal Shiva temple on top of it that was built much later by Hindus.



Anekajātisaṃsāraṃ
sandhāvissaṃ, anibbisāṃ
gahakāraṃ gavesanto;
dukkhā jāti punappunaṃ.
Gahakāraka! Diṭṭhosi.

Puna gehaṃ na kāhasi.
Sabbā te phāsukā bhaggā,
gahakūṭaṃ visaṅkhataṃ.
Visaṅkhāragataṃ cittaṃ:
taṇhānaṃ khayamajjhagā.

Through countless births in the cycle of existence
I have run, not finding
although seeking the builder of this house;
and again and again I faced the suffering of new birth.
Oh housebuilder! Now you are seen.
You shall not build a house again for me.
All your beams are broken,
the ridgepole is shattered.
The mind has become freed from conditioning:
the end of craving has been reached.



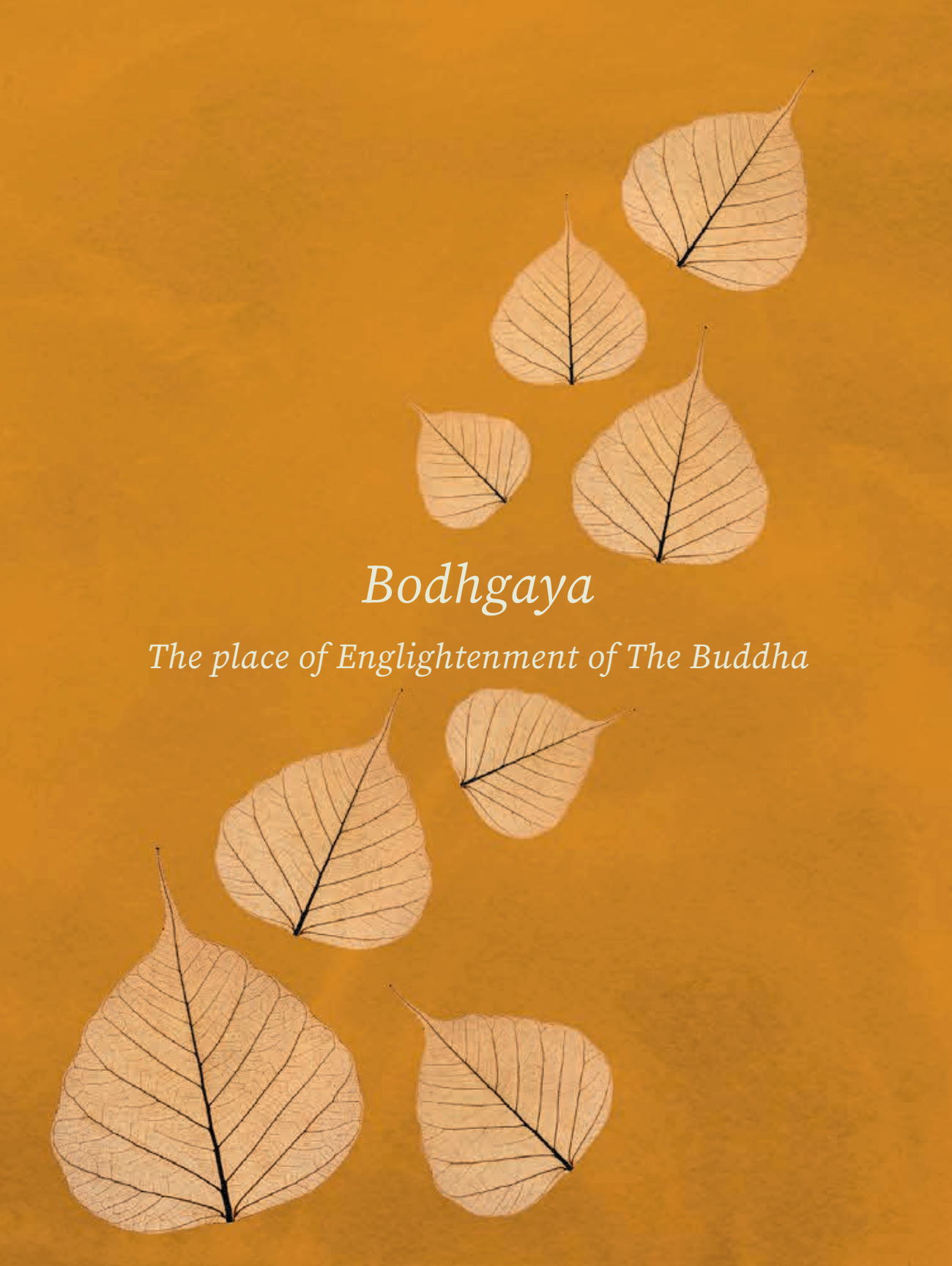
Sabbe saṅkhārā aniccā.
Yadā paññāya passati,
atha nibbindati dukkhe;
esa maggo visuddhiyā.

Impermanent are all compounded things.
When one perceives this with true insight,
then one becomes detached from suffering;
this is the path of purification.^{*1}

Āte jāte sāṁsa para,
rahe nirantara dhyāna.
Karmoṇ ke bandhana kaṭeṇ,
hoya parama kalyāṇa.

In-breath, out-breath—
if you keep unbroken awareness,
the knots of kamma will be sundered,
leading to the highest welfare.^{*2}





Bodhgaya

The place of Enlightenment of The Buddha





This is the Buddha's description of Bodh Gaya as he approached it to sit at the foot of the Bodhi Tree:

"Then, being a seeker for the good, searching for the incomparable, matchless path of peace, while walking on tour through Magadha, I arrived at Uruvelā, the army village. There I beheld a beautiful stretch of ground — a lovely woodland grove, a clear flowing river with a delightful ford, and a village nearby for support. And I thought, 'This is a good place for a young man set on striving.' So I sat down there."
(Majjhima Nikāya)



Now fully integrated into the samaṇa tradition and with a good grounding in meditational disciplines, Gotama wandered on. Perhaps out of frustration or uncertainty, he decided to try an approach popular at the time: self-mortification (attakilamatha).

There were several theories behind this discipline: Among Brahminical ascetics, it was seen as a penance (prāyaścitta), a way to purify oneself or make amends for neglecting some taboo or ritual requirement.¹⁸ Amongst non-Vedic samaṇa sects, the belief was that severe stress and pain created spiritual heat (tapa), unleashing energy that gave power over oneself and the external world.

The Jains believed that any pain one experienced now, even if self-inflicted, was the result of some evil kamma from a former life. The more one tortured oneself, the more negative kamma would be expunged.¹⁹

For the next few years Gotama undertook gruelling self-torture that became ever more extreme. He later described this:

“Such was my asceticism that I went naked, rejecting conventions, licking my hands²⁰, ignoring requests to come for alms, refusing food specifically prepared for me or an invitation to a meal. I took food only once a day, or only once every two days, or only every three, four, five, six or seven days. I was an eater of sal leaves, millet, wild rice, hide parings, rice bran, the scum from boiled rice, sesame pomace, grass, even cow dung. I foraged for forest roots, fruit or fruit fallen from the tree.

I was one who pulled out my hair and beard [rather than shaving]. I remained standing or squatting for extended periods. I slept on a bed of thorns. I immersed myself in the river three times a day, sometimes at night. Just as grime and dust on a tree stump peels off and flakes off, like that the grime and dust that had adhered to my body over the years peeled off and flaked off, and yet it never occurred to me to wipe it off. I went on all fours to the cow kraals after the cows and cowherds had gone and ate the dung of the suckling calves. As long as my own faeces and urine lasted, I consumed my own faeces and urine. I would plunge into the fearful forest, fearful enough to make one's hair stand on end if one was not free from lust. During the cold winters I would spend the night out in the open, and during the summer I would spend the day similarly...”²¹

18. See e.g., Gautama Dharmasūtra 24,1-11; Vāsiṣṭha Dharmasūtra 22,1-16, etc.

Ref: All from FITD 19. M.I,92-93; II,214 ff, 20. This refers to the practice of refusing to use a bowl to receive alms food, requiring it to be put in one's cupped hands from which it would be licked up.

21. M.I,77 ff, condensed. On these and other extreme ascetic practices see Olivelle,1992.





After years of such mortification and self-denial, his physical condition deteriorated dramatically. “Because I ate so little, my backbone looked like a string of beads, my ribs like the rafters of an old shed. My eyes sunk into their sockets, and the gleam in my eyes looked like the gleam in the water at the bottom of a deep well. My scalp shrivelled and dried up like a gourd withered in the sun. If I tried to touch the skin of my belly, it was my backbone I touched; if I tried to touch my backbone, it was the skin of my belly I touched. I would get up to urinate or defecate and fall down on my face. If I stroked my limbs, the hair, rotted at its roots, fell out.”

The Buddha said that at one point, even the gods thought he would die and offered to feed him through his pores so that technically he wouldn’t break his fast. He refused.

As much as possible he tried to avoid any human contact, choosing instead to forage for roots, berries and leaves in the forest so he would not have to go to a village for alms. condensed. This was something like what came to be called *prāṇāyāma* which involved controlling (*āyāma*) the breath as described in works such as the *Bauddhāyana Dharmasūtra* 4.1.22-4, 28-30 and the *Āśvalāyanaśrauta Sūtra* 2.7. The pain and exhaustion it caused was believed to purify the evil deeds one had done.

Alongside bodily mortification, Gotama attempted to master his thoughts: “With my teeth clenched and my tongue pressed against my palate, I crushed, subdued, and suppressed my mind using my mind.” This brought him to exhaustion. He also tried breath-retention meditation (*appāṇakam jhānam*), holding his breath for hours, causing splitting headaches²² and roaring sounds in his ears.²³

Gotama sought isolation:

“Such was my isolation that I would enter some forest and remain there. If I saw a cowherd or a shepherd, a grass-cutter, twig gatherers or a woodsman, I would flee from one grove or thicket to another, from one gully or upland to another, so that they would not see me or I them.”²³

He faced the dangers of wild animals:

“While I dwelt [in the forest], a wild animal would prowl near me, a peacock would snap a twig, or the wind would rustle the leaves. I would think, ‘Here comes that fear and dread. Why am I staying here getting nothing but fear and dread? I will master it and remain without moving.’”²⁴

22. M.I,242-247,
Ref: All from FITD 23. M.I,79. 24. M.I,20.

Gotama's fears were quite justified, as North India's forests harboured lions, tigers, leopards, wolves, hyenas, sloth bears — any could harm him.²⁵ Cowherd boys, noticing his non-retaliation, mocked him, threw things, poked him, or urinated on him.²⁶

Most later sources say Gotama underwent austerities for six years, though this likely included time with his earlier teachers Ālāra Kālāma and Udaka Rāmaputta for only a few months at most.²⁷ He practiced self-mortification for “a number of years” (nekavassagaṇika), the exact span unknown.²⁸ At some point, five samaṇas — Assaji, Bhaddiya, Koṇḍañña, Mahānāma, Vappa — became his companions, impressed by his determination. They perhaps brought him food and water during his long isolation.

After several years of ever more gruelling self-punishment, it finally occurred to Gotama that he was getting nowhere. It seemed to him that he had undertaken all the accepted austerities and many of the mind-control techniques current at the time but that, despite his fierce determination, none of them had worked. It was time for a reassessment, to reconsider the notion that pain was the way to liberation.

Eventually, he realized: “Why am I afraid of that happiness that has nothing to do with sensual pleasures and unskilful states? I am not afraid of that happiness.” He saw the futility of the pain and decided: “It is not easy to attain that happiness with such a severely emaciated body. I should eat some solid food, some boiled rice and barley porridge.” And so he did. “When I ate some solid food, those five monks were disgusted and left me, saying - “The samaṇa Gotama now lives in abundance. He has given up striving and has returned to the life of abundance.”²⁹

Apparently no nearer the goal than when he had left his home, this must have been a period of disappointment and even despair for him. He spent time recovering, eating properly, resting, and regaining his strength then set off walking through the Magadhan countryside until he came to the small riverside village of Uruvelā. His now refreshed mind enabled him to appreciate the lovely rural scene that unfolded before him.

This was not the grim and fearful forest that had been his home until just recently but a cultivated countryside in which familiar and homely sounds, like the lowing of cattle and human voices, could be heard. It lifted his spirits.

25. Vin. I, 220 mentions monks sometimes being attacked by such animals.

26. M. I, 79. Mahāvira suffered similar abuse, see Wujastyk 1984, pp. 189-194, 27. E.g., Buddhacarita 12.95; Jātaka I.67; Lalitavistara 17,22; Mahāvastu II, 241. 28. M. I, 78. Ref: All from FITD

*1 <https://www.vridhamma.org/node/676#SpreadofDhamma>

29. M. I, 247., 32. Ja. I, 69. 33. A. I, 50. Ref: All from FITD





Sujata's Porridge

Senani was a rich man from a village named Sena in Uruvela's forest area. Sujata (Sujātā), his daughter, had immense faith in a tree-deity. She was certain that her successful marriage to a businessman of Varanasi was because of the blessings of this tree-god. She also felt that the birth of her son twenty years ago was also due to the blessings of this tree-deity. So every year she returned home to worship the tree-deity on the full moon night of Vesāka.

This year Sujata prepared delicious khīra (milk-porridge) to offer to the tree-deity. She sent her maid to the tree to clean the place. When the maid saw the attractive personality and radiant face of ascetic prince Siddhattha meditating under the tree, she felt that the tree-deity had taken this physical form to receive her mistress's offerings.

She rushed home to give this good news to her mistress. Sujata was joyously surprised. She came to the tree with her khīra in a golden vessel to offer to the tree-deity. However, she immediately realized that it was not the tree deity but a recluse. She offered him the khīra and was delighted when he accepted it.³²



The Night Before the Vesāka Full Moon

Before the final watch of the night, as the Bodhisatta Siddhattha Gotama lay resting after a night of meditation, he had five dreams. These dreams signaled his future and the reach of his awakening.

First Dream ^{*1}

He saw that his body lay on the ground and progressively grew in size until it covered Nepal and India. The Himalayas became his pillow. His left hand touched the Bay of Bengal, and the waves washed his hand. His legs extended to the Indian Ocean, where the waves washed his feet. Meaning: His teachings would spread across all of Jambudīpa (roughly present-day India, Nepal, Pakistan, Bangladesh) and beyond.

Second Dream

A plant sprouted from his navel, growing higher and higher until it reached the sky. Meaning: He would teach not only humans but also devas and brahmas — the teacher of gods and humans (satthā devamanussānaṃ). He would be a teacher of all beings and his teaching would be conducive to the welfare and happiness of all beings.

Third Dream

Countless black-haired beings, clothed in white, saluted and worshipped him. Meaning: Innumerable householders would become his disciples, leaving behind rites, rituals, and blind faith to gain the Dhamma's benefit.

Fourth Dream

Blue, golden, red, and grey birds came from all four directions, sat on his lap, and turned white. Meaning: This indicated that people of all four classes (brāhmaṇa, khattiya—warrior class, vessa—business people and sudda—lower castes) would become his disciples, become monks and nuns and get liberated from the cycle of life and death. People from all classes and creeds would become his disciples, would become pure. They would become Dhammika. They would be liberated from the bondage of sectarian discrimination and casteism. They would give importance to conduct instead of religious affiliation and caste.

Fifth Dream

He walked upon earth covered with excreta, but none of it touched him. Meaning: This indicated that even though he resided in world filled with impurity, he would remain pure. This world will always be filled with impurity. It is impossible to get rid of the dirt of the entire world but the Buddha would keep himself detached from worldly impurity and would always remain pure. ^{*1}

^{*1} <https://www.vridhamma.org/node/676#SpreadofDhamma>



Refreshed, Gotama set off again and came to Uruvelā's lovely grove. There he sat down determined that it was now or never, that he was going to marshal all the patience, endurance and meditational experience he had developed during the last six years and try to make a final breakthrough. He made this resolution:

"Gladly would I have my skin, sinews and bones wither and the flesh and blood of my body dry up if I can persist until I attain that which may be attained by human strength, human exertion, human striving."³³

Reviewing his life until then, he recalled the experience he had as a youth when he spontaneously slipped into a profoundly peaceful state of mind. He explained it like this.



33. A.I,50. from FITD

He remembered his childhood:

"When my Sakyan father was working and I was sitting in the shade of a jambu tree, my mind completely secluded from sensual pleasures and unskilful states, I entered and remained in the first jhāna, joy and happiness born of seclusion together with applied and sustained thought. And I thought: 'Could this be the way to awakening?' I decided that indeed, this is the way."

He now tried to reduplicate this state within himself, succeeded in doing so and then took it further.

He deepened into the jhānas:

"Tireless energy was aroused in me and continuous mindfulness, my body was calm and untroubled, my mind concentrated and unified. Then, quite secluded from sensual pleasures and unskilled states of mind, I entered and remained in the first jhāna, which has a joy and happiness born of seclusion, together with applied and sustained thought. Then, with the ceasing of the applied and sustained thought, I entered and remained in the second jhāna, with inner tranquility, oneness of mind, an absence of applied and sustained thought and has joy and happiness born of concentration. With the fading of that joy, equanimous, mindful and with the body at ease, I entered the third jhāna, experiencing the happiness of which the worthy ones say, 'Happily lives he who is equanimous and mindful.' Then, with the giving up of both happiness and sorrow, pleasure and pain, I entered and remained in the fourth jhāna, beyond pleasure and pain and with a mindfulness purified by equanimity."³⁴

34. M.I,21-23; I,246-48.



It is difficult for one who has not experienced it to imagine what these states were like, but their culminating qualities were a penetrating, observing but utterly detached mindfulness purified by equanimity. Gotama had not yet attained awakening (bodhi), which would only come when several profound insights became apparent to him. That this jhānic state he had attained was not a passive one is clear from what he said next.

With his mind now “focused and purified, cleansed and bright,
pliant and free of defilements,
malleable, stable, firm and imperturbable,”³⁵
he turned it or directed it (cittaṃ abhininnāmeti) to certain subjects.

The first of these concerned whether or not rebirth was a reality, as some claimed, and he experienced what he called the knowledge of past lives (pubbenivāsa ñāṇa), wherein he saw with great clarity and in dramatic detail the long parade of some of his former lives.³⁶ This experience allowed him to verify the reality of rebirth directly and personally.

This led to a second insight, which he called the knowledge of the arising and passing away of beings (cutūpapāta ñāṇa), allowing him to understand how rebirth takes place according to the complex and subtle workings of kamma.

Later, he said that, while an ordinary person may believe in and accept the reality of rebirth and kamma, only an awakened person actually has a personal and direct knowledge of its working.³⁷

The third and most crucial of these insights he called the knowledge of the destruction of the mental defilements (āsavakkhaya ñāṇa).³⁸



In the deepest regions of consciousness, he saw the ultimate cause of desire and hatred, clinging and aversion and all their diverse and subtle manifestations, and in seeing them they dissolved. Now, what had been half-remembered experiences, glimpses of knowledge and scattered inklings became a sharply defined understanding which, when it merged with these three insights, gave him a complete picture of reality and the individual's position in it.



35. M.I,248. 36. This seems to have been an extension of, and in some way related to, what psychologists call a life review experience (LRE), where a person who has a close brush with death sees their whole life instantly flashing before them. 37. A.III, 348ff. 38. D.I,81-3. 34. M.I,21-23; I,246-48



*“Light arose, vision arose,
seeing arose,” and the young
ascetic Gotama became the
fully awakened Buddha.³⁹*

There is no indication of how long this overwhelming and liberating process took, but he may have been sitting, completely still, eyes closed, totally absorbed in the process for perhaps many hours.

Nor did he say exactly when it occurred, other than “during the third watch of the night” (*rattiyā pacchi yāme*),⁴⁰ i.e., towards dawn, although since ancient times the event has been celebrated during the full moon day of *Vesākhā*, the second month of the Indian calendar.

At some point during this whole process, probably towards the beginning of it, the Buddha claimed that a kind of apparition he called *Māra* appeared before him. Initially this *Māra* tried to get him to give up his quest, return to normal life and just be a good person by making merit. When this did not work, *Māra* assembled an ‘army’ around him and attacked him. The Buddha said that he overcame these attacks with insight, i.e., seeing them as they really were, and by unshakable resolve.⁴¹

Did he see this form or vision, whatever it was, with his actual eyes, or with his inner eye, his imagination, or was he simply dramatizing his final struggle with worldly desires in language that would be understandable to others? In the Tipitaka’s account of this struggle, *Māra* seems to be a metaphor for, or perhaps a personification of, the physical and psychological barriers to awakening, the conditioned mind’s final attempt to resist the light.⁴²

The name itself comes from the Sanskrit root *mṛt* meaning ‘death’ and is linked to the causative form *māreti* meaning ‘causer of death.’ It is clear from this and the constituents of *Māra*’s ‘army’ that this explanation is the most plausible. The ‘army’ consisted of sensual pleasures, discontent, hunger and thirst, craving, sloth and torpor, fear, doubt, hypocrisy and obstinacy, gain, honour and fame, desire for reputation, and exalting oneself while disparaging others.⁴³ In three or four other discourses there are references to *Māra*’s daughters, and again their names point to them being personifications of negative mental states rather than actual beings.

The daughters were named Craving (*taṇhā*), Discontent (*arati*) and Lust (*ragā*).⁴⁴

The Buddha’s Words on Awakening

Aneka jāti saṃsāraṃ
Sandhāvissaṃ anibbisaṃ;
Gahakāraṃ gavesanto,
Dukkhā jāti punappunaṃ.

Gahakāraka diṭṭhosi,
Puna gehaṃ na kāhasi;
Sabbā te phāsukā bhaggā,
Gahakūṭaṃ visaṅkhitāṃ;
Visaṅkhāragataṃ cittaṃ,
Taṇhānaṃ khayamajjhagā.

(Dhammapada 153-154)

For countless births I travelled through this cycle,
Seeking in vain the builder of this house;
In my search over and over,
I took new birth, new suffering.

O house-builder, now I have seen you,
You cannot make a new house for me;
All your rafters are broken,
The ridgepole is shattered;
The mind is freed from all past conditionings,
And has no more craving for the future.

39. On the other accounts of the Buddha’s awakening experience see Norman 1990, 25 ff. Ref: All from FITD.
40. M.I.249. In later centuries at least, the first watch (*purima yāma*) was divided into six *ghāṭikas*: the middle (*mad- hyayāma*) into two; and the third (*paścima yāma*) into four *ghāṭikas*. The duration of each would have differed according to the season, and its difficult to know how they were calculated. 41. Sn.442-3.



The Vajrasana — The Throne of Enlightenment

The Vajrasana (Diamond Throne or Enlightenment Throne) is an ancient stone slab under the Bodhi Tree, beside the Mahābodhi Temple.

Origins:

Thought to have been placed by Emperor Ashoka between 250–233 BCE. Marks the exact spot where the Buddha meditated and attained liberation.

Symbolism:

Known as the bodhimanda (seat of enlightenment) of the Buddha. Ancient texts use the term Vajrasana to refer to Bodh Gaya itself. The empty throne became a focus of devotion in early Buddhism — a symbolic relic (cetiya). Devotees, as in ancient times, kneel and pray before it.

Structure and Design:

The Vajrasana is the oldest surviving piece of architecture at Bodh Gaya. Made of polished grey sandstone. Dimensions: 7 ft 10 in long, 4 ft 7 in broad, and 6 in thick. The top surface is carved with geometrical patterns: circular designs at the center, bordered with squares. Decorative bands on the sides feature carvings of honeysuckles and geese, echoing motifs on the Pillars of Ashoka.

Restoration History:

Built by Ashoka when he established the first temple at Bodh Gaya around 260 BCE. Later hidden behind larger thrones of the Kushan and Pala periods.



https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vajrasana,_Bodh_Gaya
Photo of Vajrasana ©Mr. Manish Bhandari "Courtesy;
Bodhgaya Temple Management Committee"



Mahābodhi Temple

The Mahābodhi Temple (“Great Awakening Temple”), a UNESCO World Heritage Site, is an ancient but restored Buddhist temple in Bodh Gaya, Bihar, India. It marks the location where the Buddha attained enlightenment.

Location:

Bodh Gaya is 15 km from Gaya and about 96 km from Patna.

History:

The site contains a tree believed to be a descendant of the original Bodhi Tree under which the Buddha gained enlightenment. It has been a major Buddhist pilgrimage destination for over 2,000 years. Elements of the site date to the period of Ashoka (died c. 232 BCE). What is now visible dates from the 6th century CE or earlier, with major restorations since the 19th century.



Bodhi Tree

The Bodhi Tree at Bodh Gaya is said to be a direct descendant of the tree under which Siddhartha Gautama meditated when he attained enlightenment.

Sacred Legends:

According to the Jatakas, the navel of the earth lies at this spot — no other place can support the weight of the Buddha’s attainment. When the world is destroyed at the end of a kalpa, the Bodhimanda is the last spot to disappear and the first to reappear. A lotus will bloom at this site at the start of a new kalpa, heralding the birth of a new Buddha.

In Gautama Buddha’s case, a Bodhi tree sprang up on the day he was born.

Ashoka’s Devotion:

Emperor Ashoka worshipped the tree and held an annual festival in its honor.

His queen, Tissarakkhā, out of jealousy, is said to have cursed the tree to die — but each time it was destroyed, a new tree was planted in the same place. What is now visible dates from the 6th century CE or earlier, with major restorations since the 19th century.



The Seven Weeks at Bodhgaya

Week 1

The Bodhi Tree

The Buddha spent the first week seated under the Bodhi Tree, absorbed in the bliss of liberation.

Free from the prison of ignorance that had confined him for countless lifetimes, the Buddha blissfully spent the next seven weeks in the vicinity of the Bodhi Tree enjoying the fruits of his attainment and reflecting on the implications of what he had discovered.³⁴

While sitting under the Bodhi Tree, the Buddha understood that the ignorant mind—the mind that does not understand the universal traits of impermanence, suffering, and selflessness—is dependent on blind, habitual patterns of reaction. These reactions condition a flow of consciousness that operates in terms of mind and body, which is responsible for the six senses that allow a person to experience the outside world. This contact stimulates various sensations—pleasant, unpleasant or neutral. Reacting to one of these types of sensations brings about craving, aversion or ignorance. These negative attitudes linger on and eventually become deep-rooted attachments. These attachments push along the process of becoming, in which one's obsessive self-interests continue to develop and new personal self-images are born (in every moment of this life and in to the next). With birth, the sorrows and stresses of life arise, which then become another condition for ignorance, and the cycle continues. The Buddha also analysed the chain in terms of cessation of its factors, showing how the entire world of suffering can be stopped.

He realized that when the mind truly understands the way things are, its habitual reactions cease, and in turn, the flow of consciousness also ceases. When there is no flow of consciousness, there is no mind and body, and no senses with which to experience the world. Neither sensations nor the afflictive attitudes that result from the sensations continue to arise and impress themselves on the mind. The meditator is freed from all attachments. Siddhattha recognized the link of sensation as the point at which to break the chain of suffering. When one understands how craving is conditioned by pleasant sensations, how aversion is conditioned by unpleasant sensations, and how ignorance is conditioned by neutral sensations, attachment cannot arise.

Week 2

Gazing at the Tree

He stood gazing at the Bodhi Tree without blinking for another week, in gratitude for its shelter during his quest.



Unblinking Shrine (Animisa Cetiya)

Week 3

Cankamana Meditation

Where the Buddha practised Cankamana, or walking meditation



Week 4

The Jewel House

At the Jewel House Shrine, he reflected deeply on the Abhidhamma. Rays of blue, yellow, red, white, and orange emanated from his body.



Week 5: The Ajapāla Tree

This is where the Buddha first had contact with another human being after his Enlightenment. Here he spoke to an arrogant brahmin: “The brahmin who is rid of evil things, not haughty, undefiled, self-controlled, perfect in knowledge and living the holy life, can rightly employ the word ‘brahmin.’ The Ajapal Nigrodh tree is denoted by the pillar standing in its place on the eastern entrance of the temple complex.



Week 6: Mucalinda's Protection

It is said that when Lord Buddha was in meditation a strong storm rained down for seven days consecutively and seeing Buddha getting wet, the Serpent King of the lake, Muchalinda came out of his abode and protected Buddha from the rain. Muchalinda Sarovar is also known as Lotus Pond. In this, an idol of Lord Buddha has been installed in a meditative position which depicts the same scene.



Week 7: The Rājāyatana Tree

Here he received the first offerings from the merchants Tapussa and Bhallika. Then the two brothers took refuge in the Buddha and the Dhamma (as the treasure of the Sangha had not come into existence yet at that time) and thereby became devotees who had to pronounce only two-word refuge (Devācika-saraṇa) with reference to the Buddha and the Dhamma, saying: “We take refuge, sir, in the Blessed One and the Dhamma—Ete mayaṃ bhante, Bhagavantam saraṇam gacchāma dhammañ ca.” (These two were the first devotees in whom the two-word refuge was established.)





Paticca-samuppada Anuloma

Avijja-paccaya sankhara;
sankhara-paccaya vinnanam;
vinnana-paccaya nama-rupam;
nama-rupa-paccaya salayatana;
salayatana-paccaya phasso;
phassa-paccaya vedana;
vedana-paccaya tanha;
tanha-paccaya upadanam;
upadana-paccaya bhavo;
bhava-paccaya jati;
jati-paccaya jara-maranam
soka-parideva-dukkha-
domanassupayasa sambhavanti;
evametassa kevalassa
dukkhakkhandhassa samudayo hoti.

Chain of Dependent Origin Forward Order

Dependent on ignorance, reaction (conditioning) arises;
Dependent on reaction (conditioning), consciousness arises;
Dependent on consciousness, mind-body arise;
Dependent on mind-body, the six senses arise;
Dependent on the six senses, contact arises;
Dependent on contact, sensation arises;
Dependent on sensation craving and aversion arise ;
Dependent on craving and aversion, clinging arises ;
Dependent on clinging, the process of becoming arises
; Dependent on the process of becoming, birth arises;
Dependent on the base of birth, ageing and death arise,
together with sorrow, lamentation, physical and mental sufferings and tribulations.
Thus arises this entire mass of suffering.

Patiloma

Avijjaya tveva asesaviraganirodha, sankhara-nirodho;
sankhara-nirodha vinnana-nirodho;
vinnana-nirodha nama-rupa-nirodho;
nama-rupa-nirodha salayatana-nirodho;
salayatana-nirodha phassa-nirodho;
phassa-nirodha vedana-nirodho;
vedana-nirodha tanha-nirodho;
tanha-nirodha upadana-nirodho;
upadana-nirodha bhava-nirodho;
bhava-nirodha jati-nirodho;
jati-nirodha jara-maranam
soka-parideva-dukkha-
domanassupayasa nirujjhanti;
evametassa kevalassa
dukkhakkhandhassa nirodho hoti.

Reverse Order

With the complete eradication and cessation of ignorance, reaction (conditioning) ceases; with the cessation of reaction (conditioning), consciousness ceases;
with the cessation of consciousness, mind-body cease;
with the cessation of mind-body, the six senses cease;
with the cessation of the six senses, contact ceases;
with the cessation of contact, sensation ceases;
with the cessation of sensation, craving and aversion cease;
with the cessation of craving and aversion, clinging ceases;
with the cessation of clinging, the process of becoming ceases; with the cessation of the process of becoming, birth ceases; with the cessation of birth, ageing and death cease, together with sorrow, lamentation, physical and mental sufferings and tribulations.
Thus this entire mass of suffering ceases.

In other words, the origin of each link depends upon the preceding one. As long as this chain of twelve causal relations operates, the wheel of becoming (bhava-cakka) keeps turning, bringing nothing but suffering. This process of cause and effect is called anuloma-paticcasamuppada (the Law of Dependent Origination in forward order). Every link of anuloma results in misery(dukkha), as a result of avijja which is at the base of every link. Thus the process of anuloma clarifies the first two Noble Truths, dukkha-sacca (suffering), and samudaya-sacca (its origination and multiplication).

We have to emerge from this bhava-cakka of dukkha. Explaining how to do so, the Buddha said that when any one of the links of the chain is broken, the wheel of becoming comes to an end, resulting in the cessation of suffering. This is called patiloma-paticcasamuppada (the Law of Dependent Origination in reverse order) which clarifies the third and fourth Noble Truths, nirodha-sacca (the cessation of suffering), and nirodha-gaminipatipada-sacca (the path that leads to the cessation of suffering). How can that be achieved? Which link of the chain can be broken?

Through deep insight, the Buddha discovered that the crucial link is vedana. In the anuloma-paticcasamuppada, he says “vedana-paccaya tanha” (with the base of sensation, craving and aversion arise). Vedana is the cause of tanha, which gives rise to dukkha. In order to remove the cause of dukkha or tanha; therefore, one must not allow vedana to connect with tanha; in other words, one must practise Vipassana meditation at this juncture so that avijja becomes vijja or panna (wisdom). One has to observe vedana, to experience and to comprehend the truth of its arising and passing away, i.e., anicca.

Through Vipassana (the observation of the reality ‘as it is’), as one experiences vedana properly, one comes out of the delusion of nicca-sanna (perception of permanence) by the development of anicca-bodha or aniccavijja (the wisdom of impermanence) towards vedana. This is practised by observing with equanimity, the arising and passing away of vedana. With aniccabodha, the habit pattern of the mind changes. Instead of the earlier pattern of vedana-paccaya tanha, through anicca-vijja it becomes vedana paccaya panna (with the base of sensation wisdom arises). As panna becomes stronger and stronger, naturally the sanna and with it tanha, becomes weaker and weaker. The process of the multiplication of suffering with the base of avijja then becomes the process of the cessation of suffering, with vijja as the base. As this process continues, a time comes where there is the complete cessation of vedana as well as tanha: “vedana nirodha tanha nirodho” (with the cessation of sensation, craving and aversion cease).

This state of emancipation is a state beyond mind-matter ; where both vedana and sanna cease. One can experience this for a few seconds, minutes, hours, or days when according to one’s own capacity, one becomes established in nirodha-samapatti by practising Vipassana. After the period of nirodha-samapatti (the attainment of cessation), when one comes back to the sensual field of mind-matter, one again experiences vedana. But now the whole habit pattern of the mind has been changed, and continued observation leads to the stage where one does not generate aversion or craving at all because the anusaya kilesa and the asava (the deep-rooted mental impurities) are eradicated.



References: 5.Vinaya, Mahavagga, Nal. 3, PTS 2.6.Paticca Samuppada Sutta, Samyutta Nikaya, XII (I), 1

In this way by the breaking of one link, vedana, the whole process is shattered and the wheel of repeated existence is broken completely. If we want to advance on the path of liberation, we have to work at the level of vedana because it is here that the rotation of the wheel of misery can be arrested. With vedana starts the turning of the bhava-cakka (wheel of becoming), leading (because of avijja) to vedana-paccaya tanha which causes suffering. This is the path which ignorant persons (puthujjana) follow, since they react to vedana and generate tanha. And from here also the Dhammacakka, (wheel of Dhamma) or the wheel of cessation of suffering (dukkhanirodha-gamini-patipada) can start to rotate, leading to vedana-nirodha, tanha-nirodho: the end of craving, as a result of anicca-vijja or panna, leading to the cessation of suffering. This is the path which wise persons (sapanna) follow by not reacting to vedana, because they have developed anicca-bodha by the practice of Vipassana.

Many of the contemporaries of the Buddha held the view that craving causes suffering and that to remove suffering one has to abstain from the objects of craving. In order to develop detachment, the Buddha tackled the problem in a different way. Having learned to examine the depths of his own mind, he realized that between the external object and the mental reflex of craving is a missing link: vedana (sensation). Whenever we encounter an object through the five physical senses or the mind, a sensation arises; and based on the sensation, tanha arises. If the sensation is pleasant we crave to prolong it, and if it is unpleasant we crave to be rid of it. It is in the chain of Dependent Origination that the Buddha expressed his profound discovery.

Phassa-paccaya vedana
Vedana-paccaya tanha. ⁽⁵⁾

Dependent on contact, sensation arises.
Dependent on sensation, craving arises.

The immediate cause for the arising of craving and of suffering is, therefore, not something outside of us but rather the sensations that occur within us. To free ourselves from craving and suffering we must deal with this inner reality of sensations. Doing so is the practical way to emerge from suffering. By developing anicca-vijja (the wisdom of impermanence) we learn to cut the knots of our misery and witness the true nature of Dhamma. Vedana then is the cause of our bondage when not properly observed, as well as the means of our liberation when properly observed by understanding the Dhamma, the law of paticcasamuppada.⁽⁶⁾

5. Vinaya, Mahavagga, Nal. 3, PTS 2.

6. Paticca Samuppada Sutta, Samyutta Nikaya, XII (I),



There is no evidence that Gotama had formulated the doctrines that would later become central to his philosophy — the Four Noble Truths, Noble Eightfold Path, or Dependent Origination — before his awakening.

In fact, he said the truths he realized and later taught were: “Not been heard about before” (*pubbe ananussutesu dhammesu*).⁴⁸

He never described his awakening as the result of divine grace, as being ‘at one with the universe,’ merging with the Absolute, or ineffable — terms typically associated with mystical experience.

He insisted that awakening can be attained: “Through their own knowledge and vision” (*sayam abhiññā*) “By human strength, human exertion, human striving” (*purisa thāmena, purisa viriyena, purisa parakkamena*)⁴⁹



There are three accounts of what the Buddha did in the immediate aftermath of his awakening:

1 One version says he stayed at Uruvelā for four weeks, encountering a brahmin, a nāga, two merchants, and a deity from the Brahmā world.

2 Another version says he stayed for three weeks and met the brahmin mentioned above.

3 The oldest version, in the Ariyapariyesanā Sutta, gives no time frame and recounts only his encounter with the deity from the Brahmā world.

Ref: 48. S.V,422.49. D.III,55; A.IV,190. Ref: All from FITD

Recalling this period, the Buddha said:

“The truth I have realized is profound, difficult to see and understand, peaceful and sublime, impenetrable by mere reasoning, subtle, and accessible only to the wise.

People delight and rejoice in the things of the world — it would be hard for them to see this truth: how things come into being according to conditions, the stilling of mental constructs, letting go of attachments, the destruction of craving leading to dispassion, cessation, Nirvana.

If I were to teach this truth, they would not understand, and that would be wearisome and troublesome for me.”⁴⁷

Therefore, at first, he decided not to teach — to spend his life in peaceful obscurity, enjoying the joy of awakening.



The beings in the Brahmā world became aware of his thoughts. Brahmā Sahampati appeared before him, bowed, and pleaded:

“Lord, teach the Dhamma, let the Happy One teach the Dhamma. There are beings with little dust in their eyes who are wasting away through not hearing it. There will be those who will understand it.” (M.I,168-69)

Ref: 47. M.I,247.

The Buddha surveyed the world with his Buddha eye and saw beings like lotuses in a pond:

“Some sprout and grow in the water but never reach the surface; others grow up but remain on the surface; a few grow above the surface and stand untouched by the water.

In the same way, I saw beings with little dust in their eyes and much dust, quick-witted and slow-witted, with good dispositions and bad, amenable to instruction and resistant, only a few seeing the danger in wrongdoing and its future results.”

For the sake of this last group, though few in number, he resolved to proclaim the Dhamma.⁵²

He thought first of Ālāra Kālāma and Uddaka Rāmaputta — his former teachers, “intelligent, discerning, with little dust in their eyes.” But both had died.

Next, he thought of his five former companions, knowing they were in Bārāṇasī, and set out to find them.

On the road between Uruvelā and Gayā, he met an Ājīvaka ascetic named Upaka, who was struck by his serene deportment and radiant complexion.

Upaka asked:
“Who is your teacher? Whose doctrine do you follow?”

The Buddha replied:
“I have no teacher.
In all the world, its gods included, I am unique and without counterpart.”

Upaka, sceptical, said:
“According to what you say, you must be the universal victor!”

The Buddha answered that he was indeed a victor — over evil states of mind.

Upaka walked off shaking his head, saying:
“It may be so, friend.”⁵⁴

52. M.I,168-69. 53. D.III,126; S.IV,83.

54. M.I,170-172.

Ref: All from FITD



Kesariya Stupa

It is said that this could be the stupa erected by the Licchavis of Vaishali shortly after the death of the Buddha to house the alms bowl he gave them.





Sangh Daan at Burmese Vihara, Bodh Gaya



Maha Kala Caves, Dungeshwari Mountain

It's called so because it's also a shrine to Goddess Dungeshwari i.e. Mahakala. It is here that the Buddha performed austerities for six years before he attained enlightenment. On the top, there are Tibetan buildings including a white stupa. Inside the three caves contain two Buddhist shrines as well as one Hindu shrine. One of the Buddhist shrines houses an emaciated Buddha covered in gold and the other shrine has a 6-foot tall Buddha statue.

In the Hindu shrine, you will find the deity Dungeshwari. Siddhartha did severe penance in the Mahakala (or Dungeshwari) Caves. This cave is near the Phalgu River, 5km from Bodhgaya. The hill range is locally Mora Hill and the name 'Pragbodhi' has become popular in recent years, though Xuanzang or Huein Tsang the Chinese Buddhist traveler to whom we owe a great deal in terms of Buddhist information, mentions the hill as po-lo-ki-po-ti (Pragbodhi or Prakbodhi, i.e. pre-enlightenment).^{*1}

*1 Ref: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Category:Dungeshwari_Cave_Temple



Sujata Stupa, Bodhgaya

Sujata Stupa, also Sujata Kuti stupa or Sujata Garh, is a Buddhist stupa located in the village of Senanigrama (Bakraur) slightly east of Bodh Gaya. The stupa was dedicated to the milkmaid Sujata, from the village of Bakraur, who is said to have fed Gautama Buddha milk and rice at this spot as he was sitting under a Banyan tree, thereby ending his seven years of fasting and asceticism, and allowing him to attain illumination through the Middle Way. The Sujata Stupa is a symbol of generosity and kindness. This historical Buddhist site attracts devotees who wish to pay homage to Sujata's selfless act.





80 feet BUDDHA STATUE built by The Daijokyo sect of Japan. The statue is 18.5 m high representing the Buddha seated in a meditation pose, or dhyana mudra, on a lotus in the open air.

Gayasisa



Gayāsīsa, now known as Brahmayoni Hill, is located on the south-west edge of Gaya city. In the Suttas, the Fire Sermon is the third discourse delivered by the Buddha (after the Dhammacakkapavattana Sutta and the Anattalakkhana Sutta), several months after his enlightenment, on top of the Gayasisa Hill, near Gaya, India. He delivered it to a thousand newly converted ascetics who formerly practiced a sacred fire ritual.

Having led the thousand bhikkhus monks to Gayā's Head, the Blessed One reflected, 'What kind of Dhamma talk would be suitable for them?' He then realized, 'In the past they worshipped the fire morning and evening. I will teach them that the twelve sense bases are burning and blazing. In this way they will be able to attain arahantship.'

In this discourse, the Buddha describes the sense bases and resultant mental phenomena as "burning" with passion, aversion, delusion and suffering. Seeing such, a noble disciple becomes disenchanted with, dispassionate toward and thus liberated from the senses bases, achieving arahantship.

Adittapariyaya Sutta: The Fire Sermon

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying in Gaya, at Gaya Head, with 1,000 monks. There he addressed the monks:

"Monks, All is aflame. What All is aflame? The eye is aflame. Forms are aflame. Consciousness at the eye is aflame. Contact at the eye is aflame. And whatever there is that arises in dependence on contact at the eye — experienced as pleasure, pain or neither-pleasure-nor-pain — that too is aflame. Aflame with what? Aflame with the fire of passion, the fire of aversion, the fire of delusion. Aflame, I tell you, with birth, aging & death, with sorrows, lamentations, pains, distresses, & despairs.

"The ear is aflame. Sounds are aflame...

"The nose is aflame. Aromas are aflame...

"The tongue is aflame. Flavors are aflame...

"The body is aflame. Tactile sensations are aflame...

"The intellect is aflame. Ideas are aflame. Consciousness at the intellect is aflame. Contact at the intellect is aflame. And whatever there is that arises in dependence on contact at the intellect — experienced as pleasure, pain or neither-pleasure-nor-pain — that too is aflame. Aflame with what? Aflame with the fire of passion, the fire of aversion, the fire of delusion. Aflame, I say, with birth, aging & death, with sorrows, lamentations, pains, distresses, & despairs."

"Adittapariyaya Sutta: The Fire Sermon" (SN 35.28), translated from the Pali by Thanissaro Bhikkhu. Access to Insight (BCBS Edition), 30 November 2013, <http://www.accesstosight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn35/sn35.028.than.html>

"The intellect is aflame. Ideas are aflame. Consciousness at the intellect is aflame. Contact at the intellect is aflame. And whatever there is that arises in dependence on contact at the intellect — experienced as pleasure, pain or neither-pleasure-nor-pain — that too is aflame. Aflame with what? Aflame with the fire of passion, the fire of aversion, the fire of delusion. Aflame, I say, with birth, aging & death, with sorrows, lamentations, pains, distresses, & despairs.



Buddha footprint on top of Gayasisa mountain

“Seeing thus, the well-instructed disciple of the noble ones grows disenchanted with the eye, disenchanted with forms, disenchanted with consciousness at the eye, disenchanted with contact at the eye. And whatever there is that arises in dependence on contact at the eye, experienced as pleasure, pain or neither-pleasure-nor-pain: With that, too, he grows disenchanted.

