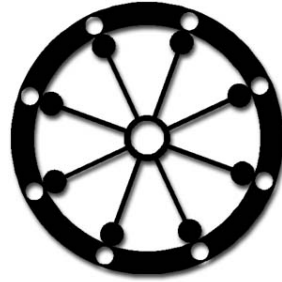


chief disciples Mahamoggallana and Sariputta having died before the Buddha.

### Physical Characteristics

Buddha is perhaps one of the few sages for whom we have mention of his rather impressive physical characteristics. A *kshatriya* by birth, he had military training in his upbringing, and by Shakyan tradition was required to pass tests to demonstrate his worthiness as a warrior in order to marry. He had a strong enough body to be noticed by one of the kings and was asked to join his army as a general. He is also believed by Buddhists to have "*the 32 Signs of the Great Man*".



The Brahmin Sonadanda described him as "*handsome, good-looking, and pleasing to the eye, with a most beautiful complexion. He has a godlike form and countenance, he is by no means unattractive.*"

"It is wonderful, truly marvelous, how serene is the good Gotama's appearance, how clear and radiant his complexion, just as the golden jujube in autumn is clear and radiant, just as a palm-tree fruit just loosened from the stalk is clear and radiant, just as an adornment of red gold wrought in a crucible by a skilled goldsmith, deftly beaten and laid on a yellow-cloth shines, blazes and glitters, even so, the good Gotama's senses are calmed, his complexion is clear and radiant."

A disciple named *Vakkali*, who later became an Arahant, was so obsessed by Buddha's physical presence that Buddha had to tell him to stop and reminded Vakkali to know Buddha through the Dhamma and not physical appearances.

Although the Buddha was not represented in human form until around the 1st century CE, the physical characteristics of fully-enlightened Buddhas are described by the Buddha in the *Digha Nikaya's Lakkhana Sutta*. In addition, the Buddha's physical appearance is described by Yasodhara to their son Rahula upon the Buddha's first post-Enlightenment return to his former princely palace in the non-canonical Pali devotional hymn, *Narasihā Gāthā* ("The Lion of Men").

## Lesson 16

### History & Teachings of Buddha

### Theravada Buddhism



NAME: \_\_\_\_\_  
 ID: \_\_\_\_\_  
 DATE: \_\_\_\_\_  
 PERIOD: \_\_\_\_\_

SIDDARTHA PREACHING

## Buddha's Life

The primary sources of information regarding Siddhartha Gautama's life are the Buddhist texts. The Buddha and his monks spent **four months** each year discussing and rehearsing his teachings, and after his death his monks set about preserving them. A **council** was held shortly after his death, and another was held a **century later**. At these councils the monks attempted to establish and authenticate the extant accounts of the life and teachings of the Buddha following systematic rules. They divided the teachings into distinct but overlapping bodies of material, and assigned specific monks to preserve each one. In some cases, essential aspects of the Buddha's **teaching** were incorporated into **stories and chants** in order to preserve them accurately.



From then on, the teachings were transmitted **orally**. From internal evidence it seems clear that the oldest texts crystallized into their current form by the time of the **second council** or shortly after it. The scriptures were not written down until **three or four hundred years** after the Buddha's death. By this point, the monks had added or altered some material themselves, in particular magnifying the figure of the Buddha.

The ancient Indians were generally not concerned with **chronologies**, being far more focused on **philosophy**. The Buddhist texts reflect this tendency, providing a clearer picture of what Shakyamuni may have taught than of the dates of the events in his life. These texts contain descriptions of the **culture** and **daily life** of ancient India which can be corroborated from the Jain scriptures, and make the Buddha's time the earliest period in Indian history for which substantial accounts exist. According to Michael Carrithers, there are good reasons to **doubt the traditional account**, though the outline of "**birth, maturity, renunciation, search, awakening and liberation, teaching, death**" must be true.

The Mahayana Vimalakirti Sutra claims, in Chapter 3, that the Buddha doesn't really become ill or old but purposely presents such an appearance only to teach those born into samsara about the impermanence and pain of defiled worlds and to encourage them to strive for Nirvana.

Ananda protested Buddha's decision to enter Parinirvana in the abandoned jungles of Kushinagar, of the Malla kingdom. Buddha, however, reminded Ananda how Kushinagar was a land once ruled by a righteous wheel-turning king that resounded with joy.

