

LIFE of the BUDDHA

Preliminary Concepts

Definitions

- Buddha:
 - The Enlightened One.
- Bodhisatta:
 - One who is aspiring to attain Buddhahood.
 - He is an “Enlightenment Being”, destined to become a future Buddha.
 - Before his last birth as a Buddha on earth, a Bodhisatta lives in the Tusita Heaven.
- Tusita:
 - The heaven of bliss, one of six heavens in the Kamavacara (sensuous) plane of existence.
- Devas:
 - Heavenly beings or deities who live in the happy realms of existence.
 - They are invisible to humans. But like humans, they are subject to the cycle of birth and death.

Concepts

- Kamma:
 - Wholesome or unwholesome action.
- Rebirth:
 - Re-becoming; renewed existence.
- Distinguishing legend, fact and fiction.

The Future Buddha

Sumedha

- The Future Buddha:
 - The vow before a past Buddha.
 - Fulfilling the Perfections.
 - Residing in anticipation in the Tusita Heaven.

- Sumedha, the future Buddha:
 - The son of a rich man.
 - His parents died while he was still young, leaving him many treasure vaults of gold and silver.
- Sumedha thought:
 - “My parents knew only how to amass wealth but did not know to take it away beyond death.”
 - “I shall now give away my property so that the merit of the deeds may follow me after death.”

Buddha Dipankara

- The first past Buddha:
 - Sumedha made the vow before Buddha Dipankara.
 - He was declared the next Buddha – Buddha Gotama.

Deities’ Invitation

The Bodhisatta

- The Bodhisatta:
 - Dwelling in Tusita Heaven.
 - Invited by devas to descend from the Heaven to the human world for his Buddhahood.

The Invitation:

- “It was not to enjoy the glory and sensual pleasures of a god or of man that you fulfilled the Perfections.
- “It was to become a fully enlightened Buddha in order to save the world, that you fulfilled the Perfections.
- “The time and fit season for your Buddhahood has now arrived.
- “Be so good as to depart from the world of gods (Tusita Heaven) and take conception in the womb of a human mother in the world of men.”

The Decision to Descend

- The Bodhisatta made five great surveys of time, continent, district, family, and (length of) the mother's life span.
- He decided to be born where:
 - humans were suited to understand His teachings;
 - the royal family of the Kingdom of Kapilavatthu is; and
 - Queen Mahamaya was the mother as she had fulfilled the Perfections and was of high morals.

Queen Mahamaya's Dream

Queen Mahamaya

- The Queen had observed a fast on the full moon day of July.

The Dream

- Four devas carried the Queen along with her bed to the foot of Himalaya Mountain.
- The devas led her to the Lake of Anotatta, and bathed her as purification rites.
- The Queen was then led to a divine couch in a golden mansion.

The Conception

- A white elephant held a white lotus in its trunk and, trumpeting, entered the golden mansion.
- The elephant perambulated the couch thrice in a clockwise direction, and entered the Queen's womb from her right.

Birth of Prince Siddhattha

Queen Mahamaya's Pregnancy

- When the Bodhisatta took conception in the Queen's womb, the mother was:
 - without any affliction; and
 - feeling happy and healthy.

- In the 10th month of her pregnancy, the Queen told her husband, King Suddhodana, her wish to go to her parental home at Devadaha for her confinement.

The Birth

- The King had prepared the road from Kapilavatthu to Devadaha for the Queen.
- However, the birth took place between the two cities in a royal garden called Lumbini Park, on a full moon day in May 623 B.C.
- The Prince was born while his mother was standing and supporting herself by a branch of Sal-tree.

The Lotus Walk

- The child advanced seven steps towards the East.
- At each step, a noble lotus appeared to receive him.
- Then he declared:
"I am the Chief of the World
There is no equal of me
I am Supreme
This is my last birth
There will be no rebirth for me."

Asita's Visit

- Asita was the great ascetic. He was also the King's tutor.
- He went to the palace to see the baby Prince Siddhattha.
- On seeing Asita, the baby Prince planted his feet on Asita's head.
- Asita foresaw the Prince's future greatness:
 - Asita saluted him.
 - So did the King (1st salutation).
- At first, Asita smiled. Then, he was sad.
- He smiled because the Prince would eventually become a Buddha.
- He was sad because he would not be able to benefit from the Buddha's teachings.

Naming Ceremony

- Siddhattha Gotama:
 - Named on the 5th day after the Prince's birth.
 - Gotama: family name.
 - Siddhattha: wish fulfilled.
- 108 brahmins were invited to the palace for the naming ceremony:
 - 8 of them examined the marks of the Prince's body.
 - 7 of them raised two fingers and said the Prince would either become a Universal Monarch or a Buddha.
- Kondanna, the youngest of the brahmins, raised only one finger and declared that the Prince would become a Buddha.
- Kondanna, who excelled the others in wisdom, had noticed the hair on the Prince's forehead turned to the right:
 - That was one of 32 main features of a Buddha.

