



# BUDDHAHOOD

GL 204E



# **BUDDHAHOOD**

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# Preface

The course material for Buddhahood, GL 204E teaches about the way very exceptional individuals pursue Perfections in order to attain Buddhahood. The Lord Buddha is the most important individual in the Three Spheres of existence. The Lord Buddha happens for the purpose of helping all beings to rid themselves of Avijja (ignorance) and defilements; the two causes which keep all beings trapped in Samsara (the round of rebirth). The Lord Buddha is the greatest role model for all beings.

This course material has been garnered from the Tripitaka and other important Texts in Buddhism to provide the students with thorough information about what it takes to attain Buddhahood. It is hoped that this course material will help the student to better appreciate the Lord Buddha's peerless purity, insight, and compassion, which in turn will inspire the student to follow in His footsteps.

The preparation of this course material is a team effort. It is possible that even after many rounds of editing and cross-editing, the material may still contain mistakes. The Committee hopes that it will receive comments and feedback which will allow it to further improve on the course material.

The Committee

September 2006

# Course Syllabus

## 1. Description of the Course Material

GL 204E: Buddhahood

It is the study of the Lord Buddha's life. It covers the general knowledge about how to become a Buddha, the Buddha's attributes and virtues, the types of Buddhas, the pursuit of Perfections which lead to Buddhahood and examples of the way our Lord Gautama Buddha pursued His Perfections from the first existence that He aspired to Buddhahood until the time He became enlightened as the Buddha.

## 2. Course Objectives

1. To enable the student to clearly understand the way the Lord Buddha pursues Perfections.
2. To enable the student to deeply appreciate the Lord Buddha's unbounded compassion and the reasons why He should be held in the highest possible regard.
3. To enable the student to understand the thinking and the practices of the individual who is the best role model in the way we live our life and to apply what is learnt to the student's daily life.

## 3. Topics Covered in the Course

Chapter 1: Introduction to Buddhahood

Chapter 2: The Buddha-Nature

Chapter 3: The Buddha-Attributes and the Buddha-Virtues

Chapter 4: The Lord Gautama Buddha's Previous Existences

Chapter 5: The First Part of the Lord Gautama Buddha's Biography

Chapter 6: The Lord Gautama Buddha's Middle Years

Chapter 7: The Lord Gautama Buddha's Final Years

Chapter 8: The Path toward Buddhahood

# Method of Study

## 1. Self-Study

The steps for studying each chapter are as follows:

1. Spend an hour each day on the course material, and finish each chapter within one to two weeks.
2. Begin each chapter with a pre-test to assess the student's prior knowledge of the material covered in the chapter. Complete the exercises provided for the chapter. After completing the chapter, the student should assess his/her comprehension of the material covered by completing the test at the end of the chapter.
3. Use other learning aids especially the broadcasted programs as detailed in 5.

## 2. Self-Evaluation before and after the Lesson

The student should complete the pre-test before beginning each chapter in order to assess his/her prior knowledge of the subject. The student can then pay special attention to what he/she has no knowledge of. The student should also complete the test at the end of each chapter. The student will then know how well he/she has learnt the material covered in the chapter and whether he/she is ready to proceed to the next chapter. A satisfactory grade is when the student can score correctly about 80% of the test. The self-evaluation will only be effective if it is carried out honestly.

## 3. The Text

The student should begin the chapter by first going over the layout of each chapter in terms of its topics, concepts, and objectives before proceeding with the detailed study.

After having finished reading the details of each topic, the student should write down its main points and complete the exercises and the test provided for the chapter. This way the student will know how well he/she understands the material covered and how he/she can apply what he/she learns to his/her daily life.

#### **4. The Exercises and the Tests**

The exercises and the tests are part of the overall evaluation. Therefore, complete all the exercises, the pre-test and the test provided for each chapter according to the given time table. The student should not wait until the last minute to do the exercises all at once because such practice is missing the point. Moreover, the student will not be able to deliver his/her completed exercises on time and will be penalized as a result. The penalty may cause the student to fail the course altogether. The student should only look up the answers at the end of the chapter after completing the tests.

#### **5. Long-Distance Learning via Satellite and other Media**

The Foundation for the Study of the Dhamma for the Environment broadcasts its programs via satellite to present information which promotes morality in both the theoretical part and the practical part. One noteworthy program is called ‘The Inner Dreams Kindergarten’. This special program teaches the truth about the world and about life and presents the Law of Kamma using real life stories in the format of case studies. Additional learning can be obtained through E-learning, which has been provided to facilitate learning anywhere in the world. Its home page is <http://www.dou.us>

#### **6. Final Exam**

The final exam contains 100 multiple-choice questions and is meant to evaluate how well the student comprehends the subject of Buddhahood. However, it is more important that the student understands the course material well enough to apply it to his/her daily life.

## **Worship the Triple Gem with These Words:**

Arahan samma-sambuddho bhagava, Buddhan bhaga-vantan abhiva-demi

The Most Exalted One is an Arahant whose defilements have been completely extinguished. He is self-enlightened. I pay homage to the Most Exalted One who is the knower, the awakened one, the joyful one.

Savak-khato bhaga-vata Dhammo, Dhamman namas-sami

The Dhamma is what the Most Exalted One teaches. I pay homage to the Dhamma.

Supati-panno bhaga-vato savaka-sangho, Sanghan namami

The Sangha are the Most Exalted One's disciples. They practice righteousness. I pay homage to the Sangha.

# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION TO BUDDHAHOOD

### TOPICS COVERED IN CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION TO BUDDHAHOOD

- 1.1 The Importance of Buddhahood**
- 1.2 What Is Buddhahood?**
- 1.3 The Relationship between Buddhahood and the Reality of the Universe**
  - 1.3.1 The Truth about Who We Are in Relation to the Universe
  - 1.3.2 The Truth about the Universe's Cycle of Existence
  - 1.3.3 The Universe Is Actually a Prison
- 1.4 The Lord Buddha Has Escaped from Prison**

## CONCEPTS

1. The material covered in 'Buddhahood' is aimed to teach the student about the way each Bodhisatta pursues Perfections in order to attain Buddhahood. The course material should increase the student's faith in the Lord Buddha and impress upon the student the great debt of gratitude we owe Him. The Lord Buddha is the best role model in how to live life safely and happily within Samsara or the round of rebirth.
2. This course is the study of what it takes to become a Buddha from the very beginning to the very end. It will become evident to the student that Buddhahood is universal in that anyone can aspire to it. However, it does take the greatest and the stoutest heart, and the willingness to repeatedly put one's life on the line in order to pursue Perfections to the fullest extent.
3. The universe is in fact the place where the round of rebirth takes place. Birth, existence, and death make up an endless cycle which is propelled by greed, anger, and ignorance. Kamma, which arises out of greed, anger, and ignorance, has consequences and perpetuates each being to endlessly undergo the round of rebirth within the 31 realms of existence. Moreover, Kamma and the consequences of Kamma keep each being immersed in suffering until the being becomes used to it and has no thought of escaping it. But whenever a human being has the wisdom to see and know suffering for what it really is, then he will endeavor to find the cause of suffering and to destroy it. However, such wisdom is difficult to beget but if we have a Knower to guide us and lead us, then we will be in a better position to end suffering for our self. The sublime Lord Buddha knows the cause of suffering and succeeds in destroying it. He has essentially escaped from the prison which is Samsara. Therefore, when we earnestly study and practice His Teachings, we too can eventually attain Nibbana and end the round of rebirth for our self.
4. Originally, every Buddha began as an ordinary human being just like us. He did not know the true purpose of a human life; he lived life recklessly; he performed a mixture of good and bad deeds; he had undergone the round of rebirth for so long that eventually deep within him there arose a conviction of having had enough of suffering. That was when the thought of leaving the round of rebirth first occurred to him. Not only did he want to leave the endless round of rebirth or Samsara, he also wanted to lead other beings out of Samsara and toward Nibbana with him. Once he aspired to Buddhahood, he began to plan the way to put his life on the line for the purpose of pursuing Perfections throughout countless existences until they reached the fullest extent. That was when he could become enlightened as a Buddha and be in a position to remove himself from Samsara and toward Nibbana. That was when he could also lead other beings toward Nibbana.

## **OBJECTIVES**

1. To enable the student to correctly describe the reasons the Lord Buddha is our role model.
2. To enable the student to correctly explain the term Buddhahood.
3. To enable the student to make a connection between Buddhahood and the universe.
4. To enable the student to practice what the Lord Buddha teaches in his/her daily life.



## INTRODUCTION TO BUDDHAHOOD

### Introduction

Each human being was born uniquely different in terms of looks, levels of intelligence, talents, abilities, circumstances in life, etc. From the Lord Buddha's Teachings, we learn that these differences arise from each human being's uniquely different Kamma which have been accumulated throughout his/her previous countless lifetimes. Details about the subject of Kamma are presented in the course 'The Law of Kamma'. Differences among human beings in terms of skin color, social caste, etc., can often times bring about conflicts. Such conflicts and problems have been with humanity throughout every age and every period.

Conflicts and problems can also arise out of the different ways people think, speak, and act as a result of their nationality, race, environment, and beliefs. Differences in beliefs can cause people to think differently and exert a profound effect in their lives.

Most importantly, certain beliefs lead human beings to have wrong views (Miccha-ditthi) about the reality of life and the world. Such wrong views include the giving of alms does not bear any fruit; the giving of aid does not bear any fruit; one's parents do not possess special virtues; this world and the hereafter do not exist; merit, demerit, hell, and heaven do not exist, etc. These wrong views cause people to trespass against the code of morality which defines us as human beings. Such transgression in turn wreaks havoc upon society at large.

Wrong views have a destructive effect on one self and others around him. Wrong-viewed individuals are always trying to expand their network. For example, in the circle of gamblers or drinkers, after exchanging just a few words complete strangers are ready to sit down to play cards or drink together. The network of wrong-viewed individuals can spread like wildfire. For this reason, the Lord Buddha teaches that given just one wrong-viewed individual in the world, world-wide destruction can already be wrought.

On the other hand, given just one right-viewed (Samma-ditthi) individual such as the Lord Buddha, who has the correct understanding about life and the world, darkness in the world can be removed. The Lord Buddha brings to all humanity the light of the Dhamma which can remove ignorance and wrong views and replace them with true wisdom that brings about peace and happiness. Although our Lord Gautama Buddha has attained complete Nibbana a long time ago, His Teachings or the Dhamma still remains. Whoever learns and practices the Dhamma can be assured of peace and happiness in life. As a right-viewed (Samma-ditthi) individual, he/she can bring peace and happiness to his/her life and to the world as well.

The Lord Buddha is the most important and most sublime individual in the world. He is the Master Teacher of human and celestial beings. He is the ultimate right-viewed individual and is most worthy of our deep veneration. Therefore, it is necessary for us to learn about the Lord Buddha's previous lives as well as the way He had pursued Perfections throughout His countless lifetimes for the purpose of attaining Buddhahood in his final existence. When we learn to use Him as our role model in the way we live our life and when we can follow in His footsteps, our life will be filled with the peace and happiness which can then spread to others and together we can all play a role in creating lasting world peace.