Buddha then asked all the attendant Bhikshus to clarify any doubts or questions they had. They had none. He then finally entered Parinirvana. The Buddha's final words were, "**All composite things pass away. Strive for your own liberation with diligence.**" The Buddha's body was cremated and the relics were placed in monuments or stupas, some of which are believed to have survived until the present. For example, **The Temple of the Tooth** or "**Dalada Maligawa**" in Sri Lanka is the place where the relic of the right tooth of Buddha is kept at present.



According to the Pali historical chronicles of Sri Lanka, the Dipavamsa and Mahavamsa, the coronation of Asoka is 218 years after the death of Buddha. According to one Mahayana record in Chinese, the coronation of Asoka is 116 years after the death of Buddha. Therefore, the time of Buddha's passing is either 486 BCE according to Theravada record or 383 BCE according to Mahayana record. However, the actual date traditionally accepted as the date of the Buddha's death in Theravada countries is 544 or 543 BCE, because the reign of Asoka was traditionally reckoned to be about 60 years earlier than current estimates.

At his death, the Buddha told his disciples to follow no leader, but to follow his teachings (dharma). However, at the First Buddhist Council, **Mahakasyapa** was held by the sangha as their leader, with the two

Buddha and Bimbisara respectively. Devadatta attempted **three** times to kill the Buddha. The first attempt involved the hiring of a group of archers, whom upon meeting the Buddha became disciples. A second attempt followed when Devadatta attempted to roll a large boulder down a hill. It hit another rock and splintered, only grazing the Buddha in the foot. A final attempt by plying an elephant with alcohol and setting it loose again failed. Failing this, Devadatta attempted to cause a schism (division) in the sangha, by proposing extra restrictions on the vinaya. When the Buddha declined, Devadatta started a breakaway order, criticizing the Buddha's laxity. At first, he managed to convert some of the bhikkhus, but Sariputta and Mahamoggallana expounded the dharma to them and succeeded in winning them back.



When the Buddha reached the **age of 55**, he made **Ananda his chief attendant**.

### Death

According to the Mahaparinibbana Sutta of the Pali canon, at the age of 80, the Buddha announced that he would soon reach Parinirvana or the final deathless state abandoning the earthly body. After this, the Buddha ate his last meal, which he had received as an offering from a **blacksmith** named **Cunda**. Falling violently ill, Buddha instructed his attendant Ananda to convince Cunda that the meal eaten at his place had nothing to do with his passing and that his meal would be a source of the greatest merit as it provided the last meal for a Buddha.

Mettanando and von Hinüber argue that the Buddha died of **mesenteric infarction**, a symptom of **old age**, rather than food poisoning. The precise contents of the Buddha's final meal are not clear, due to variant scriptural traditions and ambiguity over the translation of certain significant terms; the Theravada tradition generally believes that the Buddha was offered some kind of **pork**, while the Mahayana tradition believes that the Buddha consumed some sort of **truffle** or other **mushroom**.

### Early life and marriage

Siddhartha, destined to a luxurious life as a prince, had three palaces (for seasonal occupation) especially built for him. His father, King Suddhodana, wishing for Siddhartha to be a great king, shielded his son from religious teachings or knowledge of human suffering. Siddhartha was brought up by his mother's younger sister, **Maha Pajapati**.

As the boy reached the age of 16, his father arranged his marriage to **Yasodhara**, a **cousin** of the same age. According to the traditional account, in time, she gave birth to a son, **Rahula**. Siddhartha spent **29 years** as a Prince in Kapilavastu. Although his father ensured that Siddhartha was provided with everything he could want or need, Siddhartha felt that material wealth was not the ultimate goal of life.

### Departure and Ascetic Life

At the age of 29, Siddhartha left his palace in order to meet his subjects. Despite his father's effort to remove the sick, aged and suffering from the public view, Siddhartha was said to have seen an **old man**. Disturbed by this, when told that all people would eventually grow old by his charioteer **Channa**, the prince went on further trips where he encountered, variously, a **diseased man**, a **decaying corpse**, and **an ascetic**. Deeply depressed by these sights, he sought to overcome old age, illness, and death by living the life of an ascetic.

Siddhartha escaped his palace, accompanied by Channa aboard his horse **Kanthaka**, leaving behind this royal life to become a mendicant. It is said that, "the horse's hooves were muffled by the gods" to prevent guards from knowing the **Bodhisatta's** departure. This event is traditionally called "**The Great Departure**". Siddhartha



initially went to **Rajagaha** and began his ascetic life by begging for alms in the street. Having been recognized by the men of **King Bimbisara**, Bimbisara offered him the throne after hearing

of Siddhartha's quest. Siddhartha rejected the offer, but promised to visit his kingdom of *Magadha* first, upon attaining enlightenment.