“He grows disenchanted with the ear...

“He grows disenchanted with the nose...

“He grows disenchanted with the tongue...

“He grows disenchanted with the body...

“He grows disenchanted with the intellect, disenchanted with ideas, disenchanted with consciousness at the intellect, disenchanted with contact at the intellect. And whatever there is that arises in dependence on contact at the intellect, experienced as pleasure, pain or neither-pleasure-nor-pain: He grows disenchanted with that too. Disenchanted, he becomes dispassionate. Through dispassion, he is fully released. With full release, there is the knowledge, ‘Fully released.’ He discerns that ‘Birth is ended, the holy life fulfilled, the task done. There is nothing further for this world.’”

Nibbindaṃ virajjati
virāgā vimuccati,
vimuttasmiṃ vimuttamiti ñāṇaṃ hoti,
khīṇā jāti,
vusitaṃ brahmacariyaṃ,
kataṃ karaṇīyaṃ
nāparaṃ itthattāyāti pajānāti ti.^[15]

“Disenchanted, he becomes dispassionate.
Through dispassion, he is fully released.
With full release, there is the knowledge, ‘Fully released.’
He discerns that ‘Birth is ended,
the holy life fulfilled,
the task done.
There is nothing further for this world.’^[14]

That is what the Blessed One said. Gratified, the monks delighted at his words. And while this explanation was being given, the hearts of the 1,000 monks, through no clinging (not being sustained), were fully released from fermentation/effluents.



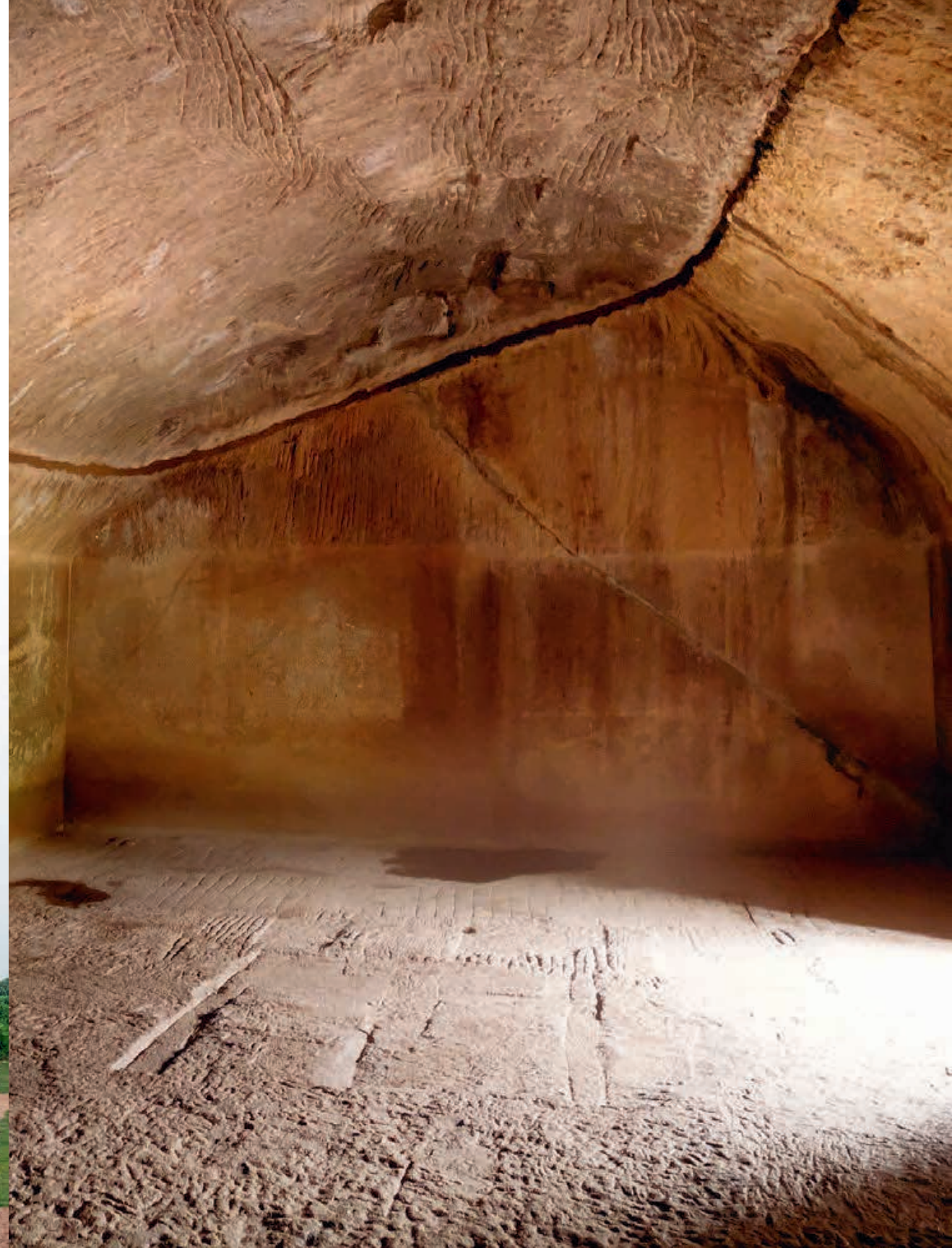
Barabar Caves

The Barabar Hill Caves are the oldest surviving rock-cut caves in India, dating from the Maurya Empire (322–185 BCE), some with Ashokan inscriptions, located in the Makhdumpur region of Jehanabad district, Bihar, India, 24 km (15 mi) north of Gaya. These rock-cut chambers bear dedicatory inscriptions in the name of “King Piyadasi” for the Barabar group.

The caves were used by ascetics from the Ajivika sect, founded by Makkhali Gosala, a contemporary of Gautama Buddha, the founder of Buddhism, and of Mahavira, the last and 24th Tirthankara of Jainism. The Ajivikas had many similarities with Buddhism as well as Jainism. Also present at the site are several rock-cut Buddhist and Hindu sculptures and inscriptions from later periods. Most caves at Barabar consist of two chambers, carved entirely out of granite, with a highly polished internal surface, the “Mauryan polish” also found on sculptures, and exciting echo effects.



This rock formation that holds the 3 caves is said to look like a crocodile



Barabar hills is an unarguably the most sought-after tourist destination of Jehanabad district. It's a home to the world's oldest surviving caves. Being a rare historical site today this has become an international tourist destination and attracts fair number of foreign tourists every year. It is located near Makhdumpur village of Jehanabad district.

For thousands of years these caves definitely remained as religious centers for innumerable Jain monks, but there are historical records to prove that even Gautama Buddha had meditated in these caves. It has the special echo effect feature; which means that any sound made here lasts for 3 minutes.



Entrance To Karan Chaupar Rock Cut Cave

The reading of the inscription has been corrected by Harry Falk in 2007, who after cleaning the stone and inspecting it read:

“When King Priyadarsin had been annointed 19 years,
he went to Jalūṭha and then this cave (called) Supriyekṣā,
was given to the Ajivikas.”

— Ashoka inscription from Karan Chaupar cave. Translation by Harry Falk, 2007





Sukho viveko tuṭṭhassa,
sutadhammassa passato.
Abyāpajjaṃ sukhaṃ loke --
pāṇabhūtesu saṃyamo.



Solitude is happiness for one who is content,
who has heard the Dhamma and clearly sees.
Non-affliction is happiness in the world --
harmlessness towards all living beings ^{*1}.

Sambādhe vāpi vindanti,
dhammaṃ nibbānapattiyā
ye satīṃ paccalatthaṃsu
sammā te susamāhitā.

Even when obstacles crowd in,
the path to Nibbana can be won
by those who establish mindfulness
and bring to perfection equipoise.^{*2}



Sabbā āsattiyo chetvā,
vineyya hadaye daram,
upasanto sukhaṃ seti,
santiṃ pappuyya cetasā.

With all one's attachments cut,
with the heart's pining subdued,
calm and serene and happy is one,
for one has attained peace of mind. ^{*1}



Atītaṃ nānvāgameyya,
nappaṭikaṅkhe anāgataṃ;
yadatītaṃ pahīnaṃ taṃ,
appattañca anāgataṃ

The past should not be followed after,
and the future not desired;
what is past is dead and gone,
and the future is yet to come.



^{*1} Udāna 2.11 Gemstones of the Good Dhamma, compiled and translated by Ven. S. Dhammika

^{*2} Samyutta Nikāya 1.88 Gemstones of the Good Dhamma, compiled and translated by Ven. S. Dhammika

^{*1} Samyutta Nikāya 1.242 Gemstones of the Good Dhamma, compiled and translated by Ven. S. Dhammika

^{*2} Majjhima Nikāya 3.272 Gemstones of the Good Dhamma, compiled and translated by Ven. S. Dhammika

Sarnath

The place of the First Discourse



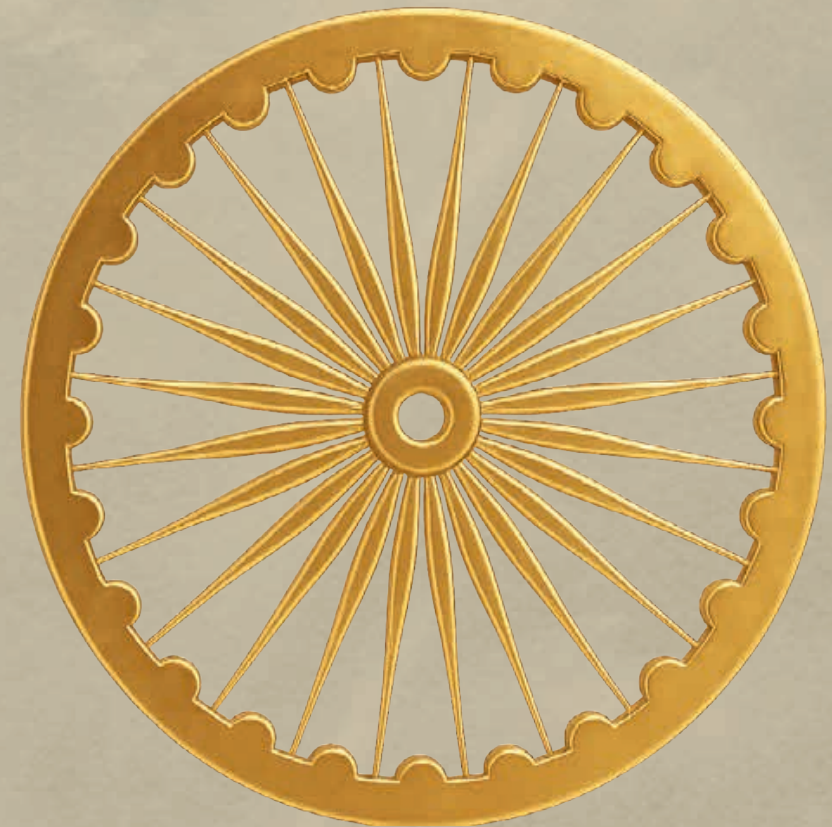
The Buddha arrived in Bārāṇasī and then headed for Isipatana, a reserve for deer where he had heard his companions were staying.⁵⁵ The five ascetics saw the Buddha approaching in the distance and agreed amongst themselves that they would cold-shoulder him, neither standing up for him nor offering him a seat, although they would not object if he joined them. He had dashed their expectations, and they would not give him their respect. As he got closer, however, the haggard, emaciated ascetic they had known now looked completely different; his complexion was radiant, and he held himself with poise and confidence. So impressive was the man who approached them that they forget their decision to withhold their respect and, one by one, rose to their feet. When he got to them they took his bowl and offered him a seat, although they were still reticent to show him marks of respect beyond that.⁵⁶ He told the five that he was now a fully awakened being and that, if they were to follow his instructions, they could become awakened too. Both these claims were met with scepticism. “Friend Gotama, even though practicing austerities, you failed to attain any elevated states, any higher knowledge or vision worthy of saints. As you have now given up striving and reverted to the life of abundance, how could you have achieved such a state now?”

The Buddha replied: “Have you ever known me to say something like this to you before?” This unexpectedly personal appeal, drawing on their years together, made the five monks pause and think, and they admitted that, indeed, Gotama had never made such a claim in all the time they had known him. Disapproval was now put aside, and they agreed to listen to what he had to say. Over the next few days the Buddha and his five companions held what would now be dubbed a workshop, with some receiving instruction while others went alms gathering, and all six eating what was collected.⁵⁷ What the Buddha imparted to them was later summarised into two suttas called the Discourse Setting into Motion the Wheel of the Dhamma and the Discourse on the Sign of Not-self, which together present a point by point, easily digestible account of the central features of what was to become Buddhism: the Four Noble Truths, the Noble Eightfold Path and the concept of no phenomena being a permanent self or its possession.⁵⁸

Being the first monks ordained by the Buddha and thus senior to all the many others who were to come, one would have expected the five to be held in particularly high regard and their careers to be fully documented, but this is not the case. Were they retiring types who spent the rest of their lives in solitude and meditation, or did they die shortly after their ordinations? We do not know.

Image on the previous page: The Buddha Preaching his First Sermon is a stone sculpture of the 5th-century CE showing Gautama Buddha in the “teaching posture” or dharmachakra pravartana mudrā

55. Mahāvastu III,324 and Lalitavistara XXVI,6-7 give the Buddha’s itinerary from Uruvelā to Isipatana, 56. M.I,171-173.57. M.I,173.58. Vin.I, 13-14; S.V,420-424.



The Lord is awakened; he teaches the Dhamma for awakening.
The Lord is tamed; he teaches the Dhamma for taming.
The Lord is calmed; he teaches the Dhamma for calming.
Majjhima Nikāya I, 235

The Buddha's awakening experience (bodhi) and the subsequent transformation it brought about within him led him to believe that he was a completely different type of human being, psychologically and ethically far above others, although still human.

He believed himself to be a Buddha and often referred to himself as being an Arahant or a Tathāgata. The epithet 'Buddha' comes from the past participle of the noun bujjhati, which means 'to awaken' or 'to be awake' and, when used in reference to a person, means one who has awakened to or realized something. Arahant was a pre-Buddhist term for those in positions of power or authority and means something like 'worthy one.'

'Tathāgata' is an unusual word in which tatha could be used as an adjective meaning true or real or as the adverb tathā meaning thus or so. The former is probably meant. Further, if the word is arranged tathā + āgata it can mean 'he who has come to the truth' or tathā + gata, 'he who had thus gone.'

His role was to draw their attention to truths which were, in a sense, already available to anyone who was able to clarify their perception enough to see them. He put it like this:

"Whether Tathāgatas appear in the world or not, this order exists: the fixed nature of phenomena, their regular pattern and their general conditionality. The Tathāgata discovers this and comprehends it and, having done so, he points it out and teaches it, explains and establishes it, reveals, analyses and clarifies it and says 'Look.'⁵

Thus the Buddha saw himself primarily as a teacher – not the aloof and distant type, but one motivated only by a deep compassion for humanity.

He said of himself:

"There is one person who is born into the world for the welfare of the many, for the happiness of the many, out of compassion for the world, for the welfare and happiness of both gods and humans. Who is that person? It is the Tathāgata, the Worthy One, the fully awakened Buddha."⁶

Image on the right : View Of Vajra Vidya Monastery At Sarnath
5. S.II, 25. 150 6. A.I,22. 7. M.I,46.

He reminded his disciples that when he reproached or even scolded them, his motive was always a compassionate concern for their well- being:
"Whatever has to be done by a teacher out of compassion for his disciples and for their welfare, I have done for you."⁷

Even those who had only a passing contact with the Buddha noticed that compassion and kindness were the most noticeable features of his character. The physician Jīvaka said this to him: "Sir, I have heard it said that Brahmā abides in love, but with my own eyes I have seen that the Lord abides in love."⁸

He was praised as "the healer of the world" and "the compassionate teacher, the supreme physician and surgeon" who extracts the poison arrow of craving. The popular perception of the Buddha, even by Buddhists themselves, is that he was a semi-recluse who spent most of his time alone in forest glades and mountain caves. This perception is not supported by the Tipitaka, which depicts him as most commonly residing within walking distance of the large cities and towns of the time and frequently communicating with people. Even when he was travelling through rural areas or had gone to forest retreats, he was always near a village or hamlet, which he relied on for his food. His audience came from all backgrounds, although typically they were city-dwellers or towns-folk, often from the economic, religious and political class.

7. M.I,46., 8. M.I,369.



They included merchants, ascetics of various sects, military men, and occasionally even royalty. Sunidha, Vassakāra and Ugga were each senior government ministers, Jīvaka was a physician, Sīha a general, Abhaya a prince, Cundi and Sumanā were both princesses, Gaṇaka Moggallāna was an accountant, and Ambapālī a courtesan.

Many of the brahmins he dialogued with were the leaders of their clans and communities or eminent scholars, and a small but significant number of them became his disciples and even monks. Others, such as Anāthapiṇḍaka, Ghosita, Kukkuṭa, Kālaka and Pāvārika, were wealthy businessmen. Such people were typically familiar with and interested in the various religious and philosophical theories being aired at the time and in some cases were quite capable of discussing the finer points of these different teachings. This should not be taken to mean that the Buddha had nothing to say to ordinary folk, that his Dhamma was not relevant to or was of little interest to them.

The carpenter Pañcakanga had a long talk with the Buddha and another with the monk Anuruddha, and he was confident enough of his grasp of the Dhamma to correct another monk's misunderstanding of it. Both Sunīta and Ariṭṭha were from the very bottom of the social ladder before becoming monks, the first a scavenger and the second was a vulture killer.¹³

Like all such communication, the Buddha used these initial brief exchanges to let people know that they were meeting him on a basis of friendliness and mutual respect. Such openings were accompanied by polite physical gestures: joining palms in the añjali gesture and sitting down at what was considered an appropriate distance from him. As for brahmins, some admired the Buddha, others were cautious of him, having heard of his attitude towards aspects of their religion, and some were reluctant to be seen conversing on equal terms with someone they considered their inferior.

Meetings with them might go like this:

“Some greeted the Lord and sat down at one side, some greeted him and chatted briefly in a courteous and friendly manner and then sat down, some put their hands together in the añjali gesture and sat down, some announced their names and clan and sat down, and some sat down at one side without saying anything.”¹⁷

A third riverine parable was used by the Buddha to explain his role in helping humankind to see the problems involved in ordinary conditioned existence: “Imagine a lovely, delightful river and a man being carried along it by the current. Then imagine that a perceptive man standing on the bank were to see this and call out, ‘Hey sir! Further downstream there are rapids and whirlpools, crocodiles and demons, and if you end up there you will suffer death or death-like pain.’ Hearing this, the man in the river would struggle against the current with his hands and feet.”

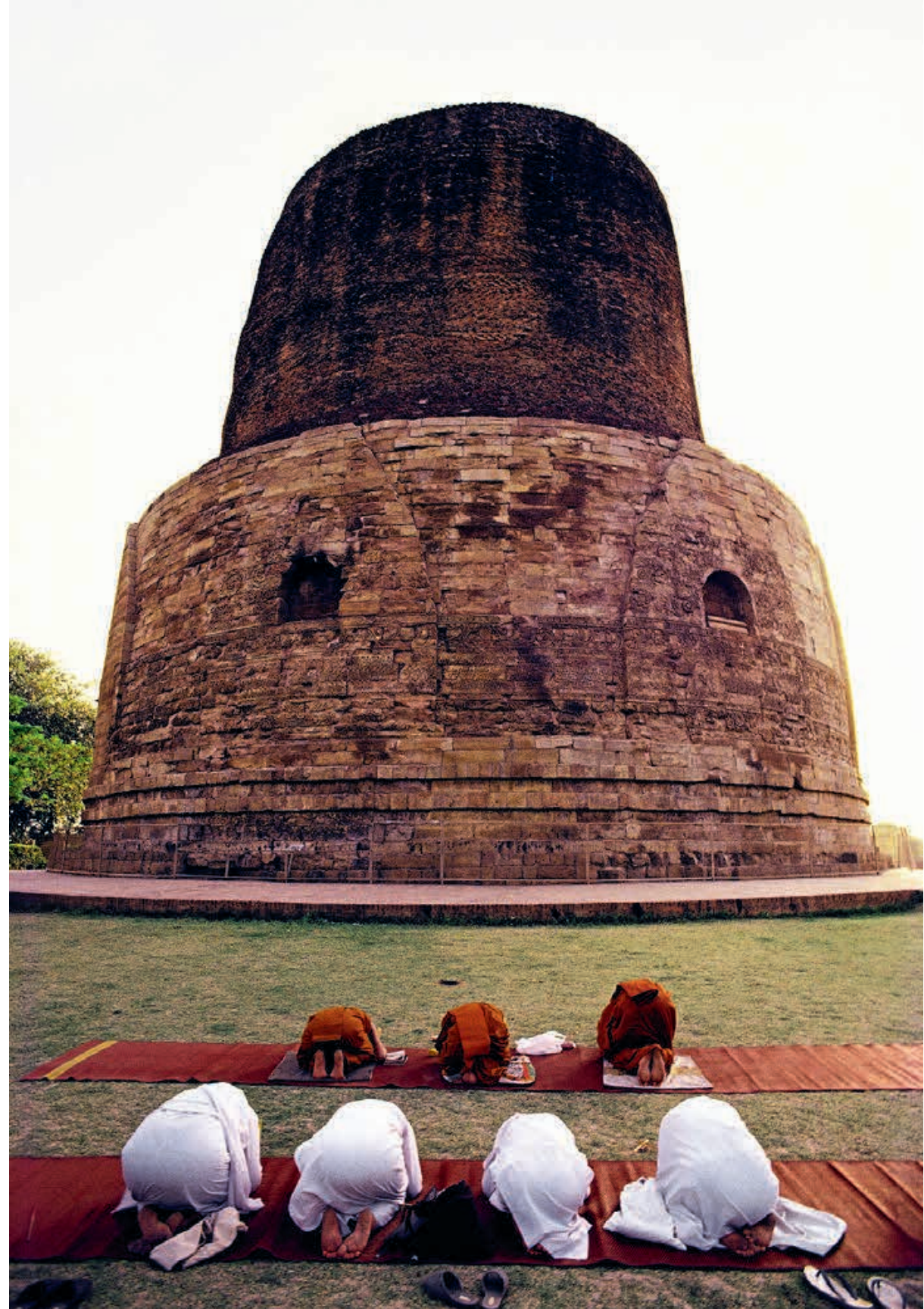
The Buddha then explained that each element of the parable represented an aspect of the spiritual life – e.g., the river for craving, struggling against the current for renunciation, and the perceptive man on the river bank for himself.²⁶ An aspect of the Buddha's approach to teaching which rarely gets mentioned is its gentle humour. His discourses and dialogues are replete with puns, humorous exaggerations, wordplay, irony and occasional satire. None of this would have caused guffaws or giggles, but some of it may well have raised a smile.

“Monks, when you understand that the Dhamma is similar to a raft, you will let go of what I have taught, even more so things I did not teach.”²⁴ For a long time, the Buddha was content to let his Dhamma speak for itself, but as people began to seek deeper explanations of it and it started to be criticised and even misrepresented, he was compelled to participate in public debates and discussions. He soon earned a reputation for being able to explain his Dhamma with great clarity and to effectively defend it against criticism.

In one of the most heartfelt appeals the Buddha ever made, he said: “I tell you this. Let an intelligent person who is sincere, honest and straightforward come to me, and I will teach him Dhamma. If he practices as he is taught, within seven days, and by his own knowledge and vision, he will attain that holy life and goal. Now you may think that I say this just to get disciples or to make you abandon your rules. But this is not so. Keep your teacher and continue to follow your rules. You may think that I say this so you will give up your way of life, follow things you consider bad or reject things you consider good. But this is not so. Live as you see fit and continue to reject things you consider bad and follow things you consider good. But there are states that are unhelpful and defiled, causing rebirth, fearful, distressful and associated with birth, decay and death, and it is only for the overcoming of these things that I teach the Dhamma.”⁵⁰

13. M.I,130 ff; Tha.620-631.16. D.I,116. 17. M.I,401.25. A.II,201.

26. It.114., 24. M.I,134-5. See Gombrich 1996, pp.23-26., 50. D.III, 55-6, condensed.





The First Discourse of the Buddha

Dhammacakkapavattana Sutta — Samyutta Nikaya LVI, 11

Mahāvagga I.6 records this as the Buddha’s first discourse after his awakening.

Thus have I heard.

On one occasion, the Blessed One was dwelling at Bārāṇasī in the Deer Park at Isipatana. There, the Blessed One addressed the bhikkhus of the group of five thus:

The Middle Way

“Bhikkhus, these two extremes should not be followed by one who has gone forth into homelessness.

What two?

The pursuit of sensual happiness in sensual pleasures — low, vulgar, the way of worldlings, ignoble, unbeneficial.

The pursuit of self-mortification — painful, ignoble, unbeneficial.

Without veering towards either of these extremes, the Tathāgata has awakened to the Middle Way — which gives rise to vision, to knowledge, to peace, to direct knowledge, to enlightenment, to Nibbāna.

The Noble Eightfold Path

“And what is this Middle Way awakened to by the Tathāgata, which leads to Nibbāna?

It is the Noble Eightfold Path:

Right View
Right Intention
Right Speech
Right Action
Right Livelihood
Right Effort
Right Mindfulness
Right Concentration

This is the Middle Way which leads to peace, to enlightenment, to Nibbāna.”

Image on the left: View of the Chaukhandi Stupa, the place where The Buddha first met his five old companions on the Path, after attaining Enlightenment

The Four Noble Truths

“Now this, bhikkhus, is the noble truth of suffering: birth is suffering, aging is suffering, illness is suffering, death is suffering; union with what is displeasing is suffering; separation from what is pleasing is suffering; not to get what one wants is suffering; in brief, the five aggregates subject to clinging are suffering.

“Now this, bhikkhus, is the noble truth of the origin of suffering: it is this craving which leads to re-becoming, accompanied by delight and lust, seeking delight here and there; that is, craving for sensual pleasures, craving for becoming, craving for disbecoming.

“Now this, bhikkhus, is the noble truth of the cessation of suffering: it is the remainderless fading away and cessation of that same craving, the giving up and relinquishing of it, freedom from it, non-reliance on it. “Now this, bhikkhus, is the noble truth of the way leading to the cessation of suffering: it is this noble eight- fold path; that is, right view ... right concentration.

“‘This is the noble truth of suffering’: thus, bhikkhus, in regard to things unheard before, there arose in me vision, knowledge, wisdom, true knowledge, and light.

“‘This noble truth of suffering is to be fully understood’: thus, bhikkhus, in regard to things unheard before, there arose in me vision ... and light.

“‘This noble truth of suffering has been fully understood’: thus, bhikkhus, in regard to things unheard before, there arose in me vision ... and light.

“‘This is the noble truth of the origin of suffering’: thus, bhikkhus, in regard to things unheard before, there arose in me vision, knowledge, wisdom, true knowledge, and light.

“‘This noble truth of the origin of suffering is to be abandoned’: thus, bhikkhus, in regard to things unheard before, there arose in me vision ... and light.

“‘This noble truth of the origin of suffering has been abandoned’: thus, bhikkhus, in regard to things unheard before, there arose in me vision ... and light.

“‘This is the noble truth of the cessation of suffering’: thus, bhikkhus, in regard to things unheard before, there arose in me vision, knowledge, wisdom, true knowledge, and light.

“‘This noble truth of the cessation of suffering is to be realized’: thus, bhikkhus, in regard to things unheard before, there arose in me vision ... and light.

“‘This noble truth of the cessation of suffering has been realized’: thus, bhikkhus, in regard to things unheard before, there arose in me vision ... and light.

“‘This is the noble truth of the way leading to the cessation of suffering’: thus, bhikkhus, in regard to things unheard before, there arose in me vision, knowledge, wisdom, true knowledge, and light.

“‘This noble truth of the way leading to the cessation of suffering is to be developed’: thus, bhikkhus, in regard to things unheard before, there arose in me vision ... and light.

“‘This noble truth of the way leading to the cessation of suffering has been developed’: thus, bhikkhus, in regard to things unheard before, there arose in me vision, knowledge, wisdom, true knowledge, and light.

“So long, bhikkhus, as my knowledge and vision of these four noble truths as they really are in their three phases and twelve aspects was not thoroughly purified in this way [*], I did not claim to have awakened to the unsurpassed perfect enlightenment in this world with its devas, Mara, and Brahma, in this generation with its recluses and brahmins, its devas and humans. But when my knowledge and vision of these four noble truths as they really are in their three phases and twelve aspects was thoroughly purified in this way, then I claimed to have awakened to the unsurpassed perfect enlightenment in this world with its devas, Mara, and Brahma, in this generation with its recluses and brahmins, its devas and humans. The knowledge and the vision arose in me: ‘Unshakeable is the liberation of my mind. This is my last birth. Now there is no more re-becoming.’”

This is what the Blessed One said. Being pleased, the bhikkhus of the group of five delighted in the Blessed One’s statement. And while this discourse was being spoken, there arose in the Venerable Kondanna the dust- free, stainless vision of the Dhamma: “Whatever is subject to origination is all subject to cessation.”

And when the Wheel of the Dhamma had been set in motion by the Blessed One, the earth devas raised a cry: “At Baranasi, in the Deer Park at Isipatana, this unsurpassed Wheel of the Dhamma has been set in motion by the Blessed One, which cannot be stopped by any recluse or brahmin or deva or Mara or Brahma or by anyone in the world.”

Having heard the cry of the earth devas, the devas of the realm of the Four Great Kings raised a cry: “At Baranasi ... this unsurpassed Wheel of the Dhamma has been set in motion by the Blessed One, which cannot be stopped ... by anyone in the world.” Having heard the cry of the devas of the realm of the Four Great Kings, the Tavatimsa devas ... the Yama devas ... the Tusita devas ... the Nimmanarati devas ... the Paranim- mitavasavatti devas ... the devas of Brahma’s company raised a cry: “At Baranasi, in the Deer Park at Isipatana, this unsurpassed Wheel of the Dhamma has been set in motion by the Blessed One, which cannot be stopped by any recluse or brahmin or deva or Mara or Brahma or by anyone in the world.”

Thus at that moment, at that instant, at that second, the cry spread as far as the Brahma-world, and this ten thousandfold world-system shook, quaked, and trembled, and an immeasurable glorious radiance appeared in the world surpassing the divine majesty of the devas. Then the Blessed One uttered this inspired utterance: “Kondanna has indeed understood! Kondanna has indeed understood!” In this way the Venerable Kondanna acquired the name “Anna Kondanna-Kondanna Who Has Understood.” *Sutta Nipāta* 3.726

“Wander forth, O monks, for the benefit of many, for the happiness of many. Shower compassion on the world for the good, benefit, and happiness of gods and men. Let no two go in the same direction.”
The Four Noble Truths - by S. N. Goenka

The Buddha taught the Four Noble Truths, which includes the theoretical as well as the practical aspect of his teaching.

The Noble Truth of Suffering: the entire field of suffering has to be known by experience. The Noble Truth of the Arising of Suffering: the eradication of craving has to be experienced.
The Noble Truth of Cessation of Suffering: the realization of Nibbāna.
The Noble Truth of the Path Leading to the Cessation of Suffering: this has to be developed by repeated practice.

Hearing these truths and understanding them at the intellectual level is good but not sufficient. To benefit from these truths, it is essential to gain knowledge about them through experiential wisdom. Merely learning about them from others and understanding them at the intellectual level cannot make one sthitaprajña or an arahat.

Ref: Vin.I,5. <https://www.vridhamma.org/node/676#SpreadofDhamma>
 “Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta: Setting the Wheel of Dhamma in Motion” (SN 56.11), translated from the Pali by Thanissaro Bhikkhu. Access to Insight (BCBS Edition), 30 November 2013, <http://www.accesstosight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn56/sn56.011.than.html>

The Buddha taught his five companions how to develop in wisdom and get established in it. All five became established in wisdom and became arahats. In the following quotation from a tradition in our country, we find reference to such arahats:

Tasya prajñā pratiṣṭhitā (Bhagavadgītā 2.57-58)
Yathindakhīlo paṭhaviṃ sito siyā,
catubbhi vātehi asampakampiyo; tathūpamaṃ sappurisaṃ vadāmi,
yo ariyasaccāni avecca passati.

Dhamma-vandanā, Ratana-sutta-8

Just as Indra’s pillar (a strong post at the entrance of a city), that is firmly embedded in the earth remains unshaken by the winds blowing from the four directions, similarly I declare as truly virtuous that person who has fully comprehended the four Noble Truths by direct experience. Such an arahat who is established in wisdom remains unshaken under all circumstances.

May pure Dhamma spread!
May more and more people start practising Dhamma
to enjoy real peace, harmony, happiness!





View of the Mulagandhakutti in Deer Park.
This is the remnant of a huge temple where the
Buddha used to sit in meditation.



Pilgrims on the way to The Deer Park



The Buddha's Meditation Practice and Daily Routine

A Straight but Natural Posture

The Buddha said he would keep his body straight (*ujjuṃ kāyaṃ*)—that is, with an upright back, though not stiff or rigid. After meditation, he would often walk up and down, likely to ease the stiffness in his legs and stimulate blood flow.²⁸

Mindfulness of Breathing

During a three-month solitary retreat, the Buddha spent much of his time practicing mindfulness of breathing (*ānāpāna sati*)—being aware of the in-and-out movement of the breath.²⁹

He described this meditation as:

“Peaceful, sublime, a deliciously pleasant way of living” (*santo ceva paṇīto asecanako sukho ca vihāro*)³⁰

The Practice of Jhāna

A meditative state that the Buddha described in detail, taught to his disciples, and likely practiced often himself was called *jhāna*.

While the word *jhāna* originally meant “to think” or “to contemplate,” the Buddha used it in a new and very specific way. Several techniques can induce the *jhānic* state:

Mindfulness of breathing
Loving-kindness meditation
Concentrating on a coloured object

Preconditions for Jhāna

To enter *jhāna*, one had to:
Be ethically grounded
Avoid noise and excitement
Become more mindful in daily life

This, the Buddha said, gave rise to two kinds of happiness:

Happiness of being blameless (*anavajja sukha*) — a clear conscience
Happiness of being untouched (*avyāseka sukha*) — freedom from constant sensory bombardment

Ref:28. E.g.D.III,80

29. S.V,326. For details of this practice see *Dhammajoti* pp.251-288.

30. S.V,321.All above from FITD by Venerable Shravasti Dhammika

From Hindrances to Concentration

Regular practice would eventually weaken—or temporarily subdue—the five hindrances.³¹ Once that happened:

“Gladness arises in the meditator; from gladness comes joy; because of joy, mind and body become tranquil; due to this, happiness is felt; and a happy mind becomes concentrated.”

This sequence leads to the first of four levels of *jhāna*, each more subtle and refined than the one before.

The Four Jhānas

First Jhāna

In the first *jhāna*, thoughts are present, although few, and the joy and happiness felt is intensified due to the absence of sensuality.

Second Jhāna

The second *jhāna* is attained when thoughts stop completely, so that the mind becomes one-pointed, and one feels a profound physical and mental tranquillity. Joy and happiness are still present, only now they are a result of the concentration.

Third Jhāna

In the third *jhāna*, joy fades away, leaving the mind equanimous, mindful and clearly comprehending, and one's whole being is happy.

Fourth Jhāna

In the fourth and highest *jhāna*, there are no feelings of either happiness or unhappiness, only a crystalline mindfulness purified by a firm and unreactive equanimity (*upekhā sati pārisuddhiṃ*). This state gives access to insights that lead to awakening.³²

Jhāna Leads to Nirvāṇa

The Buddha stressed the role of the *jhānas* in attaining awakening when he said: “Just as the river Ganges moves, slopes and inclines towards the east, so too, one who develops and enhances the four *jhānas* moves, slopes and inclines towards Nirvāṇa.”³³

Ref:31. These are sensual desire, ill-will, sloth and torpor, restlessness and worry, and doubt.

32. This whole program of discipline and training is fully described at D.I, 62-84.

All above from FITD by Venerable Shravasti Dhammika

The Buddha's Daily Routine

“When I am dwelling dependent on a village or town,
I dress in the morning, take my robe and bowl,
and enter that village or town for alms.
After eating, I go into a nearby grove,
make some grass or leaves into a pile and then sit down,
crossing my legs and keeping my back straight,
I arouse mindfulness in front of me.”¹

Solitude and Silence

The Buddha often felt the need to refresh himself through solitude and silence. The Tipiṭaka says little about how long he meditated, but in one instance, he mentioned sitting completely still and silent for seven days and nights, during which he experienced intense happiness.³⁴

Day's Abidings (Divāvihāra)

He sometimes undertook what he called a day's abiding:

Once, he asked Ānanda to bring a sitting mat and follow him to Vesālī's Cāpāla Shrine so he could spend the day there undisturbed.⁵⁴

On another occasion, he chose to spend the day completely alone in the forest, instructing Ānanda not to follow.⁵⁵

Ref:1. A.I,182. 34. M.I,93.

53. M.III,111. The phrase uyyojaniyapaṭisaṃyuttaṃ yeva kathaṃ could have several different meanings, see Anālayo 2011, Vol. II, p. 692-693, note 43.c. 54. M.I,229; S.V,259. 55. A.IV,438. 56. S.V,12; V,320., All above from FITD by Venerable Shravasti Dhammika



Extended Retreats

At times, he would undertake longer retreats:

“I wish to spend the next half month in solitude.
No one should come to me except the person who brings my food.”⁵⁶

He would spend these retreats in nearby forests, such as:

The Mahāvana, north of Vesālī

The Guarded Forest near Kosambī (a royal reserve)

The Gosīṅga Forest near Nādikā, which had a park on its edge

The Buddha is said to have sometimes spent much of the night walking up and down or giving a talk.⁸⁸ Other texts simply say that he spent the night in the open rather than in a building or under shelter, and not just in the summer but even during the winter when nights could be very cold.⁸⁹

The evidence suggests that the Buddha was in the habit of finishing his meditation and starting his day's activities shortly before dawn.

Ref:56. S.V,12; V,320., 88. S. I,107; D.II,86. 89. Vin.I,196; S.I,107; Ud.59.

All above from FITD by Venerable Shravasti Dhammika





View of excavated ruins of Isipatana, Deer Park



Capital of Ashokan pillar inside the archaeological museum at Sarnath



Sri Lankan monks chanting at Sri Lankan temple at Sarnath



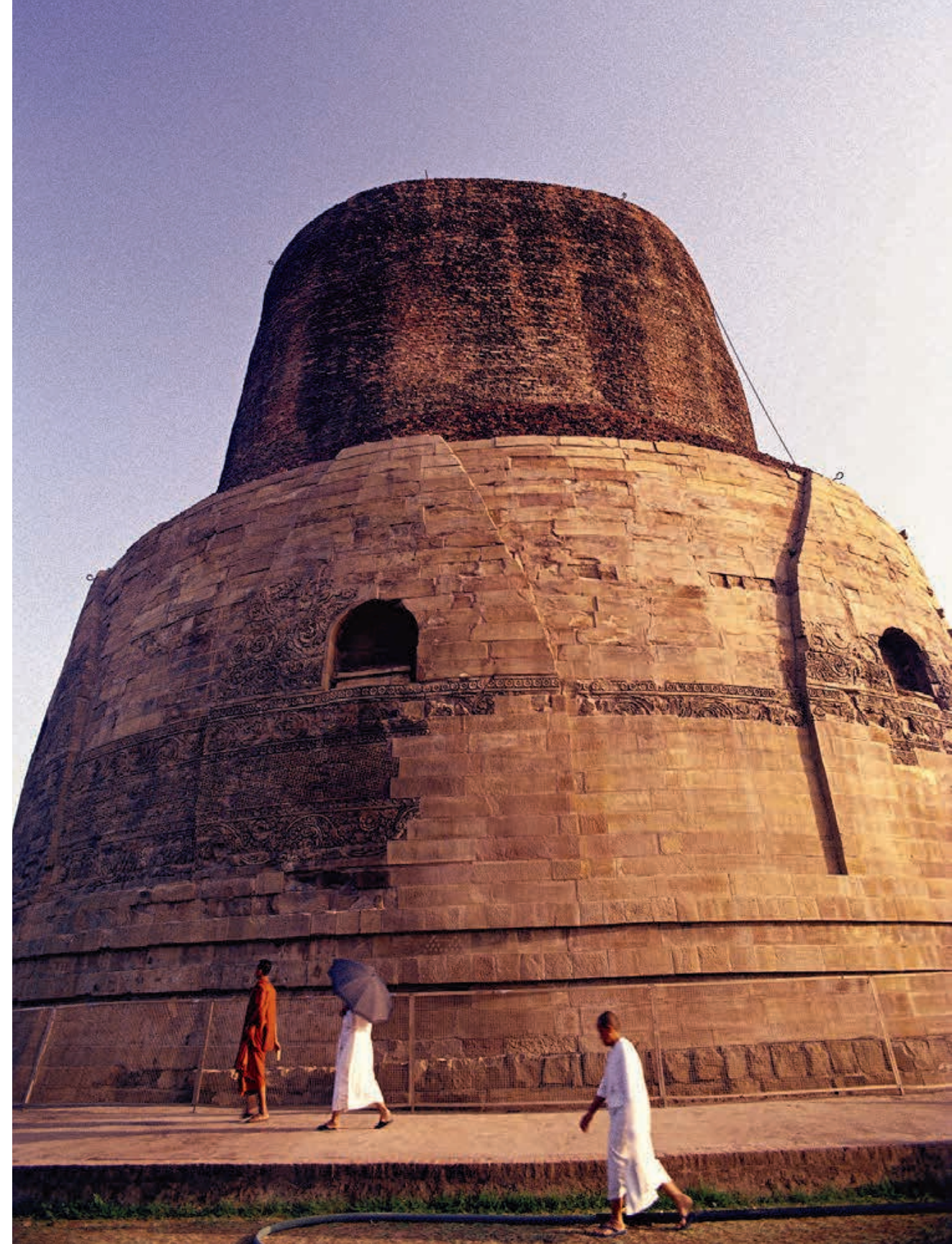
Umbrella of the Bodhisatva inside the archaeological museum at Sarnath



Dhamek Stupa is the most massive structure in Sarnath. In its current shape, the stupa is a solid cylinder of bricks and stone reaching a height of 43.6 meters and having a diameter of 28 meters. The basement seems to have survived from Ashoka's structure, while the stone facing displays delicate floral carvings characteristic of the Gupta era. The wall is covered with exquisitely carved figures of humans and birds, as well as inscriptions in Brahmi script. The stupa was enlarged on six occasions but the upper part is still unfinished. While visiting Sarnath in 640 CE, Xuanzang recorded that the colony had over 1,500 priests and the main stupa was nearly 300 feet (91 m) high.

An Ashoka pillar with an edict engraved on it stands near the site. Dhamek Stupa marks the precise location where the Buddha preached his first discourse to his first five disciples (Assaji, Koṇḍañña, Bhaddiya, Mahānāma and Vappa and where all five eventually became fully liberated. This event marked the formation of the sangha. Several of the ancient sources describe the site of this first sermon as a Mriga-dayaa-vanam or a sanctuary for animals. (In Sanskrit, the word mriga is used in the sense of game animals, with deer being the most common.

Ref: Wikipedia



The yakkha Ālavaka then addressed the Blessed One in verse:

181. “What here is a person’s best treasure?
What well practiced brings happiness?
What is really the sweetest of tastes?
How lives the one whose life they say is best?”

[The Blessed One:]

182. “Faith is here a person’s best treasure;
the Dhamma well practiced brings happiness;
truth is the sweetest of tastes;
living by wisdom, they say, one’s life is best.”

[Ālavaka:]

183. “How does one cross the flood?
How does one cross the sea?
How does one overcome suffering?
How is one fully purified?”

[The Blessed One:]

184. “By faith one crosses the flood,
by heedfulness one crosses the sea.
By energy one overcomes suffering;
by wisdom one is fully purified.”

[Ālavaka:]

185. “How does one gain wisdom?
How does one find wealth?
How does one achieve acclaim?
How does one bind friends?
When passing from this world to the next,
how does one not sorrow?”

[The Blessed One:]

186. “Placing faith in the Dhamma of the arahants
for the attainment of nibbāna,
one gains wisdom from a desire to learn
if one is heedful and astute.

All above from The Suttanipāta, translated from Pali by Bhikhu Bodhi

I,3 The Rhinoceros Horn

45. If one should find a judicious companion,
a fellow wanderer, of good behavior, resolute,
having overcome all obstacles, one should
live with him, satisfied and mindful.

46. But if one does not find a judicious companion,
a fellow wanderer, of good behavior, resolute,
like a king who has abandoned a conquered realm,
one should live alone like a rhinoceros horn.