This course is the study of the way our Lord Gautama Buddha pursued Perfections. It is a very worthwhile subject because it allows us to gain a deep understanding about what it takes to become a Buddha. Throughout every age, exceptional individuals have aspired to Buddhahood. Buddhahood is universal in that anyone can aspire to it. When our Lord Gautama Buddha first aspired to Buddhahood, He was an ordinary individual just like us. But unlike us, He had the determination and the courage to work toward Buddhahood. Any one of us who is willing to put his/her life on the line in the pursuit of Perfections by following our Lord Buddha's example from here onward, he/she will have just as much a chance to become a Buddha one day in the far distant future.

## **1.1 The Importance of Buddhahood**

Worldly knowledge can be divided into many branches such as the physical sciences, economics, art, education, etc. Worldly knowledge is taught in schools and universities to prepare the student to earn his/her livelihood after graduation.

If the student pauses to think a minute, the student will realize that worldly education aims only to prepare the student to be able to make a living and support himself/herself. It does not teach the student about how to live happily in this world. Therefore, worldly education does not address the true purpose of a human life.

Since it is extremely difficult to be reborn a human being, every minute in life is precious where self-improvement, merit-making, the pursuit of Perfections, and the destruction of defilements are concerned. Defilements are like germs which infect and erode our mind and contaminate our physical, verbal, and mental acts. Our infected mind is extremely difficult to cure.

The Buddhist Science is the science which deals with the individual who has penetrated the truth about reality; the individual who has been removed from all defilements. The penetration of the truth is true knowledge and cannot be obliterated. The Buddhist Science is the ultimate science because it teaches about the reality of life. It teaches us the way to live our life for our happiness both here and now and in the hereafter. Most importantly, it teaches us the way to free our self from the domination of defilements so that we will never have to undergo the round of rebirth again.

To live on earth, it is necessary that we learn worldly knowledge so that we can make a living. However, to live life happily and successfully, we must learn about the Buddhist Science. Worldly knowledge cannot help us when we get old and infirm and when we are about to leave this world. Moreover, worldly knowledge cannot keep us safe from the States of Loss and Woe after we die. The Buddhist Science plays a key role in preparing us for death so that we no longer have to fear death. When we learn and practice the Buddhist Science, all of our accumulated good deeds will cause our mind to be bright and clear at our moment of death, which is the key to a rebirth in the States of Happiness, the Celestial Realm.

The sciences of the world result from the formation of theories by individuals of great minds after having made a serendipitous discovery. These famous individuals conducted research into the physical world which resulted in the various sciences that we know today.

For the Buddhist Science, our Lord Buddha was willing to put His life on the line in order to penetrate the truth about life, the world, and the universe. He conducted His research through the mind, specifically through meditation. The knowledge He discovered is pure and true. This true knowledge can tell us the true purpose of a human life. The Lord Buddha is therefore the most important person in the Three Spheres of existence<sup>1</sup>. Life on earth cannot go on without the light and warmth from the sun. In the same manner, human beings cannot go on without a true knower who serves as a beacon to guide us to live life correctly. Without a true knower, we are like blind people groping through life in the dark. No other beings can penetrate the truth about reality in the way that the Lord Buddha can because He is the knower, the awakened one, the joyful one. He is completely freed of defilements. The Lord Buddha is filled with unbounded compassion and has led living beings to leave the round of rebirth which is like a gargantuan prison and is fraught with danger every microsecond.

In this course, the student will learn about the details of the way our Lord Buddha pursued Perfections. It will help the student to develop a deeper faith in the Lord Buddha and to feel deeply grateful to His unbounded compassion. The student will learn that the Lord Buddha is our best role model in the way to conduct our life for our safety and happiness during our long journey within the round of rebirth. Should anyone aspire to become a Buddha one day in the far distant future as a result of having taken this course, then the ultimate purpose of this course will have been realized.

## 1.2 What Is Buddhahood?

First of all, it is important that the student gains a clear understanding of the meaning of Buddhahood in order to have an overview of what this course is about.

**Buddhahood** generally means the detailed knowledge about how the Lord Buddha becomes self-enlightened. For this course, Buddhahood covers the general knowledge about the Lord Buddha, the Buddha-Attributes, the Buddha-Virtues, the categories of Buddhas, the pursuit of Perfections as exemplified by our Lord Gautama Buddha from the first existence in which He aspired to Buddhahood until the existence in which He attained Buddhahood.

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<sup>1</sup> The Three Spheres of existence include the Sense Sphere, the Form Sphere, and the Non-Form Sphere.

In other words, the student will learn in this course what it takes to become a Buddha. At the end of the course, the student will gain a clear picture of how our Lord Gautama Buddha had worked toward Buddhahood from the beginning to the end. The student will then realize how Buddhahood is a universal position which can be aspired to by anyone with the stoutest heart and the greatest courage, by anyone who is willing to put his life on the line countless lifetimes after countless lifetimes until his aspiration is realized.

### **1.3 The Relationship between Buddhahood and the Reality of the Universe**

Our earth is currently inhabited by over six billion human beings. Out of this great number of human beings, how many know the true purpose of the human life. Without the knowledge of the Lord Buddha's Teachings (the Dhamma), all of us will live life under the influence of our defilements and be trapped by all things worldly. As a result, we will all continue to undergo the round of rebirth endlessly. When we live life in this way, we are said to live life recklessly. The Lord Buddha has this to say about a person who lives life recklessly, "He is like a person who is dead to goodness and virtues, a person who wastes his entire life."

From the courses 'Buddhist Cosmology' and 'The Worlds of the Hereafter', the student has already learnt about the worlds and the universes. In this course, these topics will be briefly summarized here in order to help the student understand clearly the connection between the worlds, the universes and the happening of the Lord Buddha.

#### **1.3.1 The Truth about Who We Are in Relation to the Universe**

Human beings are born ignorant. We wonder about everything and we have so many questions. We wonder about who we are, why we are born, why we are here on earth, what the earth is, who creates it, etc. These questions await answers and whoever can answer any of them in a logical and correct manner, he/she will be respected and honored. In this respect, science can partly answer some of these questions and it is the reason why many scientists are famous and well-respected.

In this era, scientists have sent spacecrafts into space to carry out many space missions. One of which is to take images of our earth. We can see that our earth is round just like all the other planets and stars are. Scientists have found that earth contains living beings but they have not yet found such living beings in other places of the universe. Scientists have understood the sun to be at the center of the universe and other celestial bodies orbit around it. According to astronomers, earth is the only Human Realm in the universe and the universe has the sun as its center.

The Buddhist Science deals with the knowledge about the Lord Buddha who has discovered the truth about reality through the most elevated meditative attainments. The Lord Buddha has given us an accurate picture of the cosmos. An abbreviated version of the Buddhist Cosmology will be presented here.

## **Buddhist Cosmology**

The Lord Buddha teaches that there is an infinite number of universes in groups of one million (small), ten millions (medium), one million millions (large) which are termed 'Loka-dhatu'. Each universe consists of the Three Spheres of existence which are the dwelling of all living beings as follows:

**The Sense Sphere consists of 11 realms** which include:

**One Human Realm** which consists of the four Human Continents: Pubba-vidaha, A-para-goyan, Uttara-kuru, and Jombu.

**Four States of Loss and Woe:** These are the lowest states of existence and are the dwelling of living beings that are devoid of personal growth and development. They include the Hell Realm, the Peta Realm, the Asurakaya Realm, and the Animal Realm.

**Six Celestial Realms** where celestial beings dwell. There are altogether six celestial realms: The first celestial realm is called Catu-maha-rajika. The second celestial realm is called Tavatimsa. The third celestial realm is called Yama. The fourth celestial realm is called Tusita. The fifth celestial realm is called Nimma-narati. The sixth celestial realm is called Para-nimmita-vasa-vatti.

**The Form Sphere** is the dwelling of Form Brahma beings. The Form Sphere lies above the Celestial Realm and contains more refined celestial wealth than that in the Celestial Realm. There are altogether **Sixteen Form Brahma realms**.

**The Non-Form Sphere** is the dwelling of Non-Form Brahma beings. It lies above the Form Brahma Realm and contains more refined celestial wealth than that in the Form Brahma Realm. There are altogether **four Non-Form Brahma realms**.

## **The Structure of the Universe**

Each universe has the gargantuan mountain '**Sineru**' as its center. Around the Sineru Mountain lie the four Human Continents. The Jombu Continent or earth is to the south of the mountain. On the slopes of the Sineru is located the first celestial realm or Jatu-maha-rajika. Above the first celestial realm on the top of the Sineru Mountain is the second celestial realm or Tavatimsa. The third celestial realm or Yama lies above the Tavatimsa Realm so on and so fourth until the sixth celestial realm of Para-nimmita-vasa-vatti. The higher the celestial realm, the larger it is. Above the sixth celestial realm lie the 16 Form Brahma realms. Above the 16<sup>th</sup> Form Brahma realm lie the four Non-Form Brahma realms. Below the Sineru Mountain are a group of three mountains called 'Triikut'. Below the Triikut is the dwelling of the Asura beings. The gorges of the Triikut form the Peta and Asurakaya Realms. Further below the Triikut are the eight sites of the Hell Realm with the eighth hell site being the largest.

## **Conclusion**

From the material covered so far, the student has already learnt that we live in a universe which is one of the countless universes in existence. Specifically, we live in the Sense Sphere, in one of the four Human Continents which is called Jombu.

It is not the sun but the gargantuan mountain Sineru which is at the center of our universe. Human beings are the first beings to occupy the universe. The rest of beings are the changed forms of human beings. Therefore, besides human beings there are a myriad of living beings that possess different physical make-ups and dwell in other realms of existence within the universe.

As a result, it is necessary that we learn the connection between the round of rebirth and the different realms of existence so that we can keep our self safe for as long as we have to journey within the endless round of rebirth.

### **1.3.2 The Truth about the Universe's Cycle of Existence**

One fact which the student needs to understand about life and the round of rebirth is that every living being and everything in the countless universes are impermanent. All things and all beings are subject to the Three Characteristics which include impermanence, suffering, and the absence of true selfhood. Even the universe in which we live has undergone its own life cycle that includes birth, existence, and death countless of times and will continue to do so endlessly into the future.

#### **The Birth of the Universe**

The universe is born as a result of the combination of the four elements which form the basic makeup of all living beings and all things. Initially, within the bowel of the universe, there was only emptiness. After an infinite amount of time has passed, changes began to take place. There were rainfalls. The raindrops began as a tiny drop and grew to the size of the trunk of a palm tree. The rain was contained by the winds. At the same time, the winds percolated through the columns of rainwater. These processes took an infinite amount of time.

Once the water level subsided to the ground level and did not subside any further, the still water caused residues to clump together. These clumps floated above the water. They were yellow and looked like lotus leaves. They had a lovely fragrance and a sweet taste. These residues occurred when the crude elements came together. (The birth of other realms of existence occurred when the refined elements came together, hence, they are not visible to the naked human eyes). These floating clumps, which resulted from the combination of crude elements, eventually turned into landmasses to accommodate human, animal, and plant lives. The first plant to appear was the lotus tree. The lotus flower which appeared on the tree foretold the number of Buddhas to happen within that Kappa or Earth Age. One lotus meant that there would be the happening of one Buddha for that Kappa. In any case, five lotuses are the maximum number.