Siddhartha left Rajagaha and practiced under two hermit teachers. After mastering the teachings of *Alara Kalama*, Siddhartha was asked by Kalama to succeed him, but moved on after being unsatisfied with his practices. He then became a student of *Udaka Ramaputta*, but although he achieved high levels of meditative consciousness and was asked to succeed Ramaputta, he was still not satisfied with his path, and moved on.

Siddhartha and a group of five companions led by Kaundinya then set out to take their austerities even further. They tried to find enlightenment through near total deprivation of worldly goods, including food, practicing self-mortification. After nearly starving himself to death by restricting his food intake to around a leaf or nut per day, he collapsed in a river while bathing and almost drowned.



Siddhartha began to reconsider his path. Then, he remembered a moment in childhood in which he had been watching his father start the season's plowing, and he had fallen into a naturally concentrated and focused state that was blissful and refreshing, the *jhana*.

### Enlightenment

After asceticism and concentrating on meditation and Anapana-sati (awareness of breathing in and out), Siddhartha is said to have discovered what Buddhists call the *Middle Way*—a path of moderation away from the *extremes of self-indulgence and self-mortification*. He accepted a little milk and rice pudding from a village girl named *Sujata*, who wrongly believed him to be the spirit that had granted her a wish, such was his emaciated appearance. Then, sitting under a *pipal* tree, now known as the *Bodhi* tree in *Bodh Gaya*, India, he vowed never to arise until he had found the Truth. Kaundinya and the other four companions, believing that he had abandoned his search and become undisciplined, left. After **49 days**

*seven*, and was one of the ten chief disciples. His *half-brother Nanda* also joined the sangha and became an arahant. Another cousin *Devadatta* also became a monk although he later became an enemy and tried to kill the Buddha on multiple occasions.

Of his disciples, *Sariputta*, *Mahamoggallana*, *Mahakasyapa*, *Ananda* and *Anuruddha* comprised the five chief disciples. His ten foremost disciples were completed by the quintet of *Upali*, *Subhoti*, *Rahula*, *Mahakaccana* and *Punna*.

In the fifth vassana, the Buddha was staying at *Mahavana* near *Vesali*. Hearing of the impending death of *Suddhodana*, the Buddha went to his father and preached the dharma, and Suddhodana became an arahant prior to death.

The death and cremation led to the creation of the order of nuns. Buddhist texts record that at first he was reluctant to ordain women as nuns. His foster mother *Maha Pajapati* approached him asking to join the sangha, becoming the first Buddhist nun. Then he began the journey from Kapilavastu back to Rajagaha.



Maha Pajapati was so intent on renouncing the world that she led a group of royal Sakyan and Koliyan ladies, following the sangha to Rajagaha. The Buddha eventually accepted them five years after the formation of the Sangha on the grounds that their capacity for enlightenment was equal to that of men, but he gave them certain additional rules (*Vinaya*) to follow. This occurred after Ananda interceded on their behalf. Yasodhara also became a nun, with both becoming arhats.

During his ministry, *Devadatta* (who was not an arahant) frequently tried to undermine the Buddha. At one point Devadatta asked the Buddha to stand aside to let him lead the sangha. The Buddha declined, and stated that Devadatta's actions did not reflect on the Triple Gem, but on him alone. Devadatta conspired with Prince *Ajatasattu*, son of Bimbisara, so that they would kill and usurp the

and *Mahamoggallana* were converted by *Assaji*, one of the first five disciples; they were to become the Buddha's two foremost disciples. The Buddha then spent the next three seasons at *Veluvana Bamboo Grove* monastery in Rajagaha, the capital of Magadha. The monastery, which was of a moderate distance from the city centre was donated by Bimbisara.

Upon hearing of the enlightenment, Suddhodana dispatched royal delegations to ask the Buddha to return to Kapilavastu. Nine delegations were sent in all, but the delegates joined the sangha and became arahants. Neglecting worldly matters, they did not convey



their message. The tenth delegation, led by *Kaludayi*, a childhood friend, resulted in the message being successfully conveyed as well as becoming an arahant. Since it was not the vassana, the Buddha agreed, and two years after his enlightenment, took a two month journey to Kapilavastu by foot, preaching the dharma along the way. Upon his return, the royal palace had prepared the midday meal, but since no specific invitation had come, the sangha went for an alms round in Kapilavastu. Hearing this, Suddhodana hastened to approach the Buddha, stating: "*Ours is the warrior lineage of Mahamassata, and not a single warrior has gone*