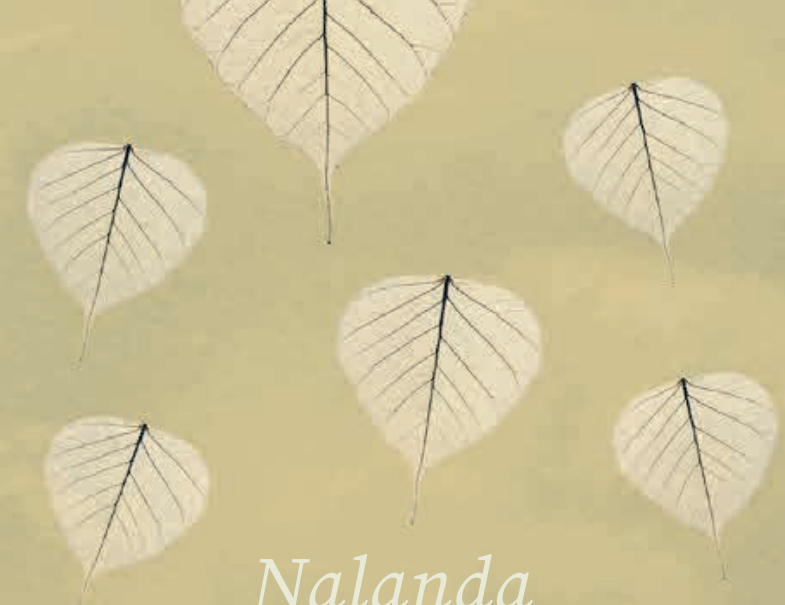
58. One should resort to the learned, a bearer of
Dhamma, an eminent friend gifted with ingenuity.
Having known the benefits and removed doubt,
one should live alone like a rhinoceros horn.

66. Having abandoned the five obstructions of mind,
having dispelled all mental defilements,
independent, having cut off affection and hatred,
one should live alone like a rhinoceros horn.

67. Having left behind pleasure and pain
and previously [discarded] joy and dejection, having
gained purified equanimity and serenity, one should
live alone like a rhinoceros horn.

70. Yearning for craving’s destruction, heedful,
intelligent, learned, mindful,
having comprehended the Dhamma,
fixed in destiny, vigorous in striving,
one should live alone like a rhinoceros horn.

All above from The Suttanipāta, translated from Pali by Bhikhu Bodhi



Nalanda

Centre of Learning in the Ancient World

Rajgir

The City of Kings



Sariputta Stupa: Temple No. 3

Sariputta, one of the Buddha’s most prominent disciples, was born and passed away in Nalanda. It is said that King Ashoka built the stupa at Nalanda to honour him. His relics were also enshrined in stupas at Sanchi and Mathura.

Nalanda: A Great Mahavihara

The term Mahāvihāra (from Sanskrit and Pāli) refers to a great vihāra—a major monastic complex or center of learning.

Nalanda was one such renowned Buddhist Mahāvihāra, flourishing in ancient and medieval Magadha (modern-day Bihar, eastern India). Often described as “the world’s first residential university,” Nalanda was located near the city of Rajagriha (now Rajgir), approximately 90 km southeast of Pataliputra (now Patna).

Origins and Patronage

Founded: Around 427 CE by Emperor Kumaragupta I of the Gupta Empire.

Support: Received from both Buddhist and non-Buddhist Indian and Javanese patrons.

Golden Age: Thrived especially during the 5th and 6th centuries, a period described by scholars as “The Golden Age of India.”

Later, Nalanda was supported by the Pala Empire (750–1161 CE) and, post-Pala, by the Pithipatis of Bodh Gaya. Though it was likely attacked by Muhammad Bakhtiyar Khilji around 1200 CE, Nalanda managed to remain active for decades—possibly even centuries—after the raids.

Image on previous page: Temple No. 3—also known as the Sariputta Stupa—is the most iconic structure at Nalanda. Its distinctive feature is the multiple flights of stairs that lead all the way to the top.
Ref:*1 Wikipedia, Nalanda Mahavihara

Global Centre of Buddhist Learning

Over its 750-year history, Nalanda attracted and produced some of the greatest minds of Mahayana Buddhism. Historian William Dalrymple remarked:

“At its apex, it was the undisputed scholarly centre of the Mahayana Buddhist world.”

Distinguished Teachers and Scholars

Nalanda’s faculty and students included:
Dharmapala
Nāgārjuna
Dharmakīrti
Asaṅga
Vasubandhu
Candrakīrti
Xuanzang (Hsüan-tsang)
Śīlabhadra
Vajrabodhi

Diverse Curriculum

The academic curriculum at Nalanda included:

Buddhist philosophies: Madhyamaka, Yogācāra, Sarvāstivāda
Vedas and Sanskrit Grammar
Logic and Mathematics
Medicine, Astronomy, and Alchemy

The Nalanda Library was a treasure trove of Sanskrit texts that were later transmitted to East Asia by pilgrims like Xuanzang and Yijing.

Some key works composed or preserved here include:
Dharmakīrti’s treatises
Bodhisattvacaryāvatāra by Shāntideva
The Mahāvairocana Tantra

Revival and Recognition

In 2010, the Government of India passed a resolution to revive Nalanda University.

A contemporary institute, Nālandā University, was established at Rajgir.

In 2016, UNESCO declared Nalanda Mahāvihāra a World Heritage Site. It is also recognized as an Institute of National Importance by the Government of India.

Origins in the 5th Century CE

A seal discovered at the site identifies Śākṛāditya (r. c. 415–455 CE) as the founder of Nalanda, establishing a sanghārāma (monastery) at the site.

This is supported by Xuanzang's travelogue, which affirms that formalised Vedic learning traditions helped inspire major learning centres like:

Nalanda
Taxila
Vikramashila

Nalanda flourished particularly under the Guptas in the 5th and 6th centuries.



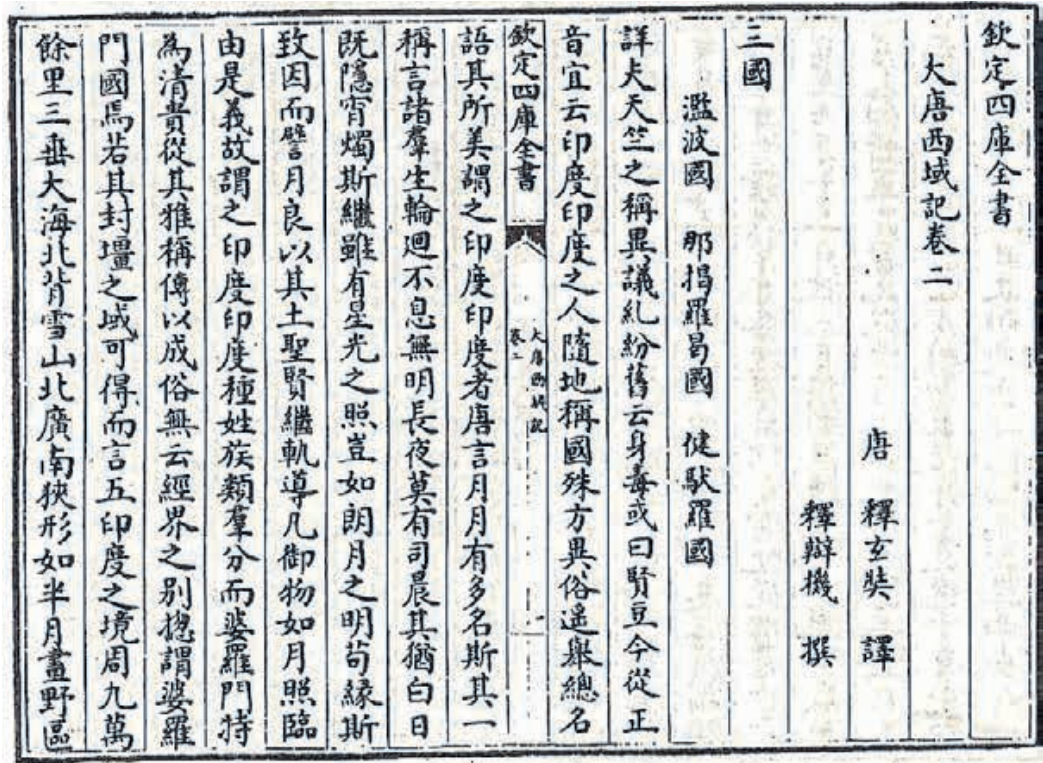
Xuanzang's Journey to Nalanda (630–643 CE)
Chinese monk Xuanzang visited Nalanda twice—first in 637 CE, then again in 642 CE—spending about two years there.

He was warmly welcomed and given the Indian name Mokshadeva. Under the tutelage of Śīlabhadra, the venerable head of Nalanda, Xuanzang fulfilled his goal of studying Yogācāra, a philosophy that had not yet been fully transmitted to China.

Besides Buddhist studies, he also attended courses in:

Grammar
Logic
Sanskrit

Later, he even lectured at the Mahāvihāra.



A page from Xuanzang's Great Tang Records on the Western Regions or Dà Táng Xīyù Jì
By Bianji (Chinese:) - Siku Quanshu, Wen Yuan Chamber, Public Domain, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=6504599>

In The Great Tang Records on the Western Regions (Dà Táng Xīyù Jì), Xuanzang offers a vivid description of Nalanda:

“The whole establishment is surrounded by a brick wall...One gate opens into the great college, from which eight other halls stand in the middle of the sanghārāma. The richly adorned towers and fairy-like turrets, like pointed hilltops, are congregated together. The observatories seem lost in the morning mist, and the upper rooms tower above the clouds.”

It is evident from the large numbers of texts that Yijing carried back with him after his 10-year residence at Nalanda, that the Mahavihara must have featured a well-equipped library.

The Great Library: Dharmaganja
Traditional Tibetan sources mention a vast library at Nalanda called Dharmaganja (“Piety Mart”), consisting of three grand, multi-storeyed buildings:

Ratnasāgara (Ocean of Jewels)
Ratnodadhi (Sea of Jewels) – nine storeys high and housed sacred texts such as:
Prajñāpāramitā Sutra
Guhyasamāja Tantra
Ratnarañjaka (Jewel-Adorned)



File:Prajnaparamita and Scenes from the Buddha's Life (top), Maitreya and Scenes from the Buddha's Life (bottom), Folios from a Dharmasamgraha (Compilation of Protective or Empowering Spells)
From: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nalanda_mahavihara



Excavated Ruins Of Nalanda University



Excavated Ruins Of Nalanda University, showing the structure and Design of Roof



View of the corridors of the University with rooms and sewage ducts



The Journey to Magadha

Prince Siddhattha crossed the river Anoma, took the robes of a recluse, and proceeded towards Magadha. He was new to the life of a monk. Near Anupriyā village, there was a mango orchard where he stayed for a week and experienced, for the first time, the happiness of monkhood. To learn meditation, he decided to go to a teacher named Alara Kalama (Ālāra Kālāma).

From Anupriyā village, he went straight to Rajgir (Rajagaha), the capital of the Magadha kingdom. On the main street of the city, he began walking from house to house for alms. The people were impressed by his radiant face and long-limbed (ājānubāhu) body. They had never seen such an attractive monk. Whoever saw him, kept gazing at him. King Bimbisara of Magadha, watching from his balcony, was similarly struck. Convinced that the monk was no ordinary person, he sent his men to follow him. They observed that as soon as the monk had received enough alms-food, he went to the Pandu cave on the city's outskirts, sat on a stone, and began eating.

Prince Siddhattha had never before seen—let alone eaten—such dry and tasteless food. Yet he consumed it with fortitude. The king's men returned to tell King Bimbisara what they had witnessed. The king went personally to meet the young recluse. After the monk had finished his meal, the king greeted him and asked, “You seem to be a youth from the noble class. Who are you?”

The young recluse replied that he was the son of a king from a republic in Kosala, located in the Himalayan Tarai region. He belonged to the Sun Dynasty and was Sakyan by birth.

King Bimbisara immediately recognized him as the son of the Sakyan king, Suddhodana, from the Kosala Empire. Suspecting that family conflict had driven the prince to become a recluse, the king offered him part of his kingdom. But the monk prince respectfully declined. He explained that he had renounced royal life to pursue the truth beyond all realms. Determined to attain this goal, he could not accept the offer.

Greatly impressed by his resolve, King Bimbisara requested that the monk return to Rajagaha to give a discourse once he attained enlightenment. The ascetic prince agreed and continued his journey.

Image on the left: Buddha Footprint Replica Inside Xuanzang Memorial, Nalanda
The following articles have been excerpted from 'Glimpses of the Buddha's Life,' published by VRI.
For more information, contact vri_admin@dhamma.net.in.

Uddaka Ramputta

After mastering the seventh jhāna (dhyāna, concentration, absorption) under Alara Kalama, the ascetic prince went to the meditation centre of Uddaka Ramputta. There, he quickly attained the eighth jhāna: nevasaññānāsaññāyatana.

This state is so subtle that perception (saññā, the evaluating faculty of mind) becomes extremely feeble—almost imperceptible. In this condition, it's difficult to determine whether saññā is present or absent. It becomes impossible to identify or label experiences: infinite sky, infinite consciousness, or even nothingness (śūnya) lose all meaning. Yet, the meditator is not completely without saññā. It is a state where one cannot say if perception exists or not.

Passing through this eighth jhāna, the Bodhisatta realized that this was the highest formless state of existence: the arūpa brahmaloka. Though one may live for thousands of eons in this realm, it is not immortal—it remains within the realm of Mara, bound by the cycle of life and death.

The Bodhisatta aspired to transcend even this—towards a state that is eternal, deathless, and beyond all misery. To do this, he would have to attain omniscience—to fully understand the causes of suffering and the way to liberation.

With this noble goal, the Bodhisatta continued toward Uruvela, a place suitable for deep meditation.

For centuries prior to the Buddha, Indian society was plagued by the evils of caste and creed. A person born into a so-called low caste or working in a menial occupation was deemed inferior.

Lower Castes:

Śūdra – The “low-born”

Caṇḍāla – Corpse burners

Bhangi – Sweepers

Cammāra – Cobblers

Upper Castes:

Brāhmaṇa – Priests

Kṣatriya – Warriors

Vaiśya – Traders

Even within the Brāhmaṇa class, hierarchies existed based on clans. Contact with the “untouchables” was avoided to the extreme—even their shadow was considered polluting. If touched, the upper castes would react with anger and violence.

Amidst these horrific conditions, the Buddha took revolutionary steps. He welcomed the lowest of castes into the Sangha. Becoming part of the Sangha elevated one's status to the highest social and spiritual rank—earning reverence from kings, nobles, merchants, and Brāhmaṇas alike. This was a profound social transformation. In this way the Buddha took a major step to uplift the lower castes.

Story of Suneet the Sweeper

One day, as the Buddha and his Bhikkhu Sangha walked the highway near Rajgir, a city sweeper named Suneet was cleaning the road. Being born in a family of destitutes and considered to be untouchable, the thought arose in Suneet's mind, “my shadow should not fall on the Buddha.” So, very hesitantly, he stood aside with folded hands. The Lord read his thoughts. Seeing the sweeper Suneet, a victim of the unforgiving, ruthless society's twisted ways; the Lord's heart was filled with compassion. He beckoned him and along with his Bhikkhu Sangha, brought him to the Vihara in Rajgiri's Venuvana.

There, he taught him Vipassana meditation. Suneet was ordained into the Sangha and began his forest practice.

Through diligence, he attained arahantship—full liberation. From a sweeper, he became a true Brāhmaṇa, a noble one.

Story of Sopaka the Outcaste Child

Sopaka, born in the Caṇḍāla clan, became orphaned at age four. Burdened by poverty, his uncle saw him as a liability. At age seven, the uncle tied Sopaka to a corpse and left him in a crematorium to be devoured by animals.

The Buddha, perceiving this with great compassion, sent a Bhikkhu to rescue the child. Brought to the Vihāra, Sopaka was ordained and given a meditation object. With earnest practice, he became an Arahant.

Anāthapiṇḍika: The Foremost Donor

Anāthapiṇḍika, a wealthy merchant from Sāvatti (Śrāvastī), had come to Rajgir to visit relatives. Hearing that the Buddha was invited to lunch at his brother-in-law's house the next day, he became eager to meet him.

At dawn, he walked toward the grove where the Buddha resided. Upon seeing him, the Buddha addressed him by name, “Come, Sudatta!”

Delighted, Anāthapiṇḍika listened to a Dhamma discourse, which brought him great peace. As a result of his past merit, he attained sotāpanna, the first stage of enlightenment.

He invited the Buddha for a meal the next day. After the meal, he said, “Venerable Sir, please spend the next monsoon in Sāvatti with the Bhikkhu Sangha.”

The Buddha replied, “O householder, the Buddha prefers solitude.”

Anāthapiṇḍika answered, “I have understood, Lord. I have understood, Blessed One.”

Back in Sāvatti, he began searching for a suitable residence for the Buddha—neither too far nor too close to the city, peaceful, and suitable for meditation. He found Prince Jeta's park, an ideal location. He went to the prince to buy it from him. The prince did not want to sell his garden. To avoid sale, the prince said that the entire land of the park had to be covered with gold coins as a price for the land.

Anathapindika agreed to the price and immediately fixed the deal. The land where the Buddha would teach the Dhamma was indeed invaluable! Anathapindika brought carts filled with gold coins and the coins were spread on the land of the park.

On seeing this, the prince was startled. One part of the land was yet to be covered by coins. Anathapindika instructed more coins to be brought but the prince took Anathapindika's hand in his own hand and said, ‘Enough, householder, do not cover this uncovered part with gold. This will be my donation.’

Cūlavaggaṇī 304-307, Anāthapindikavatthu

Anāthapiṇḍika accepted the offer. He constructed:

Residences
Halls
Water boilers
Storehouses
Lavatories
Covered and open walking paths
Tanks
Bathrooms
Tents

Thousands could now learn Dhamma under the Buddha's guidance.

The Buddha acknowledged Anāthapiṇḍika as foremost (agga) among donors—a legacy unparalleled in the history of charity.



A view of The Temple of Wat Thai, Nalanda



View Of The Gardens With Mini Stupa Of Venuvan Rajgir



Pilgrims meditating in Venuvan



View of the gardens of Venuvan Rajgir



The Ropeway, Rajgir



View of Virayatan Jain Pilgrimage ashram, Rajgir

Image on the right : View Of Shanti Stupa With Golden Buddha Statue In Dhamma Chakra Mudra Rajgir



The Sattapani Caves, Rajgir

Saptarni Cave, also referred to as Sapta parni guha (Saraiki) or sattapaṇṇi guhā (Pali), literally Seven-leaves-cave (cognate with sapta, sept), is a Buddhist cave site about 2 kilometres (1.2 mi) southwest from Rajgir, Bihar, India. It is embedded in a hill. The Saptarni Cave is important in the Buddhist tradition, because many believe it to be the site in which Buddha spent some time before his death and where the first Buddhist council was held after Buddha died (paranirvana). This sacred site is believed to be where the First Buddhist Council convened, with over 500 monks gathering to preserve Buddha's teachings after his passing.

The Council decided to appoint Ananda, Buddha's cousin, and Upali, who had accompanied the Buddha when he gave sermons in north India, to compose Buddha's teachings for the future generations. This was of special importance because the Buddha never wrote down his teachings. After the meeting in Saptarni Cave, Ananda created an oral tradition of Buddha's teaching from his memory, prefacing it with "Thus have I heard on one occasion". Upali is credited with reciting the Vinaya (discipline), or "rules for the Bhikshus". This tradition is found in Vinaya Pitaka II.284 through II.287 and Digha Nikaya II.154.

A 40-minute uphill hike from the back of the Lakshmi Narayan Temple takes you past Jain and Hindu temples to this atmospheric cave and natural rock platform, where Buddha is said to have meditated.

Ref: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saptaparni_Cave



An ascetic meditating at the Sattapani caves





Monks Praying At Satippani Caves Rajgir

Image on the left: Pilgrims Meditating At Satippani Caves Rajgir

The Atanatiya Sutta | The Protective Discourse

Thus have I heard:

On one occasion the Blessed One was living on the Vulture's Peak near Rajagaha (Rajagir).

Then four great kings having placed a guard over the four quarters, with a large army of Yakkhas, of Gandhabbas, of Kumbhandas, of Nagas; having placed troops; having placed a barricade of soldiers on four sides, came to the presence of the Blessed One, when the night was far advanced, illuminating the entire Vulture's Peak with their surpassing radiance, saluted the Blessed One and sat on one side. From among the (attendant) Yakkhas, some saluted the Blessed One, and sat on one side; some exchanged greetings with the Blessed One conversing in a friendly and courteous manner, and sat on one side; some saluted him with clasped hands, and sat on one side; some announced their name and lineage, and sat on one side; some sat on one side in silence.

Then the great King Vessavana (Skt. Vaisravana), who was seated on one side, said to the Blessed One:

“Venerable Sir (bhante), there are eminent Yakkhas who are not pleased with the Blessed One, there are also eminent Yakkhas pleased with the Blessed One. There are Yakkhas of middle rank who are not pleased with the Blessed One, and there are those who are pleased with the Blessed One. There are Yakkhas of inferior rank who are not pleased with the Blessed One, and there are those who are pleased with the Blessed One. The Yakkhas, bhante, as a rule, are not pleased with the Blessed One. What is the reason for this?”

“Well, the Blessed One teaches the Dhamma to establish abstention from killing, from stealing, from sexual misconduct, from false speech, and from liquor that causes intoxication and negligence. To them such teaching is unpleasant and unpalatable.”

“Surely bhante, there are disciples of the Blessed One. They frequent the remote recesses of forest and woodland wilderness where there is no sound, no tumult, where breezes are void of human contact, and suitable for man's seclusion and quiet contemplation. There are eminent Yakkhas who haunt these forests, who have no faith in the word of the Blessed One.

“Bhante, May the Blessed One teach the Atanata protection so that the displeased Yakkhas may be pleased, so that the monks and nuns, laymen and laywomen, may be at ease, guarded, protected and unharmed.”

The Blessed One gave consent by his silence. Then the great King Vessavana, knowing that the Blessed One had consented, recited the Atanatiya protection:

1. “Homage to Vipassi (the Buddha) possessed of the eye (of wisdom) and splendor. Homage to Sikhi (the Buddha) compassionate towards all beings.
2. “Homage to Vessabhu (the Buddha) free from all defilements and possessed of ascetic energy. Homage to Kakusanda (the Buddha), the conqueror of (the five-fold) host of Mara.
3. “Homage to Konagamana (the Buddha) who has shed all defilements, and had lived the holy life. Homage to Kassapa (the Buddha) who is fully freed from all defilements.
4. “Homage to Angirasa (the Buddha Gotama), the son of the Sakyas, who is full of radiance, and who proclaimed the Dhamma that dispels all suffering.
5. “Those in the world, who have extinguished (the flames of passion), and have perceived through insight (meditation), things as they really are, they never slander anyone; they are mighty men who are free from fear.
6. “Gotama (the Buddha) dear to gods and men, endowed with knowledge and virtue, mighty and fearless, all do homage to him (homage be to him).
- 7-8. “When the resplendent sun — offspring of Aditi — with its full orb, arises, then the night ceases, and it is called the day. The direction from which the sun rises (is the East). There exists the ocean deep and vast.
9. “This — a spreading sheet of water — they know as the ocean. Where there is East (to the East of Mount Meru) they say that quarter is East.
10. “Custodian of this quarter is a great king named Dhatarattha who has a retinue of attendants, and is sovereign lord of the Gandhabbas.
11. “Attended by Gandhabbas he enjoys their song and dance. Many are his (Datharatta's) sons, all of one name, so have I heard.
- 12-13. “Eighty and ten and one are they, Inda their name, and mighty are they. They too, beholding the Buddha — Kinsman of the sun, mighty and fearless — salute him from afar: “Homage to thee, who art unique among mankind; glory to thee, the noblest among men.”

14-15. “As by thy omniscience, thou hast looked on (mankind with a knowing eye), even the non-humans pay reverence to thee. This we have often heard. We, therefore, request the Yakkhas to pay homage to Gotama, the Conqueror (the Buddha). They too say: ‘We reverence Gotama, the Conqueror, we reverence Gotama who is endowed with knowledge and virtue.’”

16-18. “The direction from where the petas (corpses), backbiters, murderers, the fierce brigands, and the deceitful are removed, is the direction (to the right of Mount Meru), and is called the quarter of the South. The custodian of this quarter is a great king named Virulha who has a retinue of attendants, and is the sovereign lord of Kumbhandas. Attended by the Kumbhandas he enjoys their song and dance.

19. “Many are his (Virulha’s) sons, all of one name, so have I heard. Eighty and ten and one are they, Inda their names, and mighty are they.

20. “They too, beholding the Buddha — Kinsman of the sun, mighty and fearless — salute him from afar: ‘Homage to thee, who art unique among mankind; glory to thee, the highest among men.’

21-22. “As by thy omniscience, thou hast looked on (mankind with a knowing eye), even the non-humans pay reverence to thee. This we have often heard. We, therefore, request the Yakkhas to pay homage to Gotama, the Conqueror (the Buddha). They too say: ‘We reverence, Gotama, the Conqueror, we reverence Gotama who is endowed with knowledge and virtue.’

23-24. “When the resplendent sun — offspring of Aditi — with its full orb, sets, then the day ceases, and it is called night. The direction where the sun sets (is the West). There exists the ocean deep and vast.

25. “This — a spreading sheet of water — they know as the ocean. Where there is West (to the West of Mount Meru) they say that quarter is West.

26. “Custodians of this quarter is a great king named Virupakkha who has a retinue of attendants, and is sovereign lord of the Nagas.

27. “Attended by Nagas he enjoys their song and dance. Many are his (Virupakkha’s) sons, all of one name, so have I heard.

28-29. “Eighty and ten and one are they, Inda their name, and mighty are they. They too, beholding the Buddha, Kinsman of the sun, mighty and fearless salute him from afar: ‘Homage to thee, who art unique among mankind; glory to thee, the noblest among men.’

30-31. “As by thy omniscience, thou hast looked on (mankind with a knowing eye), even the non-humans pay reverence to thee. This we have often heard. We, therefore, request the Yakkhas to pay homage to Gotama, the Conqueror (the Buddha). They too say: ‘We reverence, Gotama, the Conqueror, we reverence Gotama who is endowed with knowledge and virtue.’

32. “Where lies delightful Uttarakuru (the Northern continent), where towers beautiful Mount Meru, there are born men who are selfless and unattached.

33. “They neither sow the seed nor use the plow. Spontaneously grown corn is there for them to enjoy.

34. “The rice, purged of the red powder and of husk, clean and sweet-scented, is boiled in golden vessels; it is this that they partake of.

35. “They make of cows a single-seated mount (like mounting on horseback)[9] and ride about from place to place.

36-37. “They make use of women and men, girls and boys as vehicles, and travel from place to place in them.

38. “Mounting on vehicles (on elephants and horses) they (the Yakkhas of King Vessavana) travel in every direction.

39. “This king who has a retinue of attendants, is possessed of elephants and horses on which he rides. He also has celestial chariots, palaces, and palanquins. He has cities well built in the celestial regions. “Their names are Atanata, Kusinata, Parakusinata, Natapuriya, Parakusitanata. To the North, the city of Kapilavata, to the South Janogha, and cities named Navanavati, Ambara-ambaravati and the kingdom of Alakamanda. Happy one (addressing the Buddha), this Kuvera (another name for Vessavana) has a kingdom named Visna, therefore, the great king Kuvera is called Vessavana. There are Yakkhas (of this king) who hold investigations and make them known. They are Tatola, Tattala, Tatotala, Ojasi, Tejasi, Tatojasi, Suro, Raja (Sura-raj) Arittho, Nemi (Arittha-nemi). There (in Visana kingdom) lies the lake Dharani whence rain-clouds (drawing water) pour them forth. And there is also the hall named Bhagalavati where the Yakkhas assemble.

40. “There (round about the hall) are trees bearing perpetual fruit. (On these trees) there are multitudes of birds. There also is heard the cry of peacocks and herons, and the melodious song of kokilas (the Indian cuckoo).

41. “There (near the lake) the cry of the birds, who call ‘Live ye! Live ye!’ (jivamjivaka) is heard. The bird Otthavacittaka (‘O lift your hearts!’), the jungle fowls, the crabs and the Pokkharasataka birds roam the woods.

42. “There the cry of the parrot, the myna-birds and the dandamanavaka birds is heard. And Kuvera’s lotus-lake ever lies in her beauty in all seasons.

43-44. “That direction (to the North of Mount Meru) is called by people the quarter of the North. The custodian of this quarter is a great king named Kuvera who has a retinue of attendants, and is sovereign lord of the Yakkhas. Attended by the Yakkhas he enjoys their songs and dance.

45. “Many are his (Kuvera’s) sons, all of one name, so have I heard. Eighty and ten and one are they, Inda their names, and mighty are they.

46. “They too, beholding the Buddha, kinsman of the sun, mighty and fearless, salute him from afar: ‘Homage to thee, who art unique among mankind! Glory to thee, the noblest among men.’

47-48. “As by thy pure omniscience thou hast looked on (mankind); even the non-humans pay reverence to thee, this we have heard. We, therefore, request the Yakkhas to pay homage to Gotama, the Conqueror (the Buddha). They, too, say, ‘We reverence Gotama, the Conqueror, we reverence Gotama who is endowed with knowledge and virtue.’

“Happy One, this is the Atanata protection whereby both the monks and nuns, laymen and laywomen may live at ease, guarded, protected, and unharmed.

“If any monk or nun, layman or laywoman learns by heart this Atanata protection, and be word-perfect in repeating it, and if any non-human male or female Yakkha, youth or maiden Yakkha, Yakkha Minister or any Yakkha, or Yakkha attendant; male or female Gandhabba... (as before); male or female Kumbhanda... male or female Naga... were to walk with him or her, or stand or sit or lie down with him or her with malevolent intent, such a non-human, Happy One, will not obtain hospitality from any town or township, will not obtain a place to dwell, nor could live in the Kingdom of Alakamanda. He will not be able to attend the meetings of the Yakkhas. Further he would not be accepted or given in marriage, he would be reproached (by casting remarks on

his deformed teeth or eyes or any part of the body), and the non-humans would put an empty bowl over his head and split it (head) in seven pieces.

“Happy One, there are non-humans who are fierce, violent, given to retaliation; those non-humans heed neither the (four) great kings, nor their ministers nor their attendants. They are called rebels against the (four) great kings. Even as in the kingdom of Magadha, the thieves heed neither the king of Magadha, nor the ministers, nor their attendants, and are called rebels against the king of Magadha, so there are non-humans who are fierce... (as before). They are called rebels against the (four) great kings.

“Happy One, if any non-human — male or female Yakkha, youth or maiden Yakkha, yakkha minister or any Yakkha, or Yakkha attendant; male or female Gandhabba... (as before); male or female Kumbhanda... male or female Naga... were to walk with a monk or nun, or a layman or laywoman, or stand, or sit, or lie down with him or her with malevolent intent, then should (the molested one) inform, cry aloud and shout to those Yakkhas, to the mighty Yakkhas, their commanders and chief commanders saying: ‘This Yakkha is seizing me, takes possession of me, is harassing me, assailing me, is harming me, harming me intensely and would not let me go!’

“Who are the Yakkhas, mighty Yakkhas and commanders, and chief commanders (to whom such appeal should be made)?

49. Inda, Soma, and Varuna, Bharadvaja, Pajapati, Candana, Kamasettha too, Kinnughandu, Nigahandu.

50. Panada, Opamanna too, Devasata and Matali, Cittasena and Gandhabba, Nala, Raja, Janesabha.

51. Satagira, Hemavata, Punna, Karatiya, Gula, Sivaka, Mucalinda too, Vessamitta, Yugandhara.

52. Gopala, Suppagedha too, Hiri, Netti, and Mandiya, Pañcalacanda, Alavaka, Pajjunna, Sumana, Sumukha, Dadamukkha, With these Serisakka.

“These are the Yakkhas, mighty Yakkhas, the commanders, the chief commanders to whom (the molested one) should inform, cry aloud and shout saying: ‘This Yakkha is seizing me, takes possession of me, is harassing me, assailing me, is harming me, and harming me intensely, and this Yakkha would not let me go!’

“This, Happy One, is the Atanata protection whereby monks and nuns, laymen and laywomen may live at ease, guarded, protected, and unharmed.

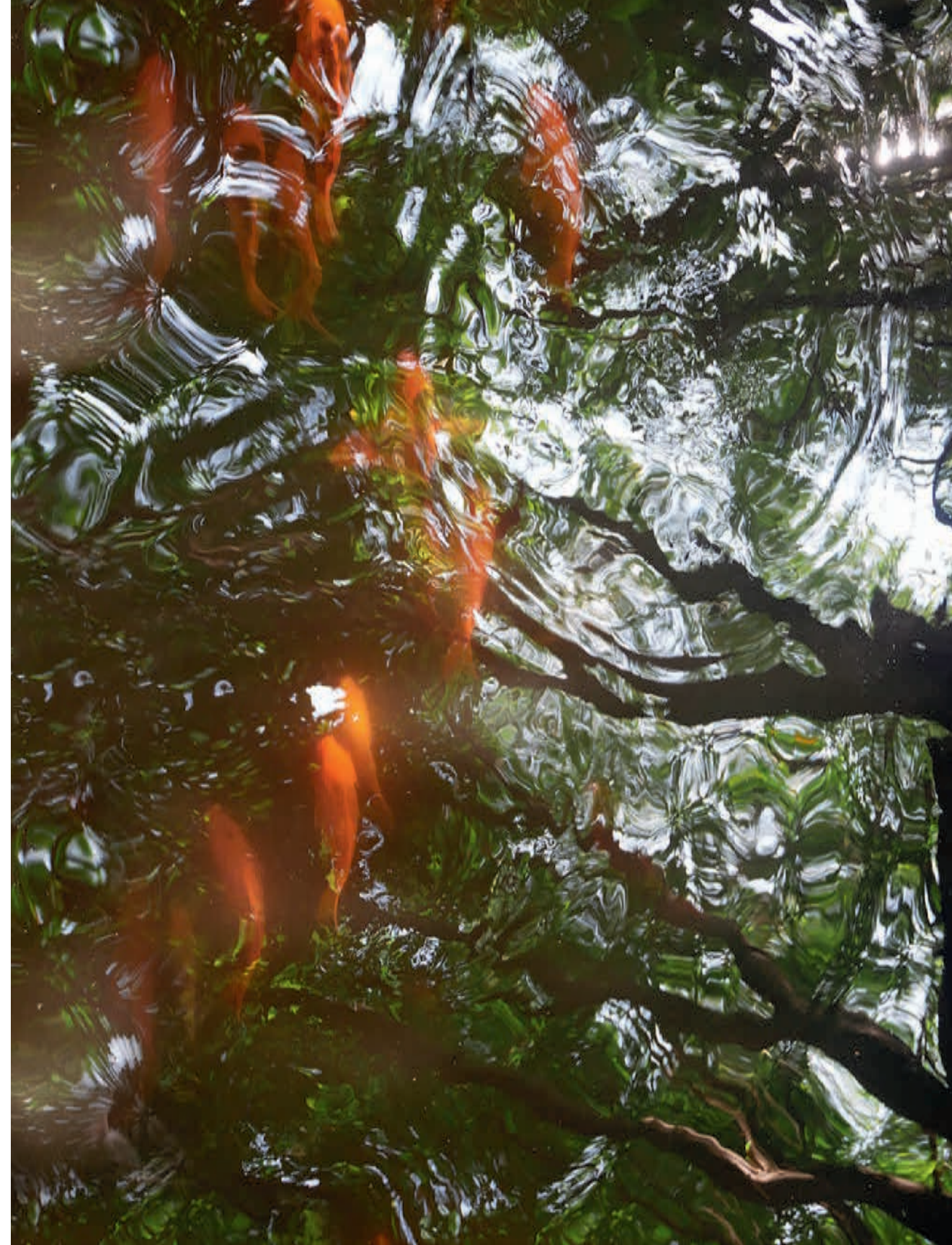
“Happy One, we now take our leave of you; for we have many duties to attend to (so said the four Great Kings).”

“Great Kings, it is time for your departure” (replied the Buddha).

The four great kings arose from their seats, and saluting the Blessed One, circled round him on his right side, and there and then vanished. From among the (attendant) Yakkhas some arose from their seats, and saluted the Blessed One, circled round him on his right side, and there and then vanished; some exchanged greetings with the Blessed One conversing in a friendly and courteous manner, and there and then vanished; some saluted the Blessed One with clasped hands, and there and then vanished; some announced their name and lineage, and there and then vanished; some in silence there and then vanished.

When the night had passed the Blessed One addressed the monks: (The Buddha related to the monks word for word what has been said by the great King Vessavana, see above.) “Learn by heart, monks, the Atanata protection, constantly make use of it, bear it in mind. This Atanata protection, monks, pertains to your welfare, and by virtue of it, monks and nuns, laymen and laywomen may live at ease, guarded, protected, and unharmed.”

This the Blessed One said. Those monks glad at heart rejoiced at the words of the Blessed One.





Monks praying at Anand's cave at Vultures Peak, Rajgir



Image on the left: Vulture's Peak



After the Mahāparinibbāna (passing away) of the Buddha, his chief disciple, Mahākassapa, was en route to Kushinagar with a group of 500 monks. It would take them another seven days to arrive, during which time the Buddha's physical remains were to be preserved.

Among Maha Kassapa's disciples there was one by the name of Subhadda who was very old in age, but very immature in Dhamma. When he heard of the Buddha's passing away, he jumped with joy exclaiming, "O wonderful the old man is gone! He was so troublesome, so bothersome with his rules stating do this, don't do that. Now that he is gone we are free to do what we want. No one can interfere."

Hearing this, Mahākassapa grew deeply concerned. He reflected:

"Certainly, there are many in the Saṅgha who are ripe and mature in the Dhamma. But there are also foolish ones like Subhadda. Now that the Buddha has passed away, such people will twist his words to suit their own purposes. They will claim that the Buddha said things he never said, or ignore teachings he did give, manipulating his words to serve their desires. By saying, 'The Buddha didn't say this,' they'll try to erase what they don't like. Such distortion will lead to the downfall of the Dhamma. What must be done?"

With this thought, the wise and experienced Mahākassapa resolved that the spoken words of the Buddha must be gathered and preserved.

Seven days later, when Mahākassapa and his followers reached Kushinagar, the Buddha's cremation was held. Then, three months after the Mahāparinibbāna, a historic gathering took place at the Sattapaṇṇi Cave in Rājagaha — the First Buddhist Council (Saṅgāyana).

The First Council (Paṭhama-Dhamma Saṅgīti) was held at Rājagaha under the patronage of King Ajātasattu in 544 B.C., after the Mahāparinibbāna of the Buddha.

This monumental event consisted of five hundred arahants and continued for seven months, all of whom had been close to the Buddha, assembled with the aim of reciting, authenticating, and preserving his teachings with utmost precision.

The Vinaya (monastic discipline) was entrusted to Upāli, a senior monk who had deeply absorbed the rules and guidance from the Buddha. He recited the Vinaya, and it was unanimously accepted.

The Suttas (discourses of the Buddha) were preserved through Ānanda, who had been by the Buddha's side and had committed to memory nearly all of his teachings. Ānanda recited the discourses, which were also accepted by all. The rest of the words and teachings were well known to Ananda, which he recounted and this too was accepted by everyone.

This was an immense undertaking. In a time when neither paper nor printing presses existed, preserving such a vast body of literature was no small task. Memorization required not just diligence but a commitment to retaining absolute authenticity, so that there could be no ambiguity or disagreement about what the Buddha truly said.

The Sangha reached a unified agreement: these were the authentic, spoken words of the Buddha. Nothing could be added or removed. This was the spirit and purpose of the First Council, which laid the foundation for a long tradition of councils that would continue to uphold and safeguard the teachings.

The Tradition of Councils

This event was a huge undertaking. In those days neither paper nor printing presses existed. This being such a large body of literature, it was not a small matter for people to memorise it in order to preserve it. And what's more, preserve it while carefully retaining its authenticity, the pristine purity of what was said, so there could be no argument regarding what was genuinely said.

So they came together on one common point of agreement saying that these were the authentic, proven words of the Buddha which no one should add anything to or remove anything from.

This was the first Sangayana. It kept Dhamma alive, giving birth to the tradition whereby the second and then the third, fourth and fifth Sangayana's were held. Then, 2500 years after the Buddha's time, the sixth Sangayana was held in Burma. At this time, wherever in the world the words of the Buddha, the Tipitaka existed - and they existed only in the five countries of Burma, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Cambodia and Laos - from these countries 2500 scholarly bhikkhus were invited to review and recite together the Buddha's words. The opinions of all had to be one, this was important, in fact a necessary condition.

Ānanda's Enlightenment

A poignant story surrounds the First Council. Three days before it began, Mahākassapa informed Ānanda that only arahants (fully enlightened beings) would be allowed to participate.

At the time, Ānanda was a sotāpanna (stream-enterer), not yet an arahant. Despite having heard and memorized the Buddha's every discourse, he now felt intense pressure — not just to attend the council, but to attain enlightenment.

Ānanda retreated to his cave on Vulture's Peak and immersed himself in strenuous meditation. Yet he made no progress. Finally, at dawn, just before the council, he sighed and surrendered. He accepted that he was not yet an arahant and decided to rest.

As he lay down, his awareness fully grounded in the present moment — without striving, without clinging to a goal — he attained nibbāna before his head touched the pillow.

Enlightened at last, Ānanda joined the council and recited the suttas — the very discourses that continue to shape and support Buddhist practice today.





Then the brahmin Kasibhāradvāja addressed the
Blessed One in verse:

6. “You claim to be a plowman,
but we do not see your plowing.
When asked, tell us about your plowing,
so that we can understand your plowing.”

[The Blessed One:]

77. “Faith is the seed, austerity the rain;
wisdom is my yoke and plow.
Moral shame is the pole, mind the yoke strap,
mindfulness my plowshare and goad.

78. “Guarded in body, guarded in speech,
controlled in food and belly,
I use truth for weeding,
and gentleness is my release.

79. “Energy is my beast of burden carrying one toward
security from bondage;
it goes ahead without turning back
to the place where one does not sorrow.

80. “In such a way this plowing is done
which bears the deathless as its fruit.
Having plowed with this kind of plowing, one is
released from all suffering.”



Cunda: Lord, How many ascetics are there in the world?
Please tell me this.”

[The Blessed One:]

84. “There are four kinds of ascetics; there is no fifth,
Cunda,” said the Blessed One.

“Being asked in person, let me explain them to you:
the conqueror of the path, the teacher of the path,
the one who lives on the path, and the defiler of the path.”

Cunda:

85. “Whom do the buddhas call a conqueror of the path?”

[The Blessed One:]

86. “One who has crossed over perplexity, free of inner darts,
delighted with nibbāna, without any greed;
the guide of this world together with its devas:
the buddhas call the impartial one a conqueror of the path.

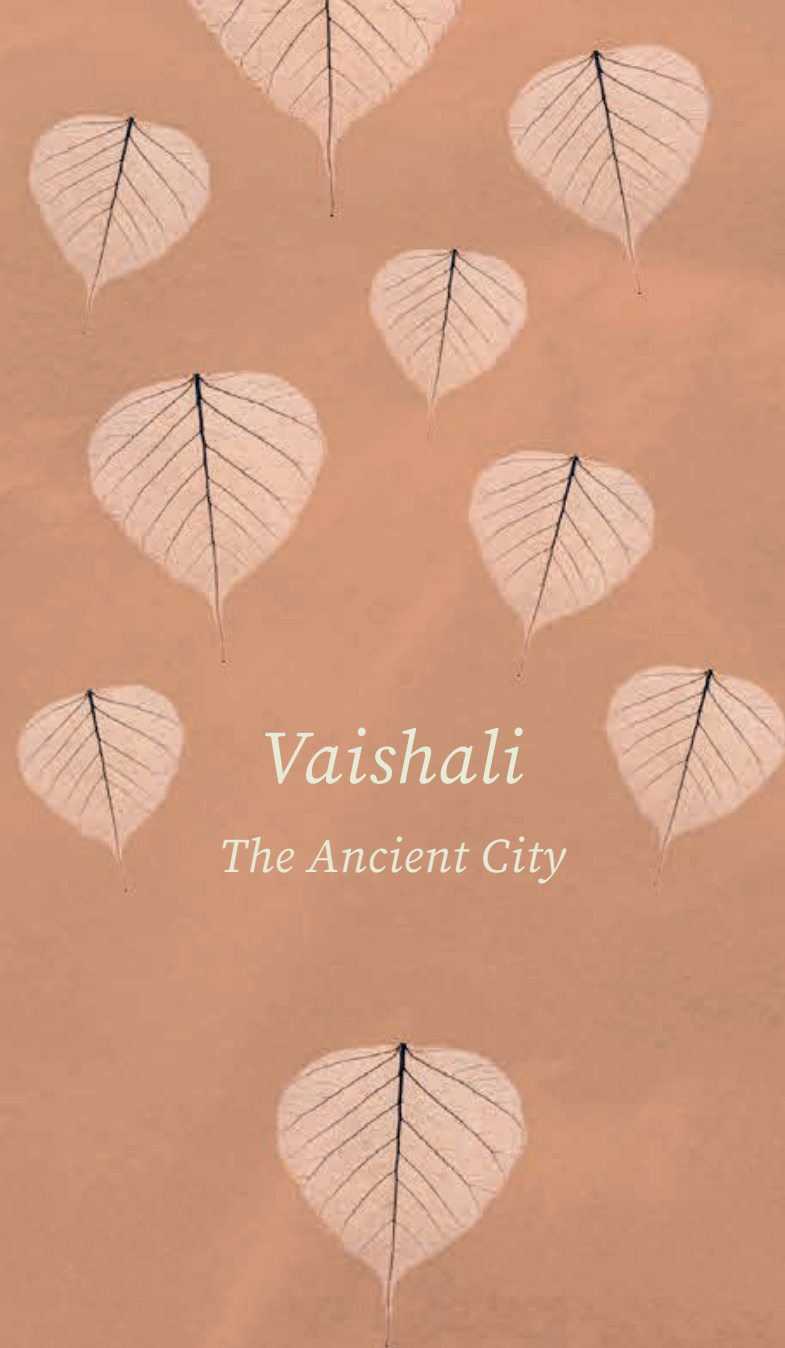
87. “One here who, having known the supreme as supreme,
explains and analyzes the Dhamma right here,
the muni who has cut off doubt, without impulse,
is the second bhikkhu, whom they call a teacher of the path.