Once the landmasses were formed, the Form Brahma beings who deceased from the Form Brahma Realm were reborn in the newly formed landmasses. They are considered the first generation human beings of the new Earth Age. These Brahma beings were asexual. Their bodies were almost weightless and they could traverse the air. They were self-luminescent and they lived on their meditative raptures. They had no need for any other types of food. They had existed that way for a very long time until finally one day, one Brahma being had the desire to taste the fragrant clumps at the surface of the landmasses. As soon as the being put a little bit of the fragrant clumps on the end of his tongue, its fragrance spread through his body. The being found the taste so much to his liking. When other first generation human beings saw what he did, they began to follow his example. Once more and more fragrant clumps had been consumed over an infinitely long period of time, their bodies began to become coarser and coarser and their self-luminescence gradually disappeared. In time, darkness covered the new landmasses and the first generation human beings became very frightened. Therefore, the sun appeared but it did not give out light all the time. Next, the moon and the stars began to appear in the sky. What followed was night and day, seasons, the oceans, the gargantuan Sineru Mountain on the slopes of which was the Catu-maha-rajika Realm, etc., etc. It took countless years for these changes to take place.

The above is an abbreviated version of the universe's birth process. It is a process which takes countless years. Details about the universe's birth process are already very extensive, left alone the details about the round of rebirth where the beginning, the middle, and the end of which is almost impossible to fathom. It is enough to realize how long the round of rebirth has been in existence and how dangerous life in the round of rebirth truly is.

### **Death of the Universe**

Once the universe began a new cycle, there came into existence human beings, animals, and plant life. With the existence of human beings, there followed the creation of society, forms of government, ways to earn a living, etc. The lifespan of human beings runs in cycles, from long to short; from short to long. It all depends on the changing environment for the better or for the worse as a function of the overall level of humanity's defilements as a whole. When it reaches the maximum level, the universe will be annihilated.

The overall level of humanity's defilements determines the condition of the natural environment around us. When it is high, the natural environment will turn against us. When the level of humanity's defilements reaches its maximum and results mainly from anger, the universe will be destroyed by fire. If it results mainly from lust, the universe will be destroyed by water. If it results mainly from ignorance, the universe will be destroyed by violent winds.

When the universe is to be destroyed by fire, the first sign will be a very long period of drought in which plant life slowly disappears. The second sign will be the appearance of another sun which gives out more intense heat than the original sun. At night when the original sun orbited away from the earth, it is the second sun which will continue to light and heat the earth. The sky will be empty of clouds. The rivers will dry up. There will be no human beings left on earth. Countless years will go by when the third sun appears. More countless years will go by when the

fourth sun appears. The huge lakes in the Himavanta Forest of the Catu-maha-rajika Realm will completely dry up and the water levels in the oceans will gradually decrease. More countless years will go by when the fifth sun appears and causes all the water in all the oceans to dry up. By the time the sixth sun appears, all the water remaining in the mountains and landmasses disappear causing the landmasses to fall apart and dust particles are everywhere. More countless years go by when the seventh sun appears. At this point, the universe bursts into gargantuan flames and explodes with the loudest sound. The top of the gargantuan Sineru Mountain will be blown off. The fire, which started in the Human Realm, will burn all the way up to the Celestial Realm and the Form Brahma realms of the First Absorption. The higher Form Brahma realms and the Non-Form Brahma Realm are not affected.

The life cycle of the universe, which has occurred repeatedly since the beginning of the round of rebirth, should further emphasize the fact that everything falls under the Three Characteristics of impermanence, suffering, and the absence of true selfhood. For everything and every living being, there are birth, existence, and death.

### **1.3.3 The Universe Is Actually a Prison**

So far the student has learnt about the structure of the universe and how it contains the 31 realms of existence. In this topic, the connection between the different realms of existence and the round of rebirth will be presented.

The round of rebirth or Samsara is a process which every living being has to undergo endlessly as a result of the chain reaction of defilements, Kamma, and the fruit of Kamma. When defilements, which include greed, anger, and ignorance, dominate our mind, it will be sad and gloomy. Defilements force human beings to perform Kamma through the body, the word, and the mind. Kamma and the fruit of Kamma cause each human being to undergo rebirth in one of the 31 realms of existence.

The concept of the round of rebirth or Samsara is difficult to understand for those that do not believe in the Lord Buddha's Teachings. Most of the people on earth believe that death is the end of everything. Therefore, they feel free to live their lives however they please and have no regards for moral values. The minority of the people, who may have an understanding about the round of rebirth, do not know how to be emancipated from it.

Human intellect has limitations because it is confined to the knowledge and experiences gained within the current existence. Human intellect cannot penetrate past and future existences. Very few humans indeed have the ability to penetrate some of their past and future existences. These are the ascetics or Yogis who have trained their minds through meditation practice until they achieve meditative attainments. Yet even the best of these ascetics or Yogis can only penetrate a certain number of their past and future existences. They cannot however penetrate the whole truth about the reality of life and the round of rebirth. In other words, their knowledge is not complete.

There are certain types of beings that are not born from the womb but are born in an adult form. These include hell beings, Petas, Asurakayas, celestial beings, and Brahma beings. These beings can recall the existence immediately previous to their current one. Some of these beings can recall a few previous existences right after their rebirth but they cannot penetrate the future.

Therefore, human beings and all the beings in the States of Happiness cannot know that the 31 realms of existence contained within the Three Spheres of existence are actually a prison which keeps us trapped within it. Rebirth is accompanied by suffering. Suffering is difficult to bear. Living beings experience suffering but do not know how to end it.

Once the Lord Buddha happens, His enlightened Knowledge has no boundaries or limitations. He penetrates the whole truth with His pure Insight and knows that Nibbana is the place where there are no rebirth and death. It is the destination of beings that have been emancipated from the round of rebirth. He knows the practices which ends one's rebirth. He has discovered that human beings are under the domination of defilements. He knows that defilements cause Kamma and the fruit of Kamma causes rebirth. This vicious cycle continues endlessly. The Three Spheres of existence are nothing but a gargantuan prison which keeps its inmates eternally trapped. The inmates have no freedom and they cannot be themselves because they are under the domination of their defilements. The Human Realm is but a small part of the prison.

Some people find it difficult to believe that celestial beings also experience suffering. Here we will present only the overall suffering experienced by each category of beings within the prison of Samsara.

Hell beings suffer because they are undergoing various forms of horrific punishment inflicted upon them by the hell denizens or the hell officials.

Petas suffer because they are constantly famished and because they still feel a strong tie to their loved ones in the Human Realm.

Asurakayas suffer because they are constantly attacked by fear. They have no home and they have nothing to eat.

Animals suffer mainly because it is difficult for them to find food.

Human beings suffer because of birth, aging, illnesses, and death. Human beings also suffer from grief which is caused by various situations.

Celestial beings suffer because their celestial wealth may not be as great as that of other celestial beings. They suffer as a result of their lust.

Brahma beings suffer because their personal radiance may not be as great as that of other Brahma beings. They suffer as a result of their self-illusion and conceit.

The common feature of all living beings is that whichever realm of existence they are in, they tend to become immune to their suffering. Being ignorant of their suffering, they are not motivated to find the end to suffering. Instead they cope with their suffering the wrong way. It is not unlike someone who is unaware of his illness and continues to do things which only aggravate his situation.

When a human being has the insight to see and know suffering, that is the time he will try to find the root cause of suffering and remove it. But this type of insight is hard to come by. Therefore, it is much easier if we can be guided and led by a truly wise person such as the Lord Buddha. Since the Lord Buddha has attained Enlightenment and escaped from the prison of Samsara, we should earnestly study and practice according to His Teachings so that one day in the far distant future we too can become enlightened and attain Nibbana.

Every Buddha teaches the same Truth. Every Buddha teaches living beings about the way to end suffering and the way to leave the round of rebirth. The Lord Buddha does not teach us everything He knows but only what is most relevant to us. Our Lord Gautama Buddha says that what he teaches us is like the leaves in a fist whereas His knowledge is like all the leaves in the forest.

#### **1.4 The Lord Buddha Has Escaped from Prison**

The happening of a Buddha is an extremely rare event. Every Buddha happens for the benefits of all beings especially human beings. He happens in order to alleviate our suffering and increase our happiness. He happens in order to lead humanity out of suffering and into Nibbana. Originally, our Lord Gautama Buddha was an ordinary individual just like us. He did not know about the true purpose of a human life. He had lived life recklessly. He had performed a mixture of good and bad deeds and had undergone the round of rebirth endlessly within the Three Spheres of existence. No one knows the beginning and the end of the round of rebirth. He had suffered birth, aging, illnesses, and death over and over again for countless Earth Ages.

Finally, during one particular rebirth as a human being, He sensed deeply within him that he had been suffering the round of rebirth for countless lifetimes. He suddenly felt that he had had enough of suffering and wanted to find the way to end it. He also felt that as soon as he could find the way out of suffering, hence out of Samsara, he would help other beings out of suffering as well. And that was the time He aspired to Buddhahood.

Since that existence, He had tried different methods to find the way out of suffering. He had continued to put His life on the line in order to accumulate merit and pursue Perfections. He had repeatedly given away his flesh, his blood, his body parts, and his life. He had met with countless obstacles but He had never given up His aspiration. He had pursued Perfections continuously for countless lifetimes for the sake of Buddhahood. Finally, after His Perfections reached the fullest extent, He became enlightened as the Buddha. He has successfully found the way to end suffering. He is therefore the most sublime being of all. He possesses Vijja (Higher Knowledge) and Carana (good conduct). He has attained Nibbana where there is no rebirth, no aging, no illnesses, and no death. He has attained eternal bliss.

His boundless compassion caused Him to teach us some of His enlightened Knowledge and to point out to us the truth about the reality of life. He reveals to us the fact that all living beings are the servants and slaves of Phya Mara; that we have been kept prisoners within the prison called Samsara or the round of rebirth since beginningless time. Most importantly, He reveals to us the practices which lead to the end of suffering; the practices which lead us out of Samsara.

This course material has been put together in order to teach the student about the various aspects about our Lord Buddha so the student can deeply appreciate His limitless insight, purity, and compassion. This course material will allow the student to understand the way our Lord Buddha pursued Perfections and the understanding will inspire the student to follow in His footsteps.

## **Exercises**

After completing this chapter, take the test and complete the exercises provided in the workbook before beginning Chapter 2.

