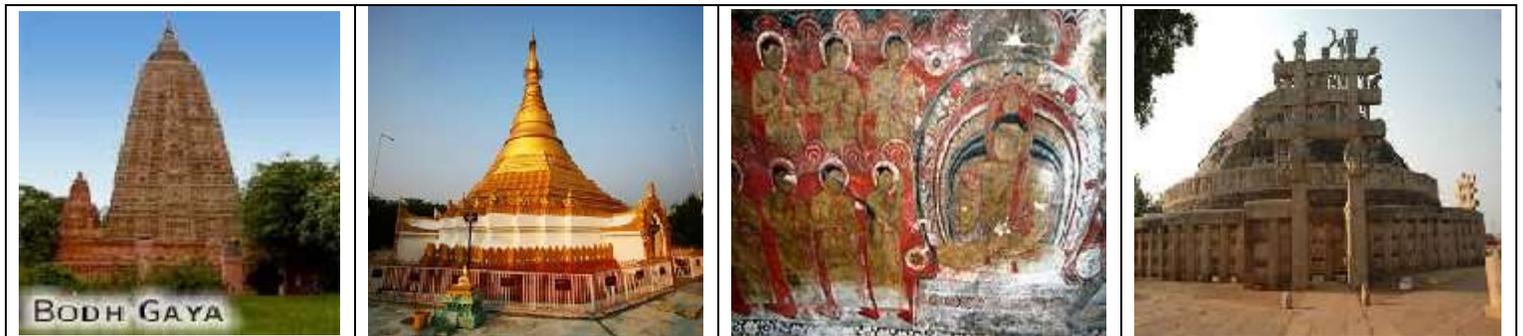


## BUDDHA



This stone sculpture now at the Lahore Museum, dates to the 2nd century AD

Siddhartha Gautama, who would one day become known as Buddha ("enlightened one" or "the awakened"), lived in northern India during the 6th to 4th century B.C. While scholars agree that he did in fact live, the events of his life are still debated. According to the most widely known story of his life, after experimenting with different teachings for years, and finding none of them acceptable, Gautama spent a fateful night in deep meditation. During his meditation, all of the answers he had been seeking became clear, and achieved full awareness, thereby becoming Buddha. Buddha was a spiritual leader and teacher whose life serves as the foundation of the Buddhist religion. Gautama has become famous as he had forty thousand monks in his own lifetime, who went out to spread the spiritual process. In his own silent way, he changed the world forever. Thus he has been one of the greatest spiritual waves on the planet in the past. "Bu" means Buddhi or the intellect. One who is above his intellect, one who is no longer a part of his mind, is a Buddha. So there have been many, but this incredible human being, in many ways has changed the face of this planet and still continues to do so.



### When & Where Born

The evidence of the early texts suggests that Siddhārtha Gautama was born into the Shakya clan, a community that was on the periphery, both geographically and culturally, of the northeastern Indian subcontinent in the 5th century BCE. According to the Buddhist tradition, Gautama was born in Lumbini, nowadays in modern-day Nepal, and raised in the Shakya capital of Kapilavastu, which may have been in either present day Tilaarakot, Nepal or Piprahwa, India

### Brief Life History of Buddha

Gautama was born as a Kshatriya, the son of Śuddhodana, "an elected chief of the Shakya clan", whose capital was Kapilavastu, and who were later annexed by the growing Kingdom of Kosala during the Buddha's lifetime. Gautama was the family name. His mother, Maya (Māyādevī), Śuddhodana's wife, was a Koliyan princess. Legend has it that, on the night Siddhartha was conceived, Queen Maya dreamt that a white elephant with six white tusks entered her right side, and ten months later Siddhartha was born. As was the Shakya tradition, when his mother Queen Maya became pregnant, she left Kapilvastu for her father's kingdom to give birth. However, her son was said to have been born on the way, at Lumbini, in a garden beneath a Sal Tree.