88. “The one on the well-taught trail of the Dhamma
who lives on the path, controlled and mindful,
resorting to blameless ways of conduct,
is the third bhikkhu, whom they call one living on the path.



89. “Having taken on the dress of the disciplined,
one who is brazen, a corrupter of families, impudent,
hypocritical, uncontrolled, chaff,
living as a dissembler: he is the defiler of the path.”





Vaishali
The Ancient City



Vaishali, or Vesali (Pali), had been the capital of the Licchavis and the Vajjian Confederacy. In Buddha's time, Vesali had been a heavily populated, major city, rich and prosperous.

The Invitation to Vesālī and the Journey

At one point, Vesālī suffered a severe drought, causing a famine, widespread death, and disease. The stench of decaying bodies attracted evil spirits, leading to a further outbreak of intestinal illnesses. The distressed people appealed to their ruling prince, who convened a general assembly. After much deliberation, it was decided to invite the Buddha to their city for relief.

At that time, the Buddha was residing at Veluvana in Rājagaha. The Licchavi Mahāli, son of Vesālī's chaplain and friend of King Bimbisāra, approached the king with this request. Bimbisāra referred Mahāli directly to the Buddha, who, after hearing the full account, consented to the journey.

The Buddha set out with five hundred monks. King Bimbisāra adorned the entire route—stretching five leagues from Rājagaha to the Ganges—and ensured comfort and hospitality along the way. He personally accompanied the Buddha. Upon reaching the Ganges after five days, splendidly decorated boats were prepared. According to legend, Bimbisāra waded into the river up to his neck in devotion.

On the opposite bank, the Licchavis received the Buddha with even greater honor than Bimbisāra had. As soon as the Buddha stepped into Vajjian territory, a thunderstorm broke, and torrential rain fell, symbolizing the end of the drought. The path from the Ganges to Vesālī spanned three leagues, and as the Buddha approached, Sakka (the king of gods) came to greet him. At the sight of the devas, the evil spirits fled in terror.

One evening, the Buddha instructed Ānanda to recite the Ratana Sutta within the three walls of the city of Vesālī. He was to perform this recitation while circling the city with the Licchavi princes. Ānanda faithfully carried out this task over the three watches of the night, and as a result, all the pestilences afflicting the citizens disappeared.

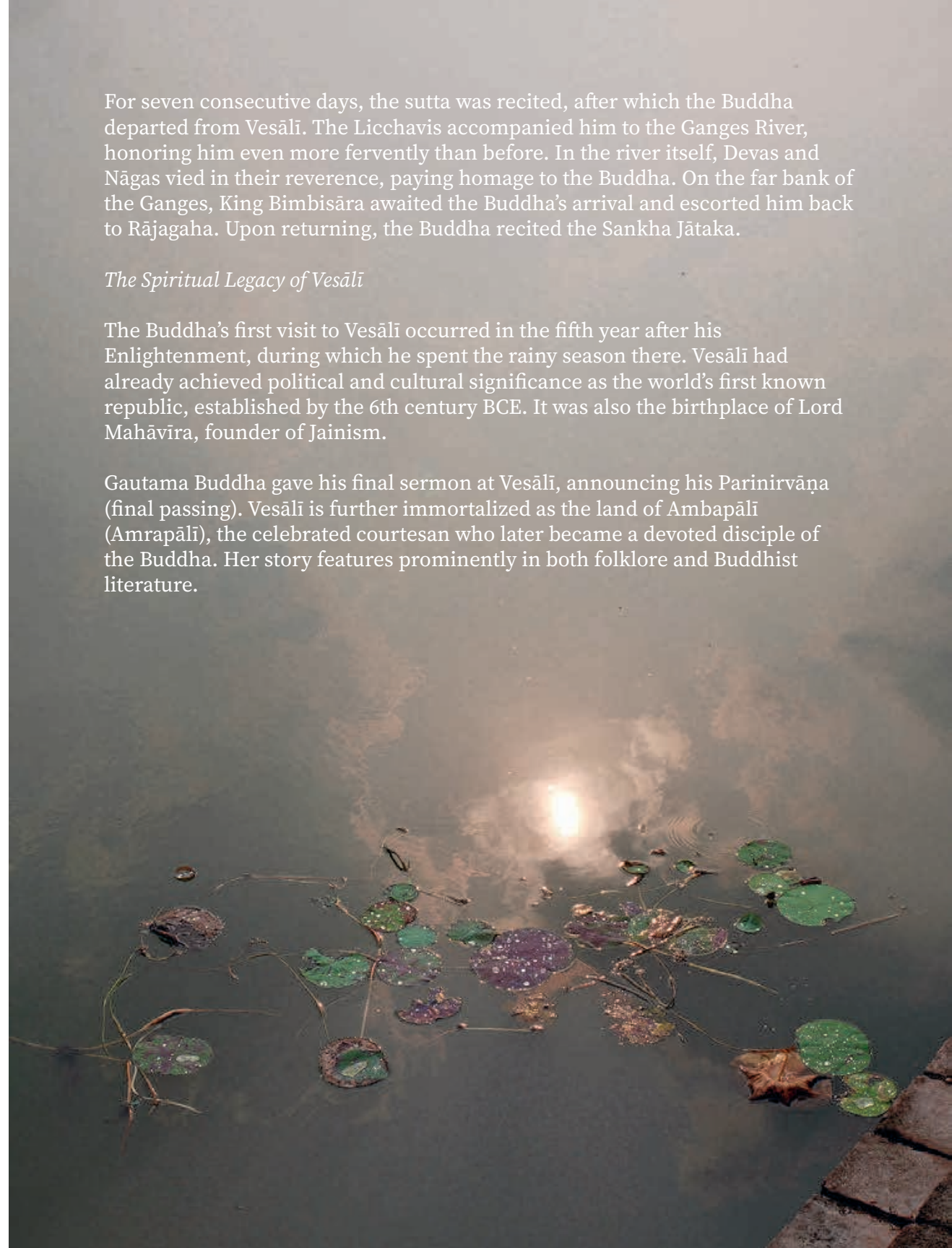
The following day, the Buddha himself recited the Ratana Sutta to the assembled people. This powerful teaching led to the conversion of 84,000 beings.

For seven consecutive days, the sutta was recited, after which the Buddha departed from Vesālī. The Licchavis accompanied him to the Ganges River, honoring him even more fervently than before. In the river itself, Devas and Nāgas vied in their reverence, paying homage to the Buddha. On the far bank of the Ganges, King Bimbisāra awaited the Buddha's arrival and escorted him back to Rājagaha. Upon returning, the Buddha recited the Sankha Jātaka.

The Spiritual Legacy of Vesālī

The Buddha's first visit to Vesālī occurred in the fifth year after his Enlightenment, during which he spent the rainy season there. Vesālī had already achieved political and cultural significance as the world's first known republic, established by the 6th century BCE. It was also the birthplace of Lord Mahāvīra, founder of Jainism.

Gautama Buddha gave his final sermon at Vesālī, announcing his Parinirvāṇa (final passing). Vesālī is further immortalized as the land of Ambapālī (Amrapālī), the celebrated courtesan who later became a devoted disciple of the Buddha. Her story features prominently in both folklore and Buddhist literature.





Relics, Memorials, and Departure

A kilometer away lies Abhishek Pushkarini, the coronation tank used to consecrate elected representatives of the Vesālī republic. Near it stand the Japanese Temple and the Vishwa Shanti Stupa (World Peace Pagoda), constructed by the Nipponzan Myōhōji sect of Japan. These monuments enshrine a small portion of the Buddha’s relics found in Vesālī—one placed in the foundation, and another in the chhatra (umbrella) of the stupa.

Nearby is Stupa 1, also known as the Relic Stupa, where the Licchavis reverently enshrined one of the eight portions of the Buddha’s relics they received after his Mahāparinirvāṇa.

After delivering his final discourse, the Buddha began his journey toward Kushinagar. The Licchavis followed him, reluctant to let him go. To ease their attachment, the Buddha gifted them his alms bowl, but even this did not dissuade them. Ultimately, the Buddha created the illusion of a flooded river, compelling them to turn back. This site corresponds to modern Deora in Kesariya village, where Emperor Ashoka later erected a stupa.

Just before the start of the vassa (rains retreat), Ambapālī hosted the Buddha and the monks for a meal, at the end of which she offered her mango grove (Ambavana) to the Saṅgha. The Buddha accepted her offering, and it became a place for monastic practice and reflection.

Ānanda, the Buddha’s beloved attendant, attained Nirvāṇa near the Ganges, just outside Vesālī.

The Decision to Enter Parinirvāṇa

On the last day of his visit, after his midday meal, the Buddha, accompanied by Ānanda, went to Cāpāla Cetiya for rest. During their conversation there, the Buddha announced his decision to pass away in three months. He first informed Māra, the embodiment of death and temptation, and later, Ānanda.

Then he delivered his final formal teaching to them:

*“Then the Blessed One addressed the monks, ‘I exhort you, monks:
All fabrications are subject to decay. Reach consummation through heedfulness. It
won’t be long until the Tathagata’s total unbinding. In three months’ time from now,
the Tathagata will totally unbind.”*

*That is what the Blessed One said. Having said that, the One Well-Gone said further:
Young and old, wise and foolish, rich and poor: all end up dying.
As a potter’s clay vessels, large and small, fired and unfired
all end up broken, so too life heads to death.*

*Then the Teacher said further:
Ripe my age, little the life remaining to me.
Leaving you, I will go, having made my refuge for myself.
Be heedful, monks, mindful, virtuous.
With your resolves well-concentrated, look after your minds.
He who, in this Dhamma and Vinaya, remains heedful,
leaving the wandering-on through birth, will make an end of stress.
— Maha Parinibbana Sutta, III*





Stupa with relics of Ananda with Asokan pillar.



Pilgrims circumbulating the Lichhavi Stupa, built over the corporeal remains of the Buddha





Dhammapada 26. Maṅgala Sutta

Discourse On Welfare - by Vipassana Research Institute (Sometimes known as the ‘vinaya’ for householders, the Maṅgala sutta is very popular among the followers of the Buddha. Two traditional opening verses that give some background are often chanted, explaining that devas and men had been discussing for a long time what was a true maṅgala. The canonical text begins with “Evaṃ me sutam” and tells us the immediate context for the sutta. The sutta is found in Khuddaka-nikāya, Sutta Nipāta, II. 4. Goenkaji’s morning chanting of this sutta on the ninth day of the ten-day Vipassana course begins with the Buddha’s answer to the question put to him.)

Yaṃ maṅgalaṃ dvādasahi, cintayimso sadevakā;
sothānaṃ nādhigacchanti, aṭṭhatimsaṇca maṅgalaṃ.
For twelve years [men] along with devas pondered, “What is welfare?” But they did not arrive at the thirty-eight welfares that bring happiness.

Desitaṃ devadevena, sabbapāpavināsaṃ; sabbaloka-hitatthāya, maṅgalaṃ
taṃ bhaṇāmahe.
The Lord of the devas [the Buddha] taught [that which] destroys all evil, for the benefit of the whole world: let us recite those welfares.

Evaṃ me sutam—
Thus have I heard—
Ekaṃ samayaṃ bhagavā sāvatthiyaṃ viharati jetavane anāthapiṇḍikassa ārāme.
Atha kho aññatarā devatā abhikkantāya rattiyaṃ abhikkantavaṇṇā kevalakappaṃ
jetavanaṃ obhāsetvā yena bhagavā tenupasaṅkami.

At one time the Blessed One was dwelling in Sāvatthi at Jeta’s grove, the
monastery of Anāthapiṇḍika.
Then, indeed, when the night was well advanced, a certain female deva of
surpassing beauty, illuminating the whole of Jeta’s grove, approached where the
Buddha was.

Upasaṅkamitvā bhagavantaṃ abhivādetvā ekamantaṃ aṭṭhāsi. Ekamantaṃ
ṭhitā kho sā devatā bhagavantaṃ gāthāya ajjhabhāsi:
Having arrived there and respectfully saluting the Blessed One,
she stood to one side. Standing to one side the deva addressed the Blessed One
in verse:
Bahū devā manussā ca, maṅgalāni acintayum; ākaṅkhamānā sothānaṃ, brūhi
maṅgalamuttamaṃ.
Many devas and men have pondered on welfares, yearning for happiness.
Please explain what is the highest welfare.

Bhagavā etadavoca:
The Buddha replies:

Asevanā ca bālānaṃ, paṇḍitānaṇca sevanā;
pūjā ca pūjanīyānaṃ, etaṃ maṅgalamuttamaṃ.

Avoidance of fools, the company of the wise,
honour where honour is due—this is the highest welfare.

Patirūpadesavāso ca, pubbe ca katapuññatā;
atta-sammāpaṇidhi ca, etaṃ maṅgalamuttamaṃ.

A suitable place of abode, the merit of past good deeds,
right aspirations for oneself—this is the highest welfare.

Bāhusaccaṇca sippaṇca, vinayo ca susikkhito;
subhāsita ca yā vācā, etaṃ maṅgalamuttamaṃ.

Great learning and skill, well-mastered discipline,
well-spoken words—this is the highest welfare.

Mātā-pitū-upaṭṭhānaṃ, puttadārassa saṅgaho;
anākulā ca kammantā, etaṃ maṅgalamuttamaṃ.

Serving one’s parents, caring for spouse and children,
a peaceful occupation—this is the highest welfare.

Dānaṇca dhammacariyā ca, ñātakānaṇca saṅgaho;
anavajjāni kammāni, etaṃ maṅgalamuttamaṃ.

Generosity, a life of Dhamma, caring for relatives,
blameless deeds—this is the highest welfare.

Āratī viratī pāpā, majjapānā ca saṃyamo;
appamādo ca dhammesu, etaṃ maṅgalamuttamaṃ.

Ceasing and shunning evil, refraining from intoxicants,
vigilance in the Dhamma—this is the highest welfare.

Gāravo ca nivāto ca, santuṭṭhi ca kataññutā;
kālena dhammassavanaṃ, etaṃ maṅgalamuttamaṃ.

Respectfulness, humility, contentment, gratitude,
listening to the Dhamma at the proper time —
this is the highest welfare.

Khantī ca sovacassatā, samaṇānañca dassanaṃ; kālena
dhammasākacchā, etaṃ maṅgalamuttamaṃ.

Forbearance, accepting guidance, beholding saintly people,
discussion of the Dhamma at the proper time— this is the highest
welfare.

Tapo ca brahmacariyañca, ariyasaccāna-dassanaṃ;
nibbānasacchikiriya ca, etaṃ maṅgalamuttamaṃ.

Ardent practice, a life of purity, witnessing the Noble Truths,
experiencing nibbāna—this is the highest welfare.

Phuṭṭhassa lokadhammehi cittaṃ yassa na kampati; asokaṃ
virajaṃ khemaṃ, etaṃ maṅgalamuttamaṃ.

When faced with the vicissitudes of life, one's mind is unshaken,
sorrowless, stainless, secure—this is the highest welfare.

Etādisāni katvāna, sabbatthamaparājitā; sabbatthasotthiṃ
gacchanti, taṃ tesam maṅgalamuttamaṃ.

Having acted in this way, everywhere invincible, they go
everywhere safely—that is the highest welfare.

The Highest Welfare

The Buddha's teaching was not merely for monks and nuns, but also for householders, many of whom used to come to him to learn Dhamma. One group came and said: "Sir, we are not prepared to become monks or nuns; we have to live as householders. Will the technique work for us? Can we also get liberated?"

He replied, "Certainly, it is a technique for all." Monks and nuns do not have any worldly responsibilities. So they can give their whole life to this purpose, and the results come sooner. Householders cannot avoid their multifarious responsibilities towards their family members, relatives, and society but the teaching also works for them. The Buddha gave a discourse to this group, explaining how to live a wholesome life. He listed thirty-eight welfares to be acquired by a family man or woman, each higher than the last. When he came to the highest, he said: Facing the vicissitudes of life the mind is not shaken; it is without grief, without impurity, without insecurity: this is the highest welfare.

Everyone has to meet vicissitudes in life but the mind should not get agitated; it should remain stable and balanced. Then there is no crying, no unhappiness, no impurity nor any feeling of insecurity in your mind. One always feels secure because one is on the path of Dhamma; nothing can go wrong. This is the highest welfare: equanimity with all the vicissitudes of life.

The story

As one of the main stages for the Buddha's countless activities, Vaishali does not exclusively represent any particular event, though a monkey giving honey to the Buddha is heralded as the most significant miracle associated with the site. The story of the monkey, as told in the Mulasarvastivada Vinaya, recalls a monkey stealing the Buddha's begging bowl, climbing into a tree, and returning the bowl filled with fresh honey as an offering to the Buddha. Upon the Buddha's acceptance of the honey, the monkey became overjoyed and fell to its death into a well. This created the link for the monkey to be reborn as a human and attain enlightenment. Variations of this story are found in several commentarial texts. The city of Vaishali is mentioned in both the Pali suttas and the Sanskrit Mahayana sutras, as well as in the commentarial traditions. For this reason, a portion of the Buddha's physical relics are enshrined at the site, making it a place of true pilgrimage.

The earliest mention of Siddhartha in Vaishali, in terms of chronological events of the Buddha's life, is in the Lalitavistara Sutra. According to this sutra, Siddhartha first ventured to the Licchavi capital on invitation, after renouncing his role as a prince. Upon arrival, he met a renowned teacher, Alara Kalama, who had perfected a meditative absorption leading to absence of the sense fields. Alara Kalama was immediately impressed by Siddhartha's presence and taught him his practice. Siddhartha quickly progressed with the practice, becoming equal to the teacher. "Monks, I then went to Alara Kalama and asked him, "Alara Kalama, you have understood and actualized this teaching, isn't that true?"

"Yes, Gautama, indeed I have," he replied.

I then told him, "I have also understood and actualized this teaching."

Alara Kalama replied, "Well then, Gautama, whatever teaching I know, you also know. And whatever you know, I also know. So now both of us should assume patronage of the students."

— Lalitavistara Sutra 16.5

As we see in the sutra, Vaishali was actually the first place where the Buddha was given permission to teach meditation, and an entourage of students. An ordinary being would likely have stopped their spiritual journey here, believing they had reached true accomplishment. Fortunately for all beings, Siddhartha knew he hadn't uprooted the cause of suffering.

"Monks, I then thought to myself, "Alara's teaching does not bring freedom. It would not bring total freedom from suffering for either of us. So now I must depart and search for a better practice."

Monks, since I had now stayed in Vaishali for as long as I found enjoyable, I proceeded to the country of Magadha and found my way to Rajagṛha, the capital city of that country.

— Lalitavistara Sutra 16.5

Later, as a fully awakened Buddha, he would return to Vaishali many times throughout his forty-five year period as a teacher in human form on this earth. In At Veshali: The Veshali Sutta, the Buddha gives one of his most simple and accessible meditation instructions on the breath.

"Breathing in long, he discerns, 'I am breathing in long'; or breathing out long, he discerns, 'I am breathing out long.' Or breathing in short, he discerns, 'I am breathing in short'; or breathing out short, he discerns, 'I am breathing out short.'"

He trains himself, 'I will breathe in sensitive to the entire body.' He trains himself, 'I will breathe out sensitive to the entire body.' He trains himself, 'I will breathe in calming bodily fabrication [in-&-out breathing].' He trains himself, 'I will breathe out calming bodily fabrication.'

— At Veshali: The Veshali Sutta

These basic breathing instructions taught to a group of monks in Vaishali are at the core of virtually every school of meditation, secular or non-secular.

On one occasion, when a rampant sickness was threatening to overwhelm the Licchavi people, the Buddha was invited to Vaishali to perform a ritual that would save them. The story is recorded in The Mahasutta "On Entering the City of Vaishali," and shows the Buddha taking on the role of a healer and exhibiting the power of mantra. On entering the city, the Buddha teaches Ananda a long mantra embedded with the power to drive out illness, and instructs him to recite it at the city gates. Empowered by the Buddha, Ananda drives out the epidemic and saves Vaishali.

Perhaps most notably, Vaishali is the site where the Buddha ordained the first nun, his aunt and former caregiver, Mahapajapati Gotami. This is documented in the Gotami Sutta. Gotami had initially requested ordination from the Buddha when he returned to his childhood home in Kapilavastu. The Buddha denied her request three times while staying there, and departed for Vaishali without granting her ordination.

Unwavering in her strong wish for ordination, Gotami shaved her head, donned beggar's robes, and set off for Vaishali, accompanied by a large group of Shakyan women. Arriving in Vaishali, she spoke with Ananda and again expressed her sincere wish for ordination. Ananda conveyed her request to the Buddha, continuing to ask on her behalf until the Buddha finally agreed. This marked the beginning of bhikkhuni ordination.

Lastly, Vaishali was almost the site of the Buddha's death. This would have been his resting place, had he not ward off a malicious bout of dysentery and vowed to live another three months before eventually passing into parinirvana in Kushinagar. While in Vaishali, the Buddha announced to the ordained sangha that he would die in three months' time, and then he delivered his final formal teaching to them:



VISHWA SHANTI STUPA

This stupa is a symbol of peace and love and enshrines the relics of Buddha in its foundation and top. Vaishali is the place where Buddha preached his last sermon before his Nirvana. The Vishwa Shanti Stupa is erected according to the teaching of the Saodharma Pundarika Sutra (The lotus Sutra) to disseminate love and peace and to create “The pure Land” on the earth.

The construction of the stupa all over the world was initiated by the most Ven. Nichidatsu Fuji Gururji, after seeing the tragedy of atomic bombs in Hiroshima and Nagasaki of Japan, at the end of the World war II. The Vishwa Shanti Stupa, Vaishali has been built by Nipponzan Myhoji and Rajgir Buddha Vihar Society. Through contribution of devotees in India and Japan.



Pilgrims walking towards Shanti Stupa





The Factors of Enlightenment (Bojjhaṅgas)

The following has been adapted from Goenkaji's discourse during the Satipaṭṭhāna course.

There are seven bojjhaṅgas (factors of enlightenment) that have to be developed to reach the final goal of full liberation. They are:

1. sati (awareness);
2. dhamma-vicaya (investigation of Dhamma);
3. viriya (effort);
4. pīti (rapture);
5. passaddhi (tranquillity);
6. samādhī (concentration, absorption) and
7. upekkhā (equanimity).

The first bojjhaṅga is sati, awareness. Without it, further steps on the path cannot be taken. Sati, the objective observation of reality, is the most important factor because it must be continuously present from moment to moment with every other factor.

Dhamma-vicaya is the second bojjhaṅga. The word caya or cayana means “to integrate.” Apparent, consolidated, integrated, illusionary truth creates delusion and confusion resulting in wrong decisions and actions. Vicaya or vicayana means to divide, dissect, disintegrate, separate, which is what Vipassana intends you to do. Initially dhamma-vicaya is intellectual. The body is analyzed as just four elements, with no “I” about it.

The mind is just the four aggregates. One observes the six sense doors, their respective objects, the contact of the two and the process of multiplication. The intellectual clarity gained by this process gives guidance to start the actual practice of Vipassana and study the truth at the actual level. To become a factor of enlightenment, dhamma-vicaya must become an experiential investigation—direct experience of the phenomenon of arising and passing away at the level of sensation.

The third bojjhaṅga is viriya (effort) as in sammā-vāyāmo in the Noble Eightfold Path. Great effort is required, but the effort is not to react, to let things just happen. Even if you have been victorious in a thousand battles against a thousand warriors, this inner battle of non-reaction is more difficult because the old habit is to do something, to react. Some pressure is necessary to drill a hole in a precious gem, but too much pressure will break it. It is a middle path.

As you keep practising with sati, dhamma-vicaya, and viriya, the impurities go away, and you experience the fourth bojjhaṅga, pīti: rapture. You have to be careful. If you develop attachment to this free flow of pleasant vibrations throughout the body, if you look for it and cling to it, it is no longer a bojjhaṅga. If the understanding of anicca remains—that this is still the field of mind and matter, of arising and passing—then pīti becomes a factor of enlightenment.

After this, the meditator experiences passaddhi: a state of deep tranquility and calmness. The mind becomes extremely peaceful, quiet, and tranquil. Again the meditator may have the false impression that this deep peace, never experienced before, is liberation. Just as pīti, can become a bondage if not used properly, in the same way, passaddhi can also become a bondage. You understand that it is only a midway rest-house: the final goal is still far away. You can check that the six sense doors are still functioning: open your eyes, or listen. You are still in the field of arising and passing. You have not transcended the field of mind and matter.

Thoroughly examine this passaddhi, this deep, tranquil, calm experience. Although difficult to grasp, a subtle oscillation remains, and this sensation is called adukkhaṃasukhaṃ (neither pleasant nor unpleasant). In pīti, the experience was pleasant; now it is just peaceful, and the danger is that anicca is not experienced. Detachment from craving towards pleasant sensation or aversion towards unpleasant sensation is much easier than detachment from this feeling of peace. You must be very attentive, with a very sharp mind, feel the subtle oscillation, check the six sense doors, and keep understanding that this experience is anicca. If you are aware of the very subtle oscillation, arising and passing, then it becomes a bojjhaṅga and gives you the strength to move further. Your experience grows.

There is often a question about adukkhaṃasukhaṃ or neutral sensations. The Buddha did not mean the initial, surface sensations which are neither pleasant nor unpleasant. That is totally different and causes craving and aversion because people get bored with it, lose interest, and want something else. Their experience has become stale. They want something more or new, something they don't have. This is their old habit pattern.

The next enlightenment factor is samādhi—concentration or absorption. Sammā- samādhi takes us beyond all the planes of existence and results in full liberation from the bondage of birth and death, and from every type of suffering. It is practised with sampajañña, the awareness of the mind-matter phenomenon and the realization of its nature of arising and passing. With the practice of sammā-samādhi (with sampajañña), one after the other, the meditator attains the fruit of sotāpanna, sakadāgāmī, anāgāmī, and arahant. Thus, samādhi becomes an enlightenment factor.

Upekkhā—equanimity is the seventh factor of enlightenment. Like sati, it must be present from the beginning to the end, at every step. Whichever other factor is being developed, awareness and equanimity must always be present. When the bojjhaṅgas are practiced properly, they increase and become perfect and when each is perfect, enlightenment is perfect.

This is the whole process of Vipassana.



Sculptures inside the Vietnamese temple depicting the first sermon given by The Buddha after his enlightenment to his five companions at Sarnath

Image on the right: Sculptures and Paintings from the Life of the Buddha inside the Vietnamese Temple





On the way to Vaishali, the landscape of Bihar



Thai rest stop



Vietnamese temple in Vaishali lit up in the night

The Ten Soldiers of Māra by Sayagyi U Ba Khin

You have to be very careful. You have to stand firm and face many difficulties, so that you can know true anicca (impermanence) with your own experience. You must work very hard—that is why we repeatedly remind you. Difficulties come at this stage of the course. During the time of our great benefactor, Saya Thetgyi, students would experience various difficulties in meditation, such as not being able to feel the object of meditation at all. When asked to focus their attention on the top of their heads, they couldn't feel anything. During Anapana they couldn't feel the area around the nostrils. Some could not feel their breath while they were breathing. Some said that they could not feel their bodies. While you are here, you too will find these things happening. Sometimes you will not be able to feel sensations and you won't be able to maintain your attention.

Some think that they have attained nibbāna (the ultimate reality) when they cannot feel their bodies. If you cannot feel the presence of your body, just hit it with your hand, or punch yourself and see. There is no need to ask the Teacher. You will know if your body is there or not. These uncertainties are rather disconcerting, aren't they?

The nature of vipallāsa (mental distortion, corruption) makes fools of you. These are undesirable defilements hidden inside people. They are present in every one of us. When there is understanding of anicca the defilements have to leave; but they don't want to—they want this understanding to leave instead. The nibbāna nature of anicca is very potent, so Māra (personification of negative forces) fights against it. The Padhāna Sutta describes the ten soldiers of Māra. We have to be careful of these ten soldiers, as they are the destroyers of meditation.

The following is condensed from a translation of a discourse by Sayagyi U Ba Khin to Vipassana students during a course. It was first published in the Sayagyi U Ba Khin Journal and has been adapted for the Newsletter., VRI

1. The Desire for Sense Pleasures

The first soldier of Māra is the desire to enjoy sense pleasures. Some people have come to meditate but not to attain nibbāna at all. They come with ulterior motives such as, "If I become close to Sayagyi, who knows so many people in high positions, I may get a promotion in my job." There are some persons like that. They come with greed in their hearts. They cannot be successful in their meditation. There must be no greed. When you asked for the technique of Vipassana you said, "Nibbānassa sacchikaraṇatthāya me bhante"—in order to realize nibbāna... I will teach you to understand the Four Noble Truths, but if you are not interested, and intend to take your time about it, what can I do?

2. Reluctance to Stay in Seclusion

The second soldier of Māra is unwillingness to reside or be happy in a quiet place such as a forest dwelling. Yesterday somebody planned to run away. He got up early and packed his belongings. He planned to sit at half past seven with you all, and then leave while I was checking the students at eight. He was planning to run like mad, catch a bus, and get home. He thought he would collect his bags at some later date. Luckily, I don't know why, I gave the one hour adhiṭṭhāna (strong determination) sitting earlier, and he had to sit that one hour. There he was—trapped! After the adhiṭṭhāna sitting, Māra left him, and he didn't want to leave anymore.

When unwillingness to reside in a quiet place arises, the person wants to leave and run away. He may inform us that he wishes to leave or he may just quietly leave. The second soldier does not want to stay in a quiet secluded place because of the turmoil inside.

3. Hunger and Unsatisfaction with Food

The third soldier of Māra is hunger—not being satisfied with food. One student came with boxes full of food and said that he could not stay without eating, so I said, "In that case you may eat, but try one, two or three days and see for yourself." However, he was not hungry at all during the ten days.

Another student said that after about three days of eating only twice a day, he would become shaky, and that in all his life, he had never done that for more than three days at a time. He asked for permission to eat and I said, "Of course, if needed." When he got here, he meditated the first day, the second day, and so on, and was not hungry at all. One does not feel hungry if the meditation is progressing, but only when the meditation is not going well. Something inside is making one hungry. One cannot control the hunger then. Once the meditator is established in meditation, he does not feel hunger anymore.

4. *Craving for various tastes and foods*

The fourth soldier of Māra is the craving for various tastes and foods. We provide the best food we can so that everyone will eat well and enjoy it. What happens when very tasty, delicious food is eaten? Doesn't this stimulate more craving for food? Is it possible to eat without any appreciation of the taste of the food? Only the arahant (fully liberated person) can do this. Wasn't the purpose of your coming here for this course to get rid of the kilesa (mental impurities), to get rid of the taṇhā (craving)? If you keep your eyes closed nothing can be seen, so you will not be craving and clinging for visual objects. The same goes for hearing. There is no one here with a tape recorder or radio playing songs. You don't have to listen to them. It is the same with smell. Nobody here goes around wearing perfume, so there need not be any craving and clinging for any sense of smell. There is nothing here for you to feel that will give you pleasant bodily sensations. But the tongue—can it avoid taste? Only if you don't eat, and in that case a doctor would have to give you glucose injections for sustenance. Taste will occur when food comes in contact with the tongue. If you eat less tasty food, then craving and clinging for taste will be reduced.

Since you have come here to get rid of your defilements of craving, we should help you by providing the best environment so that they don't increase, shouldn't we? You are trying to annihilate them. We don't want to eradicate craving on the one hand, and increase it by food on the other. We do not provide an evening meal. By not providing it we have so much less to do. It is better for us and better for you too, because you are sure to become drowsy if you eat an evening meal. So you can do without it. If you eat well in the morning and at lunchtime the two meals will provide enough for your body's requirements.

5. *Drowsiness, sloth and torpor*

The fifth soldier of Māra is drowsiness, sloth and torpor. You can understand this. Even Mahā Moggallāna (one of Buddha's chief disciples) suffered from it. Some of you can fall asleep while sitting. When I used to go for my meditation retreats, there was an old man who accompanied me. We sat in Saya Thetgyi's meditation centre in the meditation room and he sat behind me wearing a big yogi shawl. A little while later, he started snoring aloud. Normally there are not many people who can sit and snore, but there are many meditators who can do this—sit and snore, then wake up! This is called thīna-middha (sloth and torpor). Thīna-middha cannot be avoided. When insight and wisdom become sharpened, the peaceful nature of nibbāna is felt; and when the wholesome and unwholesome natures clash, a reaction occurs and produces heat. Then the person becomes drowsy and sleepy.

If you feel drowsy at times, just breathe a bit harder; you've lost your samādhi (concentration). This is a kick from within. Your samādhi has gone. If you lose your samādhi, focus your attention on the nostrils again, breathe harder and try to calm down. Sometimes when the aniccavijjā (the wisdom of impermanence) becomes stronger, you experience the meeting of physical and mental experience in your body and your insight-intuition becomes very sharp and very strong. Then there's a very strong kick from within and you lose your understanding of anicca and become disoriented. You can't understand what happened and you ask the Teacher.

If such a thing happens suddenly, there are two ways to cope with it. One method is to try and work to get reestablished in samādhi, as I have told you. Or, you can go outside and wake yourself up and the reaction will pass away. Do not go and sleep when this reaction happens. I am giving you methods to cope. They are important from the practical aspect. Drowsiness always occurs when saṅkhāras (impurities) come up. Then we have to apply anicca firmly. It should not be just paying lip service to anicca, not just from the mouth. It should be the actual knowledge of the changing nature of the body with the awareness of sensations. If you practise in this way, you will overcome and win.

6. *Fear of solitude*

The sixth soldier of Māra is not wishing to be alone and being afraid of solitude. Some cannot sit in one room but keep changing rooms, looking for company and feel frightened when alone. One female student was afraid of solitude. Her house is very big but she did not dare to stay by herself in any room; she needed a companion at all times. She came here to meditate and brought a maid with her. She asked my permission to keep the lights on when she meditated in her room, so I allowed her to do so. Not only that, but somebody had to sit quite close to her when she meditated. She did not dare to stay alone. When she was by herself she felt flushes all over her body. After staying for a course, she got a little better. After the next course she was in the little cell by herself in the dark. She came regularly for ten days every month and benefited quite well from it. She was first class in being afraid but her fear is gone now.

7. *Doubt about whether one can be successful in meditation*

The seventh soldier of Māra is doubt about whether one can be successful in meditation. I suppose this is true of everybody—wondering if his or her meditation will be successful or not. (That girl is laughing.) You can succeed. The important thing is to wash away the akusala (unwholesome conditioning), and kilesa (mental defilements) embedded in us. That is important.



Relics of the Buddha inside the Vietnamese temple, Vaishali



8. Becoming proud and arrogant when the meditation is successful

The eighth soldier of Māra is becoming proud and arrogant when the meditation is successful. When the meditation improves, one can feel it inside. The defilements become lighter and one tends to get conceited and arrogant, and think, “That fellow does not seem to be doing too well. I’d better help him.” I am saying this from my personal experience.

A long time ago when this meditation centre was started, there was no Dhamma hall. There was a ten-foot square hut that was here when we bought the land. One day one student came out after the morning sitting and said, “Look.” He hitched up his longyi and there were little lumps all over his thighs and legs just like the skin of a plucked duck. The kick from within was so strong that all those lumps appeared. He hitched his longyi up and showed us saying, “Please look. See how strong the kick from within was. You too, please try hard, please try hard.” The next day he could not meditate. He could not feel any sensations and had to approach Sayagyi for guidance. When he preached, there was ego in it, the “I” was in it, “I am doing well. These people don’t seem to be getting anywhere.” He played very good soccer, was very short-tempered, ready to hit, strike and punch. When a very bad-tempered person with a lot of heat has a kick from inside, it shows up on the body surface.

This is why I am telling you all not to preach. If there is anything that you want to ask, ask me. If there is anything that you want to say, tell me. If you progress in your practice, just stay quiet and proceed with your own meditation.

9. Teacher’s concerns of becoming well known

The ninth soldier of Māra refers to the Teacher and concerns becoming well known, receiving many offerings, gaining much respect and homage. I receive a lot of homage and offerings. I have to control myself to not get conceited. Look here, isn’t it likely to cause conceit? I have to guard myself. We started this work here for the people of the Accountant General’s office so they could meditate in their free time, but there are so few of them here now. We started this not on the basis of money, but on the basis of Dhamma. Any office worker who meditates for ten days becomes a member. The admission fee is ten days of meditation. Isn’t it good? No need to pay a cent of subscription. Just meditate steadily, guard your practice, do not lose it. We started from that and have come to this. Money can’t do it. It was Dhamma that did it. We believe in this, and we do not have any money either.

This centre does not belong to me. U Ba Khin should not get conceited, saying this is U Ba Khin’s centre. I do not own it. It belongs to the Vipassana Association of the Accountant General’s Office. I will have to leave if they drive me out. See, how nice! I do not own it. I have to be re-elected each year. Only if they re-elect me will I be here. If they say that they have found someone better than me, and elect that person, it’s over for me. Or some members from the committee may not like me, they may say I talk too much and elect someone else. Then I would have to leave. I do not own the place.

10. Following a false Dhamma, creating a new and special Dhamma

The tenth soldier of Māra is following a false Dhamma, creating a new and special Dhamma, in order to acquire abundant offerings, praising oneself and looking down on others. This is why I do not want to say too much about others. Let others speak as they like about us, isn’t that right? Some teachers get attached to receiving offerings, so as to get more students. They teach what the students would like—false teachings, teachings that are not Buddha’s teachings—simply because they want the homage and offerings. They stop working with true Dhamma. That is the tenth soldier of Māra.

Dhamma dissolves sorrows and miseries and gives happiness. Who gives this happiness? The Buddha does not give it, it is the aniccavijjā (wisdom of impermanence) inside you that gives it. We should practise Vipassana so that the aniccavijjā will neither stop nor disappear. How do we practise? Focus your attention on the four elements, be calm, cultivate samādhi and do not let sīla (moral precepts) be broken.

Telling lies is the one that I am afraid of among the precepts. I am not afraid of the others, because, by lying the basis of sīla is weakened. When sīla is weakened, samādhi will get weakened and paññā (wisdom) will also get weakened. Speak truthfully, work regularly, build up samādhi and pay attention to what is happening in your body; then the nature of anicca will come up naturally.

Our benefactor Saya Thetgyi said, “Very fast, vibrating incessantly, helter-skelter, broken up, burnt down, the destruction of the body—these are the signs of impermanence.” It is the body that is changing. The thought that knows that the rūpa (matter) is changing is the nāma (mind). When the rūpa changes and has gone, the nāma which knew about the changed-and-gone rūpa, also is changed and goes. Both rūpa and nāma are anicca. Keep this in your mind, be aware of it.

Focus your attention on the top of your head, and move down through the whole body, from the top of the head to the forehead and then the face, from the face to the neck, the neck to the shoulders, from the shoulders along to the hands. Wherever the mind goes it may be like touching with a small torch and feeling the heat wherever the torch touches, wherever the mind goes. Why? Because there is burning and annihilation taking place inside; it is the innate nature of combustion of atomic units within. This is certainly present. Learn to be sensitive to it so that you can feel it. Try it with an attentive mind and you will know.

Once the meditation is practised and once one becomes aware and observes with Vipassana knowledge, the defilements, the *samudaya akusala* (arisen unwholesomeness) cannot remain much longer. They have to leave gradually and when they are all gone, the person becomes controlled and stable, and able to live well.

How long will one have to work? Until all the immeasurable, uncountable old *akusala kamma* (unwholesome actions) accumulated along one's journey through the *saṃsāra* (cycle of rebirth) are eradicated by observing the nature of *anicca*. Then one becomes *sotāpanna* (one who has reached the first stage of saintliness, has experienced *nibbāna*), and *ariyapuggala* (noble person). This cannot be achieved easily.



Sculpture inside the Vietnamese temple

To reach the final *nibbāna* where all the *saṅkhāras* are abolished is very far off, but wouldn't you like to try and see for yourself the minor *nibbāna*? If it could be tasted only after death, these foreigners would never practise this meditation. They have tasted a bit, liked it and have kept coming back from near and far. They send their friends and acquaintances who also come from afar. Why is this? Because they have experienced the taste of Dhamma.

It is important that there is a Teacher to help students to have a taste of Dhamma. But students have to work to experience the taste. What is this taste called? It is called the *Dhamma rasa*.

“Sabba rasaṃ dhamma rasaṃ jināti.”
The taste of Dhamma is the best.

You have to try to work hard to get that taste. Just as the human monarch enjoys human pleasures, the *devas* (celestial beings) enjoy the *deva* pleasures and *brahmās* (higher celestial beings) enjoy *brahmā* pleasures; the noble *ariyas* (saintly persons) such as the Buddha and *arahants* can also enjoy the taste of the Dhamma that they have obtained. You must try hard until you too can enjoy this taste, but please do not work to the extreme, without moderation. Try to work according to the schedule we have given, work at the right time, to the fullest, with great care and effort.



Condensed from a translation of a discourse by Sayagyi U Ba Khin to Vipassana students during a course. First published in the Sayagyi U Ba Khin Journal and adapted for the Newsletter, Vipassana Research Institute.



A stone mural inside the Mahabodhi Temple in Bodhgaya depicting the attack by the armies of Mara on Siddhartha as he was about to attain complete Enlightenment



Thus have I heard. On one occasion the Blessed One was dwelling at Sāvattthī in Jeta's Grove, Anāthapiṇḍika's Park. Then, when the night had advanced, a certain deity of stunning beauty, having illuminated the entire Jeta's Grove, approached the Blessed One, paid homage to him, stood to one side, and addressed the Blessed One in verse:

91. "We ask Gotama a question
about a person in a downfall.
We have come to ask the Blessed One:
What is the cause of a downfall?"

The Blessed:

92. "One who succeeds is easily known,
one who falls down is easily known.
One who loves the Dhamma is successful;
one who detests Dhamma falls down."

94. "The bad are dear to him;
he does not treat the good as dear;
he approves of the teaching of the bad:
that is a cause of a downfall."

96. "If a person is lethargic, gregarious,
and does not make an exertion,
indolent, one who displays anger:
that is a cause of a downfall."

98. "If one who is able does not support
his mother or his father
when they have grown old, their youth gone:
that is a cause of a downfall."

100. "If one deceives with false
speech a brahmin or an ascetic
or some other mendicant:
that is a cause of a downfall."



102. "If a person with abundant wealth,
endowed with bullion and food,
eats delicacies alone:
that is a cause of a downfall."

104. "A person proud because of social class,
proud because of wealth, proud because of
clan, looks down on his own relative:
that is a cause of a downfall."

106. "A womanizer, one fond of liquor,
addicted to gambling,
dissipates whatever he has gained:
that is a cause of a downfall."

108. "One not content with his own wives is
seen among prostitutes,
seen among the wives of others:
that is a cause of a downfall."

110. "When a man past his youth marries a
girl with timbaru breasts,
he does not sleep from jealousy over her:
that is a cause of a downfall."

112. "If one places in authority
a debauched woman, a spendthrift,
or a man of similar nature:
that is a cause of a downfall."

114. "If one of little wealth and strong craving,
is born into a khattiya family,
he aspires to rulership here:
that is a cause of a downfall."

115. "Having examined these cases
of downfall in the world, a wise person,
noble, endowed with vision,
passes on to an auspicious world."





Shravasti

The site where The Buddha gave 871 Discourses



Shravasti, city of ancient India, located near the Rapti River in northeastern Uttar Pradesh state. In Buddhist times (6th century bce–6th century ce), Shravasti was the capital of the kingdom of Kosala and was important both as a prosperous trading centre and for its religious associations. It was closely associated with the life of the Buddha and with figures significant in later Buddhist history. Its most important religious place was the Jetavana Monastery, which was erected in a garden outside the walls of the city and presented to the Buddha by a wealthy banker, Anathapindaka. Other important Buddhist monasteries were the Rajakarama and the Purvarama. Shravasti was also an important centre for the Jainas.

Shravasti is the location where the Buddha gave most of his talks, later remembered by his followers and centuries later written down as Suttas. According to Woodward, 871 suttas in the four Nikayas of Buddhist canons, are based in Shravasti. These texts add that the Buddha spent twenty-five varshas in Shravasti. Scholars such as Rhys Davids state that this could mean two things. Either the Buddha primarily lived in Shravasti after his enlightenment, or that the oral tradition in early Buddhism was “systematized in Shravasti”. Malalasekera, a historian of Buddhism, considers the former more likely. Either way, Shravasti is the key site where almost all the remembered teachings of the Buddha were either heard or compiled, and centuries later were recorded as the Pali canon elsewhere.