# CHAPTER 2

## THE BUDDHA-NATURE

### TOPICS COVERED IN CHAPTER 2 THE BUDDHA-NATURE

#### **2.1 Who Is the Lord Buddha?**

##### 2.1.1 The Buddha-Virtues

- a. The Difficulty Involved in Describing the Buddha's Virtues
- b. The Meaning of the Buddha-Virtues
- c. The Nine Buddha-Virtues

##### 2.1.2 Definition of the Word 'Buddha'

#### **2.2 The Happening of a Buddha Is a Very Rare Event**

#### **2.3 The Reasons Only One Buddha Happens at any Given Time**

#### **2.4 There Have Been Countless Buddhas to Date**

#### **2.5 The Happening of a Buddha**

##### 2.5.1 Units of Time

##### 2.5.2 The Kappa or Earth Age in Which There Is the Happening of a Buddha

#### **2.6 The Categories of Buddhas**

#### **2.7 The Differences among the Buddhas**

## CONCEPTS

1. The Lord Buddha is the most sublime being in the Three Spheres of existence. He has spent countless lifetimes pursuing Perfections for the sake of Buddhahood. Every Buddha wishes to leave the suffering of the round of rebirth and lead as many beings to do the same. Therefore, his mind is filled with boundless compassion even when he was still working toward Buddhahood as a Bodhisatta. His virtues are obvious and are too great to be fully described. The pursuit of Perfections to the fullest extent not only makes Him the most sublime being in the universe but also allows Him to attain Enlightenment through the Dhammakaya within Him.
2. The Lord Buddha is the supreme human being that has the physical features of the Perfect Man on the outside and the Dhammakaya on the inside. The Lord Buddha is far removed from defilements. He has attained Vijja (Higher Knowledge) and Carana (good conduct). He is the teacher of human and celestial beings. He is the Master Teacher of the world.
3. The happening of a Buddha is a very rare event because it depends on when each Bodhisatta's pursuit of Perfections will reach the fullest extent. Only when his Perfections reach the fullest extent can a Bodhisatta become enlightened as a Buddha and teach other beings the reality of life.
4. Every Buddha started out as an ordinary human being, not a powerful god, not the creator of the earth and everything in it. He is a human being who aspires to become enlightened as a Buddha one day in the far distant future and sets out to pursue Perfections for however long it will take for them to reach the fullest level. Once enlightened, a Buddha will have discovered the truth about the reality of every being and everything; how each being and each thing comes to be; how each being and each thing comes to an end. The knowledge about the truth allows us to act correctly and appropriately. Each Buddha greatly benefits all beings. Countless Buddhas have happened and will continue to happen on earth in order to lead as many living beings as possible out of the round of rebirth.

## OBJECTIVES

1. To enable the student to correctly describe the Lord Buddha's virtues and the great good He has done for humanity.
2. To enable the student to correctly describe the definition of the term 'Buddha'.
3. To enable the student to deeply appreciate the Lord Buddha's pursuit of Perfections.
4. To enable the student to correctly describe the differences between the Lord Buddha and other prophets.



# THE BUDDHA-NATURE

## Introduction

From the material covered in chapter 1, the student has already learnt that the world we live in is but a very small part of the gargantuan prison which is Samsara. Every being living in all the 31 realms of existence be it a human being, a celestial being, a Form Brahma being, a Non-Form Brahma being, an animal, a Peta, an Asurakaya, a hell being, has undergone and will continue to undergo the round of rebirth endlessly. If during the existence as a human being, one has accumulated merit, one will be reborn in the States of Happiness which include the Human Realm, the Celestial Realm, the Form Brahma Realm, and the Non-Form Brahma Realm. The specific destination depends on one's level of accumulated merit. However, if during the existence as a human being, one has accumulated demerit, one will be reborn in the States of Unhappiness which include the Animal Realm, the Peta Realm, the Asurakaya Realm, and the Hell Realm. This round of rebirth continues endlessly for each and every living being. Each rebirth brings with it suffering of the routine and non-routine kinds. Birth, existence, and death bring tremendous suffering to a being. Yet, birth, existence, and death are a part of nature and a part of all beings.

Every Buddha started out just like the rest of us until after countless lifetimes and untold suffering He began to think about finding the way to end suffering. This tiny bud of insight remains with Him and continues to grow ever so gradually through countless more lifetimes until He had a particular experience which reminded Him of the fact that **“The round of rebirth is indeed the sea of suffering”**; it is a gargantuan prison where it is nearly impossible to escape from. He subsequently had a thought, “One day, I will find my way out of this prison, out of this sea of suffering. When that day comes, I will not leave this prison alone but will lead my fellow beings to leave it with me.”

This is not the kind of thought which occurs to human beings as a whole. It only occurs to a very special human being who has spent countless lifetimes performing good, wholesome deeds; who is extraordinarily intelligent and kind. Therefore, to aspire to Buddhahood, one must have already been on the path of righteousness for a very long time. Any individual, who has the insight to aspire to Buddhahood, is already above and beyond most beings in the Three Spheres of existence.

## 2.1 Who Is the Lord Buddha?

It is almost impossible to fully define the term ‘Buddha’. Suffice it to say for now that the Lord Buddha is the most sublime and the most important individual in the universe. Before we can make an attempt at answering who the Lord Buddha is, let us first learn about the Buddha-Virtues.

### 2.1.1 The Buddha-Virtues

#### a. The Difficulty Involved in Describing the Buddha-Virtues

The Lord Buddha is the perfect role model for human and celestial beings alike. The happening of the Buddha brings light to the Three Spheres, quenches the flames of defilements, and makes known to all beings the way out of the round of rebirth which is fraught with danger and suffering. He turns what was upside down right side up. He opens what has been closed. He is like a beacon to everyone that has lost their way. He sheds light on darkness and enables a person to see. Our Lord Gautama said, **“The innumerable virtues of each Buddha are so great that even if a Buddha were to describe them all through the Kappa, the Kappa would have long ended and He still has not fully described them.”**

Therefore, the attempt to describe the great virtues of the Lord Buddha is like trying to empty the ocean of water.

Besides our Lord Gautama’s comment regarding the Buddha-Virtues, His Chief Disciple who was honored as the most excellent in the area of Insight, Phra Sariputra, said at one point,

**“The innumerable virtues of the Buddha as mentioned by the Most Exalted One are considered very few indeed when compared to their real number. It is like a man who uses the eye of a needle to fetch water from the great Candara-bhaga River. The water which remains in the great river is immeasurably greater than the water he fetches. Or it is like a man who picks up dirt with his hand, the remaining dirt in the landmasses is immeasurably greater than what he has in his hand. Or it is like a man who points a finger at the ocean, the remaining water in the ocean is immeasurably greater than the amount of water that his finger points at. Or it is like a man who points his finger at the air, the rest of the air is immeasurably greater than where his finger points at. The innumerable virtues of the Lord Buddha which the monks cannot witness are far greater than what he can witness.”**

Phra Sariputra’s comment shows clearly that the Buddha-Virtues are so innumerable that they cannot possibly be described within a person’s lifetime. Naturally, a person with more insight can much better describe the Lord Buddha’s virtues than a person with less insight.

We owe the Lord Buddha the greatest debt of gratitude because of the fact that He has spent countless lifetimes repeatedly putting His life on the line just to amass merit and Perfections for the sake of Buddhahood so that He can lead as many beings as possible out of the suffering of Samsara.

#### b. The Meaning of the Buddha-Virtues [Buddhaguna]

The word ‘virtue’ in this case has two meanings. The first meaning is goodness and the second meaning is benefit. The Lord Buddha’s goodness includes purity and insight. It means that the Lord Buddha is pure because he has no defilements [Visuddhiguna]. It means that the Lord Buddha possesses the most sublime insight as a result of His enlightened Knowledge [Pannaguna]. As far as the benefit imparted by the Lord Buddha, it includes compassion. It means that the Lord

Buddha possesses unbounded compassion and wishes to help all beings out of suffering and into Nibbana [**Karunaguna**]. At the very least, He teaches beings the way to live life correctly by not committing any more unwholesome deeds.

**The Buddha-Virtues** are specific to the Lord Buddha alone. The Buddha-Virtues are so incomparable that the king of the Tavatimsa Realm, celestial beings, Brahma beings and human beings all hold the Lord Buddha in the highest regard.

### c. The Nine Buddha-Virtues

The Nine Buddha-Virtues are as follows:

1. **Arahan:** It means distant. It means that the Lord Buddha is far removed from defilements. That is, He is without defilements. As a result, the Lord Buddha is as pure as pure gold. His mind is steadfast. He is neither affected by things desirable nor things undesirable. He is as stable as the pillars of a dam which cannot be shaken by gale-force winds from all four directions.

The fact that the Lord Buddha is without defilements, Arahan can also mean a person who is an incomparable refuge and worthy of our deepest veneration.

2. **Samma sambuddho:** This term composes of three words. Samma, sam, and buddho. **Buddho** means the knower. It means that the Lord Buddha attains His enlightened Knowledge through the Dhammakaya-Eye. He sees the whole truth as it is. No conjecture or no interpretation is needed. One part of the Lord Buddha's first lecture which is called the Dhammacak-kappa-vattana Sutta states that "**Monks, after I have practiced the Noble Eightfold Path, these things occur to me: the eye, the knowledge, the insight, the Higher Knowledges and the brightness**". These special virtues occur in sequence and they dispel the darkness which covers up the knowledge about the truth of reality. The Lord Buddha is therefore like the supreme Dhamma beacon which brings light to the minds of human and other beings.

Once the Lord Buddha practices according to the Noble Eightfold Path or the Middle Path, He is able to attain Enlightenment. He sees the cause of all things and knows everything for what it really is, the Knowledge enables all defilements within Him to be destroyed. The Lord Buddha's enlightened Knowledge can stand up to any scrutiny and is beyond reproach, since it is true knowledge which **involves both seeing and cognition**.

The word '**sam**' is derived from the word '**san**' and means by one self. It is used in front of the word 'buddho' to mean that the Lord Buddha attains Enlightenment on His own. That is, He is self-enlightened. He needs no teacher. He does not copy anyone else's knowledge. He sees and knows everything by Himself.

The word '**samma**' means righteousness and is used before '**sam buddho**' to mean that His enlightened Knowledge is good for Himself and others. His knowledge is the whole truth and is accurate in every detail. His Knowledge is about cause and effect.

Therefore, the term ‘**samma sambuddho**’ means that the Lord Buddha attains Enlightenment righteously and by Himself. He is the knower of the whole truth. He knows the cause and effect of every phenomenon. He knows how something begins and how something ends as Phra Assaji once said to Phra Sariputra, **“What causes something to happen, the Most Exalted One knows it; what causes something to end, the Most Exalted One knows it as well.”**

3. **Vijja carana sampanno:** This term comes from two words – vijja and carana. **Vijja** in this case means the Eightfold Knowledge which includes:

**Vipassana-nana:** It means that the Lord Buddha penetrates the whole truth. For example, He sees that the Five Aggregates<sup>1</sup> are transient, changing all the time, and absent of true selfhood. They cause all beings to be trapped within the endless round of rebirth. Penetration of the truth is not achieved through the physical eyes but is attained through the Dhammakaya-Eye within.

**Mano-mayiddhi:** It means the supernormal power of the mind. Whatever the mind imagines, it can happen.

**Iddhi-vidhi:** It means Psychic Powers. One body can become several bodies, etc.

**Dibba-sota:** It means Celestial Ear. Whatever one wishes to listen to, one can hear it.

**Ceto-pariya-nana:** It means knowing the thoughts of others.

**Pubbe-nivasa-nussati-nana:** It means the supernormal knowledge which enables one to remember one’s own previous existences.