The day of the Buddha's birth is widely celebrated in Theravada countries as Vesak. Buddha's Birthday is called *Buddha Purnima* in Nepal and India as he is believed to have been born on a full moon day. Various sources hold that the Buddha's mother died at his birth, a few days or seven days later. The infant was given the name Siddhartha (Pāli: Siddhattha), meaning "he who achieves his aim". During the birth celebrations, the hermit seer Asita journeyed from his mountain abode and announced that the child would either become a great king (chakravartin) or a great sadhu. By traditional account, this occurred after Siddhartha placed his feet in Asita's hair and Asita examined the birthmarks.

While later tradition and legend characterized Śuddhodana as a hereditary monarch, the descendant of the Suryavansha (Solar dynasty) of Ikṣvāku (Pāli: Okkāka), many scholars think that Śuddhodana was the elected chief of a tribal confederacy.

Early texts suggest that Gautama was not familiar with the dominant religious teachings of his time until he left on his religious quest, which is said to have been motivated by existential concern for the human



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condition. The state of the Shakya clan was not a monarchy, and seems to have been structured either as an oligarchy, or as a form of republic. The more egalitarian gana-sangha form of government, as a political alternative to the strongly hierarchical kingdoms, may have influenced the development of the śramanic Jain and Buddhist sanghas, where monarchies tended toward Vedic Brahmanism

Siddhartha was brought up by his mother's younger sister, Maha Pajapati. By tradition, he is said to have been destined by birth to the life of a prince, and had three palaces (for seasonal occupation) built for him. Although more recent scholarship doubts this status, his father, said to be King Śuddhodana, wishing for his son to be a great king, is said to have shielded him from religious teachings and from knowledge of human suffering.

When he reached the age of 16, his father reputedly arranged his marriage to a cousin of the same age named Yaśodharā (Pāli: Yasodharā). According to the traditional account, she gave birth to a son, named Rāhula. Siddhartha is said to have spent 29 years as a prince in Kapilavastu. Although his father ensured that Siddhartha was provided with everything he could want or need, Buddhist scriptures say that the future Buddha felt that material wealth was not life's ultimate goal

At the age of 29, the popular biography continues, Siddhartha left his palace to meet his subjects. Despite his father's efforts to hide him from the sick, aged and suffering, Siddhartha was said to have seen an old man. When his charioteer Channa explained to him that all people grew old, the prince went on further trips beyond the palace. On these he encountered a diseased man, a decaying corpse, and an ascetic. These depressed him, and he initially strove to overcome aging, sickness, and death by living the life of an ascetic.

Accompanied by Channa and riding his horse Kanthaka, Gautama quit his palace for the life of a mendicant. It's said that, "the horse's hooves were muffled by the gods to prevent guards from knowing of his departure.

Later he attained enlightenment under Bodhi Tree and preached non-violence, vegetarian food, and the path of realization to all.

At the age of 80, the Buddha announced that he would soon reach Parinirvana, or the final deathless state, and abandon his earthly body. Ananda protested the Buddha's decision to enter Parinirvana in the abandoned jungles of Kuśināra (present-day Kushinagar, India) of the Malla kingdom. The Buddha, however, was said to have reminded Ananda how Kushinara was a land once ruled by a righteous wheel-turning king that resounded with joy.

The time of Buddha's passing is either 486 BCE according to Theravāda record or 383 BCE according to Mahayana record.

### **Principles & Practices in Spiritual Life**

Gautama initially went to Rajagaha and began his ascetic life by begging for alms in the street. After King Bimbisara's men recognised Siddhartha and the king learned of his quest, Bimbisara offered Siddhartha the throne. Siddhartha rejected the offer, but promised to visit his kingdom of Magadha first, upon attaining enlightenment.



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He left Rajagaha and practised under two hermit teachers of yogic meditation. After mastering the teachings of Alara Kalama (Skr. Ārāḍa Kālāma), he was asked by Kalama to succeed him. However, Gautama felt unsatisfied by the practice, and moved on to become a student of yoga with Udaka Ramaputta (Skr. Udraka Rāmaputra). With him he achieved high levels of meditative consciousness, and was again asked to succeed his teacher. But, once more, he was not satisfied, and again moved on.