*seeking alms*", to which the Buddha replied:

*"That is not the custom of your royal lineage. But it is the custom of my Buddha lineage. Several thousands of Buddhas have gone by seeking alms."*

Suddhodana invited the sangha back to the royal palace for the meal, followed by a dharma talk, after which he became a *sotapanna*. During the visit, many members of the royal family joined the sangha. His cousins *Ananda* and *Anuruddha* were to become two of his five chief disciples. His son *Rahula* also joined the sangha at the *age of*

*meditating*, at the *age of 35*, he *attained Enlightenment*; according to some traditions, this occurred approximately in the *fifth lunar month*, and according to others in the *twelfth*. Gautama, from then on, was known as *the Buddha* or "*Awakened One*." Buddha is also sometimes translated as "*The Enlightened One*." Often, he is referred to in Buddhism as *Shakyamuni Buddha* or "*The Awakened One of the Shakya Clan*."

At this point, he is believed to have realized complete awakening and insight into the nature and cause of human suffering which was ignorance, along with steps necessary to eliminate it. This was then categorized into "*Four Noble Truths*"; the state of *supreme liberation*—possible for any being—was called *Nirvana*. He then allegedly came to possess the *Nine Characteristics*, which are said to belong to every Buddha.



According to one of the stories in the *Ayacana Sutta*, a scripture found in the *Pali* and other canons, immediately after his Enlightenment, the Buddha was wondering whether or not he should teach the Dharma to human beings.

He was concerned that, as human beings were overpowered by greed, hatred and delusion, they would not be able to see the true dharma, which was subtle, deep and hard to understand. However, *Brahma Sahampati*, interceded and asked that he teach the dharma to the world, as "*there will be those who will understand the Dharma*". With his great compassion to all beings in the universe, the Buddha agreed to become a teacher.

## Formation of the Sangha

After becoming enlightened, two merchants whom the Buddha met, named *Tapussa* and *Bhalkika* became the first lay disciples. They are given some hairs from the Buddha's head, which are believed to now be enshrined in the *Shwe Dagon Temple* in *Rangoon, Burma*. The Buddha intended to visit Asita, and his former teachers, Alara Kalama and Uddaka Ramaputta to explain his findings, but they had already died.

The Buddha thus journeyed to *Deer Park* near *Varanasi* (Benares) in northern India, he set in motion the *Wheel of Dharma* by delivering his first sermon to the *group of five companions* with whom he had previously sought enlightenment. They, together with the Buddha, formed the first *sangha*, the company of Buddhist monks, and hence,



the first formation of *Triple Gem* (Buddha, Dharma and Sangha) was completed, with Kaundinya becoming the first stream-enterer. All five soon become arahants, and with the conversion of *Yasa* and *fifty four of his friends*, the number of arahants swelled to **60** within the *first two months*. The conversion of the three Kassapa brothers and their 200, 300 and 500 disciples swelled the sangha over 1000, and they were *dispatched to explain* the dharma to the populace.

It is unknown what the Buddha's mother tongue was, and no conclusive documentation has been made at this point. It is likely that he preached and his teachings were originally preserved in a variety of closely related *Middle Indo-Aryan dialects*, of which *Pali* may be a standardization.

## Travels and Teaching

For the remaining 45 years of his life, the Buddha is said to have traveled in the *Gangetic Plain*, in what is now *Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and southern Nepal*, teaching his doctrine and discipline to an extremely diverse range of people— from nobles to outcaste street sweepers, mass murderers such as *Angulimala* and cannibals such as *Alavaka*. This extended to many adherents of rival philosophies and religions. The Buddha founded the community of Buddhist monks and nuns (the Sangha) to continue the dispensation after his Parinirvana or "*complete Nirvana*", and made thousands of converts. His religion was *open* to all races and classes and had no caste structure. He was also subject to attack from opposition religious groups, including attempted murders and framings.

The sangha travelled from place to place in India, expounding the dharma. This occurred throughout the year, except during the four months of the *vassana* (rainy season). Due to the heavy amount of flooding, travelling was difficult, and ascetics of all religions in that



time did not travel, since it was more difficult to do so without stepping on submerged animal life, unwittingly killing them. During this period, the sangha would retreat to a monastery, public park, cave or a forest and people would come to them.

The *first vassana* (rainy season) was spent at *Varanasi* when the sangha was first formed. After this, he travelled to *Rajagaha*, the capital of *Magadha* to visit *King Bimbisara*, in accordance with his promise after enlightenment. It was during this visit that *Sariputta*