**Dibba-cakkhu:** It means Celestial Eye. It is the ability to see everything near and far as well as the ability to know others’ previous existences.

**Asavak-khaya-nana:** It means the knowledge of the cessation of mental intoxication which leads to the complete destruction of one’s defilements. The Lord Buddha said to the young man Saga-rava, **“When my mind is still, pure, bright, and devoid of defilements, I have the insight to know that I’ve been emancipated. I penetrate the fact that there will be no more rebirths for me. I’ve accomplished all that needs to be accomplished. Nothing is left undone.”**

Since the Lord Buddha possesses the Eightfold Higher Knowledge, He not only can destroy all of His defilements but can also teach other beings to be freed from their defilements and attain Enlightenment in the way that He has. **Vijja** is the Higher Knowledges which allow one to completely remove darkness or Avijja from one’s consciousness.

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<sup>1</sup> **The Five Aggregates** include corporeality, feeling, perception, mental formation, and consciousness.

The word '**carana**' means good conduct which is defined by 15 virtues. **Sila-sanvara** means discipline as prescribed by the Patimokkha<sup>2</sup>. **Indriya-sanvara** means discipline in regards to restraint of the sense faculties which include the eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind. **Bhojane-mattan-nuta** means moderation in food consumption. **Jaga-riya-nuyoga** means the practice of wakefulness. The rest include **Saddha** (faith), **Sati** (mindfulness), **Hiri** (moral shame), **Otappa** (moral fear), **Bahu-sacca** (profound knowledge), **U-pa-kamo** (endeavor), **Panna** (insight), and **the Four Jhanas** (the Four Absorptions). These virtues show clearly that the Lord Buddha possesses exemplary moral habits, mien and deportment. He has practiced these 15 virtues throughout a huge number of existences because these virtues enable Him to remain steadfast in His pursuit of Perfections and in His quest for Buddhahood.

The term '**Vijja carana sampanno**' means an individual who possesses both Vijja (the Higher Knowledge) and carana (Conduct). The Lord Buddha had practiced all 15 types of conduct throughout His many previous existences as a Bodhisatta. This enabled Him to eventually remove the darkness which is Avijja (ignorance) and become self-enlightened as the Buddha.

4. **Sugato:** It means that the Lord Buddha has gone to a good place, that He has destroyed all defilements never to know the round of rebirth ever again. It also means that wherever the Lord Buddha goes, He brings incalculable benefits to others. Another meaning of Sugato is that wherever the Lord Buddha goes, He brings happiness to that place. For example, our Gautama Buddha once went to the city of Vesali in order to rid the city of an epidemic which brought terrible hardships to its people. As a result, the city was cleansed, the epidemic was arrested, and happiness was restored.
5. **Loka-vidu:** It means that the Lord Buddha knows everything about the Three Spheres of existence which consist of Sankhara-loka (the physical forms), (Sattava-loka) (the mind), and Okasa-loka (the environment).
  - 1) **Sankhara-loka** includes Rupa (corporeality), Vedana (feeling), Sanna (perception), Sankhara (mental formation), and Vinnana (consciousness) or the Five Aggregates. It means that the all living beings are composed of the physical form and the mind which are nourished and maintained by food<sup>3</sup>.
  - 2) **Sattava-loka** includes seeing, memorizing, thinking, and cognition. These functions are performed by the mind. The mind of all beings is easily influenced by what they see, taste, smell, hear, and touch.
  - 3) **Okasa-loka** includes the realms of existence contained within the Three Spheres. They are the places for producing good and bad Kamma; they are the places for reaping the fruits of good and bad Kamma.

<sup>2</sup> **Patimokkha** means the Fundamental Precepts or the 227 disciplinary rules binding on Buddhist monks

<sup>3</sup> There are four types of food as follows: **Kavalin-kara-hara:** food which is taken it by the mouth. **Phassa-hara:** things which affect the mood. Certain things make one feel happy. Certain things make one feel unhappy. Certain things make one feel neither happy nor unhappy. **Manosan-cetana-hara:** food for thought. It gives rise to thought, word, and action. **Vinnana-hara:** consciousness.

The Lord Buddha knows all the goings-on of all living beings in terms of the way they live their lives, the thoughts they have, the deeds they perform, the destination of their next rebirth, etc. It is the reason He knows that the Three Spheres of existence are but a prison to keep all living beings trapped within the endless round of rebirth. Nothing in the Three Spheres can be concealed from the Lord Buddha.

Therefore, He is called 'Loka-vidu' because He penetrates the whole truth about the reality of the worlds.

- 6. Anuttaro Purisa-damma-sarathi:** It means that the Lord Buddha is the expert and incomparable trainer of all beings. He can teach beings to attain Enlightenment and Nibbana. He knows exactly how to train each individual because He knows each individual's particular way which results from the way the individual has lived his countless lives. He knows exactly how to approach an individual such that the individual's stubbornness can be dissolved, hence, be in a position to benefit from His Teachings.
- 7. Sattha Deva-manus-sanan:** It means that the Lord Buddha is the Master Teacher of celestial and human beings alike. He can teach all celestial beings, all Form Brahma beings, all Non-Form Brahma beings, and all human beings depending on each being's level of accumulated merit. The Lord Buddha performs five activities daily. **Early in the morning, He employs His insight to see who has accumulated enough merit to attain a certain stage of Enlightenment** so that He can go and help the person. **Later in the morning, He goes on His alms-round** to allow human beings to make great merit by offering food to Him. **In the evening, He gives Dhamma lectures to the laity. At nightfall, He gives advice to His disciples** in order to enable them to attain Enlightenment. **At midnight, He gives Dhamma lectures to celestial beings** and a large number of celestial beings have attained the different stages of Enlightenment as a result. The Lord Buddha never tires of teaching beings to attain Enlightenment. Therefore, the Lord Buddha is the Master Teacher of all celestial and human beings.
- 8. Buddhho:** It means that the Lord Buddha is a knower, is fully awakened, is filled with joy. The Lord Buddha is a knower because He penetrates the whole truth about the reality of life. He knows that life is full of suffering. He knows the cause of suffering. He knows how to end suffering. His enlightened Knowledge is pure knowledge. Therefore, the knower of pure knowledge is fully awakened and filled with joy.

**The Lord Buddha is fully awakened** because He has been awakened from defilements while the majority of human beings are still asleep and steeped in their defilements. The Lord Buddha has arisen above defilements and no longer does their bidding. He has not only destroyed His defilements but has taught others to do the same. Whatever the Master Teacher can do, He has taught it to others.

**The Lord Buddha is filled with joy** because His mind is clean and pure and can be compared to a lotus in full bloom. His enlightened Knowledge, the destruction of all of His defilements, and the attainment of Buddhahood cause Him to be filled with joy.

**9. Bhagava:** It has two meanings. The first meaning is to break free. It means that the Lord Buddha has broken out of the round of rebirth. He has been completely freed from Avijja (lack of knowledge), Tanha (craving), and U-pa-dana (attachment), the three defilements which keep a being trapped within the Three Spheres. The removal of these defilements makes it possible for Him to be freed from the Three Spheres and to attain Nibbana.

The second meaning of Bhagava is to distribute. It means that the Lord Buddha knows how to categorize the Dhamma in order to clarify it and make it easier to understand and practice. The Lord Buddha's Dhamma lectures are always pure and lovely in the beginning, in the middle, and in the end.

The nine Buddha-Virtues and the Lord Buddha's boundless compassion make Him our greatest refuge. Every Buddha wishes to lead living beings out of the round of rebirth. He drives Avijja away from living beings by teaching them the truth about the reality of life. He deserves all living beings' utmost respect.

### 2.1.2 Definition of the Word 'Buddha'

Ignorance has led people to think of the Lord Buddha in ways that deviate from the truth. Some understand the Lord Buddha to be the Buddha Image in the Uposatha hall of the temple; they do not know that the Lord Buddha was an actual person. Others understand the Lord Buddha as an incarnate of this or that god. These beliefs do damage to the Buddhist Faith.

The nine Buddha-Virtues should have already given the student some ideas about who the Lord Buddha is. Here, the student will learn in more detail the definition of the word 'Buddha'. The word 'Buddha' can be defined in two ways.

**Firstly, the word 'Buddha'** means our Lord Gautama Buddha who has escaped from suffering; who has been emancipated from the round of rebirth; who has attained Self-Enlightenment. He was born Prince Siddhattha of the Sakya House. He was the personage who went into meditation beneath the Bodhi Tree with the resolve that if He could not attain Enlightenment and become a Buddha, He would not rise from the meditation pose again even if it meant His flesh and blood would dry up leaving only skin, tendons, and bones. He did eventually attain Buddhahood and had spent 45 years proclaiming the Dhamma and spreading Buddhism. He attained complete Nibbana when He was 80 years old.

This first definition refers to the physical identity of the Lord Gautama Buddha who possessed the physical features of the Perfect Man. He was the Master Teacher who became self-enlightened. He was far removed from defilements. He possessed both Vijja (Higher Knowledges) and Carana (good conduct). He was the teacher of both human and celestial beings. Everything about Him has been well recorded.

The body of the Perfect Man is transient, experiences suffering, and does not possess true selfhood. It experiences aging, illnesses, and death just like an ordinary body. Only an individual who will become enlightened as a Buddha possesses the body of the Perfect Man. Once the Buddha attains complete Nibbana, the body of the Perfect man undergoes death and decay.

**Secondly, the word ‘Buddha’** means the ‘Buddha’ who resides within the physical form of our Lord Gautama Buddha. The name for this Inner Buddha is the Dhammakaya. It is through the Dhammakaya that a Bodhisatta becomes enlightened as a Buddha. The Lord Buddha said that **‘being a Buddha does not occur at the skin and flesh level but at the Dhamma level.’** He also said, **‘Whoever sees the Dhamma sees me; whoever sees me sees the Dhamma.’**

The Dhammakaya who resides within the body of the Perfect Man never undergoes decay and can be experienced by any human being who practices meditation earnestly and correctly.

Therefore, the term ‘Buddha’ means the Lord Gautama Buddha who possessed the body of the Perfect Man as well as the Dhammakaya who looks exactly like the Perfect Man but dwells inside the body of the Lord Gautama Buddha. The two bodies merged completely with each other.

In other words, the term **‘Buddha’ means the Perfect Man who possesses the Dhammakaya within him; who is far removed from defilements; who possesses Vijja and Carana; who is the teacher of human and celestial beings; who is the Master Teacher of the Three Spheres.**

We owe the Lord Buddha the greatest depth of gratitude because He had resolutely pursued Perfections to the fullest extent for the purpose of becoming enlightened as a Buddha so that He could escape from suffering and also lead other living beings to escape with Him. It was His Perfections, which had been cultivated to the fullest extent throughout countless lifetimes, which gave Him the body of the Perfect Man. It is the body which inspires awe, faith, and veneration.