Siddhartha and a group of five companions led by Kaundinya were then said to have set out to take their austerities even further. In a famous incident, after becoming starved and weakened during that journey, he was said to have accepted milk and rice pudding from a village girl. Such was his emaciated appearance that she wrongly believed him to be a spirit that had granted her a wish.

According to the early Buddhist texts, after realizing that meditative dhyana was the right path to awakening, and that extreme asceticism didn't work, Gautama discovered what Buddhists call the Middle Way—a path of moderation away from the extremes of self-indulgence and self-mortification, or the Noble Eightfold Path, as was identified and described by the Buddha in his first discourse, the Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta.

When Buddha announced about his Parinirvana, or the final deathless state, and abandon his earthly body, he then asked all-the attendant Bhikkhus to clarify any doubts or questions they had. They had none.

According to Buddhist scriptures, he then finally entered Parinirvana.

The Buddha's final words are reported to have been: "All composite things (Saṅkhāra) are perishable. Strive for your own liberation with diligence".

At his death, the Buddha is famously believed to have told his disciples to follow no leader.

### **Spiritual Works**

According to Buddhism, at the time of his awakening he realized complete insight into the cause of suffering, and the steps necessary to eliminate it. These discoveries became known as the "Four Noble Truths", which are at the heart of Buddhist teaching. Through mastery of these truths, a state of supreme liberation, or Nirvana, is believed to be possible for any being. The Buddha described Nirvāna as the perfect peace of a mind that's free from ignorance, greed, hatred and other afflictive states, or "defilements" (kilesas). Nirvana is also regarded as the "end of the world", in that no personal identity or boundaries of the mind remain. In such a state, a being is said to possess the Ten Characteristics, belonging to every Buddha.

According to a story in the Āyācana Sutta (Samyutta Nikaya VI.1) — a scripture found in the Pāli and other canons — immediately after his awakening, the Buddha debated whether or not he should teach the Dharma to others. He was concerned that humans were so overpowered by ignorance, greed and hatred that they could never recognise the path, which is subtle, deep and hard to grasp. However, in the story, Brahmā Sahampati convinced him, arguing that at least some will understand it. The Buddha relented, and agreed to teach

After his awakening, the Buddha met Taphussa and Bhallika — two merchant brothers from the city of Balkh in what is currently Afghanistan — who became his first lay disciples. It is said that each was given



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hairs from their head, which are now claimed to be enshrined as relics in the Shwe Dagon Temple in Rangoon, Burma. The Buddha intended to visit Asita, and his former teachers, Alara Kalama and Udaka Ramaputta, to explain his findings, but they had already died.

He then travelled to the Deer Park near Varanasi (Benares) in northern India, where he set in motion what Buddhists call the Wheel of Dharma by delivering his first sermon to the five companions with whom he had sought enlightenment. Together with him, they formed the first sangha: the company of Buddhist monks.

All five become arahants, and within the first two months, with the conversion of Yasa and fifty four of his friends, the number of such arahants was said to have grown to 60. The conversion of three brothers named Kassapa followed, with their reputed 200, 300 and 500 disciples, respectively. This swelled the sangha to more than 1,000.

For the remaining 45 years of his life, the Buddha was said to have traveled in the Gangetic Plain, in what is now Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and southern Nepal. The sangha traveled through the subcontinent, expounding the dharma. This continued throughout the year.

Upon hearing of his son's awakening, Suddhodana sent, over a period, ten delegations to ask him to return to Kapilavastu. On the first nine occasions, the delegates failed to deliver the message, and instead joined the sangha to become arahants. The tenth delegation, led by Kaludayi, a childhood friend of Gautama's (who also became an arahant), however, delivered the message. Now two years after his awakening, the Buddha agreed to return, and made a two-month journey by foot to Kapilavastu, teaching the dharma as he went.