The 32 Main Features

1. Feet with level soles.
2. Wheel marks on soles.
3. Projecting heels.
4. Long fingers and toes.
5. Hands and feet are soft-skinned.
6. Net-like lines on palms and soles.
7. High raised ankles.
8. Taut calf muscles like an antelope.
9. Can touch knees without bending.
10. Sexual organs are concealed in a sheath.
11. Complexion is bright, gold.
12. Skin is so fine that no dust can attach to it.
13. Body hairs are separate with one hair/pore.
14. Body hair is bluish and curls clockwise.
15. Godlike upright stance.
16. 7 convexities of the flesh, i.e. on both hands, feet and shoulders, and trunk.
17. Chest like a lion's.
18. No hollow between shoulders.
19. Distance from hand-to-hand and head-to-toe is equal.
20. Round and smooth neck.

21. Sensitive taste-buds.
22. Jaw like a lion's.
23. 40 teeth.
24. Evenly spaced teeth.
25. Gapless teeth.
26. Crystal-like canine teeth.
27. Large, long tongue.
28. Brahmin's voice.
29. Very blue eyes.
30. Eyes are like a cow's, i.e. large with long eyelashes.
31. White soft wisp of hair in the centre of the brow.
32. Head like a royal turban.

Death of Queen Mahamaya

- 7 days after the birth of Prince Siddhattha, the Queen died.
- The Prince was raised by Maha Pajapati:
 - The Prince's aunt.
 - The Queen's sister.
 - Also married to King Suddhodana.

Prince Siddhattha's Childhood

Education

- As a royal child, the Prince:
 - was sent to school where he joined the children of other noble families;
 - learnt a wide range of subjects; and
 - received special training in the art of warfare.
- The Prince excelled in all things, surpassing his fellow pupils, and even going beyond what his teachers could teach him.

Ploughing Festival

- The ploughing festival: an important event.
- The King had gone to the field where the festival was to be held:
 - The Prince was taken near a tree and looked after by nurses.
 - The nurses soon left the Prince alone to go to the field.

- The Prince sat under the rose apple tree:
 - He saw various ants on the ground.
 - A lizard then ate them.
 - Next, a snake ate the lizard.
 - Finally, a hawk swooped down from the sky to eat the snake.
- The Prince was saddened by what he saw:
 - sweating men;
 - tired oxen;
 - dying animals, etc.
- The Prince then meditated under the tree and reached the 1st Jhana.
- When the King saw his child in meditation, he saluted him (2nd salutation).

Swan Hunting Incident

- Devadatta:
 - Cousin of the Prince.
 - Son of King Suppabuddha, whose sister was Queen Mahamaya.
- One day, the Prince was in the woods with Devadatta.
- Devadatta saw a bird flying overhead and shot it.
- The Prince reached the spot where the bird had fallen first.
- The Prince then extracted the arrow from the bird and bandaged its wound.
- Devadatta claimed to be the owner of the bird.
- The Prince refused.
- The argument went on before the court of wise men.
- They agreed with the Prince that “the bird belonged not to him who had attempted to take its life, but to him who had saved its life”.

Prince Siddhattha's Youth

Life in the Palace

- The Prince lived in great luxury and immense splendour.

- The King built for him three palaces for the three seasons – the summer, spring and rainy season.

Marriage

- King Suddhodana decided the time had come for Prince Siddhattha to marry.
- He sent an invitation to 40,000 families to invite their daughters to a ceremony where the Prince could then select his bride.
- The Prince was to display his art of warfare and feat of archery to win one of those daughters' hand in marriage.
- The Prince, then 16, eventually chose his cousin, Yasodhara, also 16, to be his bride.

The Four Great Sights

The World Outside

- All along, King Suddhodana had been very protective of his son, Prince Siddhattha.
- Finally, one day, the Prince wished to see the world outside and asked his charioteer, Channa, to accompany him.
- It was during these visits that the Prince came into direct contact with the realities of life.

The Four Great Sights

- During the Prince's visit to the world outside, he met the following sights:
 - an old man;
 - a diseased person;
 - a corpse; and
 - a dignified hermit. *ascetic → someone who renounce the world*
- The first three sights convinced the Prince of the inexorable nature of life and the universal sickness of humanity.
- The fourth sight signified the means to overcome the ills of life and attain peace and calm.

The Decision to Renounce

- Realising the worthlessness of sensual

pleasures, Prince Siddhattha decided to renounce the world in search of Truth and Peace.

- After his decision, the Prince received news of the birth of his son.
- But he was not overjoyed.
- The Prince had regarded the birth of his son as an impediment.
- His son was accordingly named Rahula by King Suddhodana.

Palace Entertainment

- Returning to his palace, the Prince no longer took pleasure in entertainment.
- He decided to sleep.
- When he awoke in the night, he was disgusted by the appearances of the entertainers.
- He then resolved to make the Great Renunciation immediately.

Looking at Wife and Son

- Before his renunciation, Prince Siddhattha went to take a look at his wife Yasodhara, and son Rahula.
- Yasodhara was sleeping with her hand placed over the body of Rahula.
- The Prince feared that if he moved his wife's hand so as to look at his son's face, she might wake up and prevent him from leaving.
- He therefore left the palace without seeing his son.

The Great Renunciation

- The Prince had called Channa and ordered him to saddle his horse, Kanthaka:
 - A deva then opened the city gate for them.
- As the Prince passed out of the city gate, Mara the Evil One offered him Universal Monarch if he would abandon his purpose.
- The Prince rebuked Mara and passed on.
- The Prince had made the Great Renunciation.
- He was 29 years old.