## **2.2 The Happening of a Buddha Is a Very Rare Event**

The reason it is very rare for a Buddha to happen in the world is that anyone who can become enlightened as a Buddha has to possess the stoutest heart and has to realize that the round of rebirth is but a prison which keeps all living beings trapped in endless suffering. It takes an incalculably long time for anyone to attain Buddhahood. Therefore, the scarcity of the type of person who can aspire to Buddhahood coupled with the incalculable amount of time it takes for the person to cultivate Perfections to the fullest extent make the happening of a Buddha an unimaginably rare event.

Every Buddha-to-be starts out as an ordinary individual, he has to do things the hard way in his endeavors to find the way to end suffering. As a result, along the infinitely long way he has made mistakes by committing misdeeds and has to be reborn in the States of Unhappiness which only increases the length of time of his pursuit of Perfections. But as soon as he is reborn a human being, he will do everything he can to cultivate Perfections. Had it not been for His aspiration to Buddhahood, our great Bodhisatta could have attained Arahatsip countless existences ago. Ever since He resolved to work toward Buddhahood, He has remained steadfast to His loftiest goal even during His rebirths in the Animal Realm.

It takes an incalculable amount of time for a Buddha to happen because it takes an incalculable amount of time for a Buddha-to-be to discipline his body, word, and mind before his thought, his word, and his act can be pure and devoid of defilements. The Lord Buddha said, **“Behold, monks. The most sublime human being was born for the purpose of benefiting the world and humanity, for the purpose of aiding the world, for the purpose of bringing happiness to celestial and human beings. The happening of the most sublime being is extremely rare. The most sublime being was born the ultimate genius. The time of his birth causes sorrow for many (because they will not live to benefit from his enlightenment). The most sublime human being is peerless. He is incomparable. The happening of such a human being brings the Great Eye, the great brightness, the great glory, the Six A-nutta-riyas (the Six Incomparables) which lead to the penetration of the Four Pati-sambhidas (the Fourfold Discrimination): the penetration of all the elements which lead to the Fruit of Stream-Entry (the Fruit of Sotapanna), the Fruit of Once-Returner (the Fruit of Sakada-gami), the Fruit of Non-Returner (the Fruit of Anagami), and the Fruit of Arahatsip. And who is this most sublime human being? This most sublime being is the Buddha.”**

From the Buddha’s saying, we can see that at any one time there can happen only one Buddha but the happening of the Buddha is for the benefits of so many living beings. The Buddha is the most sublime human being because the teaching of His enlightened Knowledge can help living beings to leave the round of rebirth and attain Nibbana.

Moreover, the Buddha imparts to the world the **Six A-nutta-riyas** (the Six Incomparables) which include:

- **Dassana-nutta-riya:** It means that to see the Lord Buddha is supreme seeing.
- **Savana-nutta-riya:** It means that to hear the Lord Buddha’s Teachings is supreme hearing.
- **Labha-nutta-riya:** It means that to have faith in the Buddha-Virtues is supreme gain.
- **Sikkha-nutta-riya:** It means that to train according to the Sikkhat-taya (the Threefold Training) is supreme learning.
- **Pari-cariya-nutta-riya:** It means that to serve the Lord Buddha by training oneself according to the Sikkhat-taya is supreme service.
- **A-nussata-nutta-riya:** It means that to remind oneself constantly of the Buddha-Virtues is supreme remembrance.

The happening of the Buddha causes living beings to penetrate the Four Pati-sambhidas (the Fourfold Discrimination) which leads to the understanding and knowledge of the different elements that make up the myriad living beings within all the realms of existence. As a result, living beings have been enabled to attain the fruits of the Path which include the Fruit of Sotapanna (the Fruit of Stream-Entry), the Fruit of Sakada-gami (the Fruit of Once-Returner), the Fruit of Anagami (the Fruit of Non-Returner), and the Fruit of Arahatsip.

The happening of each Buddha is an extremely rare event because it takes countless lifetimes for a Buddha-to-be to free himself of defilements through the pursuit of Perfections to the fullest extent. It is only in the final rebirth that a Buddha-to-be (a Bodhisatta) can discover the Middle Way or Majjhima-pati-pada which leads him to become enlightened as a Buddha. Once enlightened, each Buddha will spend the rest of His life teaching as many human and celestial beings as possible to attain the different stages of the Path as well as to establish and propagate His Teachings for later generations.

It can be said that within the Three Spheres, no being can be compared to the Lord Buddha, for no other being can benefit all living beings the way the Lord Buddha can. No other being possesses virtues like the Buddha-Virtues. The Lord Buddha is the Supreme Being and the happening of a Buddha is an extremely rare event. Our Gautama Buddha confirmed this fact by saying,

**“Kiccho Buddha-namu-padado”**

**“The happening of a Buddha is difficult”**

### **2.3 The Reasons Only One Buddha Happens at any Given Time**

As mentioned earlier, the happening of a Buddha is an extremely rare event for two very main reasons. One, it is very rare for a human being to aspire to Buddhahood. Two, once such a human being can be found, it will take him countless rebirths to discipline his thought, word, and body until they are pure and far removed from defilements through the pursuit of Perfections to the fullest extent.

For a particular Kappa or Earth Age, there can happen at the most only five Buddhas and the happening is spaced in such a way that a Buddha will happen only after the preceding Buddha's Teachings has completely disappeared from the world. The space of time between the happening of one Buddha and another can be as long as trillions of years or more.

However, there can be more than two Buddhas happening at one time but only in different universes. According to the Buddhist Canon found in Burma, at one point, Phra Maha-moggalana, our Lord Gautama Buddha's Chief Disciple, went space traveling but before he left, the Lord Buddha said to him, **“Come back down as soon as the earth looks as big as a gooseberry to you. If it looks smaller than that, you'll lose your way and may go into another universe.”** Lo and behold, Phra Moggalana did get lost and he saw another Buddha who looked exactly like our Lord Gautama Buddha. Mistaking Him for our Lord Gautama Buddha, Phra Moggalana went to pay Him homage. Only then did he learn that He was not Gautama Buddha and he had indeed gone into another universe. This other Buddha told him, **“Moggalana, follow the direction of my six-colored light which I will express for you to guide you back to your universe.”** In the meantime, our Lord Gautama Buddha knew of Phra Moggalana's situation and expressed His six-colored light to join with that of the other Lord Buddha. That was how Phra Moggalana got back to earth.

It was recorded in the Tripitaka that there exists not just one universe but one million millions universes and countless universes. Each of the Buddha that happens in any given universe at any one time has what is called the Buddha-Domain. There are **three types of the Buddha-Domain**: the Birth-Domain, the Power-Domain, and the Capacity-Domain.

**The Birth-Domain:** It means the domain of the Lord Buddha's Enlightenment. The Birth-Domain covers 10,000 universes. These 10,000 universes will quake at different occasions which concern the Lord Buddha. These include His conception, His ordination, His practice of self-mortification, the foretelling of His death, and His attainment of complete Nibbana.

**The Power-Domain:** It means the domain which is protected by the Lord Buddha. The Power-Domain is one million millions universes.

**The Capacity-Domain:** This domain is limitless, since each Buddha's Insight can penetrate any one of the countless universes any time He wishes.

In a lecture about the Buddha-Domain, Venerable Candasaro Bhikku (The Most Venerable Phra Monkolthepmuni, the former Abbot of Wat Paknam) said, **"The air around the Three Spheres which meets the upper edge of Loganta Hell below and the lower edge of Nibbana above is all protected by the Lord Buddha."**

To reiterate, a Buddha can happen only one at a time at a given universe. At any point and time, there may be several Buddhas happen in several different universes. For example, there may very well be different Buddhas happening at different universes at this point.

Throughout the Buddhist history, there has yet to be a time when two Buddhas happen at the same time in the same universe but it does not mean that it can never happen. Much has been written in the Buddhist Canons about the reasons there can happen only one Buddha at a time and it can be summarized as follows:

- 1) **The Dhamma is one and the same for all Buddhas:** It means that every Buddha's enlightened Knowledge is one and the same. The enlightened Knowledge has always been there but it takes a Buddha to discover it, to teach it, and to propagate it. Moreover, each Buddha attains Enlightenment by Himself and without the aid of a teacher. If more than one Buddha happens at the same time, these tenets can no longer apply.
- 2) **The Buddhist Communities will be split:** It means that if two Buddhas happen at the same time, a split will occur among the Buddhist Communities and can lead to in-fighting which will jeopardize the Lord Buddha's Teachings.
- 3) **The landmasses cannot uphold more than one Buddha at a time:** It means that it takes 10,000 universes to uphold a Buddha. Should a second Buddha happen, the 10,000 universes will be tilted out of balance and may collapse altogether. It is like a boat which can accommodate only one person. If a second person gets into it, he may be like the first person in height, weight, etc., the boat will tilt and capsize. It is like two wagons filled to the brim with precious stones. If the stones in one wagon are emptied into another wagon, the over-laden wagon will fall apart because the wheels and chassis may break.

4) **The Buddha can no longer be referred to as the most sublime being, the peerless one, the most advanced being, etc.,** if more than one Buddha happens at the same time. It is in the same manner that there can be only one king per kingdom, one ruler for each celestial realm.

5) **The happening of one Buddha at a time is the norm.** Throughout countless Earth Ages, only one Buddha happens in one universe at any point and time.

These are the reasons cited in the Buddhist Canons. However, Venerable Dhammajayo Bhikku of Wat Phra Dhammakaya, the teacher of the Inner Dreams Kindergarten which is broadcasted via satellite to audiences all over the world has a different view about the reason for the happening of one Buddha at a time. He said, **“A Buddha-to-be has pursued Perfections for countless existences for the purpose of one day becoming enlightened as a Buddha and lead as many beings as possible to Nibbana with him. Such was his resolve all throughout countless existences. Therefore, the happening of the Buddha means that He will free a huge number of beings from the prison of Samsara, hence from the domination of Phya Mara. Therefore, Phya Mara will do everything possible to prevent the happening of more than one Buddha at a time. But some ignorant individuals had the view that if more than one Buddha happens at the same time, fights between disciples of each Buddha will break out. But that is the view of human beings still thick with defilements. If and when two Buddhas happen at the same time, it means that people who are reborn at the time will possess a vast amount of merit and will be able to learn on their own to admire both their own Master and the other Buddha. They will not think of comparing the two Buddhas or trying to make their Master superior to the other Buddha. Each of the Buddhas will teach His disciples how every Buddha is the most advanced being, the most sublime beings, possessing all the incomparable Buddha-Virtues. The Buddhas differ only in the amount of time each Buddha takes in the pursuit of Perfections.”**

Every Buddha has the same goal in that He wishes to free Himself from defilements, hence the round of rebirth and teach as many beings as possible to do the same. As it happens, countless number of Buddhas have happened throughout countless Kappas or Earth Ages, yet only a handful of beings have been led to attain Nibbana compared to the total number of beings still trapped within the round of rebirth presently. It means that something beyond all imaginings has been operating here to prevent the happening of more than one Buddha at a time. The situation will be different if a Buddha will happen every so often or many Buddhas can happen at the same time. In this case, they can lead a significant number of living beings to Nibbana at one time.