Shravasti is also mentioned as the capital and home of king Prasenajit – where the royal patron of the Buddha lived. It was also the home of Anathapindada – the richest early donor for the Buddha. Anathapindada is famous in the Buddhist literature as the one who offered his Jetavana grove and residences. In the Buddhist tradition, the Buddha is remembered for having performed miracles, of which two are particularly popular in reliefs found in its stupas, artwork and literature. The Buddha is believed to have performed the Mahapratiharya or the “great miracle”, and the Yamakapratiharya or the “twin miracle” in Shravasti. These are called the “Sravasti miracles”.

Image on previous page: Anathapindika's Stupa, situated on the location where his house used to be



Pilgrims walking meditatively just as The Buddha did

Gandhakutti

The most important site in the Jetavana complex is the ruin of temple #2, which marks the spot of 'The Fragrant Hut' (Gandha Kuṭi) where the Buddha used to meditate, exercise, meet students, and rest. Most of the dwelling places built for the Buddha were usually referred to as the Gandha Kuṭi, either because they retained the pleasant smell that emanated from his body, or because devotees used to come and offer perfumed flowers and incense at the door of his hut.

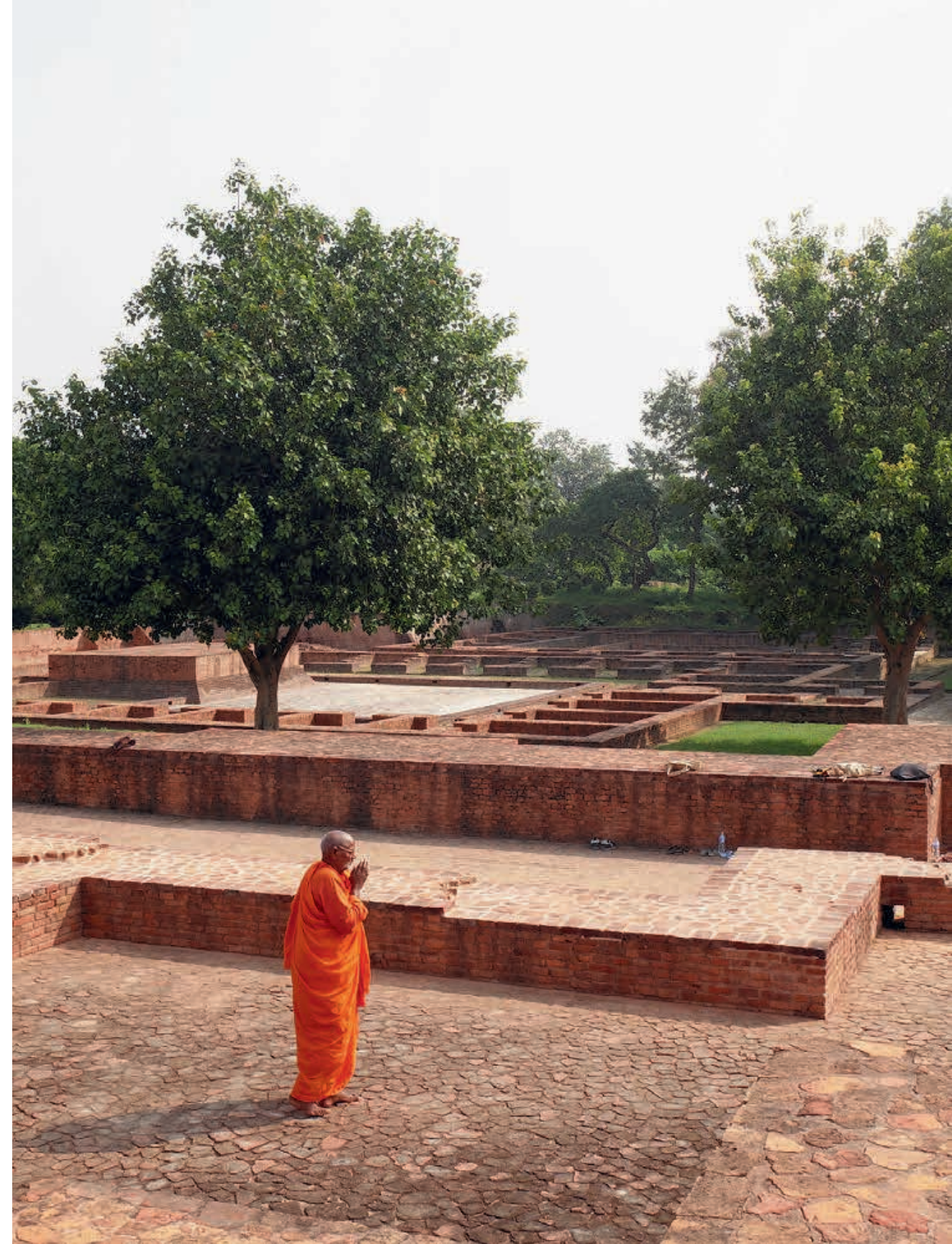


Image on the right : A monk walking around the Gandhakutti

Shravasti is the setting for more sutras than any other location. The Buddha's activities in and around this ancient city were truly vast. It is said, in the Divyavadana and other scriptures, that a living Buddha must perform a fantastic miracle in Shravasti before passing into parinirvana. Shakyamuni Buddha certainly fulfilled this requirement with his incredible display known as the "Twin Miracle." While the Pali and Sanskrit accounts contain slight variations, both depict the Buddha performing an incredible act at Shravasti after being challenged to a tournament of miracles by six heretical teachers preaching destructive views.

The Miracle at Savatthi

According to the Pali version of the story, in the Buddha's time, a wealthy treasurer suspended a sandalwood bowl in the air with a cord, hoping to find an enlightened being who can fly up and take it. For six days, teachers from six other religious sects attempted to trick the treasurer into giving them the bowl, but failed. On the seventh day, news of this reached one of the Buddha's disciples, Pindola Bharadvaja, who then proceeded to fly up and take the bowl, thus converting the treasurer to Buddhism. While on his way back to the monastery, he was asked by people who missed the miracle to perform it again, which he did.

When the Buddha hears about this, he reprimands Pindola for doing this, and lays down a rule forbidding monks from using supernormal powers for such purposes. Upon hearing that the Buddha laid down a rule forbidding his monks from showing off miracles, six jealous teachers from rival religious sects try to win back followers by publicly challenging the Buddha to a miracle tournament, thinking he would refuse to perform one. In the Sanskrit account of the event, the sandalwood bowl story is absent and the six jealous teachers, confident in their own supernormal powers, challenge the Buddha to a miracle contest on their own accord in hopes of regaining followers.

The Miracle Tournament

According to the Pali account of the story, the six rival teachers go to King Bimbisara of Magadha to sponsor the contest. To the rival teachers' surprise, the Buddha accepts the challenge, stating that the rule forbidding miracles applied to his monks but not to him, in the same way that subjects are forbidden from picking from the royal orchard, but not the king himself. In the Sanskrit version of the story, the rival teachers go first to King Bimbisara to host the contest but are turned down, and then go to King Pasenadi of Kosala who agrees to host the tournament if the Buddha agrees.

In this version, the Buddha advises his followers against doing such miracles, but states he will do this miracle because all Buddhas are supposed to perform the twin miracle.

The Buddha declares that he will perform the miracle at the foot of a mango tree in Savatthi on the full moon day of Asalha Puja in four months time. According to the Pali version of the story; the rival teachers, desperate to avoid the contest, uproot all of the mango trees in the area prior to the miracle tournament. On the day of the tournament, a royal gardener finds a mango on the floor that he prepares to give to the king, but upon seeing the Buddha walk by, he gives it to the Buddha instead. When the time of the miracle contest approaches, the Buddha eats the mango and plants the seed in front of the city gate, after washing his hands over the area, a full mango tree immediately grows. In the Sanskrit version of the event, the mango story is absent, but the Buddha instead performs other precursor miracles in the days prior to the tournament, including manipulating air to put out a fire and restoring the hands and feet of King Pasenadi's brother, who lost his hands and feet for a crime he didn't commit.

The Buddha starts by creating a jewelled walkway in mid-air and prepares to perform the miracle for the crowd of observers, but is interrupted by several of his disciples, who ask to perform a miracle in his place to save him the trouble. The disciples each propose a different miracle for them to perform in the Buddha's place but he refuses each request. Finally Maha Moggallana, the Buddha's chief disciple foremost in psychic powers, offers to perform a miracle in his place but the Buddha still refuses.

He then states that he must perform the miracle himself, as it is one of the duties of a Buddha. Standing on top of the jewelled walkway, the Buddha enters a meditative state and emits fire from the top half of his body and streams of water from the lower half and then starts alternating the fire and water between the positions, creating an array of six colors. The fire and water then shoot up to illuminate the cosmos to the applause of the audience while the Buddha teaches the Dhamma to the observers as he walks along on the jewelled walkway. The Sanskrit version also includes the Buddha creating several duplicates of himself that fill the air during the miracle, with some walking, lying down, and sitting. At the conclusion of the miracle, it is the rival religious leaders' turn to perform a miracle but they are unable to move. A strong wind knocks down the pavilion they prepared for the tournament and the rival teachers flee, with one committing suicide. The Buddha continues the miracle and proceeds to create a single duplicate of himself and then have the duplicate ask him questions which he would in turn answer in order to teach the observing audience.

Following the miracle, the Buddha is said to have ascended to Tavatimsa Heaven for three months to spend his rains-retreat and teach his deceased mother the Abhidhamma, in accordance with what all Buddhas are believed to have done after performing the miracle.

Anathapindaka was among the Buddha's most generous benefactors. He serves as an archetype for how wealthy householders can benefit the teachings and countless beings through their devotion and generosity. Anathapindada was one of the wealthiest merchants in all of Shravasti, but he could see beyond the entrapments of materialism. It is said that upon simply hearing the Buddha's name for the first time, great devotion arose in Anathapindada's heart, as he knew beyond any doubt that he had to meet him. After an auspicious meeting with the Buddha in Rajgir, Anathapindada invited him to come and spend time in Shravasti, offering him and his monks land and a monastery, known as Jetavana, or Jeta's Grove. The Buddha and his monks went on to spend twenty-five rainy season retreats at Jeta's Grove, more than at any other location.

Dhammika Sutta : The Dhamma for Householders

Thus have I heard. At one time the Lord was staying near Savatthi in the Jeta Grove at Anathapindika's monastery. Now the lay-follower Dhammika with five hundred other lay-followers approached the Lord. Having drawn near and having saluted the Lord respectfully he sat down at one side. Sitting there the lay-follower Dhammika addressed the Lord as follows:

"I ask Gotama of extensive wisdom this: How acting is a disciple virtuous — both the disciple who has gone from home to the homeless state and the followers who are householders? For you clearly understand the behavior of the world with the devas and the final release. There is none equal to you who are skilled in seeing what is profound. You are an illustrious Awakened One (Buddha). Having investigated all knowledge and being compassionate towards beings you have announced the Dhamma, a revealer of what is hidden, of comprehensive vision, stainless, you illuminate all the worlds.

"This Dhamma, subtle and pleasing and taught so clearly by you, Lord, it is this we all wish to hear. Having been questioned, foremost Awakened One, tell us (the answer). All these bhikkhus and also the layfollowers who have come to hear the truth, let them listen to the Dhamma awakened to (anubuddham) by the Stainless One as the devas listen to the well-spoken words of Vasava."

(The Lord:) "Listen to me, bhikkhus, I will teach you the ascetic practice (dhamma dhutam), the mode of living suitable for those who have gone forth. Do you all bear it in mind. One who is intent upon what is good and who is thoughtful should practice it.

"A bhikkhu should not wander about at the wrong time but should walk the village for food at the right time, as one who goes about at the wrong time is (liable to be) obsessed by attachment, therefore Awakened Ones do not walk (for alms) at the wrong time. Sights, sounds, tastes, scents and bodily contacts overwhelm (the minds of) beings. Being rid of desire for these sense objects, at the right time, one may enter (the village) for the morning meal. Having duly obtained food, going back alone and sitting down in a secluded place, being inwardly thoughtful and not letting the mind go out to external objects, a bhikkhu should develop self-control.

"If he should speak with a lay-disciple, with someone else or with another bhikkhu, he should speak on the subtle Dhamma, not slandering others nor gossiping. Some set themselves up as disputants in opposition to others; those of little wisdom we do not praise; attachments bind them and they are carried away by their emotions.

"Having heard the Dhamma taught by the Sugata and considered it, a disciple of Him of excellent wisdom should wisely make use of food, a dwelling, a bed, a seat and water for washing the robe. But a bhikkhu should not be soiled by (clinging to) these things, as a lotus is not wetted by a drop of water.

"Now I will tell you the layman's duty. Following it a lay-disciple would be virtuous; for it is not possible for one occupied with the household life to realize the complete bhikkhu practice (dhamma).

"He should not kill a living being, nor cause it to be killed, nor should he incite another to kill. Do not injure any being, either strong or weak, in the world.

"A disciple should avoid taking anything from anywhere knowing it (to belong to another). He should not steal nor incite another to steal. He should completely avoid theft.

"A wise man should avoid unchastity as (he would avoid falling into) a pit of glowing charcoal. If unable to lead a celibate life, he should not go to another's wife.

"Having entered a royal court or a company of people he should not speak lies. He should not speak lies (himself) nor incite others to do so. He should completely avoid falsehood.

"A layman who has chosen to practice this Dhamma should not indulge in the drinking of intoxicants. He should not drink them nor encourage others to do so; realizing that it leads to madness.

Through intoxication foolish people perform evil deeds and cause other heedless people to do likewise. He should avoid intoxication, this occasion for demerit, which stupefies the mind, and is the pleasure of foolish people. Do not kill a living being; do not take what is not given; do not speak a lie; do not drink intoxicants; abstain from sexual intercourse; do not eat food at night, at the wrong time; do not wear flower-garlands nor use perfumes; use the ground as a bed or sleep on a mat.

“This is called the eight-factored observance made known by the Awakened One who has reached the end of suffering.

“With a gladdened mind observe the observance day (uposatha), complete with its eight factors, on the fourteenth, fifteenth and eighth days of the (lunar) fortnight and also the special holiday of the half month. In the morning, with a pure heart and a joyful mind, a wise man, after observing the uposatha, should distribute suitable food and drink to the community of bhikkhus. He should support his mother and father as his duty and engage in lawful trading. A layman who carries this out diligently goes to the devas called “Self-radiant.”



Ref: Translated from the Pali by John D. Ireland © 1994

“Dhammika Sutta: Dhammika” (Sn 2.14), translated from the Pali by © John D. Ireland. Access to Insight (BCBS Edition), 30 November 2013, <http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/kn/snp/snp.2.14.irel.html> .



Ānandabodhi

In Sāvatti-- the capital city of Kosala, Anāthapiṇika had spent millions to have the Jetavana Vihāra built. The Buddha lived there during most of the rainy retreats and taught Dhamma to the people. After the rainy retreats he would go to other parts of India to teach Dhamma.

Anāthapiṇika thought it would be beneficial to have a place symbolizing the Buddha where people would gather and practice meditation even when the Buddha was not there himself. He expressed his desire to Bhikkhu Ānanda. Ānanda, in his turn, very tactfully conveyed his wish to the Buddha.

In his reply the Buddha emphasized the importance of the Bodhi tree under which he had attained enlightenment as the atmosphere around the Bodhi tree would be very supportive for meditators to experience peace of mind.

Thrilled with joy Ānanda requested Mahāmoggallāna to bring a seed of the Bodhi tree from Bodhi Gaya and got it sown by Anāthapiṇika in the presence of King Pasenadi, Mātā Visākhā, and other disciples near the main gate of Jetavana Monastery. The tree was named Ānandabodhi because it was planted there with the efforts of Ānanda.

The Buddha was then requested by Ānanda, to meditate under the tree just as he had done under the Bodhi tree. So the Buddha, for the benefit of many, spent a whole night under the Anandabodhi abiding in Nirodha Samāpatti (attainment of annihilation: extinction of feeling and perception) suffusing every atom of that place and the tree with the vibrations of Nibbānadhātu and Dhammadhātu.

Many meditators continually practiced meditation under the Ānandabodhi tree during and even after the life time of the Buddha. At the same place, there is still a tree, which is believed to be the original Bodhi tree and perhaps it is the oldest in the world.

The supportive atmosphere in the vicinity of this Bodhi tree helps meditators to experience anicca the impermanence of all compound things when they meditate there Vipassana meditation even today, when the second sāsana has started.

Reference: The book “Anāthapiṇika” Hindi published by Vipassana Research Institute.







The Shorter Exhortation to Rāhula

Cūḷa Rāhulovāda Sutta (MN 147)

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Sāvatthī in Jeta’s Grove, Anāthapiṇḍika’s monastery. Then, as he was alone in seclusion, this line of thinking arose in the Blessed One’s awareness: “The mental qualities that ripen in release have ripened in Rāhula. What if I were to lead Rāhula further to the ending of the effluents?”

Then the Blessed One, early in the morning—having adjusted his lower robe and taking his bowl & outer robe—went into Sāvatthī for alms. Having gone for alms in Sāvatthī, after the meal, returning from his alms round, he said to Ven. Rāhula, “Fetch your sitting cloth, Rāhula. We will go to the Grove of the Blind to spend the day.”

Responding, “As you say, lord,” to the Blessed One, Ven. Rāhula, carrying his sitting cloth, followed behind the Blessed One. Now at that time, many thousands of devas were following behind the Blessed One, (thinking,) “Today the Blessed One will lead Ven. Rāhula further to the ending of the effluents.”

Then the Blessed One, having plunged into the Grove of the Blind, sat down on a seat made ready at the foot of a tree. Ven. Rāhula, having bowed down to the Blessed One, sat to one side.

As he was sitting there, the Blessed One said to him, “What do you think, Rāhula? Is the eye constant or inconstant?” “Inconstant, lord.”

“And is that which is inconstant easeful or stressful?” “Stressful, lord.”

“And is it fitting to regard what is inconstant, stressful, subject to change as: ‘This is mine. This is my self. This is what I am?’” “No, lord.”

“What do you think? Are forms constant or inconstant?” “Inconstant, lord.”

“And is that which is inconstant easeful or stressful?” “Stressful, lord.”

“And is it fitting to regard what is inconstant, stressful, subject to change as: ‘This is mine. This is my self. This is what I am?’”
“No, lord.”

“What do you think? Is consciousness at the eye constant or inconstant?”
“Inconstant, lord.”

“And is that which is inconstant easeful or stressful?”
“Stressful, lord.”

“And is it fitting to regard what is inconstant, stressful, subject to change as:
‘This is mine. This is my self. This is what I am?’”
“No, lord.”

“What do you think? Is contact at the eye constant or inconstant?”
“Inconstant, lord.”

“And is that which is inconstant easeful or stressful?”
“Stressful, lord.”

“And is it fitting to regard what is inconstant, stressful, subject to change as:
‘This is mine. This is my self. This is what I am?’”
“No, lord.”

“What do you think? Whatever there is that arises in dependence on contact at the eye as a mode of feeling, a mode of perception, a mode of fabrication, or a mode of consciousness:¹ Is it constant or inconstant?”
“Inconstant, lord.”

“And is that which is inconstant easeful or stressful?”
“Stressful, lord.”

“And is it fitting to regard what is inconstant, stressful, subject to change as:
‘This is mine. This is my self. This is what I am?’”
“No, lord.”

“What do you think, Rāhula? Is the ear constant or inconstant?”
“Inconstant, lord” ...

“What do you think, Rāhula? Is the nose constant or inconstant?”
“Inconstant, lord” ...

“What do you think, Rāhula? Is the tongue constant or inconstant?”
“Inconstant, lord” ...

“What do you think, Rāhula? Is the body constant or inconstant?”
“Inconstant, lord” ...

“What do you think, Rāhula? Is the intellect constant or inconstant?”
“Inconstant, lord.”

“And is that which is inconstant easeful or stressful?”
“Stressful, lord.”

“And is it fitting to regard what is inconstant, stressful, subject to change as:
‘This is mine. This is my self. This is what I am?’”
“No, lord.”

“What do you think? Are ideas constant or inconstant?”
“Inconstant, lord.”

“And is that which is inconstant easeful or stressful?”
“Stressful, lord.”

“And is it fitting to regard what is inconstant, stressful, subject to change as:
‘This is mine. This is my self. This is what I am?’”
“No, lord.”

“What do you think? Is consciousness at the intellect constant or inconstant?”
“Inconstant, lord.”

“And is that which is inconstant easeful or stressful?”
“Stressful, lord.”

“And is it fitting to regard what is inconstant, stressful, subject to change as:
‘This is mine. This is my self. This is what I am?’”
“No, lord.”

“What do you think? Is contact at the intellect constant or inconstant?”
“Inconstant, lord.”

“And is that which is inconstant easeful or stressful?”
“Stressful, lord.”

“And is it fitting to regard what is inconstant, stressful, subject to change as:
‘This is mine. This is my self. This is what I am?’”
“No, lord.”

“What do you think? Whatever there is that arises in dependence on contact at the intellect as a mode of feeling, a mode of perception, a mode of fabrication, or a mode of consciousness: Is it constant or inconstant?”
“Inconstant, lord.”

“And is that which is inconstant easeful or stressful?”
“Stressful, lord.”

“And is it fitting to regard what is inconstant, stressful, subject to change as:
‘This is mine. This is my self. This is what I am?’”
“No, lord.”

“Seeing thus, Rāhula, the instructed disciple of the noble ones grows disenchanted with the eye, disenchanted with forms, disenchanted with consciousness at the eye, disenchanted with contact at the eye. And whatever there is that arises in dependence on contact at the eye as a mode of feeling, a mode of perception, a mode of fabrication, or a mode of consciousness: With that, too, he grows disenchanted.

“He grows disenchanted with the ear....
“He grows disenchanted with the nose....
“He grows disenchanted with the tongue....
“He grows disenchanted with the body....

“He grows disenchanted with the intellect, disenchanted with ideas, disenchanted with consciousness at the intellect, disenchanted with contact at the intellect. And whatever there is that arises in dependence on contact at the intellect as a mode of feeling, a mode of perception, a mode of fabrication, or a mode of consciousness: With that, too, he grows disenchanted. Disenchanted, he becomes dispassionate. Through dispassion, he is released.

With release, there is the knowledge, ‘Released.’ He discerns that ‘Birth is ended, the holy life fulfilled, the task done. There is nothing further for this world.’”

Ref: “Cula-Rahulovada Sutta: The Shorter Exposition to Rahula” (MN 147), translated from the Pali by Thanissaro Bhikkhu. Access to Insight (BCBS Edition), 30 November 2013,
<http://www.accesstosight.org/tipitaka/mn/mn.147.than.html>

That is what the Blessed One said. Gratified, Ven. Rāhula delighted in the Blessed One’s words. And while this explanation was being given, Ven. Rāhula’s mind, through lack of clinging/sustenance, was released from effluents. And to those many thousands of devas there arose the dustless, stainless Dhamma eye: “Whatever is subject to origination is all subject to cessation.”

“Renouncing the five pleasures of sense that entrance and delight the mind, and in faith departing from home, become one who makes an end of suffering!

“Associate with good friends and choose a remote lodging, secluded, with little noise. Be moderate in eating. Robes, alms-food, remedies and a dwelling — do not have craving for these things; do not be one who returns to the world. Practice restraint according to the Discipline, and control the five sense-faculties.

“Practice mindfulness of the body and continually develop dispassion (towards it). Avoid the sign of the beautiful connected with passion; by meditating on the foul cultivate a mind that is concentrated and collected.

“Meditate on the Signless and get rid of the tendency to conceit. By thoroughly understanding and destroying conceit you will live in the (highest) peace.”

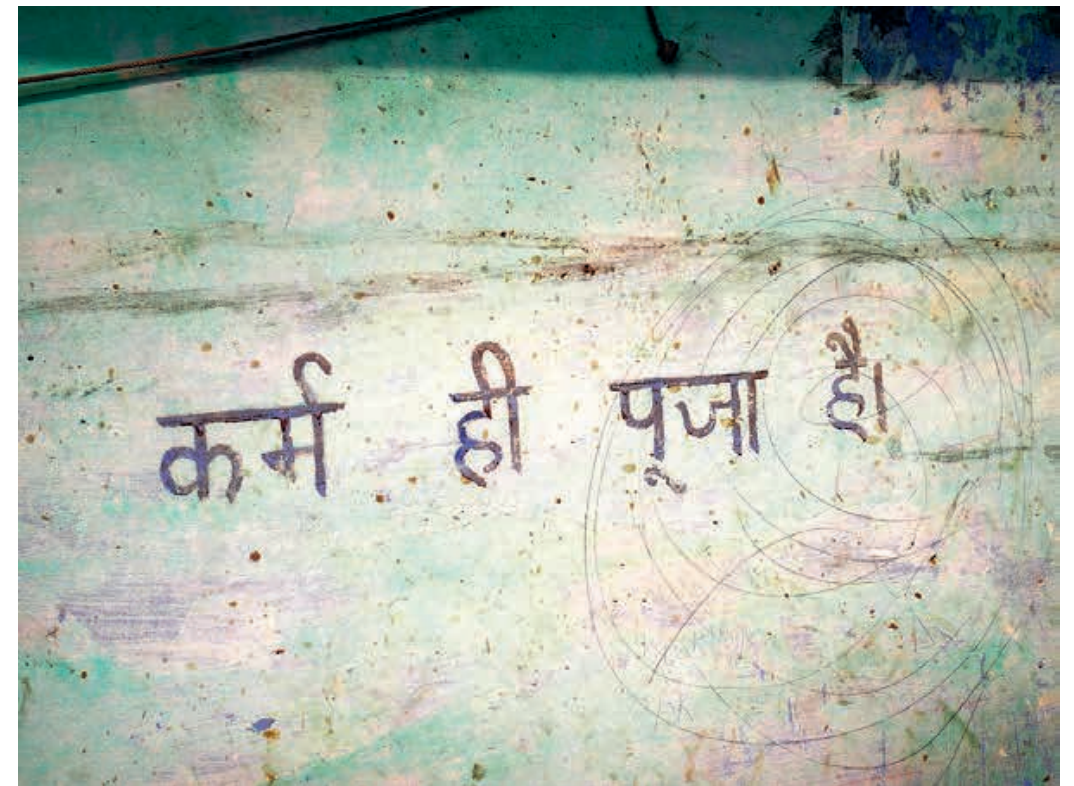
In this manner the Lord repeatedly exhorted the Venerable Rahula.





The Miracle Stupa







A Shivling within the complex of Pubbarama Mahavihar



A pilgrim interacting with the local children



Pilgrims meditating at Pubbarama, Shravasti



A painting on the walls of the Sri lankan Temple, depicting the victory of the Buddha over Mara.



A Sri Lankan Monk praying before the Relics of The Buddha at the Sri Lankan Temple, Shravasti



Pilgrims meditating in the Sri Lankan Temple



Monk chanting in front of the Buddha relics



I,8 Loving-Kindness

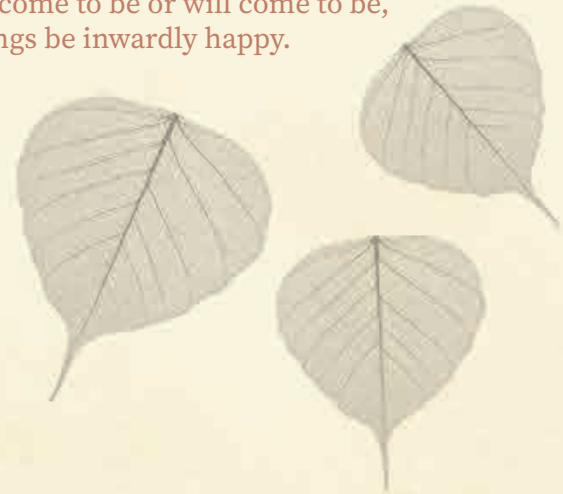
143. This is what should be done by one skilled in the good,
having made the breakthrough to that peaceful state:
he should be able, upright, and very upright,
amenable to advice and gentle, without arrogance.

144. [He should be] content and easily supported,
of few duties and a frugal way of living;
of peaceful faculties and judicious,
courteous, without greed when among families.

145. He should not do anything, however slight,
because of which other wise people might criticize him.
May all beings be happy and secure;
may they be inwardly happy.

146. Whatever living beings there are
whether frail or firm, without omission,
those that are long or those that are large,
middling, short, fine, or gross.

147. whether they are seen or unseen,
whether they dwell far or near,
whether they have come to be or will come to be,
may all beings be inwardly happy.



48. No one should deceive another,
nor despise anyone anywhere.
Because of anger and thoughts of aversion
no one should wish suffering for another.

149. Just as a mother, with her own life,
would protect her own son, her only son,
just so toward all beings one should develop
a state of mind without boundaries.

150. And toward the whole world
one should develop loving-kindness,
a state of mind without boundaries—
above, below, and across—
unconfined, without enmity, without adversaries.

151. Whether standing, walking, sitting,
or lying down, as long as one is not drowsy,
one should resolve on this mindfulness:
they call this a divine dwelling here.

152. Not taking up any views,
possessing good behavior, endowed with vision,
having removed greed for sensual pleasures,
one never again comes back to the bed of a womb.



Kushinagar

The place of the Mahaparinibanna of the Buddha



After first turning the wheel of Dharma at Saranath, the Buddha continued to teach for 45 years, gaining renown from the highest royalty down to the lowest of beggars throughout all of Magadha and well beyond. Shortly before his death, the Buddha was tempted by Mara to relinquish his existence and pass into parinirvana, but the Buddha felt he needed to continue teaching until this wisdom was fully understood by his disciples. Fortunately, the Buddha was successfully able to transmit the Dharma to his disciples to maintain these profound teachings.

Three months before his passing, the Buddha predicted his death to his disciples, “Then the Blessed One said to the bhikkhus: “So, bhikkhus, I exhort you: All compounded things are subject to vanish. Strive with earnestness. The time of the Tathagata’s Parinibbana is near. Three months hence the Tathagata will utterly pass away.”

— Mahaparinibbana Sutta, 3.63

Ananda urged the Buddha not to pass away, but to stay and teach the Dharma for as long as possible. According to the Mahaparinibbana Sutta (nibbana and sutta are Pali for the Sanskrit terms nirvana and sutra), the Buddha had previously told Ananda that, “the Tathagata could, if he so desired, remain throughout a world- period or until the end of it.” At that earlier time, unfortunately, Ananda had failed to request the Buddha to remain at this time, and so the Buddha decided not to remain, but to display impermanence through his passing. This later request by Ananda was made too late, and so the Buddha again told his disciples that he would pass in three months. Three months later, the Buddha was invited to stay at a mango grove that belonged to a blacksmith named Cunda. Excited to be receiving the Buddha, Cunda offered to prepare a meal for the Buddha and his monks. It was a special dish, called sukaramaddava. The exact translation of this dish is disputed, but was either pork or mushroom. The Buddha knew the dish would be accidentally tainted, but didn’t want to deny Cunda’s offer. He accepted the dish, but told Cunda to serve it only to himself, and to dispose of it immediately after serving him, making sure not feed it to anyone else. The Buddha quickly fell ill with dysentery, and asked his monks to take him to Kushinara.

“When he had eaten Cunda’s food, I heard,
with fortitude the deadly pains he bore.
From the sukara-maddava a sore
and dreadful sickness came upon the Lord.
But nature’s pains he endured. “Come, let us go To Kushinara,” was his
dauntless word.

— Mahaparinibbana Sutta, 4.23,

As they made their way to Kushinara from Cunda’s mango grove, near the city of Vashali, the Buddha displayed many miracles. It was also documented that his skin appeared clear and radiant:

““It is so, Ananda. There are two occasions, Ananda, when the skin of the Tathagata appears exceedingly clear and radiant. Which are these two? The night, Ananda, when the Tathagata becomes fully enlightened in unsurpassed, supreme enlightenment, and the night when the Tathagata comes to his final passing away into the state of nibbana in which no element of clinging remains. These, Ananda, are the two occasions on which the skin of the Tathagata appears exceedingly clear and radiant.

— Mahaparinibbana Sutta, 4.49

After some time, they arrived at a sala tree grove, on the banks of the Hiraññavati River, near Kushinagara. The Buddha requested Ananda to clear an area between two sala trees for him to recline. As he took his rest between the two trees, they began to blossom flowers. Even the trees paid homage to the Buddha, their flower petals raining upon him as he rested. As his passing drew nearer, the Buddha told Ananda:

“Ananda, these four are the places that should be seen by a faithful gentleman, that should cause agitation.

‘Here the Tathagata was born’, Ananda, is a place that should be seen by a faithful gentleman, that should cause agitation.

‘Here the Tathagata awakened to unsurpassed perfect awakening’, Ananda, is a place that should be seen by a faithful gentleman, that should cause agitation.

‘Here the unsurpassed wheel of the law was turned by the Tathagata’, Ananda, is a place that should be seen by a faithful gentleman, that should cause agitation.

‘Here the Tathagata attained complete nibbana by the element of nibbana without any remainder’, Ananda, is a place that should be seen by a faithful gentleman, that should cause agitation. — Mahaparinibbana Sutta, 5.16-22

Then Ananda asked the Buddha how to handle the remains of his body. The Buddha instructed him to treat his body like that of a great king, wrapping it in many layers of pure white linen and burning it on a pyre. He instructed them to build a stupa at the cremation site:

“And even, Ananda, as with the body of a universal monarch, so should it be done with the body of the Tathagata; and at a crossroads also a stupa should be raised for the Tathagata. And whosoever shall bring to that place garlands or incense or sandalpaste, or pay reverence, and whose mind becomes calm there — it will be to his well being and happiness for a long time.

— Mahaparinibbana Sutta, 5.26



Before finally passing, the Buddha asked the retinue of monks if there were any doubts regarding his teachings that they wanted him to clear away. The monks had no questions, assuring the Buddha that his teachings were well understood. With this, the Buddha spoke his last words:

“And the Blessed One addressed the bhikkhus, saying:

*“Behold now, bhikkhus, I exhort you:
All compounded things are subject to vanish.
Strive with earnestness!”*

This was the last word of the Tathagata.
— Mahaparinibbana Sutta, 6.8

When the Buddha passed, marvelous signs of a miraculous being of great realization were abundant. The earth shook, shooting stars filled the sky ablaze with fire, and spontaneous, naturally resounding melodies of celestial music filled the air. His body was carried through the city to a nearby cremation ground as flowers rained from the sky every step of the way. The pyre the Buddha was placed upon would not catch alight, as his great disciple Mahakasyapa had not yet arrived from Rajagir to pay his respects. When Mahakasyapa finally arrived and honored the Buddha’s body, the pyre spontaneously burst into flames. After the fire was extinguished, the relics were gathered into a vase and brought back to the city of Kushinara for distribution.



Last Place of Rest

1. Then the Blessed One addressed the Venerable Ananda, saying: “Come, Ananda, let us cross to the farther bank of the Hiraññavati, and go to the Mallas’ Sala Grove, in the vicinity of Kusinara.”

“So be it, Lord.”

2. And the Blessed One, together with a large company of bhikkhus, went to the further bank of the river Hiraññavati, to the Sala Grove of the Mallas, in the vicinity of Kusinara. And there he spoke to the Venerable Ananda, saying:

3. “Please, Ananda, prepare for me a couch between the twin sala trees, with the head to the north.

I am weary, Ananda, and want to lie down.”

“So be it, Lord.” And the Venerable Ananda did as the Blessed One asked him to do. Then the Blessed One lay down on his right side, in the lion’s posture, resting one foot upon the other, and so disposed himself, mindfully and clearly comprehending.

4. At that time the twin sala trees broke out in full bloom, though it was not the season of flowering. And the blossoms rained upon the body of the Tathagata and dropped and scattered and were strewn upon it in worship of the Tathagata. And celestial mandarava flowers and heavenly sandalwood powder from the sky rained down upon the body of the Tathagata, and dropped and scattered and were strewn upon it in worship of the Tathagata. And the sound of heavenly voices and heavenly instruments made music in the air out of reverence for the Tathagata.

5. And the Blessed One spoke to the Venerable Ananda, saying: “Ananda, the twin sala trees are in full bloom, though it is not the season of flowering. And the blossoms rain upon the body of the Tathagata and drop and scatter and are strewn upon it in worship of the Tathagata. And celestial coral flowers and heavenly sandalwood powder from the sky rain down upon the body of the Tathagata, and drop and scatter and are strewn upon it in worship of the Tathagata. And the sound of heavenly voices and heavenly instruments makes music in the air out of reverence for the Tathagata.



6. “Yet it is not thus, Ananda, that the Tathagata is respected, venerated, esteemed, worshipped, and honored in the highest degree. But, Ananda, whatever bhikkhu or bhikkhuni, layman or laywoman, abides by the Dhamma, lives uprightly in the Dhamma, walks in the way of the Dhamma, it is by such a one that the Tathagata is respected, venerated, esteemed, worshipped, and honored in the highest degree. Therefore, Ananda, thus should you train yourselves: ‘We shall abide by the Dhamma, live uprightly in the Dhamma, walk in the way of the Dhamma.’”

The Grief of the Gods

7. At that time the Venerable Upavana was standing before the Blessed One, fanning him. And the Blessed One rebuked him, saying: “Move aside, bhikkhu, do not stand in front of me.”

8. And to the Venerable Ananda came the thought: “This Venerable Upavana has been in attendance on the Blessed One for a long time, closely associating with him and serving him. Yet now, right at the end, the Blessed One rebukes him. What now could be the reason, what the cause for the Blessed One to rebuke the Venerable Upavana, saying: ‘Move aside, bhikkhu, do not stand in front of me?’”

9-10. And the Venerable Ananda told his thought to the Blessed One. The Blessed One said: “Throughout the tenfold world-system, Ananda, there are hardly any of the deities that have not gathered together to look upon the Tathagata. For a distance of twelve yojanas around the Sala Grove of the Mallas in the vicinity of Kusinara there is not a spot that could be pricked with the tip of a hair that is not filled with powerful deities. And these deities, Ananda, are complaining: ‘From afar have we come to look upon the Tathagata. For rare in the world is the arising of Tathagatas, Arahants, Fully Enlightened Ones. And this day, in the last watch of the night, the Tathagata’s Parinibbana will come about. But this bhikkhu of great powers has placed himself right in front of the Blessed One, concealing him, so that now, at the very end, we are prevented from looking upon him.’ Thus, Ananda, the deities complain.”

11. “Of what kind of deities, Lord, is the Blessed One aware?”

12-13. “There are deities, Ananda, in space and on earth, who are earthly-minded; with dishevelled hair they weep, with uplifted arms they weep; flinging themselves on the ground, they roll from side to side, lamenting: ‘Too soon has the Blessed One come to his Parinibbana! Too soon has the Happy One come to his Parinibbana! Too soon will the Eye of the World vanish from sight!’

14. “But those deities who are freed from passion, mindful and comprehending, reflect in this way:
‘Impermanent are all compounded things. How could this be otherwise?’”

Ananda’s Concern

15. “Formerly, Lord, on leaving their quarters after the rains, the bhikkhus would set forth to see the Tathagata, and to us there was the gain and benefit of receiving and associating with those very revered bhikkhus who came to have audience with the Blessed One and to wait upon him.
But, Lord, after the Blessed One has gone, we shall no longer have that gain and benefit.”

Four Places of Pilgrimage

16. “There are four places, Ananda, that a pious person should visit and look upon with feelings of reverence. What are the four?”



17. “Here the Tathagata was born!” This, Ananda, is a place that a pious person should visit and look upon with feelings of reverence.

18. “Here the Tathagata became fully enlightened in unsurpassed, supreme Enlightenment!”

This, Ananda, is a place that a pious person should visit and look upon with feelings of reverence.

19. “Here the Tathagata set rolling the unexcelled Wheel of the Dhamma!” This, Ananda, is a place that a pious person should visit and look upon with feelings of reverence.

20. “Here the Tathagata passed away into the state of Nibbana in which no element of clinging remains!” This, Ananda, is a place that a pious person should visit and look upon with feelings of reverence.

21. “These, Ananda, are the four places that a pious person should visit and look upon with feelings of reverence. And truly there will come to these places, Ananda, pious bhikkhus and bhikkhunis, laymen and laywomen, reflecting: ‘Here the Tathagata was born! Here the Tathagata became fully enlightened in unsurpassed, supreme Enlightenment! Here the Tathagata set rolling the unexcelled Wheel of the Dhamma! Here the Tathagata passed away into the state of Nibbana in which no element of clinging remains!’

22. “And whoever, Ananda, should die on such a pilgrimage with his heart established in faith, at the breaking up of the body, after death, will be reborn in a realm of heavenly happiness.”

23. Then the Venerable Ananda said to the Blessed One: “How, Lord, should we conduct ourselves towards women?”

“Do not see them, Ananda.”

“But, Lord, if we do see them?”

“Do not speak, Ananda.”

“But, Lord, if they should speak to us?”

“Then, Ananda, you should establish mindfulness.”

24. Then the Venerable Ananda said: “How should we act, Lord, respecting the body of the Tathagata?”

“Do not hinder yourselves, Ananda, to honor the body of the Tathagata. Rather you should strive, Ananda, and be zealous on your own behalf, for your own good. Unflinchingly, ardently, and resolutely you should apply yourselves to your own good. For there are, Ananda, wise nobles, wise brahmins, and wise householders who are devoted to the Tathagata, and it is they who will render the honor to the body of the Tathagata.”



25. Then the Venerable Ananda said: “But how, Lord, should they act respecting the body of the Tathagata?”

“After the same manner, Ananda, as towards the body of a universal monarch.”
“But how, Lord, do they act respecting the body of a universal monarch?”

26. “The body of a universal monarch, Ananda, is first wrapped round with new linen, and then with teased cotton wool, and so it is done up to five hundred layers of linen and five hundred of cotton wool. When that is done, the body of the universal monarch is placed in an iron oil vessel, which is enclosed in another iron vessel, a funeral pyre is built of all kinds of perfumed woods, and so the body of the universal monarch is burned; and at a crossroads a stupa is raised for the universal monarch. So it is done, Ananda, with the body of a universal monarch. And even, Ananda, as with the body of a universal monarch, so should it be done with the body of the Tathagata; and at a crossroads also a stupa should be raised for the Tathagata. And whosoever shall bring to that place garlands or incense or sandalpaste, or pay reverence, and whose mind becomes calm there —it will be to his well being and happiness for a long time.

27. “There are four persons, Ananda, who are worthy of a stupa. Who are those four? A Tathagata, an Arahant, a Fully Enlightened One is worthy of a stupa; so also is a Paccekabuddha, and a disciple of a Tathagata, and a universal monarch.

28-31. “And why, Ananda, is a Tathagata, an Arahant, a Fully Enlightened One worthy of a stupa? Because, Ananda, at the thought: ‘This is the stupa of that Blessed One, Arahant, Fully Enlightened One!’ the hearts of many people will be calmed and made happy; and so calmed and with their minds established in faith therein, at the breaking up of the body, after death, they will be reborn in a realm of heavenly happiness. And so also at the thought: ‘This is the stupa of that Paccekabuddha!’ or ‘This is the stupa of a disciple of that Tathagata, Arahant, Fully Enlightened One!’ or ‘This is the stupa of that righteous monarch who ruled according to Dhamma!’ — the hearts of many people are calmed and made happy; and so calmed and with their minds established in faith therein, at the breaking up of the body, after death, they will be reborn in a realm of heavenly happiness. And it is because of this, Ananda, that these four persons are worthy of a stupa.”

Ananda’s Grief

32. Then the Venerable Ananda went into the vihara and leaned against the doorpost and wept:

“I am still but a learner, and still have to strive for my own perfection. But, alas, my Master, who was so compassionate towards me, is about to pass away!”

33. And the Blessed One spoke to the bhikkhus, saying: “Where, bhikkhus, is Ananda?”

“The Venerable Ananda, Lord, has gone into the vihara and there stands leaning against the door post and weeping: ‘I am still but a learner, and still have to strive for my own perfection.

But, alas, my Master, who was so compassionate towards me, is about to pass away!’”

34. Then the Blessed One asked a certain bhikkhu to bring the Venerable Ananda to him, saying:

“Go, bhikkhu, and say to Ananda, ‘Friend Ananda, the Master calls you.’”

“So be it, Lord.” And that bhikkhu went and spoke to the Venerable Ananda as the Blessed One had asked him to. And the Venerable Ananda went to the Blessed One, bowed down to him, and sat down on one side.

35. Then the Blessed One spoke to the Venerable Ananda, saying: “Enough, Ananda! Do not grieve, do not lament! For have I not taught from the very beginning that with all that is dear and beloved there must be change, separation, and severance? Of that which is born, come into being, compounded, and subject to decay, how can one say: ‘May it not come to dissolution!’?”

There can be no such state of things. Now for a long time, Ananda, you have served the Tathagata with loving-kindness in deed, word, and thought, graciously, pleasantly, with a whole heart and beyond measure. Great good have you gathered, Ananda! Now you should put forth energy, and soon you too will be free from the taints.”