Buddhist texts say that Suddhodana invited the sangha into the palace for the meal, followed by a dharma talk. After this he was said to have become a sotapanna. During the visit, many members of the royal family joined the sangha. The Buddha's cousins Ananda and Anuruddha became two of his five chief disciples. At the age of seven, his son Rahula also joined, and became one of his ten chief disciples. His half-brother Nanda also joined and became an arahant.

Later the Buddha attained Mahaparinirvana – attaining the state of deathless by dropping the earthly body consciously.

### **Critical moments of life**

In the path of seeking, after almost eight years of very body-destroying efforts, Gautama had become very weak. For four years he had been a Samana. The main sadhana for a Samana was to walk and never seek food – just walking and fasting. This destroyed his body almost to a point of death. At this time, he came to the river Niranjana, which as many other rivers in India today, has dried up and disappeared. This river was actually just a large stream with knee-high water flowing swiftly. He tried to cross the river but half-way through his body was so physically weak that he could not take one more step. But he was not the kind to give up so he just held on to a dead branch that was there and just stood. It is said that he stood like that for many hours. At the verge of collapsing Siddhartha was rescued by a village girl and she gave him some payasam (a pudding made from milk and jaggery) after which Siddhartha got back some energy. Siddhartha began to reconsider his path. At that moment, he realized that what he was seeking was after all



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within himself, so why all this struggle?! “All that was needed was an absolute willingness when it was right there. He questioned himself, why was I searching around the world?” When he realized this, he sat down under the Bodhi Tree with the determination that, unless the Ultimate happens to him, he would not move. Either he would get up as an Enlightened Being or he would die in that posture.” And in a moment he was there because that is all it takes. So it was just that one moment. He became fully enlightened as the full-moon was just rising. He sat there for a few hours and then he got up. Seeing the intensity of his sadhana as a Samana, over the years, five co-travelers had gathered around him who looked up to him. The first thing Buddha said when he got up was, “Let’s have dinner.” These five were aghast. They thought he had fallen and they went away. Out of his compassion, after a few years, he went in search of these five people one by one and put them on the path of enlightenment.

### **Teachings of Buddha**

The Four Noble Truths are as follows:

1. The world is full of suffering and sorrow.
2. The cause of suffering is desire.
3. The renunciation of desires will lead to salvation from the world, and
4. The path to salvation can be achieved by following The Eight-Fold Path.

The Eight Fold Path is as under:

Right Knowledge means a basic and thorough understanding of the Four Noble Truths.

Right Attitude means having an unselfish and mentally healthy attitude to life, free from hatred and covetousness.

Right Speech means speaking words that are good and true. One should not lie or gossip.

Right Action means always conducting oneself in a way that does not harm, hurt nor displease anyone. Adultery, cheating, stealing and murder are specifically denounced.

Right Means of Livelihood means that one must always strive to earn one's livelihood by honest means.

Right Effort means one should conscientiously strive to develop good tendencies and destroy negative inclinations.

Right Awareness means we should introspect about our inclinations and not give in easily to temptation.

Right Meditation means working towards training your mind towards intense concentration, which, in turn, will lead to salvation.

Buddhism also advocated the doctrines of Karma and reincarnation. Buddha preached that the soul goes through many incarnations before it finally sheds all its Karma and is reunited to its pure state. He called this



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state Nirvana. This is a state where all the desires and cravings of the mind become extinct and a state of total, uninterrupted bliss is experienced.

What is notable about Buddhism is the absence of a personal Creator or God in its tenets. While Buddha did not deny the existence of God, he preached that the universe is guided and governed by a Supreme Power that did not possess a name or form. Consequently, all rites and rituals became defunct.

### **Pilgrimage sites in India**

Gautama Buddha is said to have identified four sites most worthy of pilgrimage for his followers, saying that they would produce a feeling of spiritual urgency. These are,

- Lumbini: birthplace (in Nepal)
- Bodh Gaya: the place of his Enlightenment (in the current Mahabodhi Temple).
- Sarnath: (formally Isipathana) where he delivered his first teaching.
- Kusinara: (now Kushinagar, Uttar Pradesh, India) where he died.

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