## 2.4 There Have Been Countless Buddhas to Date

Any being can aspire to Buddhahood. All it takes is an unwavering resolve to pursue Perfections to the fullest extent during each and every human existence. The position of Buddha is almost like that of a President or Prime Minister which anyone can aspire to and work toward. If the determination is all there, if the efforts are all there, then the aspiration will eventually be realized.

The Lord Buddha is not the creator of all things and all beings. No one assigns the Buddha to come to the world and become enlightened in order to save all the beings. But each Buddha starts out as a very insightful but ordinary human being who wants to discover the truth about life and existence. He wants to find out how things and beings come to be, how they exist, how they die and fall apart. Most importantly, he wants to know how to end suffering once and for all. Countless Buddhas have happened throughout countless number Kappas or Earth Ages. The number of Buddhas to date is greater than all the grains of sand in the four great oceans. There will be countless more Buddhas to happen in the future as well. Yet, the happening of a Buddha is an extremely rare event. Just to give us an idea of how rare it is, throughout the four Asankheyyas<sup>4</sup> after our great Bodhisatta received the forecast from the Lord Dipankara Buddha that he will definitely in four Asankheyyas and 100,000 Kappas hence become enlightened as a Buddha and his name would be Gautama, our great Bodhisatta had met only 25 Buddhas in all these incalculable Kappas.

A Buddha will happen only when a Buddha-to-be has pursued Perfections to the fullest extent and only in an A-suna-kappa<sup>5</sup>. This earth throughout its countless cycles of birth, existence, and annihilation, has seen the happening of countless Buddhas.

## 2.5 The Happening of a Buddha

Once a Buddha-to-be or Bodhisatta has pursued Perfections to the fullest extent, he will be reborn in the Human Realm for the final time to become enlightened as a Buddha. Although each universe consists of four Human Continents, a Buddha-to-be will only be reborn in the Jambu Continent and only in an A-suna-kappa. A Buddha-to-be has to spend at the very least 20 Asankheyyas and 100,000 Kappas in the pursuit of Perfections. Here the definitions of Asankheyya and Kappa will be given.

### 2.5.1 Units of Time

Units of time in Asankheyyas and Kappas appear only in the Lord Buddha's Teachings. They are units of time comprehensible to the Buddha-Insight and are used to measure the length of time it takes for a Buddha to pursue Perfections to the fullest extent. Mere human intellect finds such a unit of time incomprehensible. However, it is not only comprehensible but visible to those who have practiced meditation until they can attain the Dhammakaya and witness the Asankheyya through the Dhammakaya-Eye just as in the case of the Lord Gautama Buddha.

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<sup>4</sup> **An Asankheyya** is a unit which measures an incalculable number of Kappas or Earth Ages. It is incalculable using human intellect but penetrable by Insight which is one of the Higher Knowledges.

<sup>5</sup> **An A-suna-kappa** means a Kappa in which there will happen at least one Buddha and at most five Buddhas.

The following explanations may make an Asankheyya and a Kappa somewhat more comprehensible to us.

- 1. An Asankheyya:** “Suppose it rains torrentially all day and all night long for three whole years until the water level reaches the edge of the universe which is 1,344,000 kilometers high. The total number of the raindrops contained in the rainfall is equal to one Asankheyya.”
- 2. One Asankheyya Year:** The longest lifespan that a human being can have is called **one Asankheyya Year and is equal to  $10^{140}$  years** or 1 followed by 140 zeros years.
- 3. The Kappa Age:** It is the term used to describe the lifespan of a being in any particular realm of existence. For example, the average lifespan of human beings during the time of the Lord Gautama Buddha was 100 years. Or we can say that the Kappa Age then was 100 years. Now the average lifespan of human beings is 75 years. Therefore the current Kappa Age is 75 years. The Kappa Age in the first celestial realm of Catu-maha-rajika is 500 celestial years or 9 million earth years.
- 4. A Kappa:** “Suppose there is a stone mountain which is 16 kilometers in width, length, and height. It is a solid monolith. A man takes the finest cloth from the Kasi District to dust the mountain once every 100 years. The time it will take for the mountain to be worn down to nothing is less than one Kappa.

Another analogy about a Kappa has been given in the Sasapa Sutta, “**A container which is made of iron sheets 16 kilometers wide, 16 kilometers long, and 16 kilometers high. It is filled with lettuce seeds. A man removes one seed from the container every 100 years. The length of time for all the seeds to be removed from the container is still shorter than a Kappa.**”

Each Kappa consists of four periods. Each period consists of 64 Antara-kappas. Therefore, one Kappa consists of 256 Antara-kappas.

**The 1<sup>st</sup> Period:** This is the period of annihilation and is called ‘**Sanvatta-asankheyya-kappa**’. It is the period in which the earth is being annihilated by fire, floods or violent winds. This period lasts 64 Antara-kappas.

**The 2<sup>nd</sup> Period:** This is the period of emptiness and is called “**Sanvattathayi-asankheyya-kappa**”. It is the period in which the earth has been totally annihilated leaving only a great void. This period lasts 64 Antara-kappas.

**The 3<sup>rd</sup> Period:** This is the period when landmasses begin to form and is called ‘**Vivatta-asankheyya-kappa**’. It is the period in which the earth is entering the developing stage. This period lasts 64 Antara-kappas.

**The 4<sup>th</sup> Period:** This is the period of development where living beings begin to appear. This period is called ‘**Vivattathayi-asankheyya-kappa**’. It is the period in which everything comes into existence: trees, mountains, human beings, animals, etc. We are in this period right now. This period begins when

the Brahma beings descend to earth to eat the most delicious, fragrant floating clumps called ‘Nguandin’. This period lasts 64 Antara-kappas.

5. **An Antara-kappa** can be defined as the time period which covers the time when the lifespan of human beings is at its longest at one Asankheyya Year and gradually decreases to the shortest lifespan of 10 years then gradually increases back up to one Asankheyya Year.

To make the concept of time periods easier to understand, one can picture a pie which can be divided into four equal parts or four Asankheyya Kappas. Each of the four parts contains 64 Antara-kappas. The four parts are called **Sanvatta-asankheyya-kappa**, **Sanvatta-thayi-asankheyya-kappa**, **Vivatta-asankheyya-kappa**, and **Vivatta-thayi-asankheyya-kappa**. The entire pie is one Kappa and contains **256 Antara-kappas**.

These units of time which are taught in Buddhism should give the student a better understanding of how long it takes for a Buddha-to-be to pursue Perfections to the fullest extent in order to attain Buddhahood. The minimum length of time is 20 Asankheyyas and 100,000 Kappas. Throughout these incalculable Kappas or Earth Ages, a Buddha-to-be has to keep his resolve and stay the course toward Buddhahood. Therefore, the Lord Buddha’s Teachings are most precious. One needs to earnestly study and practice the Lord Buddha’s Teachings to benefit oneself and others.

### 2.5.2 The Kappa or Earth Age In Which There Is the Happening of a Buddha

One Kappa lasts a very long time indeed and the happening of a Buddha is an extremely rare event. Living beings have to undergo deaths and rebirths so many times before they have a chance to hear the Lord Buddha’s Teachings. And the happening of a Buddha does not occur in every Kappa. In fact, many Kappas have gone by without the happening of a single Buddha. The Lord Buddha said, “To hear the Truth is difficult, so is the happening of a Buddha.”

Whenever a Confirmed Bodhisatta is ready to become enlightened as a Buddha, then that Kappa will not be devoid of the enlightened Knowledge which is the Fruit of Nibbana. Such a Kappa is called A-suna-kappa. There are two main categories of Kappas: Suna-kappa and A-suna-kappa.

1. **Suna-kappa**: It means a Kappa which is devoid of the Fruit of Nibbana. A Suna-kappa is devoid of a Buddha, a Pacceka-Buddha, a Universal Monarch. A Suna-kappa is devoid of individuals with exceptional virtues.
2. **A-suna-kappa**: It means a Kappa which is not devoid of the Fruit of Nibbana. In an A-suna-kappa, there is the happening of one or more Buddhas. There is the happening of a Pacceka-Buddha or a Universal Monarch as well as individuals of exceptional virtues. A-suna-kappa is further divided into five categories depending on the number of Buddhas that happen in it.
  - 1) **Sara-kappa**: It means a Kappa which has substance. A Sara-kappa means that there is the happening of one Buddha in that Kappa.

- 2) **Manda-kappa:** It means a Kappa which has brightness. A Manda-kappa means that there is the happening of two Buddhas in that Kappa.
- 3) **Vara-kappa:** It means a sublime Kappa. A Vara-kappa means that there is the happening of three Buddhas in that Kappa.
- 4) **Sara-manda-kappa:** It means a brighter and more sublime Kappa. A Sara-manda-kappa means that there is the happening of four Buddhas in that Kappa.
- 5) **Bhadara-kappa:** It means the most developed and the rarest Kappa. A Bhadara-kappa means that there is the happening of five Buddhas in that Kappa.

Our current Kappa is called Bhadara-kappa and our Lord Gautama Buddha is the fourth Buddha of this Kappa. The happening of our Lord Gautama Buddha occurs in the 12<sup>th</sup> Antara-kappa of the Vivatta-thayi-asankheyya-kappa. The next and last Buddha is called the Lord Meitraya Buddha and He will happen in the 13<sup>th</sup> Antara-kappa.

## 2.6 The Categories of Buddhas

It is true that every Buddha-to-be pursues Perfections to the fullest extent in order to become enlightened as a Buddha and to teach His enlightened Knowledge to other living beings. But each Buddha spends different amounts of time in the pursuit of Perfections and spends different amounts of time in teaching the Dhamma. Because of these differences, there are three categories of Buddha.

1. **Panna-dhika Buddhas:** These Buddhas are outstanding in the area of insight but the level of faith is low. They spend 20 Asankheyyas and 100,000 Kappas in the pursuit of Perfections. This period can be divided into three parts as follows:

**The 1<sup>st</sup> Part:** This is the time period where a Buddha-to-be contemplates his aspiration to Buddhahood and it lasts 7 Asankheyyas.

**The 2<sup>nd</sup> Part:** This is the time period where a Buddha-to-be professes his aspiration to Buddhahood and it lasts 9 Asankheyyas.

**The 3<sup>rd</sup> Part:** This time period begins when a Buddha-to-be receives the first Buddha-Forecast that he will definitely become enlightened as a Buddha at a specified time in the future. This time period lasts 4 Asankheyyas and 100,000 Kappas.

2. **Saddha-dhika Buddhas:** These Buddhas are outstanding in the area of faith but the level of insight is moderate. They spend 40 Asankheyyas and 100,000 Kappas in the pursuit of Perfections. This period can be divided into three parts as follows:

**The 1<sup>st</sup> Part:** This is the time period where a Buddha-to-be contemplates his aspiration to Buddhahood and it lasts 14 Asankheyyas.

**The 2<sup>nd</sup> Part:** This is the time period where a Buddha-to-be professes his aspiration to Buddhahood and it lasts 18 Asankheyyas.