36. Then the Blessed One addressed the bhikkhus, saying: “Bhikkhus, the Blessed Ones, Arahants, Fully Enlightened Ones of times past also had excellent and devoted attendant bhikkhus, such as I have in Ananda. And so also, bhikkhus, will the Blessed Ones, Arahants, Fully Enlightened Ones of times to come.

37. “Capable and judicious is Ananda, bhikkhus, for he knows the proper time for bhikkhus to have audience with the Tathagata, and the time for bhikkhunis, the time for laymen and for laywomen; the time for kings and for ministers of state; the time for teachers of other sects and for their followers.

38. “In Ananda, bhikkhus, are to be found four rare and superlative qualities. What are the four? If, bhikkhus, a company of bhikkhus should go to see Ananda, they become joyful on seeing him; and if he then speaks to them of the Dhamma, they are made joyful by his discourse; and when he becomes silent, they are disappointed. So it is also when bhikkhunis, laymen, or laywomen go to see Ananda: they become joyful on seeing him; and if he then speaks to them of the Dhamma, they are made joyful by his discourse; and when he becomes silent, they are disappointed.

39. “In a universal monarch, bhikkhus, are to be found four rare and superlative qualities. What are those four? If, bhikkhus, a company of nobles should go to see the universal monarch, they become joyful on seeing him; and if he then speaks, they are made joyful by his talk; and when he becomes silent, they are disappointed.

So it is also when a company of brahmans, of householders, or of ascetics goes to see a universal monarch.

40. “And in just the same way, bhikkhus, in Ananda are to be found these four rare and superlative qualities.”

The Past Glory of Kusinara

41. When this had been said, the Venerable Ananda spoke to the Blessed One, saying: “Let it not be, Lord, that the Blessed One should pass away in this mean place, this uncivilized township in the midst of the jungle, a mere outpost of the province. There are great cities, Lord, such as Campa, Rajagaha, Savatthi, Saketa, Kosambi, and Benares — let the Blessed One have his final passing away in one of those. For in those cities dwell many wealthy nobles and brahmans and householders who are devotees of the Tathagata, and they will render due honor to the remains of the Tathagata.”

42. “Do not say that, Ananda! Do not say: ‘This mean place, this uncivilized township in the midst of the jungle, a mere outpost of the province.’ In times long past, Ananda, there was a king by the name of Maha Sudassana, who was a universal monarch, a king of righteousness, a conqueror of the four quarters of the earth, whose realm was established in security, and who was endowed with

the seven jewels. And that King Maha Sudassana, Ananda, had his royal residence here at Kusinara, which was then called Kusavati, and it extended twelve yojanas from east to west, and seven from north to south.

43. “And mighty, Ananda, was Kusavati, the capital, prosperous and well populated, much frequented by people, and abundantly provided with food. Just as the royal residence of the deities, Alakamanda, is mighty, prosperous, and well populated, much frequented by deities and abundantly provided with food, so was the royal capital of Kusavati.

44. “Kusavati, Ananda, resounded unceasingly day and night with ten sounds — the trumpeting of elephants, the neighing of horses, the rattling of chariots, the beating of drums and tabours, music and song, cheers, the clapping of hands, and cries of ‘Eat, drink, and be merry!’

Lamentation of the Mallas

45. “Go now, Ananda, to Kusinara and announce to the Mallas: ‘Today, Vasetthas, in the last watch of the night, the Tathagata’s Parinibbana will take place. Approach, O Vasetthas, draw near! Do not be remorseful later at the thought: “In our township it was that the Tathagata’s Parinibbana took place, but we failed to see him at the end!”’
“So be it, Lord.”

And the Venerable Ananda prepared himself, and taking bowl and robe, went with a companion to Kusinara.

46. Now at that time the Mallas had gathered in the council hall for some public business. And the Venerable Ananda approached them and announced: “Today, Vasetthas, in the last watch of the night, the Tathagata’s Parinibbana will take place. Approach, Vasetthas, draw near! Do not be remorseful later at the thought: ‘In our township it was that the Tathagata’s Parinibbana took place, but we failed to see him at the end.’”

47. When they heard the Venerable Ananda speak these words, the Mallas with their sons, their wives, and the wives of their sons, were sorely grieved, grieved at heart and afflicted; and some, with their hair all dishevelled, with arms uplifted in despair, wept; flinging themselves on the ground, they rolled from side to side, lamenting:

“Too soon has the Blessed One come to his Parinibbana!
Too soon has the Happy One come to his Parinibbana!
Too soon will the Eye of the World vanish from sight!”

48. And thus afflicted and filled with grief, the Mallas, with their sons, their wives, and the wives of their sons, went to the Sala Grove, the recreation park of the Mallas, to the place where the Venerable Ananda was.

49. And the thought arose in the Venerable Ananda: “If I were to allow the Mallas of Kusinara to pay reverence to the Blessed One one by one, the night will have given place to dawn before they are all presented to him. Therefore let me divide them up according to clan, each family in a group, and so present them to the Blessed One thus: “The Malla of such and such a name, Lord, with his wives and children, his attendants and his friends, pays homage at the feet of the Blessed One.”

50. And the Venerable Ananda divided the Mallas up according to clan, each family in a group, and presented them to the Blessed One. So it was that the Venerable Ananda caused the Mallas of Kusinara to be presented to the Blessed One by clans, each family in a group, even in the first watch of the night.

The Last Convert

51. Now at that time a wandering ascetic named Subhadda was dwelling at Kusinara. And Subhadda the wandering ascetic heard it said: “Today in the third watch of the night, the Parinibbana of the ascetic Gotama will take place.”

52. And the thought arose in him: “I have heard it said by old and venerable wandering ascetics, teachers of teachers, that the arising of Tathagatas, Arahants, Fully Enlightened Ones, is rare in the world. Yet this very day, in the last watch of the night, the Parinibbana of the ascetic Gotama will take place. Now there is in me a doubt; but to this extent I have faith in the ascetic Gotama, that he could so teach me the Dhamma as to remove that doubt.”

53. Then the wandering ascetic Subhadda went to the Sala Grove, the recreation park of the Mallas, and drew near to the Venerable Ananda, and told the Venerable Ananda his thought. And he spoke to the Venerable Ananda, saying: “Friend Ananda, it would be good if I could be allowed into the presence of the ascetic Gotama.”

54. But the Venerable Ananda answered him, saying: “Enough, friend Subhadda! Do not trouble the Tathagata. The Blessed One is weary.”

55-56. Yet a second and a third time the wandering ascetic Subhadda made his request, and a second and a third time the Venerable Ananda refused him.

57. And the Blessed One heard the talk between them, and he called the Venerable Ananda and said:

“Stop, Ananda! Do not refuse Subhadda. Subhadda, Ananda, may be allowed into the presence of the Tathagata. For whatever he will ask me, he will ask for the sake of knowledge, and not as an offence. And the answer I give him, that he will readily understand.”

58. Thereupon the Venerable Ananda said to the wandering ascetic Subhadda: “Go then, friend Subhadda, the Blessed One gives you leave.”

59. Then the wandering ascetic Subhadda approached the Blessed One and saluted him courteously. And having exchanged with him pleasant and civil greetings, the wandering ascetic Subhadda seated himself at one side and addressed the Blessed One, saying: “There are, Venerable Gotama, ascetics and brahmans who are heads of great companies of disciples, who have large retinues, who are leaders of schools, well known and renowned, and held in high esteem by the multitude, such teachers as Purana Kassapa, Makkhali Gosala, Ajita Kesakambali, Pakudha Kaccayana, Sañjaya Belatthaputta, Nigantha Nataputta. Have all of these attained realization, as each of them would have it believed, or has none of them, or is it that some have attained realization and others not?”

60. “Enough, Subhadda! Let it be as it may, whether all of them have attained realization, as each of them would have it believed, or whether none of them has, or whether some have attained realization and others not. I will teach you the Dhamma, Subhadda; listen and heed it well, and I will speak.” “So be it, Lord.”

The Lion’s Roar

61. And the Blessed One spoke, saying: “In whatsoever Dhamma and Discipline, Subhadda, there is not found the Noble Eightfold Path, neither is there found a true ascetic of the first, second, third, or fourth degree of saintliness. But in whatsoever Dhamma and Discipline there is found the Noble Eightfold Path, there is found a true ascetic of the first, second, third, and fourth degrees of saintliness.

Now in this Dhamma and Discipline, Subhadda, is found the Noble Eightfold Path; and in it alone are also found true ascetics of the first, second, third, and fourth degrees of saintliness.

Devoid of true ascetics are the systems of other teachers.

But if, Subhadda, the bhikkhus live righteously, the world will not be destitute of arahats.



62. “In age but twenty-nine was I, Subhadda,
When I renounced the world to seek the Good;
Fifty-one years have passed since then, Subhadda,
And in all that time a wanderer have I been
In the domain of virtue and of truth,
And except therein, there is no saint
(of the first degree).
“And there is none of the second degree, nor of the third degree, nor of the
fourth degree of saintliness. Devoid of true ascetics are the systems of other
teachers. But if, Subhadda, the bhikkhus live righteously, the world will not be
destitute of arahats.”

63. When this was said, the wandering ascetic Subhadda spoke to the Blessed
One, saying:
“Excellent, O Lord, most excellent, O Lord! It is as if, Lord, one were to set
upright what had been overthrown, or to reveal what had been hidden, or to
show the path to one who had gone astray, or to light a lamp in the darkness
so that those with eyes might see — even so has the Blessed One set forth the
Dhamma in many ways. And so, O Lord, I take my refuge in the Blessed One,
the Dhamma, and the Community of Bhikkhus.
May I receive from the Blessed One admission to the Order and also the higher
ordination.”

64. “Whoever, Subhadda, having been formerly a follower of another creed,
wishes to receive admission and higher ordination in this Dhamma and
Discipline, remains on probation for a period of four months. At the end of
those four months, if the bhikkhus are satisfied with him, they grant him
admission and higher ordination as a bhikkhu. Yet in this matter I recognize
differences of personalities.”

65. “If, O Lord, whoever, having been formerly a follower of another creed,
wishes to receive admission and higher ordination in this Dhamma and
Discipline, remains on probation for a period of four months, and at the
end of those four months, if the bhikkhus are satisfied with him, they grant
him admission and higher ordination as a bhikkhu — then I will remain on
probation for a period of four years. And at the end of those four years, if
the bhikkhus are satisfied with me, let them grant me admission and higher
ordination as a bhikkhu.”

66. But the Blessed One called the Venerable Ananda and said to him: “Ananda,
let Subhadda be given admission into the Order.” And the Venerable Ananda
replied: “So be it, Lord.”

67. Then the wandering ascetic Subhadda said to the Venerable Ananda: “It
is a gain to you, friend Ananda, a blessing, that in the presence of the Master
himself you have received the sprinkling of ordination as a disciple.”

68. So it came about that the wandering ascetic Subhadda, in the presence of
the Blessed One, received admission and higher ordination. And from the time
of his ordination the Venerable Subhadda remained alone, secluded, heedful,
ardent, and resolute. And before long he attained to the goal for which a worthy
man goes forth rightly from home to homelessness, the supreme goal of the
holy life; and having by himself realized it with higher knowledge, he dwelt
therein.

He knew: “Destroyed is birth; the higher life is fulfilled; nothing more is to be
done, and beyond this life nothing more remains.”

And the Venerable Subhadda became yet another among the arahats,
and he was the last disciple converted by the Blessed One himself.

Part Six: The Passing Away

The Blessed One’s Final Exhortation

1. Now the Blessed One spoke to the Venerable Ananda, saying: “It may be,
Ananda, that to some among you the thought will come: ‘Ended is the word
of the Master; we have a Master no longer.’ But it should not, Ananda, be so
considered. For that which I have proclaimed and made known as the Dhamma
and the Discipline, that shall be your Master when I am gone.

2. “And, Ananda, whereas now the bhikkhus address one another as ‘friend,’
let it not be so when I am gone. The senior bhikkhus, Ananda, may address
the junior ones by their name, their family name, or as ‘friend’; but the junior
bhikkhus should address the senior ones as ‘venerable sir’ or ‘your reverence.’

3. “If it is desired, Ananda, the Sangha may, when I am gone, abolish the lesser
and minor rules.

4. “Ananda, when I am gone, let the higher penalty be imposed upon the
bhikkhu Channa.”

“But what, Lord, is the higher penalty?”

“The bhikkhu Channa, Ananda, may say what he will, but the bhikkhus should
neither converse with him, nor exhort him, nor admonish him.”

5. Then the Blessed One addressed the bhikkhus, saying: “It may be, bhikkhus, that one of you is in doubt or perplexity as to the Buddha, the Dhamma, or the Sangha, the path or the practice. Then question, bhikkhus!

Do not be given to remorse later on with the thought:

“The Master was with us face to face, yet face to face we failed to ask him.”

6. But when this was said, the bhikkhus were silent. And yet a second and a third time the Blessed One said to them: “It may be, bhikkhus, that one of you is in doubt or perplexity as to the Buddha, the Dhamma, or the Sangha, the path or the practice. Then question, bhikkhus! Do not be given to remorse later on with the thought:

“The Master was with us face to face, yet face to face we failed to ask him.”

And for a second and a third time the bhikkhus were silent. Then the Blessed One said to them: “It may be, bhikkhus, out of respect for the Master that you ask no questions.

Then, bhikkhus, let friend communicate it to friend.” Yet still the bhikkhus were silent.

7. And the Venerable Ananda spoke to the Blessed One, saying: “Marvellous it is, O Lord, most wonderful it is!

This faith I have in the community of bhikkhus, that not even one bhikkhu is in doubt or perplexity as to the Buddha, the Dhamma, or the Sangha, the path or the practice.”

“Out of faith, Ananda, you speak thus. But here, Ananda, the Tathagata knows for certain that among this community of bhikkhus there is not even one bhikkhu who is in doubt or perplexity as to the Buddha, the Dhamma, or the Sangha, the path or the practice. For, Ananda, among these five hundred bhikkhus even the lowest is a stream-enterer, secure from downfall, assured, and bound for enlightenment.”

8. And the Blessed One addressed the bhikkhus, saying:

“Behold now, bhikkhus, I exhort you:

All compounded things are subject to vanish. Strive with earnestness!”

This was the last word of the Tathagata.

How the Blessed One Passed into Nibbana

9. And the Blessed One entered the first jhana. Rising from the first jhana, he entered the second jhana. Rising from the second jhana, he entered the third jhana. Rising from the third jhana, he entered the fourth jhana. And rising out of the fourth jhana, he entered the sphere of infinite space.

Rising from the attainment of the sphere of infinite space, he entered the sphere of infinite consciousness. Rising from the attainment of the sphere of infinite consciousness, he entered the sphere of nothingness. Rising from the attainment of the sphere of nothingness, he entered the sphere of neither-perception-nor-non-perception. And rising out of the attainment of the sphere of neither-perception-nor-non-perception, he attained to the cessation of perception and feeling.

10. And the Venerable Ananda spoke to the Venerable Anuruddha, saying:

“Venerable Anuruddha, the Blessed One has passed away.”

“No, friend Ananda, the Blessed One has not passed away.

He has entered the state of the cessation of perception and feeling.”

11. Then the Blessed One, rising from the cessation of perception and feeling, entered the sphere of neither-perception-nor-non-perception.

Rising from the attainment of the sphere of neither-perception-nor-non-perception, he entered the sphere of nothingness.

Rising from the attainment of the sphere of nothingness, he entered the sphere of infinite consciousness.

Rising from the attainment of the sphere of infinite consciousness, he entered the sphere of infinite space.

Rising from the attainment of the sphere of infinite space, he entered the fourth jhana.

Rising from the fourth jhana, he entered the third jhana.

Rising from the third jhana, he entered the second jhana.

Rising from the second jhana, he entered the first jhana.

Rising from the first jhana, he entered the second jhana.

Rising from the second jhana, he entered the third jhana.

Rising from the third jhana, he entered the fourth jhana.

And, rising from the fourth jhana, the Blessed One immediately passed away.

The World’s Echo

12. And when the Blessed One had passed away, simultaneously with his Parinibbana there came a tremendous earthquake, dreadful and astounding, and the thunders rolled across the heavens.

13. And when the Blessed One had passed away, simultaneously with his Parinibbana, Brahma Sahampati spoke this stanza:

All must depart — all beings that have life Must shed their compound forms.

Yea, even one, A Master such as he, a peerless being, Powerful in wisdom, the Enlightened One, has passed away.

14. And when the Blessed One had passed away, simultaneously with his Parinibbana, Sakka, king of the gods, spoke this stanza:
Transient are all compounded things, Subject to arise and vanish; Having come into existence they pass away; Good is the peace when they forever cease.

15. And when the Blessed One had passed away, simultaneously with his Parinibbana, the Venerable Anuruddha spoke this stanza:
No movement of the breath, but with steadfast heart, Free from desires and tranquil — so the sage Comes to his end. By mortal pangs unshaken, His mind, like a flame extinguished, finds release.

16. And when the Blessed One had passed away, simultaneously with his Parinibbana, the Venerable Ananda spoke this stanza:
Then there was terror, and the hair stood up, when he, The All-accomplished One, the Buddha, passed away.

17. Then, when the Blessed One had passed away, some bhikkhus, not yet freed from passion, lifted up their arms and wept; and some, flinging themselves on the ground, rolled from side to side and wept, lamenting:
“Too soon has the Blessed One come to his Parinibbana!
Too soon has the Happy One come to his Parinibbana! Too soon has the Eye of the World vanished from sight!”
But the bhikkhus who were freed from passion, mindful and clearly comprehending, reflected in this way:
“Impermanent are all compounded things. How could this be otherwise?”

18. And the Venerable Anuruddha addressed the bhikkhus, saying: “Enough, friends! Do not grieve, do not lament! For has not the Blessed One declared that with all that is dear and beloved there must be change, separation, and severance? Of that which is born, come into being, compounded and subject to decay, how can one say:
‘May it not come to dissolution!’? The deities, friends, are aggrieved.”
“But, venerable sir, of what deities is the Venerable Anuruddha aware?”
“There are deities, friend Ananda, in space and on the earth who are earthly-minded; with dishevelled hair they weep, with uplifted arms they weep; flinging themselves on the ground, they roll from side to side, lamenting:

‘Too soon has the Blessed One come to his Parinibbana!
Too soon has the Happy One come to his Parinibbana!
Too soon has the Eye of the World vanished from sight!’
But those deities who are freed from passion, mindful and clearly comprehending, reflect in this way:

‘Impermanent are all compounded things. How could this be otherwise?’”

19. Now the Venerable Anuruddha and the Venerable Ananda spent the rest of the night in talking on the Dhamma. Then the Venerable Anuruddha spoke to the Venerable Ananda, saying: “Go now, friend Ananda, to Kusinara, and announce to the Mallas: ‘The Blessed One, Vasetthas, has passed away. Do now as seems fitting to you.’” “So be it, venerable sir.” And the Venerable Ananda prepared himself in the forenoon, and taking bowl and robe, went with a companion into Kusinara.

20. At that time the Mallas of Kusinara had gathered in the council hall to consider that very matter. And the Venerable Ananda approached them and announced:
“The Blessed One, Vasetthas, has passed away. Do now as seems fitting to you.”

And when they heard the Venerable Ananda speak these words, the Mallas with their sons, their wives, and the wives of their sons, were sorely grieved, grieved at heart and afflicted; and some, with their hair all dishevelled, with arms upraised in despair, wept; flinging themselves on the ground, they rolled from side to side, lamenting: “Too soon has the Blessed One come to his Parinibbana! Too soon has the Happy One come to his Parinibbana! Too soon has the Eye of the World vanished from sight!”

“Maha-parinibbana Sutta: Last Days of the Buddha” (DN 16), translated from the Pali by Sister Vajira & Francis Story. Access to Insight (BCBS Edition), 30 November 2013, <http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/dn/dn.16.1-.html>.



Ramabhar Stūpa (Makuṭa Baṇḍhana Stūpa)

Ramabhar Stupa holds a great religious significance to Buddhists all over the world as it is said that this is the exact spot where Lord Buddha was cremated and got Mahaparinirvana after his death in 483 BC. The stupa was constructed by the Malla Kings who ruled over Kushinagar when Buddha was alive. In ancient Buddhist texts, this Stupa has been referred to as Mukut-Bandhan Chaitya or Mukta-Bandhan Vihara.

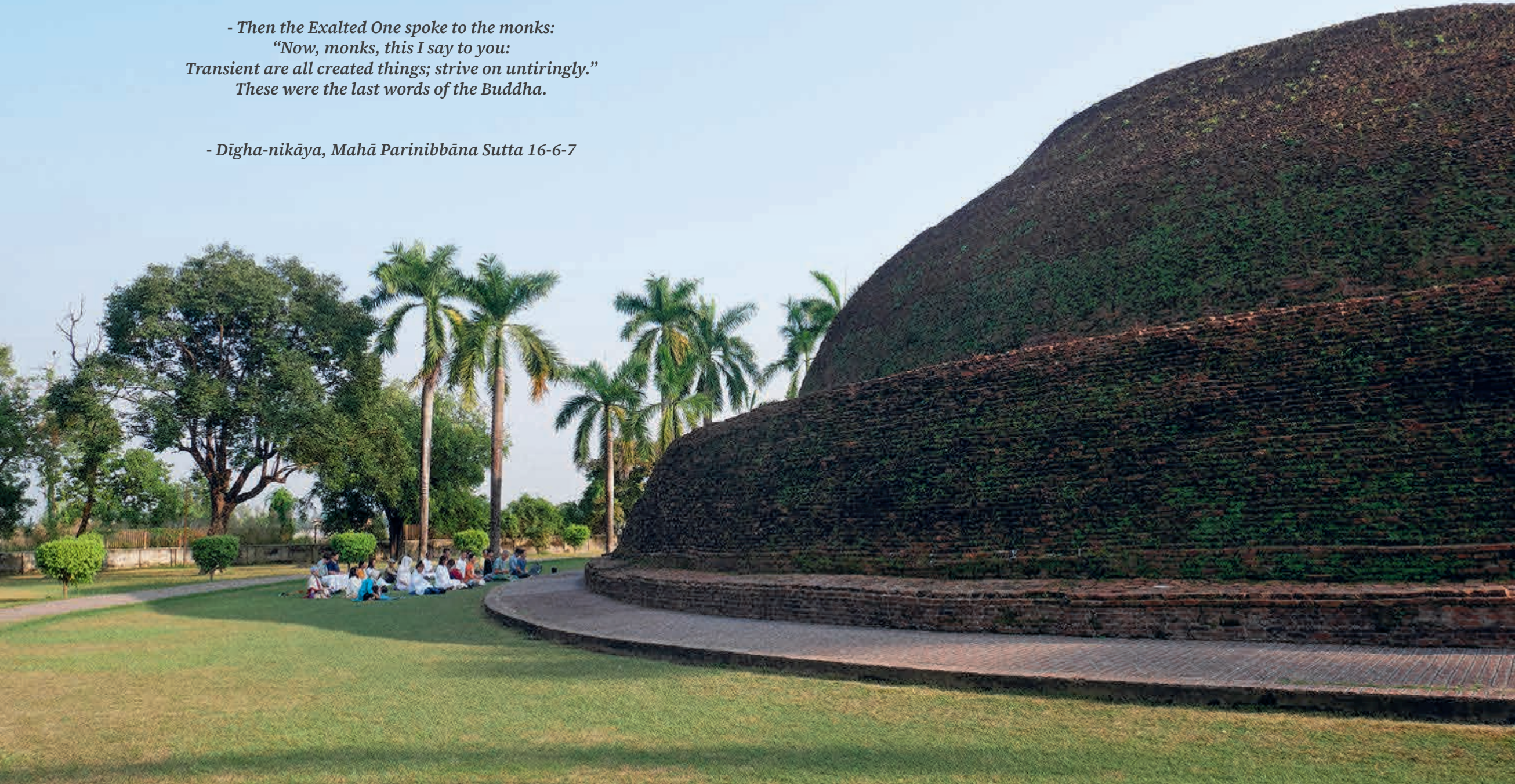
According to the legends, the word Ramabhar might be derived from the pond or the mound located close to it. The Stupa is made out of bricks and is 14.9 m high. The stupa is built on a mound standing opposite the Kushinagar-Deoria road. The circular drum of this stupa has a diameter of 34.14 m at the top and 47.24 m at the bottom. There is also a pond-like water body close to it.



*Atha kho bhagava amantesi
“handa dani, bhikkhave,
amantayami vo,
vayadhamma saṅkhara, appamadena sampadetha” ti.
Ayaṃ tathagatassa pacchima vaca.*

*- Then the Exalted One spoke to the monks:
“Now, monks, this I say to you:
Transient are all created things; strive on untiringly.”
These were the last words of the Buddha.*

- Dīgha-nikāya, Mahā Parinibbāna Sutta 16-6-7



Work Out Your Own Salvation

- by S. N. Goenka

The following article has been condensed from a discourse given by S. N. Goenka on the second day of a three-day Vipassana course for old students.)

At the surface, the mind plays so many games thinking, imagining, dreaming, giving suggestions. But deep inside, the mind remains a prisoner of its own habit pattern, and the habit pattern of the deepest level of the mind is to feel sensations and react. If the sensations are pleasant, the mind reacts with craving; if they are unpleasant, it reacts with aversion.

The enlightenment of the Buddha was to go to the root of the problem. Unless we work at the root level, we will be dealing only with the intellect and only this part of the mind will be purified. As long as the roots of a tree are healthy they will provide healthy sap for the entire tree. So start working with the roots. This was the enlightenment of the Buddha.

When he gave Dhamma, the Noble Eightfold Path the path of *sīla* (morality), *saṃādhi* (mastery over the mind) and *paññā* (experiential wisdom) it was not to establish a cult, a dogma or a belief. Dhamma is a practical path. Those who walk on it can go to the deepest level and eradicate all their miseries.

Those who have really liberated themselves will understand that going to the depth of the mind making a surgical operation of the mind has to be done by oneself, by each individual. Someone can guide you with love and compassion; someone can help you in your journey on the path, but nobody can carry you on their shoulders and say: "I will take you to the final goal, just surrender to me; I will do everything."

You are responsible for your own bondage. You are responsible for making your mind impure, no one else. You are responsible for purifying your mind by breaking all the bondages. No one else can do that for you.

Continuity of practice is the secret of success. When it is said that you should be continuously aware, this means that you must be aware with wisdom of the sensations on the body, where you really experience things arising and passing away. The awareness of *anicca* is what purifies your mind, the awareness of the arising and passing away of these sensations.

Intellectualising this truth will not help. You may understand: "Everything that arises sooner or later passes away. Anyone who takes birth sooner or later dies.

This is *anicca*."

You may understand this correctly but you are not experiencing it. Only your own personal experience will help you to purify your mind and liberate you from your miseries. The word for "experience" used in India at the time of Buddha was *vedanā*, feeling by experiencing, not just intellectualisation. And this is possible only when a sensation is felt on the body.

Anicca must be experienced. If you are not experiencing it, it is merely a theory. And the Buddha was not interested in theories.

Even before the Buddha, and at the time of the Buddha, there were teachers who taught that the entire universe is *anicca*; this was not new. What was new from the Buddha was the experience of *anicca*; and when you experience it within the framework of your own body, you have started working at the deepest level of your mind.

Two things are very important for those who walk on the path. The first is breaking the barrier that divides the conscious and the unconscious mind. But even if your conscious mind can now feel those sensations that were previously felt only by the deep unconscious part of your mind, that alone will not help you. The Buddha wanted you to take a second step: change the mind's habit of reacting at the deepest level.

Coming to the stage where you have started feeling sensations is a good first step, yet the habit pattern of reaction remains. When you feel an unpleasant sensation, if you keep reacting, "Oh, I must get rid of this," that will not help. If you start feeling a pleasant flow of very subtle vibrations throughout the body, and you react, "Ah, wonderful! This is what I was looking for. Now I've got it!" you have not understood Vipassana at all.

Vipassana is not a game of pleasure and pain. You have been reacting this way for your entire life, for countless lifetimes. Now in the name of Vipassana you have started making this habit pattern stronger. Every time you feel an unpleasant sensation you react with aversion; every time you feel a pleasant sensation you react with craving, in the same way as before. Vipassana has not helped you, because you have not practised Vipassana in the right way.

Whenever you again make the mistake of reacting because of the old habit, see how quickly you can become aware of it: "Look, an unpleasant sensation and I am reacting with aversion; look, a pleasant sensation and I am reacting with craving. This is not Vipassana. This will not help me."

Understand that this is what you have to do. If you are not one hundred per cent successful, it does not matter. This will not harm you as long as you keep understanding and keep trying to change the old habit pattern. If you have started coming out of your prison for even a few moments, you are progressing.

This is what the Buddha wanted you to do: practise the Noble Eightfold Path. Practise *sīla* so that you can have the right type of *samādhi*. For those who keep breaking *sīla* there is little hope that they will go to the deepest levels of reality. *Sīla* develops after you have some control over your mind, after you start understanding with *paññā* that breaking *sīla* is very harmful. Your *paññā* at the experiential level will help your *samādhi*. Your *samādhi* at the experiential level will help your *sīla*. Strong *sīla* will help your *samādhi* become strong. Strong *samādhi* will help your *paññā* become strong. Each of the three will start helping the other two and you will keep progressing, progressing on the path.

There were many techniques in India in those days, and also later on, practising which meditators started feeling subtle vibrations throughout the body, when the solidity of the body had dissolved. The truth is that even the subtlest vibration one can experience is still a phenomenon in the field of mind and matter. It is arising, passing, arising, passing; still in the field of *anicca*, a field of constant change.

Some meditators of old tried to impose a philosophy on this subtle experience. Having reached the stage where they experienced nothing but vibrations, they postulated: “Throughout the universe, there is this subtle energy. This is God Almighty. I am experiencing this; I am with God Almighty. The entire universe is one. Every being is God. Why should I have any kind of preference or prejudice?” It is a very positive mental suggestion but it only helps at a superficial level.

The reality is that even this very subtle experience is still in the field of mind and matter; it is not the ultimate truth that is beyond mind and matter. All these suggestions, however positive they may be, cannot liberate anyone. You must be with reality: all vibrations are nothing but a flux, a flow. This realisation removes the deep-rooted habit pattern of reacting to the sensations.

Whatever sensations you experience pleasant, unpleasant or neutral you should use them as tools. These sensations can become tools to liberate you from your misery, provided you understand the truth as it is. But these same sensations can also become tools that multiply your misery. Likes and dislikes should not cloud the issue.

The reality is: sensations are arising and passing away; they are *anicca*. Pleasant, unpleasant or neutral it makes no difference. When you start realising the fact that even the most pleasant sensations you experience are *dukkha* (suffering), then you are coming nearer to liberation.

Understand why pleasant sensations are *dukkha*. Every time a pleasant sensation arises, you start relishing it. This habit of clinging to pleasant sensations has persisted for countless lifetimes, and it is because of this that you have aversion. Craving and aversion are two sides of the same coin. The stronger the craving, the stronger aversion is bound to be. Sooner or later every pleasant sensation turns into an unpleasant one, and every unpleasant sensation will turn into a pleasant one; this is the law of nature. If you start craving pleasant sensations, you are inviting misery.

The Buddha’s teaching helps us to disintegrate the solidified intensity that keeps us from seeing the real truth. At the actual level, there are mere vibrations, nothing else. At the same time, there is solidity. For example, this wall is solid. This is a truth, an apparent truth. The ultimate truth is that what you call a wall is nothing but a mass of vibrating subatomic particles. We have to integrate both these truths through proper understanding.

Dhamma develops our understanding, so that we free ourselves from the habit of reacting and understand that craving is harming us, aversion is harming us. And then we become more realistic: “See, there is ultimate truth, but there is also apparent truth, which is also a truth.”

The process of going to the depth of the mind to liberate yourself is done by you alone; but you must also be prepared to work with your family, with society as a whole. The yardstick to measure whether love, compassion and goodwill are truly developing within you is whether these qualities are being exhibited toward the people around you.

The Buddha wanted us to be liberated at the deepest level of our minds. And that is possible only when three characteristics are realised: *anicca* (impermanence), *dukkha* (suffering) and *anattā* (egolessness). When the mind starts to become deconditioned, layer after layer becomes purified until the mind is totally unconditioned. Then purity becomes a way of life. You will not have to practise *mettā* (compassionate love) as you do now at the end of your one-hour sitting. Later, *mettā* just becomes a part of your life. All the time you will remain suffused with love, compassion and good will. This is the aim, the goal.

The path of liberation is the path of working at the deepest level of the mind. There is nothing wrong with giving good mental suggestions, but unless you change the blind habit of reacting at the deepest level, you are not liberated. Nobody is liberated unless the deepest level of the mind is changed. And the deepest level of the mind is constantly in contact with bodily sensations.

We have to divide, dissect and disintegrate the entire structure to understand how mind and matter are interrelated. If you work only with the mind and forget the body, you are not practising the Buddha's teaching. If you work only with the body and forget the mind, again you are not understanding the Buddha properly.

Anything that arises in the mind turns into matter, into a sensation in the material field. This was the Buddha's discovery. People forgot this truth, which can only be understood through proper practice. The Buddha said, "Sabbe dhammā vedanā samosaraṇā:; anything that arises in the mind starts flowing as a sensation on the body.

The Buddha used the word *asava*, which means flow or intoxication. Suppose you have generated anger. A biochemical flow starts, which generates very unpleasant sensations. Because of these unpleasant sensations, you start reacting with anger. As you generate anger, the flow becomes stronger. There are unpleasant sensations and, with them, a biochemical secretion. As you generate more anger, the flow becomes stronger.

In the same way, when passion or fear arises, a particular type of biochemical substance starts flowing in the blood. A vicious circle starts, which keeps repeating itself. There is a flow, an intoxication, at the depth of the mind. Out of ignorance, we become intoxicated by this particular biochemical flow. Although it makes us miserable, yet we become intoxicated: we want it again and again. So we keep on generating more and more anger, more and more passion, more and more fear. We become intoxicated by whatever impurity we generate in the mind. When we say that someone is addicted to alcohol or drugs, this is untrue. No one is addicted to alcohol or drugs. The actual truth is that one is addicted to the sensations that are produced by the alcohol or drugs.

Buddha teaches us to observe reality. Every addiction will be undone if we observe the truth of the sensations on the body with this understanding: "Anicca, anicca. This is impermanent." Gradually we will learn to stop reacting. Dhamma is so simple, so scientific, so true a law of nature applicable to everyone. Whether one is Buddhist, Hindu, Muslim, Christian; whether one is American, Indian, Burmese, Russian or Italian it makes no difference; a human

being is a human being. Dhamma is a pure science of mind, matter, and the interaction between the two. Do not allow it to become a sectarian or philosophical belief. This will be of no help.

The greatest scientist produced by the world worked to find the truth about the relationship between mind and matter. And discovering this truth, he found a way to go beyond mind and matter. He explored reality not just for the sake of satisfying his curiosity but to find a way to be free of suffering. So much misery in every family, in every society, in every nation, in the entire world. The Enlightened One found a way to come out of this misery.

There is no other solution: each one must come out of misery oneself. When every member of a family comes out of misery, the family will become happy, peaceful and harmonious. When every member of society comes out of misery, when every member of a nation comes out of misery, when every citizen of the world comes out of misery only then will there be world peace.

There cannot be world peace just because we want world peace: "There should be peace in the world because I am agitating for it." This does not happen. We cannot agitate for peace. When we become agitated, we lose our peacefulness. Let there be no agitation. Purify your mind. Then every action you take will add peace to the universe.

Purify your mind: this is how you can stop harming others and start helping them. When you work for your own liberation, you will find that you have also started helping others come out of their misery. One individual becomes several individuals there is a slow widening of the circle. But there is no magic, no miracle. Work for your own peace, and you will find that you have started helping the atmosphere around you to become more peaceful, but only when you work properly.

The biggest miracle is changing the habit pattern of the mind from rolling in misery to freedom from misery. There is no bigger miracle than this. Every step that is taken toward this kind of miracle is a healthy step, a helpful step. Every other apparent miracle is only bondage.



May you all come out of your misery,
come out of your bondage.
May you all enjoy real peace,
real harmony,
real happiness.

Bhavatu Sabba Mangalam!!!



The Buddha Relics in India

Buddha belonged to the Shakya clan, whose capital was located at Kapilavastu. During an excavation in 1898, William Claxton Peppe discovered five small vases containing bone fragments, ashes, and jewels in a long-forgotten stupa in Piprahwa, near Birdpur in the Basti district of Uttar Pradesh, India. A team led by K.M. Srivastava performed further excavations at the Piprahwa site between 1971 and 1973. The team discovered a casket containing fragments of charred bone and dated them to the 4th or 5th century BCE. Based upon the findings of these excavations, the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) has identified Piprahwa as Kapilavastu. This conclusion is disputed by some authorities, including the Nepalese Department of Archaeology, which claims Tilaurakot as the historical location of Kapilavastu.

The 20 bone relics, which are said to be parts of the skull, on display at the National Museum are part of the 22 bone fragments that were discovered by the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) in the 1970s in two separate caskets made of soapstone. The largest piece is about 3 X 5 centimeters. The other two pieces of these bone fragments are on display at the National Museum in Kolkata. These bone fragments have been placed in a pavilion made of gold that was presented as a gift to the museum by the royal Thai government in 1997.

The Relic Stupa of Vaishali was built by Lichhavis in Vaishali as a mud stupa in the 5th century BCE. Noted archaeologists Anant Sadashiv Altekar and Sitaram Rai of the K.P. Jayaswal Research Institute led an archaeological excavation of this stupa from 1958 to 1962. A reliquary was discovered and removed from the core of the stupa; it was dated to the 5th century BCE. It was later determined that this reliquary contained ashes of the Buddha mixed with earth, a copper punch-marked coin, and several other items. The casket was brought to the Patna Museum in 1972, where it remains to this day.

Mortal remains of the Buddha belonging to the third or fourth century were found during an excavation in 1962–1963 at Devni Mori which is a Buddhist archaeological site near Shamalaji in Gujarat. Ashes of Buddha were found in a gold bottle wrapped in silk cloth within a copper bowl that was kept in a casket. The 1,700-year-old casket's inscription in Brahmi script mentions 'Dashabala Sharira Nilaya' — which stands for 'abode of the bodily relics of Lord Buddha'. The remains are preserved in the Museum of Department of Archaeology and Ancient History of the Faculty of Arts, Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda - Vadodara.

Reference: Wikipedia

When the first dome of the Global Vipassana Pagoda was constructed in October 2006 in Mumbai; bone relics of the Buddha were enshrined in the central locking stone of the dome, making it the world's largest structure containing relics of the Buddha. The relics were originally found in the stupa at Bhattiprolu, Guntur district, Andhra Pradesh, India. They have been donated by the Mahabodhi Society of India and the prime minister of Sri Lanka to be kept at the Global Vipassana Pagoda. A casket was discovered in Lalitgiri in Orissa believed to contain bones of Buddha.



Bones of the Buddha in this gold pavilion gifted by the Thai Government in the National Museum, New Delhi.



The relics of The Buddha as photographed by the National Musuem, New Delhi



II,4 Blessings

Thus have I heard. On one occasion the Blessed One was dwelling at Sāvattthī in Jeta's Grove, Anāthapiṇḍika's Park.

Then, when the night had advanced, a certain deity of stunning beauty, having illuminated the entire Jeta's Grove, approached the Blessed One, paid homage to him, stood to one side, and addressed the Blessed One in verse:

258. "Many devas and human beings
have reflected on blessings,
longing for safety,
so declare the highest blessing."

259. "Not associating with fools,
associating with the wise,
and venerating those worthy of veneration:
this is the highest blessing.

260. "Residing in a suitable place,
merit done in the past,
and directing oneself rightly:
this is the highest blessing.

261. "Much learning, a craft,
a well-trained discipline, and
well-spoken speech:
this is the highest blessing.

262. "Serving one's mother and father,
maintaining a wife and children,
and an honest occupation:
this is the highest blessing.

263. "Giving and righteous conduct,
assistance to relatives,
blameless deeds:
this is the highest blessing.

264. "Desisting and abstaining from evil,
refraining from intoxicating drink,
heedfulness in good qualities:
this is the highest blessing.

265. "Reverence and humility,
contentment and gratitude,
timely listening to the Dhamma:
this is the highest blessing.

266. "Patience, being amenable to advice,
the seeing of ascetics,
timely discussion on the Dhamma:
this is the highest blessing.

267. "Austerity and the spiritual life,
seeing of the noble truths,
and realization of nibbāna:
this is the highest blessing.

268. "One whose mind does not shake
when touched by worldly conditions,
sorrow less, dust-free, secure:
this is the highest blessing.

269. "Those who have done these things
are victorious everywhere;
everywhere they go safely:
theirs is that highest blessing."

A decorative graphic on the left side of the image. It features several white, stylized leaves of various sizes scattered across a light blue, textured background. The leaves are arranged in a way that suggests they are falling or floating. The text is centered within this graphic area.

Sri Lanka

The Island of Dhamma



Anuradhapura

Anuradhapura (Sinhala:: Anurādhapuraya; is a major city located in north central plain of Sri Lanka. It is the capital city of North Central Province and the capital of Anuradhapura District. The city lies 205 kilometers (127 mi) north of the current capital of Colombo in the North Central Province, on the banks of the historic Malwathu Oya. The city is now a World Heritage Site famous for its well-preserved ruins of the ancient Sinhalese civilization.

The name ‘Anuradhapura’ means the ‘city of Anuradha’ (Anuradha+pura), where “pura” stand for ‘city’ in Sanskrit, Pali, and Sinhala.

While Mahāvamsa place the founding of the city in 437 BCE, the site has been inhabited for much longer, making it a major human settlement on the island for almost three millennia and one of the oldest continuously occupied cities in Asia. It is the cradle of the Hydraulic Sinhalese civilization, Theravada Buddhism, and the longest-serving ancient capital of Sri Lanka that has survived for 1500 years. Moreover, It was the first capital of the Sinhala Kingdom of Rajarata, following the kingdoms of Tambapanni and Upatissa Nuwara. Anuradhapura was also the center of Theravada Buddhism for many centuries and has been a major Buddhist pilgrimage site with ruins of many ancient Buddhist temples, including the famous Anuradhapura Maha Viharaya and the Jaya Sri Maha Bodhi, the oldest still-living, documented, planted tree in the world and that is believed to have originally been a branch of the sacred fig tree at Bodh Gaya (Bihar, India), under which the Buddha attained enlightenment. These vast networks of ancient temples and monasteries now cover over 100 square kilometers (40 sq mi) of area of the city today.

The city was mostly destroyed and largely deserted after 993 CE, with the Cholar invasion from South India. Although several attempts were made by later Sinhalese kings to return the capital to Anuradhapura, it was not re-established as a major population center of the island until the British colonial era in the 19th century CE. The revival of the current city began in earnest in the 1870s. The contemporary city, much of which was moved during the mid-20th century to preserve the site of the ancient capital, is a major road junction of northern Sri Lanka and lies along a railway line. The city is the headquarters of Sri Lanka’s archeological survey, and tourism is a significant factor in its economy.

Buddhism and Anuradhapura

Anuradhapura was a major intellectual center for early Theravada Buddhism, home to revered Buddhist philosophers including Buddhaghosa.

During the reign of Dhatusena (455-473) a redaction of the Theravada Buddhist canon took place while at the same time 18 new vihara (temple complexes) were built and a statue erected for Mahinda, the Indian prince-monk who introduced Buddhism to the island. During the late Anuradhapura period, the royal family and nobility of Sri Lanka strongly supported Buddhism. As such, they frequently commissioned works of art and donated these items to Buddhist temples. In return, the temple and local Buddhist community supported the king’s rule. Artworks featuring depictions of Avalokitesvara, the Bodhisattva of Mercy and Compassion, became increasingly popular.



A view of the Anuradhapura town, Sri Lanka

Jaya Sri Maha Bodhi is a historical sacred bo tree (*Ficus religiosa*) in the Mahamewuna Garden in historical city of Anuradhapura, Sri Lanka. This is believed to be a tree grown from a cutting of the southern branch from the historical sacred bo tree, Sri Maha Bodhi, which was destroyed during the time of Emperor Ashoka the Great, at Buddha Gaya in India, under which Siddhartha Gautama (Buddha) attained Enlightenment. The Buddhist nun Sangamitta Maha Theri, a daughter of Indian Emperor Ashoka, in 288 BC, brought the tree cutting to Sri Lanka during the reign of Sinhalese King Devanampiya Tissa. At more than 2,300 years old, it is the oldest living human-planted tree in the world with a known planting date. The Mahavamsa, or the great chronicle of the Sinhalese, provides an elaborate account of the establishment of the Jaya Siri Maha Bodhi on the Island and the subsequent development of the site as a major Buddhist pilgrimage site.

Today, the Jaya Siri Maha Bodhi is situated on a high terrace, about 6.5 meters above the ground, and surrounded by 4 other lower-level terraces with Bo trees called “Parivara Bodhi” planted for its protection. The site is currently administered by the Chief High Priest of Atamasthana and the Atamasthana Palakasabha, the administrative body of the Atamasthana, and receives millions of pilgrims each year. The site is open to visitors and continuously hosts numerous acts of worship throughout the year. However, access to the uppermost terrace where the bo tree is located is restricted due to the old age of the tree and various acts of vandalism it has endured throughout history. The Jaya Sri Maha Bodhi is a sacred Bo tree, that stands in the Mahamewna Gardens in Anuradhapura, Sri Lanka. Not only is it the closest authentic living link to Gautama Buddha, it is also the oldest human-planted tree in the world with a known planting date and a recorded history.

About 2,600 years ago, Lord Gautama Buddha sat with his back against an Esathu (Aśvat-tha) tree on the banks of the Neranjana River in Bodhgaya, India. It was at this moment, as he sat against the tree, that the Buddha is said to have achieved enlightenment. In doing so, the tree also gained a venerated status. It became known as the Bodhi tree, and pilgrims came to see it even within the lifetime of the Buddha.

Later, in 236 BC, the Buddhist nun Sanghamitta Maha Theri was sent by Emperor Asoka from India to Sri Lanka. With her, she carried a southern branch of the original sacred fig. This branch was ceremoniously presented to Devanampiya Tissa, one of the earliest kings of Sri Lanka whose reign was notable for the arrival of Buddhism. In 288 BC, Tissa planted the branch of the Bodhi tree in his Royal Park in Anuradhapura.

The Jaya Sri Maha Bodhi, as it became known, has since been cared for and protected by Buddhist monks and dedicated kings. Statues, water canals, golden fences, and walls have been built around the tree over the centuries, and many vows and offerings have been made by Buddhists at the foot of the sacred fig.

Buddhists on the Island have had a practice of visiting and paying homage to the most sacred Bodhi tree. It is an annual custom for pilgrims from far-away villages to visit the city of Anuradhapura and to pay homage to the Sri Maha Bodhi. The caretaker of this site provides various offerings on a daily basis. The Buddhists in general have a strong belief that offerings made to the Jaya Sri Maha Bodhi have produced significant and positive changes in their life. It has also been customary for many Buddhists to make a special vow before the Jaya Sri Maha Bodhi for the safe delivery of their babies without malformations and for many other cures. It has also been a long tradition among farmers around Anuradhapura to offer the Sri Maha Bodhi tree the rice prepared from their first paddy harvest. They strongly believe that such offerings lead to a sustained paddy production with the least sufferings from drought as well as pest attacks, including elephant damage.







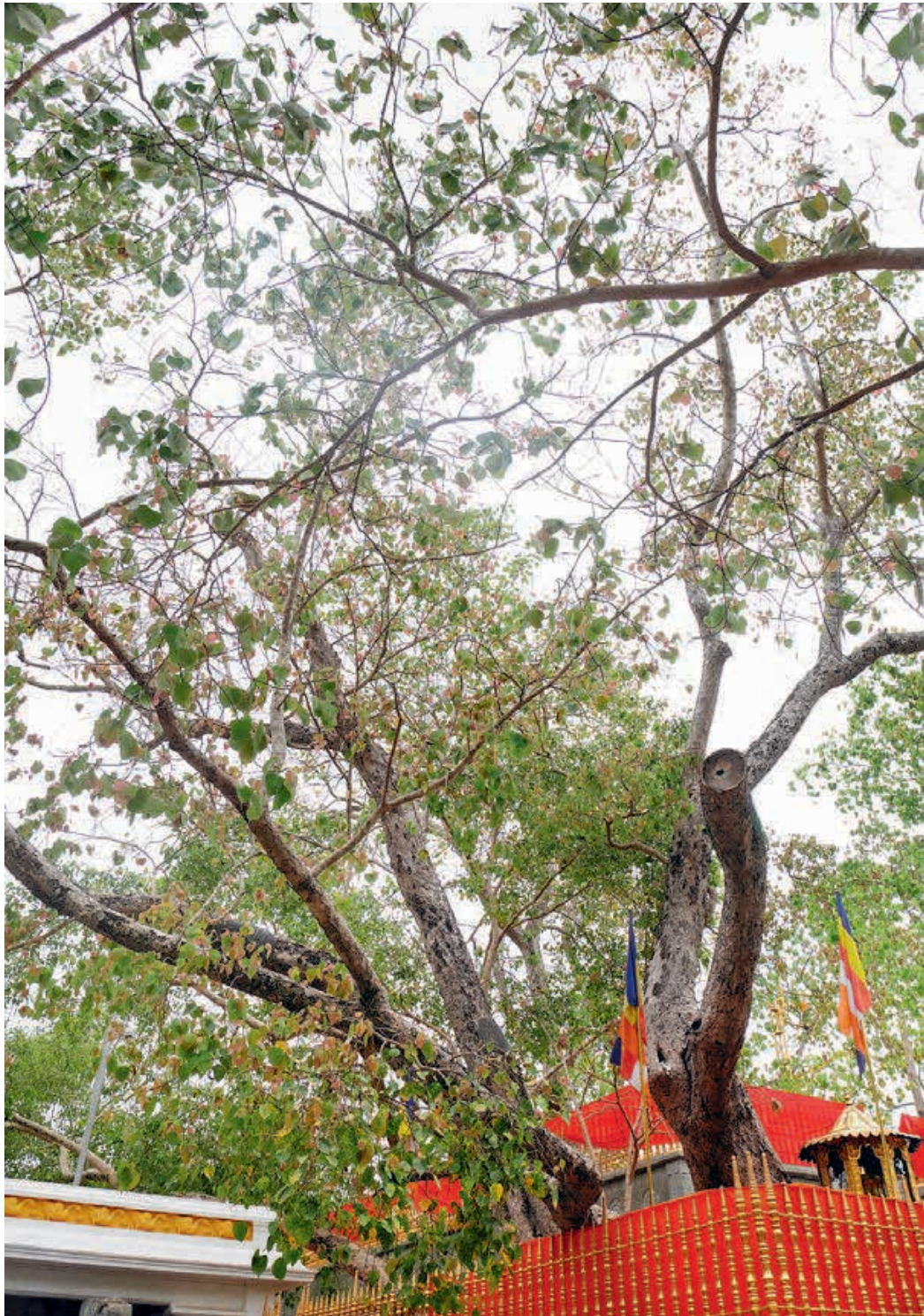


Pilgrims lighting lamps and incense sticks as an offering





Devotees and Monks paying respects to the Bodhi Tree



Pilgrims making offerings to The Maha Bodhi Tree



The 1,600 Stone Pillars Palace
of Lovamahapaya

Ruwanwelisaya



The Ruwanweli Maha Seya, also known as the swarnamali maha seya (lit. ‘the Great Thupa’), is a stupa (a hemispherical structure containing relics) in Anuradhapura, Sri Lanka. Two quarts or one Dona of the Buddha’s relics are enshrined in the stupa, making it the largest collection of his relics anywhere. It was built by Sinhalese King Dutugemunu in c. 140 B.C., who became king of Sri Lanka after a war in which the Chola King Elāra (Ellalan) was defeated. It is also known as Swarnamali Seya, Svaṇṇamāli Mahaceti (in Pali) and Rathnamali Seya.

This is one of the “Solosmasthanā” (the 16 places of veneration) and the “Atamasthanā” (the 8 places of veneration). The stupa is one of the world’s tallest ancient monuments, standing at 103 m (338 ft) and with a circumference of 290 m (951 ft). The original stupa had been about 55 m (180 ft) in height and was renovated by many kings. The Kaunghmudaw Pagoda in Sagaing, Myanmar is modelled after this stupa. The Mahāvamsa contains a detailed account on the construction and the opening ceremony of the stupa.

The stupa was covered by wilderness as of the 19th century. After fund raising efforts by a bhikkhu, it was renovated in the early 20th century. The Ruwanweli Seya Restoration Society was set up, most notably the philanthropist Hendrick Appuhamy, donated Rs 20 million (1912) adjusted for inflation in 2021 it is worth 611 million US Dollars for the restoration works, the foundation was founded in 1902 and the modern day crowning (a “crown” is a large gem placed at the very top of the stupa) was done on June 17, 1940, and the final crowning of the stupa took place on November 26, 2019.

Buddha’s Relic

In the Mahāvamsa, Ashoka of the Maurya dynasty chooses not to retrieve Buddha relics in the possession of Nagas at Ramagrama. It was said that on his deathbed, Buddha told a prophecy that of the eight donas of his body relics, one would be venerated by the Koliyas of Ramagrama, then the relics would belong to the Nagas until being enshrined in Sri Lanka. Ashoka is told more prophecy by arhats, who speak of the future enshrinement of these relics by King Dutthagamani.

King Dutthagamani then received from the Sangha the Buddha’s relics upon his head in a casket and departed from the golden pavilion in the midst of manifold offerings and honours made by gods and “Brahmas”. He circumambulated the relic-chamber three times, entered to it from the east, and when laid the relic-casket on a silver couch one “koṭi” worth, that was arranged in the north side.

Image on the right: The Buddha’s Footprints with the special marks.

An image of the Buddha was then, according to the Buddha’s determination, created in the lion’s reclining posture (“sihaseyya”), and all the relics were enshrined within that image. When the enshrining of the relics in the Great Stūpa Ruvanveli was completed, the two novices Uttara and Sumana closed the relic-chamber with the stone-blocks that were previously hidden to be used as a lid.

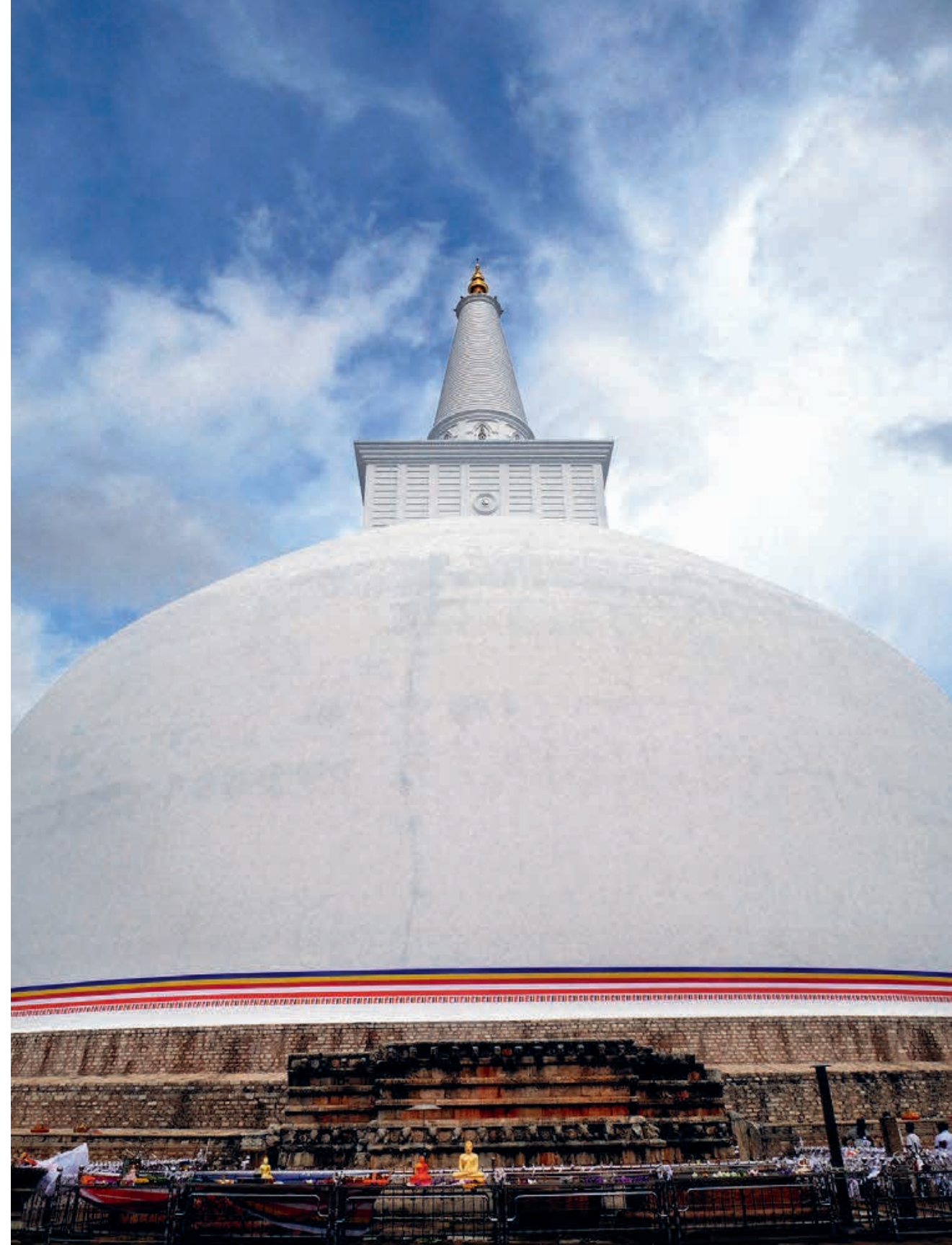
In the Thupavamsa numerous types of beings attended the enshrinement of the relics into the Mahathupa; including the Naga king Mahakala who until recently guarded them. The relics were to be placed atop a golden throne crafted by Visvakarman the divine artificer; the throne brought by Indra. Brahma offers his invisible umbrella of sovereignty, with the king Dutthagamani offering his own. The arhat Indagutta creates a metal canopy over the universe, so that Mara will not interfere, as monks chanted the Sutta Pitaka (the Collection of Discourses delivered by the Buddha). Dutthagamani ceremoniously enters with the urn atop his head; but as he is about to place the urn on the golden throne, the relics rise into the air and form Buddha, with each of the 32 major signs and 80 lesser signs of a great man. In this form he performs the twin miracle of fire and water, fulfilling the fifth of his death bed resolutions.



One hundred and twenty million gods and humans gain arhatship from this experience. The relics return to the urn and they are laid to rest and the chamber sealed with forty meter stone slabs.

“The relic-chamber shall not shake even by an earthquake; flowers such as jasmine that were offered on that day shall not wither till the end of Buddha Gotama’s Dispensation; the lamps that were kindled with ghee-oil shall not be extinguished; the clay that was mixed with perfume and sandalwood shall not dry; even a single scratch shall not appear within the relic-chamber; stains shall not appear in any of the golden goods that were offered.’ All this occurred by the determination-power of all Arahants present. They determined also that inimical persons should not be able to even see the relic-chamber. Furthermore, by order of King Dutugemunu, the people of Sri Lanka enshrined, along with many other objects such as golden and silver caskets, thousand more of the Buddha’s relics over the relic-chamber.”

Ref: Encyclopedia of Sri Lanka 2018, Strong 2007



Mihintale

Mihintale is a mountain peak near Anuradhapura in Sri Lanka. It is believed by Sri Lankans to be the site of a meeting between the Buddhist monk Mahinda and King Devanampiyatissa which inaugurated the presence of Buddhism in Sri Lanka. It is now a pilgrimage site, and the site of several religious monuments and abandoned structures.

History

Approximately 12.5 km (7.8 mi) east of Anuradhapura, close to the Anuradhapura - Trincomalee Road is situated the “Missaka Pabbata” which is 1,000 feet (300 m) in height and is one of the peaks of a mountainous range.

According to Dipavamsa and Mahavamsa, Thera Mahinda came to Sri Lanka from India on the full moon day of the month of Poson (June) and met King Devanampiyatissa and preached the Buddhist doctrine. The traditional spot where this meeting took place is revered by the Buddhists of Sri Lanka. Therefore, in the month of Poson, Buddhists make their pilgrimage to Anuradhapura and Mihintale.

Mahinda was the son of Emperor Ashoka of India. King Ashoka embraced Buddhism after he was inspired by a monk named “Nigrodha.” The King was in great misery after witnessing the devastation caused by expansionist wars. Meeting this peaceful young monk was a turning point in his life, thereafter, he renounced war. He was determined to spread the message of peace. As a result, both his son and daughter were ordained as Buddhist monastics, and became enlightened Arahats. In his quest to spread the message of peace instead of war, Ashoka sent his son Mahinda, to the island of Lanka, which was also known as “Sinhale”. This island was ruled by his friend King Devanampiyatissa. Thus, “Mahinda” was the Indian name, which in Sinhale, became “Mihindu.”

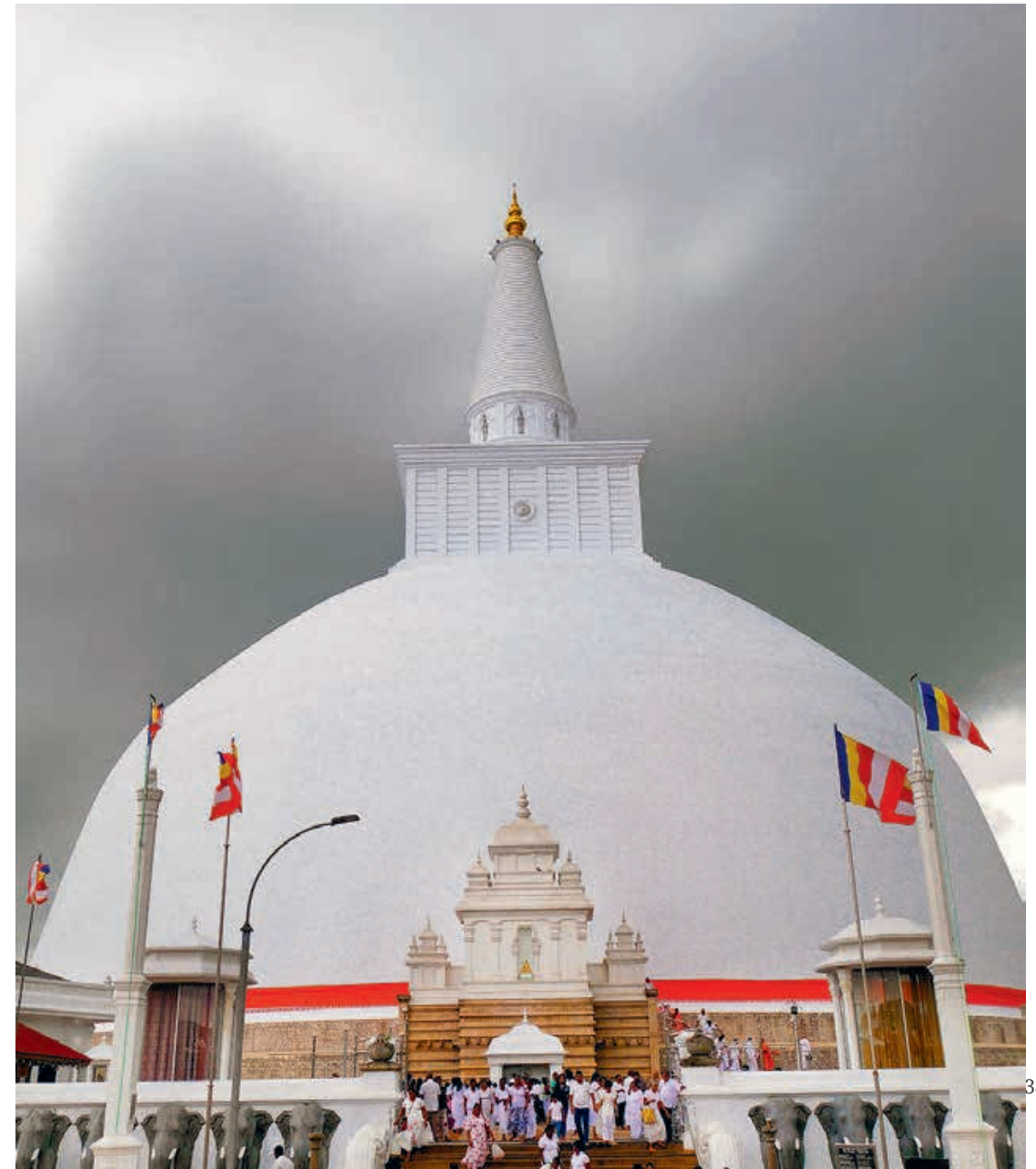
In Sinhala Mihin-Thale literally means the “plateau of Mihindu”. This plateau is on top of a hill from where Arahath Mihindu was supposed to have called King Devanampiyatissa, by the King’s name to stop him shooting a deer. Hence, “Mihin Thale” is a specifically Sinhala term.

From ancient times, large steps were constructed to climb Mihintale. It is stated that King Devanampiyatissa constructed a vihara and 68 caves for the bhikkhus to reside in. At Mihintale there gradually grew a number of Buddhist monasteries or viharas with all the dependent buildings characteristic of the monasteries of that period.

Aradhana Gala, where the Arahath Mahinda landed.

Which faces Maha Seya is on a summit of a hill. Even during very windy weather pilgrims do not fail to visit this rock, which has iron railings to help them to climb. In ancient books such as the Mahavamsa it is written that Mahinda came to Sri Lanka by travelling through the air. He came down and landed on the top of the Aradhana Gala where he met King Devanampiyatissa for the first time.

Ref: Sinha Pokuna of Mihintale 2013





Aradhana Gala, where the Arahant Mahinda landed



The Bodhi Tree in Mihintale



Dambulla Cave Temple

Dambulla Cave Temple (also known as the Golden Temple of Dambulla) is located in the central part of Sri Lanka. The site is located 148 kilometers (92 mi) east of Colombo and 72 kilometers (45 mi) north of Kandy. The largest and best-preserved cave temple complex in Sri Lanka, the rock from which the caves were carved towers 160 meters (520 ft) over the surrounding plains. More than eighty caves have been discovered and documented in the area. Major attractions are spread over five caves which contain statues and paintings of Lord Buddha and his life. A total of 153 Buddha statues, three statues of Sri Lankan kings and four statues of gods and goddesses also stand in the site. The latter include statues of the Hindu deities, Vishnu and Ganesh. The murals found there cover an area of 2,100 square meters (22604 sq ft). Depictions on the walls of the caves include Buddha's temptation by Mara and Buddha's first sermon. UNESCO designated the Golden Temple of Dambulla a World Heritage Site in 1991.

Sri Lanka has a long history of the presence and practice of Buddhism. The Dambulla cave temple represents one of the oldest sites for Buddhist monasticism, with a history as a pilgrimage site for twenty-two centuries. The massive cave temple complex is unique in Southeast Asia because monks carved the caves out from rock. The cave temples in India, such as Ajanta, Elephanta, Ellore and Karla, have been created in natural caves. The cave monastery has been a sacred pilgrimage site since its founding. It has five sanctuaries, including the Cave of the Divine King, Cave of the Great Kings, Great New Monastery, and two lesser caves of more recent creation. The caves, in continuous use for more than two millennia, have been developed in stages. The centuries' long effort to maintain the cave temples demonstrates constant and continual adherence to Buddhism in Sri Lanka.

Central Province of Sri Lanka

Dating back to the first century B.C.E., the Dambulla Cave Temple represents the most impressive cave temple in Sri Lanka. It has five caves under a vast overhanging rock, carved with a drip line to keep the interiors dry. In 1938 craftsman embellished the architecture with arched colonnades and gabled entrances. Inside the caves, the ceilings had been painted with intricate images of the Lord Buddha and Bodhisattvas, as well as various gods and goddesses following the contours of the rock.

The Dambulla cave still operates as a monastery and remains the best preserved ancient edifice in Sri Lanka.

The complex dates from the third and second centuries B.C.E., serving as one of the largest and most important monasteries. King Valagambahu has been traditionally believed to have converted the caves into a temple in the first century B.C.E. The caves in the city provided refuge to King Valagamba (also called Vattagamini Abhaya) in his fourteen year long exile from the Anuradapura kingdom. Buddhist monks meditating in the caves of Dambulla at that time provided the exiled king protection from his enemies. When King Valagamba returned to the throne at Anuradapura kingdom in the first century B.C.E., he had a magnificent rock temple built at Dambulla as a gratitude to the monks in Dambulla.

Many other kings added to it later and by the eleventh century, the caves had become a major religious center. King Nissanka Malla gilded the caves and added about seventy Buddha statues in 1190 C.E. During the eighteenth century, the Kandyan Kings restored and painted the caves.

Five caves converted into shrine rooms make up the temple. The caves, built at the base of a 150 meter high rock during the Anuradhapura (first century B.C.E. to 993 C.E.) and Polonnaruwa periods (1073 to 1250), represent by far the most impressive of the many cave temples found in Sri Lanka. Devotees and visitors access the caves along the gentle slope of the Dambulla Rock, offering a panoramic view of the surrounding flat lands, which includes the rock fortress Sigiriya, nineteen kilometers away. Dusk brings hundreds of swooping swallows to the cave entrance. The largest cave measures about fifty two meters from east to west, twenty three meters from the entrance to the back, and seven meters tall at its highest point. Hindu deities also have representation, as well as the Kings Valgamba and Nissankamalla, and Ananda, Buddha's most devoted disciple.

Cave of the Divine King

The first cave, called Devaraja lina (lina in Sinhalese means "cave"), or "Cave of the Divine King," has an account of the founding of the monastery recorded in a first century Brahmi inscription over the entrance of the cave. The cave, dominated by a fourteen meter statue of the Buddha, has been hewn out of the rock. It has been repainted countless times in the course of its history, and probably received its last coat of paint in the twentieth century. At his feet sits Buddha's favorite pupil, Ananda. At his head stands Vishnu, said to have used his divine powers to create the caves.

Cave of the Great Kings

Dambulla cave interior

In the second and largest cave, in addition to sixteen standing and forty seated statues of Buddha, stand the gods Saman and Vishnu which pilgrims often decorate with garlands. The statues of King Vattagamani and King Nissanka Malla also stand in the cave. King Vattagamani, for honoring the monastery in the first century B.C.E., and King Nissanka Malla, for gilding of fifty statues in the twelfth century as indicated by a stone inscription near the monastery entrance. The cave fittingly has been named Maharaja lena, “Cave of the Great Kings.”

Wooden figures of the Bodhisattvas Maitreya and Avalokiteshvara or Natha escort the Buddha statue hewn out of the rock on the left side of the room. A spring, said to have healing powers, drips out of a crack in the ceiling. Valuable tempera paintings on the cave ceiling dating from the eighteenth century depict scenes from Buddha’s life, from the dream of Mahamaya to temptation by the demon Mara. Further pictures relate important events from the country’s history.

Great New Monastery

The third cave, the Maha Alut Vihara, the “Great New Monastery,” received ceiling and wall paintings in the typical Kandy style during the reign of King Kirti Sri Rajasinha (1747- 1782), the famous Buddhist revivalist. In addition to the fifty Buddha statues, a statue of the king stands in the cave.

Fourth and Fifth Caves

The smaller fourth and fifth caves date from a later period. The painting and sculptures display inferior craftsmanship. A small Vishnu Devale, between the first and second caves, attracts many worshippers.

Statues

Within the shrine rooms reside a collection of one hundred and fifty statues of the Buddhist Order and the country’s history. The statues and paintings represent many epochs of Sinhala sculpture and Sinhala art. The Buddha statues vary in size and attitude, with the largest fifteen meters long. One cave has over 1,500 paintings of Buddha covering the ceiling.

Ref: Golden Temple of Dambulla, UNESCO, Discover Sri Lanka with Lakpura













Temple of the Sacred tooth relic, Kandy

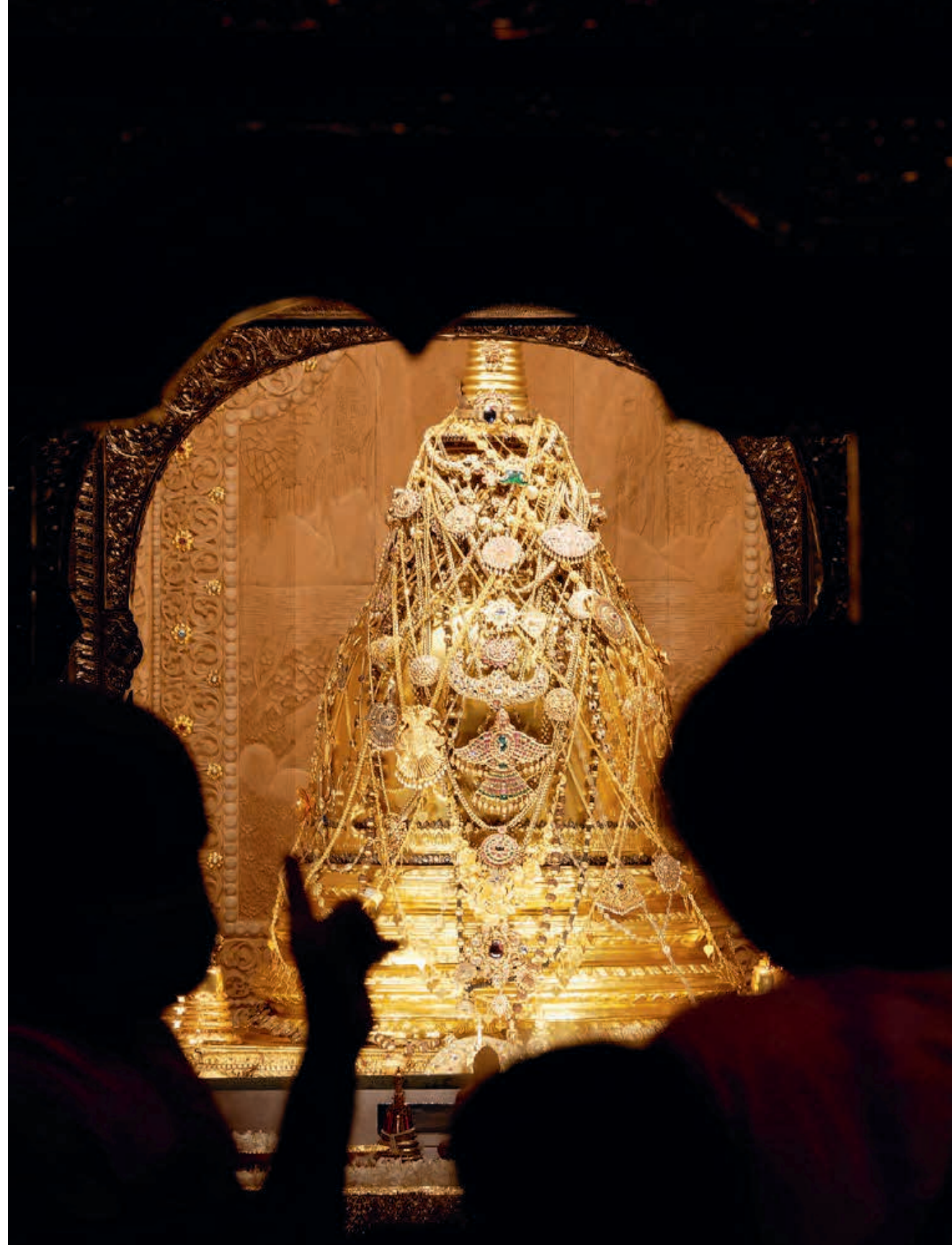
Temple of the Sacred tooth relic, Kandy is one of the most religious places of Sri Lankan Buddhists. It is situated adjacent to the royal palace complex of the historical kingdom of Kandy. With its artistic, architectural, cultural, and spiritual values, the Temple of Tooth Relic houses the left canine tooth of Lord Buddha. It can be recognized as a living cultural heritage that carries various cultural and religious practices for a long period.

The historical value of the Temple of the tooth relic

As recorded in history, the sacred tooth relic of Lord Buddha was brought to Sri Lanka during the reign of King Kirti Sri Megahavanna (301-328 AD) by Prince Danta and Princess Hemamala from the kingdom of Kalinga, India. The King enshrined the tooth relic in the present day Isurumuniya Viharaya in Anuradhapura. Since then, the legal guardian of the relic was the rulers of ancient Sri Lanka and it was preciously guarded by them in a special shrine built within the premises of the royal place, wherever the capital was located.

The entire temple complex, from peaked tiled roofs to white walls with large windows, is built displaying the style of classical Kandyan architecture. In front of the main building, there is a building named Hewisi Mandapaya or the Drummer's hall and it can be reached through a tunnel after the main entrance. The main building consists of two stories; the Lower floor is known as Palle Malaya (Lower floor) whereas the upper floor is known as Udu Malaya or Weda sitina Maligawa. The lower floor is comprised of two sections as Digge and Maha Aramudala. The donations made by the kings and the people to the Tooth Relic from time to time are kept in the section called Maha Aramudala.

There are various chambers on the upper floor including the main chamber where the tooth relic is kept known as 'Handun kunama'. In 1987, a golden canopy was constructed over the main shrine by then Prime Minister Ranasinghe Premadasa, and the golden fence which encircles the main shrine is also a notable feature. The door to that chamber is carved in ivory and inside the chamber there lies the sacred tooth relic on seven gemstone-studded golden caskets which are engraved with precious gemstones. The caskets have the shape of a stupa. The procession casket which is used during the Kandy Esala Perahera is also displayed in the same chamber. The narrow corridor nearby the main chamber is called Kavikara Maduwa where the chanting for the Sacred tooth relic is conducted in this place.



In the present day, the chief custodians of the Tooth relic are the chief monks or the Mahanayake theros of Malwatta and Asgiriya chapters; the main two monasteries of the country and the Diyawadana Nilame. Safeguarding the Sacred tooth relic and conducting the religious rituals that have been continued since the past are being carried out to the present day with the blessings and advice of these chief monks and the Diyawadana Nilame acts as the lay guardian. Over the years, the two monasteries are of significance concerning the guardianship of the Sacred tooth relic, and both play equal roles in the religious activities of the temple of tooth relic.

Being a living cultural heritage site in Sri Lanka, the Temple of the Sacred Tooth Relic is venerated by thousands of both local and foreign devotees every day. Due to its universal value, the temple was designated as a world heritage site in the year 1988 by UNESCO.

Ref: Sithani Jayatissa 015081



Pilgrims paying respects to the tooth relic of the Buddha



A golden Buddha Statue inside the temple in one of the pavilions



A traditional drummer playing the Mridangam, announcing the start of the viewing of the Buddha's Tooth Relic

Gangaramaya Temple

One of the most prominent Buddhist temples in Colombo City, Gangaramaya Temple houses an extensive collection of artefacts. Located in the bustling inner-city near the picturesque Beira Lake, this temple complex is a massively popular tourist attraction, a sacred place of worship and a learning and vocational training centre.

Established over 120 years ago, this once little hermitage nestled on a piece of marshy land, has transformed into a must-see attraction. Hordes of people, including local and foreign devotees gather at this bustling space, revered for its embellished architecture and statues showcasing Sri Lankan, Chinese, Thai, Burmese and other artistic styles. A spectacular work of art, the Temple is elaborately designed and surrounded by statues of Buddha, lions, nymphs and china vases. Standing like sentinels at the door, two golden Buddha statues guide the throngs to the main sanctuary of the Temple and the door is decorated in intricate wood carvings of elephants and swans.

Gangaramaya Temple was started by the famous scholar-monk Hikkaduwa Sri Sumangala Nayaka Thera in the late 19th century CE. After the Venerable Sri Sumangala, Sri Jinaratana Nayake Thera took on the administration of the temple and convert the little temple to an institute of international reckoning. It is much more than a temple in the conventional term, but a place of worship, a seat of learning and a cultural center.

The Gangaramaya Temple is a unique blend of architectural styles from Sri Lanka, Thailand, Chinese and India. It is exceptionally beautiful with the Beira Lake on one side and statues & carvings paving the way inside. It features a Vihara, the main temple, Cetiya (which is a pagoda), Seema Malaka which is the assembly hall for monks, the Vihara Mandiraya, and the relic chamber where all the relics are stored. The main sanctuary has a huge Buddha statue while the ceilings portray his stories. The exterior of the temple is boldly decorated in elaborate designs and golden adornments.

The temple's most distinguishing feature is its treasure-trove museum that holds numerous colorful Buddha statues in different positions like sitting, standing, sleeping and meditating, made of metals like bronze and gold. The temple museum proudly houses the smallest Buddha statue on the island, carefully encased in a glass box, which visitors can view with a magnifying glass. It also houses Buddha's hair, colossal ivory tusks, ancient manuscripts, old paintings and gifts from devotees like expensive cars, watches, ornaments, and artifacts.

Gangaramaya Buddhist Temple has a replica of Borobudur temple of Central Java, complete with Buddha figures and stupas. There is an old bodhi, which was first planted as a Bo sapling brought from Maha Bodhiya in Anuradhapura. Besides, one can also visit Seema Malakaya, another temple opposite to the Gangaramaya Temple on the calm waters of Beira Lake. It is a suitable place for meditation and observing some moments in peace. It is part of the Gangaramaya Temple and is connected to the mainland via pontoon bridges.

The main religious event held here is the Nevam Perahara procession held on the poya day (full moon) every February. Hundreds of monks take part in the procession in which sacred relics are carried in a casket on the back of a highly decorated elephant.







Another view of the shrine holding the Buddha Hair Relics



A Buddha Statue inside the temple complex adorned with elephant tusks and columns in Chinese sculptural style



A sculptural presentation depicting the enlightenment of the Buddha with dieties paying respects



A Bodhi Tree inside the temple complex





Sukha dukha āte hī raheñ,
jyoñ āveñ dina raina.
Tū kyūñ khove bāvaḷā,
apane mana kī caina?

Pleasure and pain keep coming like
day and night.
Why then cast away
your peace of mind, oh child?

Dhana āe to bāvare,
mata kara garaba gumāna.
Yaha bālū kī bhīnta hai,
isakā kyā abhimāna?

If wealth comes, oh child,
do not be vain and haughty.
It is a castle made of sand;
why be proud of it?

Jisake mana pragyā jage,
hoya vinamra vinīta.
Jisa ḍālī para phala lageñ,
jhukane kī hī rīta.

If wisdom arises in your mind you
become humble and modest,
as a branch laden with fruit
is sure to bow low.



Śāsana meñ jāge Dharama,
ukhaḍe bhraṣṭācāra.
Dhaniyoñ meñ jāge Dharama,
svaccha hoyā vyāpāra.

May Dhamma arise among the rulers,
uprooting corruption.
May Dhamma arise in the wealthy,
cleansing business dealings.

Bhalā hoyā isa jagata kā,
sukhī hoñya saba loga.
Dūra hoñya dāridra dukha,
dūra hoñya saba roga.

Bhalā hoyā saba jagata kā,
sukhī hoñya saba loga.
Dūra hoñya dāridra dukha,
dūra hoñya bhava roga.

May the world enjoy well-being;
may all people be happy.
May poverty and suffering be
dispelled; may all ills be vanquished.

May the world enjoy well-being;
may all people be happy.
May poverty and suffering be dispelled;
may all ills be vanquished.

*Global Vipassana Pagoda,
Mumbai, India*



Global Vipassana Pagoda, Mumbai India

Mission of the Global Vipassana Pagoda

Araddhaviṛiye pahitatte, niccam dalhaparakkame. Samagge savake passa, etam buddhanavandanam.

“I see meditators all together, steadfast, resolute, always exerting strong effort; this is the proper way to pay homage to the Buddhas.”

—Mahapajapatigotamitheriapadanam-2/7-171

The Buddha did not teach Buddhism. He did not convert a single person to Buddhism. This might sound surprising, because of centuries of misconceptions. But the historical truth is that the Buddha neither taught Buddhism nor made any person a Buddhist.

Those to whom the Buddha taught the Dhamma thoroughly were sent to teach others with only the noble volition of “bahujana hitaya bahujana sukhaya lokanukampaya” - For the good of many, for the happiness of many, out of compassion for the world. Instead of establishing a religious sect he re-established the ancient true eternal Dhamma in its pristine purity.

The Vipassana Research Institute (VRI) in Dhamma Giri, Igatpuri, has produced a CD- ROM containing the entire teaching of the Buddha and related literature in Pali. This vast literature contains 146 volumes with 52,602 pages and 7,448,248 words. With the CD-search facility of every word in this vast teaching, we find that the word “Bauddh” has not been used either in his teachings or in that of his followers. The word used for the teaching of the Buddha is “Dhamma”, not “Buddhist Dhamma”. Whenever any adjective precedes the word “Dhamma”, it is qualitative, not sectarian. Like saddhamma - true Dhamma, ariyo dhammo - noble Dhamma, dhammo sanantano - eternal Dhamma, and so on. His followers were not called Buddhists anywhere in the texts. For those who gained benefit by walking on the path shown by him, these six words were used: dhammim, dhammiko, dhammattho, dhammacarim, dhammavihari, dhammanusari.

Not only during the lifetime of the Buddha but even in the next few centuries, we do not come across words like “Buddhist” or “Buddhism” anywhere. About 250 years after the Buddha, Emperor Ashoka, who was obsessed with power and was proud to be called “Ashoka the Cruel”, came in contact with Dhamma. He benefited, inspired others to walk on the path of Dhamma and he was called “Dhamma Ashoka”, not “Buddhist Ashoka”.

Out of love for his subjects Emperor Ashoka encouraged the spread of Dhamma among them, not Buddhism. He sent not Buddhism, but the Dhamma ratana - the jewel of Dhamma, not only to neighbouring countries but to distant Western countries as well, as a priceless gift from India. He sent Dhammaduta - Messengers of Dhamma, not “Messengers of Buddhism”. None of the edicts on rocks and columns of Emperor Ashoka that have come to light so far contain the word “Buddhist”; everywhere, the word “Dhamma” is used. Dhamma is universal, it is for everyone.

Sectarian words may have come into use to describe the Buddha’s teaching after this country forgot the essence of the true teaching of the Buddha. Gradually this country also lost the entire original related literature and, worst of all, lost Vipassana, the technique of practicing the essence of that teaching.

Vipassana is a very ancient meditation technique of India. Any person who becomes a Buddha attains enlightenment by rediscovering this lost technique. In the Vedic literature before the lifetime of the Buddha there is abundant praise for this technique. But it is only praise. The Buddha rediscovered this lost technique.

Vipassana, the practical aspect of the Buddha’s teaching, serves people from every caste, race, class and religion.

It is direct proof that the Buddha’s teaching is universal. When Vipassana was lost the original teaching of the Buddha was lost. This was a great loss not only for our country, but also for all humanity. India lost the beneficial technique due to which its past had been very prosperous and the world had saluted it as a vishwa-guru - Teacher of the world. With the loss of Vipassana most people forgot the universal and eternal importance of the Buddha’s teaching. As long as it was “Dhamma”, people practiced it but as soon as it began to be called “Buddhism”, the delusion naturally spread, “This is the Dhamma for Buddhists, not for us”. And the immense benefits to be gained from Vipassana were lost. Fortunately the neighbouring country of Myanmar preserved this universal technique of Vipassana in its pure form for centuries, from generation to generation. It has returned to India and arisen again in the world. This Global Vipassana Pagoda is a symbol of the arising of the Buddha’s true teachings.

This huge stone monument will be a light-house of India’s ancient prosperity and prestige. It will again bring to light the ancient, eternal, universal tradition of Dhamma for the benefit of the world. This golden pagoda will herald the second coming of that golden age when India was the leader not only in the field of spirituality but also in material prosperity.

Adjacent to the Global Vipassana Pagoda, a Vipassana center is being built to enable holding of residential 10-day courses, as in 130 Vipassana centers worldwide.

A state-of-the art exhibition gallery will convey information about Vipassana, and will depict various well-known, inspiring incidents in the life of the Buddha and his disciples, showing how this universal, non-sectarian teaching enables one to live a life full of compassion, equanimity and practical wisdom to deal with all the challenging ups and downs in life.

Visitors will come to learn that Sakyamuni Gotama Buddha was neither a god, nor an incarnation of any God, nor a prophet of any God. He was not a mythological being but a historical person. He did not become the Buddha - the highest state that can be attained by a human being - because of divine grace, but by exerting strenuous efforts for innumerable lives. He attained supreme enlightenment in his final life and therefore was called a Sammasambuddha - one who becomes a Buddha by his own efforts.

The Buddha was called the All-Compassionate One because, out of infinite compassion and despite many hardships and challenges he faced in his life, he taught Vipassana for liberation from suffering. He completely eradicated craving, aversion and ignorance, and so was called Bhagava. He rediscovered and taught the natural law of cause and effect.

If the true qualities of the historical Buddha come to light, misconceptions about him will be removed and the importance of human effort and valour will be established in place of blind belief in divine miracles.

The Global Vipassana Pagoda will help remove such misconceptions about the Buddha.

Another important aspect about the Global Vipassana Pagoda will be that the sacred relics of the physical body of the Buddha will be enshrined within. These sacred relics were received from the Maha Bodhi Society and from Sri Lanka. Usually such pagodas are solid. But using the most modern techniques of architecture this vast meditation hall has been built within so that over 8,000 Vipassana students can benefit from meditating together. There are thousands of Vipassana meditators in Mumbai itself. This number is increasing day-by-day and it will continue to do so in the future. We express our gratitude towards Myanmar. For centuries, people of this country who see this pagoda will remember the kindness of that country with gratitude. With the arising of this feeling of gratitude, their Dhamma volition will be strengthened.

Thus the building of this Global Vipassana Pagoda, a replica of the Shwe Dagon pagoda in Yangon (Rangoon), will be meaningful. The people of this country will become happy, become peaceful.

The Vision behind the Global Vipassana Pagoda

The Buddha held that two qualities are rare among humans: Katannuta that is, gratitude and Pubbakarita, which is, initiative to help others without expecting anything in return. These two qualities are the true measure of progress on the path of Dhamma for any person devoted to Dhamma.

Gratitude is more important of the two qualities. Whenever we remember the help given to us by any saintly person we feel gratitude towards him/her, we naturally feel inclined to live up to that ideal and consequently we are inspired to give selfless service towards that ideal. Gratitude and selfless service complement and support each other. An individual uses words to express himself. A civilization expresses itself in architecture.

The Global Vipassana Pagoda is an expression of our gratitude: towards the Buddha, who as the Bodhisatta strived for incalculable aeons to fulfill his paramis (noble qualities) to reach Supreme Enlightenment. Having done so, he taught the Dhamma for the good and benefit of many, out of compassion for all beings.

The Purpose and Value of the Global Pagoda

Some of the various functions and purpose of the pagoda can be listed as follows: Honouring the Buddha

Following the instructions in the last discourse of the Enlightened One, the genuine Buddha relics are enshrined at the top of a large central hall where about 8,000 Vipassana students can sit and meditate jointly, getting advantage of the powerful vibrations emanating from the relics.

With the genuine relics enshrined, the Pagoda has become a centre of tremendous attraction for the devotees of the Buddha around the world to come and pay their respects to the relics and get the message of Vipassana - the quintessence of the teaching of the Enlightened One that is lost in their countries also. Hence, this magnificent structure will also be a great symbol for creating goodwill amongst countries that have traditionally revered the Buddha.

Correcting Historical Misconceptions

During the past nearly one-and-half to two millennia, the actual historical truth about the life and teachings of the Enlightened One has not only disappeared from the country but a gross misinformation has spread making him a mythological divine figure, completely forgetting his historical human reality. Besides, his rational, scientific teachings were totally misunderstood and became wrongly considered as just another of the many sectarian dogmas and religious tenets. The Pagoda will have an informative gallery exhibiting the actual historical life of the Buddha, and the benefit of the practice of Vipassana derived during his lifetime.

The Pagoda will be a vehicle for the spread of the Buddha's true teaching that emphatically opposes any sectarian, casteist, religious dogmas. The teaching is already proving to be an ideal bridge for peace, tolerance and harmony across all the communal and regional divides splintering India today. The strongly secular nature of Vipassana is further proved by its acceptance amongst people of all religions, nations, sects and socio-cultural backgrounds. Vipassana courses are taking root even in some of the staunchly sectarian countries.

Expression of Gratitude

The Global Pagoda is visible proof of the re-awakening of the Buddha's teachings in India, and the acceptance of the teachings around the world. It is an expression of gratitude to Myanmar, the country that preserved Vipassana, the practical essence of the Buddha's Teaching. It embodies our gratitude to U Ba Khin, who enabled each of us today to find the path to liberation.

Vehicle for Promotion of Social Peace, Harmony and Tolerance

Centuries ago, India served humanity at large by distributing the invaluable gift of Vipassana. This proved so very effective and beneficial that people accepted and adopted it wholeheartedly. History now is repeating itself, with the rapid spread of Vipassana to many countries across the six continents. The Vipassana Pagoda will be a central symbol of this spiritual tradition.

Acharya Goenkaji's most fervent Dhamma wish was fulfilled in November 2008 when the construction of the Global Vipassana Pagoda was completed. He hopes that this monument will act as a bridge between different communities, different sects, different countries and different races to make the world a more harmonious and peaceful place..

History of Pagodas as a Structure of Reverence

From the jungles of Java to the snow-covered wastes of Mongolia, from the mountains of Afghanistan to Japan's pacific coastline, these monuments rose, bearing silent witness to the power of the Buddha's teaching. Called a 'Stupa' or 'Pagoda' - it was originally a mound erected as a memorial to a great leader. It is mentioned in the Mahaparinibbana Sutta, the discourse recording the last days of the Buddha, that ten stupas were constructed to honour his remains...

Lenatthanca sukhatthanca, jhayitunca vipassitum.

Viharadanam sanghassa, aggam Buddhena vannitam.

Tasma hi pandito poso, sampassam atthamattano.

Vihare karaye ramme, vasayettha bahussute. -- Culavagga 295





Monks circumambulat the Pagoda while chanting



Monks circumambulat the Pagoda





Monks partaking of the meal served during the Sangha Daan on
19-1-2026 at the Global Pagoda



One day Vipassana course in progress inside the Pagoda on the occasion of Pujya Mataji Ilaichidevi's birth anniversary



Interior view of the Pagoda which can accomodate 8000 meditators





Sheltering and conducive to concentration and insight, a place of meditation is praised by the Buddha as the greatest gift to the Sangha. Therefore a wise man, considering his own welfare, should build pleasant dwellings in which those who have heard much about the Dhamma may stay (and practice it).

The custom of building such memorials seems to date from very ancient times in India. In Sanskrit the term is Chaitya and in Pali it is Cetiya or Thupa. One of these is thought to be still standing at Kushinagar in modern-day Uttar Pradesh, marking the spot where the Buddha's body was cremated.

Traditional accounts credit the Emperor Asoka with building 84,000 stupas all over his realm, each containing a relic taken from the original ten. Archaeological evidence confirms that extensive construction was undertaken in Asoka's time, two hundred years after the Buddha.

The best preserved of the Asokan stupas are at Sanchi in central India, where the relics of the Buddha's chief disciples, Sariputta and Moggallana were found. The boxes contained small fragments of bone in white soapstone caskets, along with precious stones and fragments of sandalwood, perhaps from the funeral pyres. The relics were removed to Britain but were returned to India after it gained independence, and are now again enshrined at Sanchi.

Still more astonishing is the discovery of caskets identified as containing relics of the Buddha himself, made at Peshawar in Pakistan, site of the ancient city of Purushapura and at Piprahva in Uttar Pradesh, where a rare pre-Asokan stupa stands. Some of the relics are enshrined at Saranath, where the Buddha began his teachings and some are enshrined in a temple in Mandalay, Myanmar.

As the Dhamma spread beyond the frontiers of India, the practice of building stupas followed. The largest is the Shwedagon Pagoda in Yangon (Rangoon), Myanmar. Legend has it that this was the first stupa built to honour the Buddha, established to enshrine the hair that he had given as relics to two Burmese merchants who paid respects to him soon after his enlightenment. Although the largest and most highly venerated, Shwedagon is only one of countless stupas in Myanmar, which is sometimes called "the Land of Golden Pagodas." The landscape is dotted with these monuments and every village has its stupa, though sometimes of modest size.

Concept and Planning of the Global Vipassana Pagoda

Planning for the construction of the Global Vipassana Pagoda began in 1997, while actual building work started in 2000. The pagoda consists of three subdomes.

The first and largest dome was completed when bone relics of Gautama Buddha were enshrined in the central locking stone of the dome on October 29, 2006, making it the world's largest hollow stone masonry structure containing relics of the Buddha. The relics were originally found in Bhattiprolu, Guntur district, Andhra Pradesh, South India. They have been donated by the Mahabodhi Society of India and the Prime Minister of Sri Lanka to be kept at the Global Vipassana Pagoda. The second and third domes, along with an auxiliary dome adjoining the second dome, sit atop the first dome. Construction of the third dome was structurally completed on November 21, 2008.

The center of the Global Vipassana Pagoda contains the world's largest stone dome built without any supporting pillars. The height of the dome is approximately 29 metres, while the height of the building is 96.12 meters, which is twice the size of the previously largest hollow stone monument in the world, the Gol Gumbaz Dome in Bijapur, India. The external diameter of the largest section of the dome is 97.46m and the shorter sections, is 94.82m.

The internal diameter of the dome is 85.15m. The inside of the pagoda is hollow and serves as a very large meditation hall with an area covering more than 6000 sq m (65,000 sq ft). The massive inner dome seats over 8000 people, enabling them to practice the non-sectarian Vipassana meditation as taught by Mr S N Goenka, and now being practiced in over 160 centres in more than 60 countries. An inaugural one-day meditation course was held at the pagoda on December 21, 2008, with Mr S.N. Goenka in attendance as the teacher. The aim of the pagoda complex is to express gratitude to Gautama Buddha for dispensing a universal teaching for the eradication of suffering, to reveal the truth about the life of Buddha and His teaching, and to provide a place for the practice of Vipassana meditation. Vipassana meditation courses are held free of charge at the meditation centre that is situated in the Global Vipassana Pagoda complex.

Construction and Development

In October 1997, the foundation stone of the Global Vipassana Pagoda was laid on the Essel Plateau in Mumbai. In the eleven years since this auspicious event, the construction work progressed without interruption, supported selflessly by Vipassana meditators and devotees from around the world. The pillar-less dome of such a magnitude is a marvel when one thinks of thousands of stones, each of 600 to 700 kg approximate weight, without any temporary support (centering) during construction. The top keystone itself weighs 10 tonnes and it remained in place at 90 ft height without any centering during construction. These massive stones are suspended over our heads, locked into place by the inter-locking principle of one stone gripping and holding another in ring form.

The more weight that is added to the stones, the more firmly the stones grip and hold each other to defy gravity. Since a structure of such uniqueness does not exist anywhere else, or in world history, the project team did not have prior knowledge as reference. The biggest masonry dome built anywhere in the world before the Global Pagoda is the dome at Bijapur which is of 130 ft diameter. The Global Pagoda is over twice its size in diameter.

In the beginning, it was contemplated building the Pagoda in R.C.C. and mild steel. But the project aim was to build a structure to last for a thousand years which could only be achieved by using stone for construction. It was decided to use basic building principles that have existed in ancient India for centuries combined with the latest construction technologies. The construction plans were finalised following various governmental clearances, structural design and consulting engineering from Nandadeep Building Centre, Aurangabad, advice from consultants and research studies, including one by the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), Mumbai. Shri Parvez Dhumasia was the Architect involved in the project.

The inter-locking principle: When Goenkaji first expressed his wish to have such a dome built without any pillars in the gigantic Dhamma Hall, to avoid inconvenience to meditators, almost all consultants and a number of technical personnel expressed their doubts and said this was almost an impossible task. The high cost was another factor. When the matter came to the notice of a Sompura Consultant, he actually demonstrated the idea of locking system of stones by using bars of soap. He cut the soap into shape the same way the stones here are cut. Each stone in the Global Pagoda has grooves cut both in horizontal and vertical direction, and is so designed that it interlocks in both directions. The entire construction is done using lime mortar to ensue longevity and strength of the structure.

Utmost care has to be exercised for such construction work. Only after each layer is fully completed in a circle, do the individual stones remain secured in their place. The foundation and the base level of the Pagoda are built with black basalt stones. The average depth of the foundation is 30 ft with about 20 ft width. The inner dome and outside serrations are constructed from Jodhpur stone historically known for its longevity and used in many Indian structures. Approximately 2.5 million tons of stone have been used. These were carted from quarries in Rajasthan, more than a thousand kilometers from the construction site. Its transportation, cutting and fixing in place in itself was mammoth work requiring expertise in man and material handling. For the inner dome alone, approximately 15,500 cubic meters of Jodhpur stones, and 46,000 cubic meters of basalt stones were used.



A Buddha idol carved from a single piece of marble donated by Vipassana meditators from Myanmar.

It has been calculated that this means if we fill trucks with all the stones so far used in the Pagoda, and the trucks are placed one behind the other, the number of trucks in line will stretch from Mumbai to Igatpuri, 120 kms away! This gives us some idea of the logistics involved in bringing such quantity of stones from faraway places as Rajasthan, cutting the stones into shape, and then hoisting them carefully into place. It took a total of 3.87 million man-days to complete this unique monument.

Besides the main pagoda, two small pagodas of 60 ft height have been constructed and one of them contains individual cells for meditators to practice Vipassana. The basement area is 200,000 sq. ft. It contains a basement structure providing accommodation for service facilities, parking area and rest rooms. It will also have display galleries which will provide information on Vipassana and depict the historical truth about the Buddha and inspiring incidents from his life.

The Global Vipassana Pagoda complex also houses an Art Gallery depicting the life and teaching of Gautama Buddha that is expected to draw one hundred thousand visitors annually. The Global Vipassana Pagoda's educational displays will communicate the Buddha's universal teaching as a path towards real happiness.

The Global Vipassana Pagoda complex consists of the following structures:

- Pagoda dome containing relics of Buddha (complete)
- Vipassana Meditation Centre Dhamma Pattana (complete)
- Art Gallery depicting life of the Buddha (Complete)
- Two smaller pagodas on the North and South side (complete on the North side)
- Library and study rooms (under planning)
- Circumambulation path around the dome (complete with landscaping and tiling still to be done.)
- Administration building (complete)
- Underground parkade
- Two Auditoriums
- Museums

The south pagoda contains 108 meditation cells for use by Vipassana students taking a meditation course at the adjoining meditation centre.

Facts and Figures

It has been designed as a replica of the Shwedagon Pagoda of Yangon, Myanmar to show the gratitude of India to Myanmar for preserving the non-sectarian Vipassana Meditation, in its pristine purity, when it was lost in the country of its birth, India.

- The genuine relics of the Buddha are enshrined here.
- It is one of the largest stone monuments in Asia.
- The technique of inter-locking stones is used to construct the monument. This negates the need for any pillars in the construction of the Pagoda.
- It contains the biggest pillar-less stone dome on earth. It is more than thrice the size of the previously largest stone dome structure - the Gol Gumbaz in Bijapur (90 feet in diameter).
- At its centre is a huge meditation hall, 280 feet in diameter which has a seating capacity of 8000 people.
- At 325 feet height, it is almost as tall as a 30 storey building.
- Approximately 2.5 million tons of stone was used in the construction.
- 3.87 million man-days were required to complete the monument.
- It took 11 years to finish. The foundation stone was laid in October 1997 and the construction was completed in November 2008.
- The construction work progressed without interruption supported selflessly by Vipassana meditators and devotees from around the world.
- It is expected to exist as a beacon of Peace and Harmony for the next 1000 years. Structures in the Complex

Myanmar Gate

- The Myanmar Gate is a massive entrance arch to the Global Vipassana Pagoda complex, from the under-construction MMRDA road.
- Seven tiers will rise from the roof of the arch to the top.
- Two side entrances will act as associate entrances as well.
- It is done in intricate Burmese designs.

Buddha Statue

- The Buddha statue is carved from a single rock of marble, and weighs nearly 80 MT, is 21.5' high.
- The Buddha is carved in a seated, meditative posture.
- The statue is painted over the white marble, giving the statue a more life-like view.

- The seat upon which the Buddha is seated is 3' high, and contiguous with the rest of the statue.
- Four scenes from the Buddha's life are also shown, as mini-dioramas carved into the front part of the seat. These four are, from left to right: Birth of the Buddha, Enlightenment of the Buddha, Setting the Wheel of Dhamma in motion, Passing away of the Buddha
- Exquisite designs have been made with intricate artwork in making the throne of the Buddha behind the actual statue.
- An RCC umbrella has been hung over the statue. Bells similar to the ones hanging on the umbrella over the Main Pagoda have been attached here as well.

Ref: Vipassana Research Institute





The drum of Dhamma has been struck, with reverberation far and wide.



Image on the right: The Bodhi Tree: a sapling from Sri Lanka was planted onr March 02, 2014. Hence, in a way the cutting of the same Bodhi tree under which the Buddha attained enlightenment has returned to its motherland after so many centuries.





Exhibit depicting the Turning of the Wheel of Dhamma



View of entrance to Guruji S.N.Goenka's residence



Detail of the Burmese carving and one of the four smaller Pagodas



Statues of the Elephant King paying respects to the Relics of the Buddha



Residence of Pujya Guruji Shri S.N. Goenka



A sculpture with the etching "May All Beings Be Happy"









Embellishments in Myanmar artistic style adorning the exterior of the Centre





“Vayadhamma sankhara,
appamadena sampadetha”
Ayam tathagatassa pacchima vaca

Impermanent are all compounded things
work out your own salvation with diligence



These were the last words of the Buddha



“Start Again”

Acharya Shri S.N. Goenka

A Glossary of Pali and Buddhist Terms

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This glossary covers many of the Pali words and technical terms that you may come across in the books and articles available on this website.

A

Abhidhamma:

(1) In the discourses of the Pali canon, this term simply means “higher Dhamma,” and a systematic attempt to define the Buddha’s teachings and understand their interrelationships. ācariya:

Teacher; mentor. See kalyāṇamitta.

adhiṭṭhāna:

Determination; resolution. One of the ten perfections (pāramīs).

akālika:

Timeless; unconditioned by time or season.

akusala:

Unwholesome, unskillful, demeritorious. See its opposite, kusala.

anāgāmi:

Non-returner. A person who has abandoned the five lower fetters that bind the mind to the cycle of rebirth (see saṃyojana), and who after death will appear in one of the Brahma worlds called the Pure Abodes, there to attain nibbāna, never again to return to this world.

ānāpānasati:

Mindfulness of breathing. A meditation practice in which one maintains one’s attention and mindfulness on the sensations of breathing. anattā: Not-self; ownless.

anicca:

Inconstant; unsteady; impermanent.

anupādisesa-nibbāna:

Nibbāna with no fuel remaining

anusaya:

Obsession; underlying tendency. There are seven major obsessions to which the mind re- turns over and over again: obsession with sensual passion (kāma-rāgānusaya), with resistance (paṭighānusaya), with views (diṭṭhānusaya), with uncertainty (vicikicchānusaya), with conceit (mānānusaya), with passion for

becoming (bhava-rāgānusaya), and with ignorance (avijjānusaya)

apāya-bhūmi:

State of deprivation; the four lower levels of existence into which one might be reborn as a result of past unskillful actions (kamma): rebirth in hell, as a hungry ghost (peta), as an angry demon (asura), or as a common animal. None of these states is permanent.

appamāda:

Heedfulness; diligence; zeal. The cornerstone of all skillful mental states, and one of such fundamental import that the Buddha’s stressed it in his parting words to his disciples: “All fabrications are subject to decay. Bring about completion by being heedful!” (appamādena sampādeṭṭha)

arahant:

A “worthy one” or “pure one”; a person whose mind is free of defilement (see kilesa), who has abandoned all ten of the fetters that bind the mind to the cycle of rebirth whose heart is free of mental effluents (āsava), and who is thus not destined for further rebirth. A title for the Buddha and the highest level of his noble disciples.

ariya:

Noble, ideal. Also, a “Noble One”

ariya-puggala:

Noble person; enlightened individual. An individual who has realized at least the lowest of the four noble paths (magga) or their fruitions (phala). Compare puthujjana (worldling).

ariya-sacca:

Noble Truth. The word “ariya” (noble) can also mean ideal or standard, and in this context means “objective” or “universal” truth. There are four: stress, the origin of stress, the disbanding of stress, and the path of practice leading to the disbanding of stress.

āsava:

Mental effluent, pollutant, or fermentation. Four qualities — sensuality, views, becoming, and ignorance — that “flow out” of the mind and create the flood of the round of death and re- birth.

avijjā:

Unawareness; ignorance; obscured awareness; delusion about the nature of the mind.

āyatana:

Sense medium. The inner sense media are the sense organs: eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and mind. The outer sense media are their respective objects.

B

bhante:

Venerable sir; often used when addressing a Buddhist monk.

bhava:

Becoming. States of being that develop first in the mind and can then be experienced as internal worlds and/or as worlds on an external level. There are three levels of becoming: on the sensual level, the level of form, and the level of formlessness.

bhāvanā:

Mental cultivation or development; meditation. The third of the three grounds for meritorious action.

bhikkhu:

A Buddhist monk; a man who has given up the householder's life to live a life of heightened virtue (sīla) in accordance with the Vinaya in general, and the Pātimokkha rules in particular.

bhikkhuni:

A Buddhist nun; a woman who has given up the householder's life to live a life of heightened virtue (sīla) in accordance with the Vinaya in general, and the Pātimokkha rules in particular.

bodhi-pakkhiya-dhammā:

“Wings to Awakening” — seven sets of principles that are conducive to Awakening and that, according to the Buddha, form the heart of his teaching: the four frames of reference (satipaṭṭhāna); four right exertions (sammappadhāna) — the effort to prevent unskillful states from arising in the mind, to abandon whatever unskillful states have already arisen, to give rise to the good, and to maintain the good that has arisen; four bases of success (iddhipāda) — desire, persistence, intentness, circumspection; five dominant factors (indriya) — conviction, persistence, mindfulness, concentration, discernment; five strengths (bala) — identical with; seven factors for Awakening (bojjhaṅga) — mindfulness, investigation of phenomena, persistence, rapture (see pīti), serenity, concentration, equanimity; and the eightfold path (magga) — Right View, Right Attitude, Right Speech, Right Activity, Right Livelihood, Right Effort, Right Mindfulness, Right Concentration.

bodhisatta:

A being (striving) for Awakening; the term used to describe the Buddha before he actually become Buddha, from his first aspiration to Buddhahood until the time of his full Awakening. Sanskrit form: Bodhisattva.

brahmā:

“Great One” — an inhabitant of the non-sensual heavens of form or formlessness.

brahma-vihāra:

The four “sublime” or “divine” abodes that are attained through the development of boundless mettā (goodwill), karuṇā (compassion), muditā (appreciative joy), and upekkhā (equanimity).

brahman (from Pali brāhmaṇa):

The brahman (brahmin) caste of India has long maintained that its members, by their birth, are worthy of the highest respect. Buddhism borrowed the term brahman to apply to those who have attained the goal, to show that respect is earned not by birth, race, or caste, but by spiritual attainment. Used in the Buddhist sense, this term is synonymous with arahant.

buddho:

Awake; enlightened. An epithet for the Buddha.

Buddha:

The name given to one who rediscovers for himself the liberating path of Dhamma, after a long period of its having been forgotten by the world. According to tradition, a long line of Buddhas stretches off into the distant past. The most recent Buddha was born Siddhattha Gotama in India in the sixth century BCE. A well-educated and wealthy young man, he relinquished his family and his princely inheritance in the prime of his life to search for true freedom and an end to suffering (dukkha). After seven years of austerities in the forest, he rediscovered the “middle way” and achieved his goal, becoming Buddha.

C

caṅkama:

Walking meditation, usually in the form of walking back and forth along a prescribed path.

cetasika:

Mental concomitant (see vedanā, saññā, and saṅkhāra).

citta:

Mind; heart; state of consciousness.

D

dāna:

Giving, liberality; offering, alms. Specifically, giving of any of the four requisites to the monastic order. More generally, the inclination to give, without expecting any form of repayment from the recipient. Dana is the first theme in the Buddha's system of gradual training (see anupubbī-kathā), the first of the ten pāramīs, one of the seven treasures (see dhana), and the first of the three grounds for meritorious action (see sīla and bhāvanā).

deva; devatā:

Literally, “shining one” — an inhabitant of the heavenly realms Devadatta:

A cousin of the Buddha who tried to effect a schism in the saṅgha and who has since become emblematic for all Buddhists who work knowingly or unknowingly to undermine the religion from within.

dhamma [Skt. dharma]:

(1) Event; a phenomenon in and of itself; (2) mental quality; (3) doctrine, teaching; (4) nibbāna. Also, principles of behavior that human beings ought to follow so as to fit in with the right natural order of things; qualities of mind they should develop so as to realize the inherent quality of the mind in and of itself. By extension, “Dhamma” is used also to denote any doctrine that teaches such things. Thus the Dhamma of the Buddha denotes both his teachings and the direct experience of nibbāna, the quality at which those teachings are aimed.

Dhamma-vinaya:

“doctrine (dhamma) and discipline (vinaya).” The Buddha's own name for the religion he founded.

dhana:

Treasure(s). The seven qualities of conviction (saddhā), virtue (sīla), conscience & concern (hiri-ottappa), learning (suta), generosity (dāna), and wisdom (paññā).

dhātu:

Element; property, impersonal condition. The four physical elements or properties are earth (solidity), water (liquidity), wind (motion), and fire (heat). The six elements include the above four plus space and consciousness.

dosa:

Aversion; hatred; anger. One of three unwholesome roots (mūla) in the mind. dukkha: Stress; suffering; pain; distress; discontent. [MORE]

E

Eekaggatārammana:

Singleness of preoccupation; “one-pointedness.” In meditation, the mental quality that allows one's attention to remain collected and focused on the chosen meditation object. Ekagat- tārammana reaches full maturity upon the development of the fourth level of jhāna.

ekāyana-magga:

A unified path; a direct path. An epithet for the practice of being mindful of the four frames of reference: body, feelings, mind, and mental qualities.

evaṃ:

Thus; in this way.

G

gotrabhū-ñāna:

“Change of lineage knowledge”: The glimpse of nibbāna that changes one from an ordinary person (puthujjana) to a Noble One (ariya-puggala).

Hīnayāna:

“Inferior Vehicle,” originally a pejorative term — coined by a group who called themselves followers of the Mahāyāna, the “Great Vehicle” — to denote the path of practice of those who adhered only to the earliest discourses as the word of the Buddha. Hinayanists refused to recognize the later discourses, composed by the Mahayanists, that claimed to contain teachings that the Buddha felt were too deep for his first generation of disciples, and which he thus secretly entrusted to underground serpents. The Theravāda school of today is a descendent of the Hīnayāna.

hiri-ottappa:

“Conscience and concern”; “moral shame and moral dread.” These twin emotions — the “guardians of the world” — are associated with all skillful actions. Hiri is an inner conscience that restrains us from doing deeds that would jeopardize our own self-respect; ottappa is a healthy fear of committing unskillful deeds that might bring about harm to ourselves or others.

I

indriya:

Faculties; mental factors. In the suttas the term can refer either to the six sense media (āyatana) or to the five mental factors of saddhā (conviction), viriya (persistence), sati (mindfulness), samādhi (concentration), and paññā (discernment); see bodhi-pakkhiya-dhammā.

J

jhāna [Skt. *dhyāna*]:

Mental absorption. A state of strong concentration focused on a single physical sensation (resulting in rūpa jhāna) or mental notion (resulting in arūpa jhāna). Development of jhāna arises from the temporary suspension of the five hindrances (see nīvaraṇa) through the development of five mental factors: vitakka (directed thought), vicāra (evaluation), pīti (rapture), sukha (pleasure), and ekaggatārammana (singleness of preoccupation).

K

kalyāṇamitta:

Admirable friend; a mentor or teacher of Dhamma.

kamma [Skt. *karma*]:

Intentional acts that result in states of being and birth.

kammaṭṭhāna:

Literally, “basis of work” or “place of work.” The word refers to the “occupation” of a meditating monk: namely, the contemplation of certain meditation themes by which the forces of defilement (kilesa), craving (taṇhā), and ignorance (avijjā) may be uprooted from the mind. In the ordination procedure, every new monk is taught five basic kammaṭṭhāna that form the basis for contemplation of the body: hair of the head (kesā), hair of the body (lomā), nails (nakhā), teeth (dantā), and skin (taco). By extension, the kammaṭṭhāna include all the forty classical meditation themes.

karuṇā:

Compassion; sympathy; the aspiration to find a way to be truly helpful to oneself and others. One of the four “sublime abodes” (brahma-vihāra).

kāya:

Body. Usually refers to the physical body (rūpa-kāya; see rūpa), but sometimes refers to the mental body (nāma-kāya; see nāma).

kāyagatā-sati:

Mindfulness immersed in the body. This is a blanket term covering several meditation themes: keeping the breath in mind; being mindful of the body’s posture; being mindful of one’s activities; analyzing the body into its parts; analyzing the body into its physical properties (dhātu); contemplating the fact that the body is inevitably subject to death and disintegration.

khandha:

Heap; group; aggregate. Physical and mental components of the personality and of sensory experience in general. The five bases of clinging (see upadāna). See: nāma (mental phenomenon), rūpa (physical phenomenon), vedanā (feeling), saññā (perception), saṅkhāra (mental fashionings), and viññāṇa (consciousness).

khanti:

Patience; forbearance. One of the ten perfections (pāramīs).

kilesa:

Defilement — lobha (passion), dosa (aversion), and moha (delusion) in their various forms, which include such things as greed, malevolence, anger, rancor, hypocrisy, arrogance, envy, miserliness, dishonesty, boastfulness, obstinacy, violence, pride, conceit, intoxication, and complacency.

kusala:

Wholesome, skillful, good, meritorious. An action characterized by this moral quality (kusala-kamma) is bound to result (eventually) in happiness and a favorable outcome. Actions characterized by its opposite (akusala-kamma) lead to sorrow.

L

lobha:

Greed; passion; unskillful desire. Also rāga. One of three unwholesome roots (mūla) in the mind.

loka-dhamma:

Affairs or phenomena of the world. The standard list gives eight: wealth, loss of wealth, status, loss of status, praise, criticism, pleasure, and pain.

lokavidū:

Knower of the cosmos. An epithet for the Buddha.

lokuttara:

Transcendent; supramundane

M

magga:

Path. Specifically, the path to the cessation of suffering and stress. The four transcendent paths — or rather, one path with four levels of refinement — are the path to stream-entry (entering the stream to nibbāna, which ensures that one will be reborn at most only seven more times), the path to once-returning, the path to non-returning, and the path to arahantship.

mahāthera:

“Great elder.” An honorific title automatically conferred upon a bhikkhu of at least twenty years’ standing.

majjhimā:

Middle; appropriate; just right.

Māra:

The personification of evil and temptation.

mettā:

Loving-kindness; goodwill. One of the ten perfections (pāramīs) and one of the four “sublime abodes” (brahma-vihāra).

moha:

Delusion; ignorance (avijjā).. One of three unwholesome roots (mūla) in the mind.

muditā:

Appreciative/sympathetic joy. Taking delight in one’s own goodness and that of others. One of the four “sublime abodes” (brahma-vihāra).

mūla:

Literally, “root.” The fundamental conditions in the mind that determine the moral quality — skillful (kusala) or unskillful (akusala) — of one’s intentional actions (see kamma). The three unskillful roots are lobha (greed), dosa (aversion), and moha (delusion); the skillful roots are their opposites.

N

nāga:

A term commonly used to refer to strong, stately, and heroic animals, such as elephants and magical serpents. In Buddhism, it is also used to refer to those who have attained the goal of the practice.

nāma:

Mental phenomena. A collective term for vedanā (feeling), saññā (perception), cetana (intention, volition), phassa (sensory contact) and manasikāra (attention, advertence). Compare rūpa.

nāma-rūpa:

Name-and-form; mind-and-matter; mentality-physicality. The union of mental phenomena (nāma) and physical phenomena (rūpa), conditioned by consciousness (viññāṇa) in the causal chain of dependent co-arising (paṭicca-samuppāda).

nekkhamma:

Renunciation; literally, “freedom from sensual lust.” One of the ten pāramīs.

nibbāna [Skt. nirvāna]:

Liberation; literally, the “unbinding” of the mind from the mental effluents (āśava), defilements (kilesa), and the round of rebirth (vaṭṭa), and from all that can be described or defined.

nimitta:

Mental sign, image, or vision that may arise in meditation.

nīvaraṇa: Hindrances to concentration — sensual desire, ill will, sloth & drowsiness, restlessness & anxiety, and uncertainty.

O

opanayiko:

Referring inwardly; to be brought inward. An epithet for the Dhamma.

PQ

pabbajjā:

“Going forth (from home to the homeless life)”; ordination as a samaṇera (samaṇeri), or novice monk (nun).

paccekabuddha:

Private Buddha. One who, like a Buddha, has gained Awakening without the benefit of a teacher, but who lacks the requisite store of pāramīs to teach others the practice that leads to Awakening. On attaining the goal, a paccekabuddha lives a solitary life.

Pāḷi:

The canon of texts (see Tipiṭaka) preserved by the Theravāda school and, by extension, the language in which those texts are composed.

paññā:

Discernment; insight; wisdom; intelligence; common sense; ingenuity. One of the ten perfections (pāramīs).

pāramī, pāramitā:

Perfection of the character. A group of ten qualities developed over many lifetimes by a bodhisatta, which appear as a group in the Pali canon only in the Jataka (“Birth Stories”): generosity (dāna), virtue (sīla), renunciation (nekkhamma), discernment (paññā), energy/persistence (virīya), patience/forbearance (khanti), truthfulness (sacca), determination (adhiṭṭhāna), good will (mettā), and equanimity (upekkhā).

parinibbāna:

Total Unbinding; the complete cessation of the khandhas that occurs upon the death of an arahant.

parisā:

Following; assembly. The four groups of the Buddha’s following that include monks, nuns, laymen, and laywomen.

pariyatti:

Theoretical understanding of Dhamma obtained through reading, study, and learning. See paṭipatti and paṭivedha.

paṭicca-samuppāda:

Dependent co-arising; dependent origination. A map showing the way the aggregates (khandha) and sense media (āyatana) interact with ignorance (avijjā) and craving (taṇhā) to bring about stress and suffering (dukkha).

Pātimokkha:

The basic code of monastic discipline, consisting of 227 rules for monks (bhikkhus) and 311 for nuns (bhikkhunīs).

paṭipadā:

Road, path, way; the means of reaching a goal or destination. The “Middle way” (majjhima-paṭipadā) taught by the Buddha; the path of practice described in the fourth noble truth (dukkhanirodhagāminī-paṭipadā).

paṭipatti:

The practice of Dhamma, as opposed to mere theoretical knowledge (pariyatti).

paṭivedha:

Direct, first-hand realization of the Dhamma.

peta [Skt. preta]:

A “hungry shade” or “hungry ghost” — one of a class of beings in the lower realms, sometimes capable of appearing to human beings. The petas are often depicted in Buddhist art as starving beings with pinhole-sized mouths through which they can never pass enough food to ease their hunger.

phala:

Fruition. Specifically, the fruition of any of the four transcendent paths.

pīti:

Rapture; bliss; delight. In meditation, a pleasurable quality in the mind that reaches full maturity upon the development of the second level of jhāna.

pūjā:

Honor; respect; devotional observance. Most commonly, the devotional observances that are conducted at monasteries daily (morning and evening), on uposatha days, or on other special occasions.

puñña:

Merit; worth; the inner sense of well-being that comes from having acted rightly or well and that enables one to continue acting well.

R

rāga:

Lust; greed.

rūpa:

Body; physical phenomenon; sense datum. The basic meaning of this word is “appearance” or “form.”

S

sabhāva-dhamma:

Condition of nature; any phenomenon, event, property, or quality as experienced in and of itself.

sacca:

Truthfulness. One of the ten perfections (pāramīs).

saddhā:

Conviction, faith. A confidence in the Buddha that gives one the willingness to put his teachings into practice. Conviction becomes unshakeable upon the attainment

of stream-entry.

sādhū:

(exclamation) “It is well”; an expression showing appreciation or agreement.

sagga:

Heaven, heavenly realm. The dwelling place of the devas. Rebirth in the heavens is said to be one of the rewards for practicing generosity (see *dāna*) and virtue (see *sīla*).

sakadāgāmī:

Once-returner. A person who has abandoned the first three of the fetters that bind the mind to the cycle of rebirth (see *saṃyojana*), has weakened the fetters of sensual passion and resistance, and who after death is destined to be reborn in this world only once more.

sakkāya-diṭṭhi:

Self-identification view. The view that mistakenly identifies any of the *khandha* as “self”; the first of the ten fetters (*saṃyojana*). Abandonment of *sakkāya-diṭṭhi* is one of the hallmarks of stream-entry *Sākyamuni*: “Sage of the Sakyans”; an epithet for the Buddha.

sākya-putta:

Son of the Sakyan. An epithet for Buddhist monks, the Buddha having been a native of the Sakyan Republic.

samādhi:

Concentration; the practice of centering the mind in a single sensation or preoccupation, usually to the point of *jhāna*.

samaṇa:

Contemplative. Literally, a person who abandons the conventional obligations of social life in order to find a way of life more “in tune” (*sama*) with the ways of nature.

samaṇera (samaṇerī):

Literally, a small *samaṇa*; a novice monk (nun) who observes ten precepts and who is a candidate for admission to the order of *bhikkhus* (*bhikkhunīs*).

sammuti:

Conventional reality; convention; relative truth; supposition; anything conjured into being by the mind.

sampajañña:

Alertness; self-awareness; presence of mind; clear comprehension. *saṃsāra*: Transmigration; the round of death and rebirth.

saṃyojana:

Fetter that binds the mind to the cycle of rebirth (see *vaṭṭa*) — self-identification views (*sakkāya-diṭṭhi*), uncertainty (*vicikiccha*), grasping at precepts and practices (*sīlabbata- parāmāsa*); sensual passion (*kāma-rāga*), resistance (*vyāpāda*); passion for form (*rūpa-rāga*), passion for formless phenomena (*arūpa-rāga*), conceit (*māna*), restlessness (*uddhacca*), and unawareness (*avijjā*).

sandiṭṭhiko:

Self-evident; immediately apparent; visible here and now. An epithet for the Dhamma.

saṅgha:

On the conventional (*sammuti*) level, this term denotes the communities of Buddhist monks and nuns; on the ideal (*ariya*) level, it denotes those followers of the Buddha, lay or ordained, who have attained at least stream-entry (see *sotāpanna*), the first of the transcendent paths (see *magga*) culminating in *nibbāna*.

saṅkhāra:

Formation, compound, fashioning, fabrication — the forces and factors that fashion things (physical or mental), the process of fashioning, and the fashioned things that result. *Saṅkhāra* can refer to anything formed or fashioned by conditions, or, more specifically, (as one of the five *khandhas*) thought-formations within the mind.

saññā:

Label; perception; allusion; act of memory or recognition; interpretation.

sāsana:

Literally, “message.” The dispensation, doctrine, and legacy of the Buddha.

sati:

Mindfulness, self-collectedness, powers of reference and retention. In some contexts, the word *sati* when used alone covers alertness (*sampajañña*) as well.

satipaṭṭhāna:

Foundation of mindfulness; frame of reference — body, feelings, mind, and mental events, viewed in and of themselves as they occur.

sa-upādisesa-nibbāna:

Nibbāna with fuel remaining (the analogy is to an extinguished fire whose embers are still glowing) — liberation as experienced in this lifetime by an arahant.

sāvaka:

Literally, “hearer.” A disciple of the Buddha, especially a noble disciple (see ariya-puggala.)

sayadaw: (Burmese).

Venerable teacher; an honorific title and form of address for a senior or eminent bhikkhu.

sīla:

Virtue, morality. The quality of ethical and moral purity that prevents one from falling away from the eightfold path. Also, the training precepts that restrain one from performing unskillful actions. Sīla is the second theme in the gradual training (see anupubbī-kathā), one of the ten pāramīs, the second of the seven treasures (see dhana), and the first of the three grounds for meritorious action (see dāna and bhāvanā).

sotāpanna:

Stream winner. A person who has abandoned the first three of the fetters that bind the mind to the cycle of rebirth (see saṃyojana) and has thus entered the “stream” flowing inexorably to nibbāna, ensuring that one will be reborn at most only seven more times, and only into human or higher realms.

stupa (Pali *thūpa*):

Originally, a tumulus or burial mound enshrining relics of a holy person — such as the Buddha — or objects associated with his life. Over the centuries this has developed into the tall, spired monuments familiar in temples in Thailand, Sri Lanka, and Burma; and into the pagodas of China, Korea, and Japan.

sugati:

Happy destinations; the two higher levels of existence into which one might be reborn as a result of past skillful actions (kamma): rebirth in the human world or in the heavens (sagga). None of these states is permanent. sugato: Well-faring; going (or gone) to a good destination. An epithet for the Buddha.

sukha:

Pleasure; ease; satisfaction. In meditation, a mental quality that reaches full maturity upon the development of the third level of jhāna.

sutta [Skt. *sūtra*]:

Literally, “thread”; a discourse or sermon by the Buddha or his contemporary disciples. After the Buddha’s death the suttas were passed down in the Pali language according to a well-established oral tradition, and were finally committed to written form in Sri Lanka around 100 BCE. More than 10,000 suttas are collected in the Sutta Piṭaka, one of the principal bodies of scriptural literature in Theravāda Buddhism. The Pali Suttas are widely regarded as the earliest record of the Buddha’s teachings.

T

tādi:

“Such,” an adjective to describe one who has attained the goal. It indicates that the person’s state is indefinable but not subject to change or influences of any sort.

taṇhā:

Craving — for sensuality, for becoming, or for not-becoming.

tāpas:

The purifying “heat” of meditative practice.

Tathāgata:

Literally, “one who has truly gone (tatha-gata)” or “one who has become authentic” (tathaagata), an epithet used in ancient India for a person who has attained the highest spiritual goal. In Buddhism, it usually denotes the Buddha, although occasionally it also denotes any of his arahant disciples.

thera:

“Elder.” An honorific title automatically conferred upon a bhikkhu of at least ten years’ standing. Compare mahāthera.

Theravāda:

The “Doctrine of the Elders” — the only one of the early schools of Buddhism to have survived into the present; currently the dominant form of Buddhism in Thailand, Sri Lanka, and Burma.

ti-lakkhaṇa:

Three characteristics inherent in all conditioned phenomena — being inconstant (anicca), stressful (dukkha), and not-self (anattā).

tipiṭaka [Skt. *tripiṭaka*]:

The Buddhist (Pali) Canon. Literally, “three baskets,” in reference to the three principal divisions of the Canon: the Vinaya Piṭaka (disciplinary rules),

Sutta Piṭaka (discourses); and Abhidhamma Piṭaka (abstract philosophical treatises).

tiratana:

The “Triple Gem” consisting of the Buddha, Dhamma, and Saṅgha — ideals to which all Buddhists turn for refuge.

tisarāṇa:

The “Threefold Refuge” — the Buddha, Dhamma, and Saṅgha. See tiratana.

U

upādāna:

Clinging; attachment; sustenance for becoming and birth — attachment to sensuality, to views, to precepts and practices, and to theories of the self.

upāsaka/upāsikā:

A male/female lay follower of the Buddha.

upekkhā:

Equanimity. One of the ten perfections (pāramīs) and one of the four “sublime abodes” (brahma-vihāra).

uposatha:

Observance day, corresponding to the phases of the moon, on which Buddhist lay people gather to listen to the Dhamma and to observe special precepts.

V

vassa:

Rains Retreat. A period from July to October, corresponding roughly to the rainy season, in which each monk is required to live settled in a single place and not wander freely about.

vaṭṭa:

The cycle of birth, death, and rebirth. This denotes both the death and rebirth of living beings and the death and rebirth of defilement (kilesa) within the mind. See saṃsāra.

vedanā:

Feeling — pleasure (ease), pain (stress), or neither pleasure nor pain.

Vesak, Vesakha, Visakha, Wesak, etc. (visākha):

The ancient name for the Indian lunar month in spring corresponding to our April-May. According to tradition, the Buddha’s birth, Awakening, and Parinibbāna each took place on the full-moon night in the month of Visakha. These events are commemorated on that day in the Visakha festival, which is celebrated annually throughout the world of Theravāda Buddhism. vicāra: Evaluation; sustained thought. In meditation, vicāra is the mental factor that allows one’s attention to shift and move about in relation to the chosen meditation object. Vicāra and its companion factor vitakka reach full maturity upon the development of the first level of jhāna.

vijjā:

Clear knowledge; genuine awareness; science (specifically, the cognitive powers developed through the practice of concentration and discernment).

vijjā-caraṇa-sampanno:

Consummate in knowledge and conduct; accomplished in the conduct leading to awareness or cognitive skill. An epithet for the Buddha.

vimutti:

Release; freedom from the fabrications and conventions of the mind. The suttas distinguish between two kinds of release. Discernment-release (paññā-vimutti) describes the mind of the arahant, which is free of the āsavas.

Vinaya:

The monastic discipline, spanning six volumes in printed text, whose rules and traditions define every aspect of the bhikkhus’ and bhikkhunīs’ way of life. The essence of the rules for monastics is contained in the Pātimokkha. The conjunction of the Dhamma with the Vinaya forms the core of the Buddhist religion: “Dhamma-vinaya” — “the doctrine and discipline”

viññāṇa:

Consciousness; cognizance; the act of taking note of sense data and ideas as they occur. There is also a type of consciousness that lies outside of the khandhas — called consciousness without feature (viññāṇaṃ anidassanaṃ) — which is not related to the six senses at all.

vipāka:

The consequence and result of a past volitional action (kamma).

vipassanā:

Clear intuitive insight into physical and mental phenomena as they arise and disappear, seeing them for what they actually are — in and of themselves — in terms of the three characteristics (ti-lakkhaṇa) and in terms of stress, its origin, its disbanding, and the way leading to its disbanding (ariya-sacca).

vipassanūpakkilesa:

Corruption of insight; intense experiences that can happen in the course of meditation and can lead one to believe that one has completed the path. The standard list includes ten: light, psychic knowledge, rapture, serenity, pleasure, extreme conviction, excessive effort, obsession, indifference, and contentment.

virīya:

Persistence; energy. One of the ten perfections (pāramīs), the five faculties (bala; see bodhi-pakkhiya-dhammā), and the five strengths/dominant factors (indriya; see bodhi-pakkhiya-dhammā).

vitakka:

Directed thought. In meditation, vitakka is the mental factor by which one's attention is applied to the chosen meditation object. Vitakka and its companion factor vicāra reach full maturity upon the development of the first level of jhāna.

WXYZ

yakkha:

One of a special class of powerful “non-human” beings — sometimes kindly, sometimes murderous and cruel — corresponding roughly to the fairies and ogres of Western fairy tales. The female (yakkhinī) is generally considered more treacherous than the male.

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“And, Ananda, said the Buddha,
those who shall die with faith
while making a pilgrimage to these shrines,
will be reborn, after death,
in a happy state”

The Mahaparinibbana Sutta