**The 3<sup>rd</sup> Part:** This time period begins when a Buddha-to-be receives the first Buddha-Forecast that he will definitely become enlightened as a Buddha at a specified time in the future. This time period lasts 8 Asankheyyas and 100,000 Kappas.

- 3. Viriya-dhika Buddhas:** These Buddhas are outstanding in the area of endeavor but the level of insight is lower than the other two categories of Buddhas. They spend 80 Asankheyyas and 100,000 Kappas in the pursuit of Perfections. This period can be divided into three parts as follows.

**The 1<sup>st</sup> Part:** This is the time period where a Buddha-to-be contemplates his aspiration to Buddhahood and it lasts 28 Asankheyyas.

**The 2<sup>nd</sup> Part:** This is the time period where a Buddha-to-be professes his aspiration to Buddhahood and it lasts 36 Asankheyyas.

**The 3<sup>rd</sup> Part:** This time period begins when a Buddha-to-be receives the first Buddha-Forecast that he will definitely become enlightened as a Buddha at a specified time in the future. This time period lasts 16 Asankheyyas and 100,000 Kappas.

Once a Buddha-to-be receives his first Buddha-Forecast, if he changes his mind about becoming a Buddha in the far distant future and wishes to ordain under that Lord Buddha, he can attain Arahatsip immediately in the following manners.

**A Panna-dhika Buddha-to-be** who is outstanding in the area of insight can attain Arahatsip before the Lord Buddha ends the third verse of His lecture.

**A Saddha-dhika Buddha-to-be** who is outstanding in the area of faith can attain Arahatsip before the Lord Buddha ends the fourth verse of His lecture.

**A Viriya-dhika Buddha-to-be** who is outstanding in the area of endeavor can attain Arahatsip when the Lord Buddha ends the fourth verse of His lecture.

## 2.7 The Differences among the Buddhas

Every enlightened Buddha receives the deepest veneration from all living beings even though the length of time each Buddha spends in the pursuit of Perfections differs. In spite of this difference, once enlightened every Buddha discovers the same Knowledges which have been concealed from other beings. In addition, once Perfections have been cultivated to the fullest extent, every Buddha possesses all the physical features of the Perfect Man. Every Buddha teaches His enlightened Knowledge to all living beings and establishes Buddhism during His time on earth.

Differences among the Buddhas occur in eight areas. These are lifespan, stature, lineage, effort, personal radiance, transportation, the Tree of Enlightenment, and the Throne of Enlightenment.

**Lifespan:** Some Buddhas have a long lifespan, others a short one depending on the average human lifespan at the time of Their happening. For example, the Lord Dipankara Buddha lived to be 100,000 years old; the Lord Revata Buddha lived to be 60,000 years old; and our Lord Gautama Buddha lived to be only 80 years old.

**Stature:** The height differences among the Buddhas are a result of the average human lifespan at the time of Their happening. The longer the lifespan, the taller will the stature be. For example, the Lord Vipassi Buddha was 40 meters tall; the Lord Padu-muttara Buddha was 26 meters tall; and our Lord Gautama Buddha was 2.10 meters tall.

**Lineage:** Some Buddhas were born in a royal family, others were born in a Brahmin family. For example, the Lord Kassapa Buddha was born in a Brahmin family whereas our Lord Gautama Buddha was born in a royal family.

**Effort:** It means the time each Buddha takes before He becomes enlightened. For example, it took the Lord Kondanna Buddha ten months to become enlightened; it took the Lord Kona-gamana Buddha six months to become enlightened; and it took our Lord Gautama Buddha six years to become enlightened.

**Personal Radiance:** It means the radius of brightness emitted from each Buddha's personage. For example, the Lord Mangala Buddha's personal radiance extends across 10,000 universes; the Lord Padu-muttara Buddha's personal radiance has a radius of 192 kilometers; the Lord Gautama Buddha's brilliance has a radius of two meters.

**Transportation:** It means the mode of transportation each Buddha uses to leave the householder's life. Some Buddhas left on an elephant; some Buddhas left on a horse; some Buddhas left in a carriage; some Buddhas left on foot; some Buddhas left on a palanquin, etc. Our Lord Gautama Buddha left on horseback.

**The Tree of Enlightenment:** Different Buddhas become enlightened under different kinds of trees. For example, the Lord Sumedha Buddha's Tree of Enlightenment is the Nipa Tree; the Lord Siddhattha Buddha's Tree of Enlightenment is the Hursinghar Tree; our Lord Gautama Buddha's Tree of Enlightenment is the Pipal Tree.

**The Throne of Enlightenment:** The thrones on which the Buddhas become enlightened have different heights. For example, the Lord Vipassi Buddha's throne was 26.5 meters high; the Lord Sumana Buddha's throne was 30 meters high; our Gautama Buddha's throne was 7 meters high.

These differences are a result of the manner and the length of time in which each Buddha pursues Perfections. Although every Buddha possesses the same Buddha-Virtues and has pursued Perfections to the fullest extent, their overall Kamma is uniquely different. As a result, their final rebirth differs accordingly.

## Conclusion

Every Buddha started out as an ordinary human being. What sets them apart is their unique and lofty aspiration to become enlightened as a Buddha one day in the very distant future. As Buddhas-to-be or Bodhisattas, they have spent countless existences throughout countless Kappas or Earth Ages to pursue Perfections to the fullest extent. The minimum period required is 20 Asankheyyas and 100,000 Kappas as in the case of our Lord Gautama Buddha. The maximum period is 80 Asankheyyas and 100,000 Kappas. Every Buddha possesses the Buddha-Virtues and is worthy of our deepest veneration. Every Buddha has the physical characteristics of the Perfect Man and every Buddha merges as one in a perfect fit with the Inner Buddha or the Dhammakaya.

During a Bodhisatta's pursuit of Perfections, he has had to undergo countless existences in all the different realms of existence. Through it all, he remains steadfast to his aspiration and endeavors to accumulate as much merit as he can in every existence. His understanding of the fact that 'life is filled with suffering, which is caused by oneself and others', drives him on resolutely until he can eventually discover the way out of suffering. Moreover, his aspiration is such that not only is it important for him to exit the round of rebirth, he also wants to lead as many beings as possible out of suffering. When his Perfections have reached the fullest extent, his final rebirth will take place in the Jambu Continent of the Human Realm in an 'A-suna Kappa'. He will attain Buddhahood. He will teach the Dhamma to all beings and establish Buddhism. There are three categories of Buddha depending on the length of time spent in the pursuit of Perfections. The happening of a Buddha is an extremely rare event. Yet, countless Buddhas have happened already throughout the countless Kappas. The number of which is greater than all the grains of sand in the four great oceans.

Since the overall Kamma of each Buddha is uniquely different, the final rebirth of each Buddha is also uniquely different. For this reason, the Buddhas differ in their final rebirth in eight different ways.

Any human being can aspire to be a Buddha, for Buddhahood is a neutral position. If one is determined to accumulate merit every minute of everyday in the way that every Buddha-to-be has done from this day onward, if one is resolved to cultivate good habits by abandoning all unwholesome deeds in public and in private, and if one is unwavering in his aspiration, then one can aspire to Buddhahood. However, these wholesome and dedicated practices can benefit every single one of us in that our accumulated merit will cause us to have a beautiful mind, good looks, a good character, a good reputation; it will cause us to be trustworthy and admirable. And when we begin to practice meditation regularly, we will be able to attain the Inner Buddha or the Dhammakaya easily. Eventually, we will be able to extinguish all of our defilements and attain Nibbana in the same way that all the Buddhas have done.

## Exercises

After completing this chapter, take the test and complete the exercises provided in the workbook before beginning Chapter 3.



## CHAPTER 3

# THE BUDDHA-ATTRIBUTES AND THE BUDDHA-VIRTUES

### TOPICS COVERED IN CHAPTER 3 THE BUDDHA-ATTRIBUTES AND THE BUDDHA-VIRTUES

#### **3.1 Buddha-karaka-dhamma**

- 3.1.1 The Meaning of 'Perfections' [Parami]
- 3.1.2 The Necessity to Pursue Perfections
- 3.1.3 What Are the Ten Perfections?
- 3.1.4 Levels of Perfections

#### **3.2 A Bodhisatta's Temperament**

#### **3.3 Dhamma-samo-dhana**

#### **3.4 Buddha-bhumi-dhamma**

#### **3.5 The 32 Physical Features of the Perfect Man**

## CONCEPTS

1. Every Buddha-to-be or Bodhisatta has the resolute aspiration to become enlightened as a Buddha one day in the very distant future regardless of how long it will take him or how difficult it will be for him. He continues to pursue Perfections with unwavering determination throughout countless lifetimes in order to improve his nature through righteous physical, verbal, and mental deeds. The vast amount of merit, which has been accumulated by repeatedly putting his life on the line over the countless lifetimes, eventually makes it possible for him to pursue all Ten Perfections to the fullest extent at all three levels.
2. A Bodhisatta's temperament means cultivating the habits of pursuing Perfections and these well-developed habits in turn will prevent him from falling prey to unwholesomeness during his pursuit of Perfections. He continues to develop the six habits of a successful Bodhisatta in every existence regardless of the destination of his rebirth.
3. Dhamma-samo-dhana means the attributes which enable a Bodhisatta to eventually become enlightened as a Buddha. Dhamma-samo-dhana allows a Bodhisatta to finally receive the Buddha-Forecasts from different Buddhas which confirm the fact that he will definitely attain Buddhahood in a specified Kappa in the future.
4. Every Buddha has spent an unimaginably long time to pursue Perfections to the fullest extent. As a result, this optimum amount of accumulated merit makes it possible for the Buddha to be reborn with the body of the Perfect Man in his final rebirth. The Buddha is every living being's best role model. He is worthy of our deepest veneration. He inspires faith in everyone who meets Him. He is, therefore, the Supreme Being in all the Three Spheres of existence.

## OBJECTIVES

1. To enable the student to correctly explain the way a Bodhisatta pursues Perfections.
2. To enable the student to apply what he/she has learnt to his/her daily life.
3. To enable the student to know about the Buddha-Attributes and the Buddha-Virtues.
4. To enable the student to correctly explain the characteristics of the Perfect Man and to have a good understanding of the Law of Kamma so that he/she can live his/her life accordingly.

## THE BUDDHA-ATTRIBUTES AND THE BUDDHA-VIRTUES

### Introduction

As mentioned in chapter two, each Buddha has spent at least 20 Asankheyyas and 100,000 Kappas and at most 80 Asankheyyas and 100,000 Kappas pursuing Perfections to the fullest extent. Throughout these countless Kappas, a Buddha-to-be or Bodhisatta has never lost sight of his resolve to become enlightened as a Buddha in the far distant future regardless of the destination of his rebirth. Even when certain misdeeds lead him to be reborn in one of the States of Loss and Woe, his resolve remains with him in such a way that as soon as he is reborn in the Human Realm again, he will continue to pursue Perfections by training himself in all manners with dedicated effort and perseverance.

To become enlightened as a Buddha one day so that he can lead himself and as many beings as possible out of suffering, which is the round of rebirth, requires the most generous and stoutest heart. Therefore, a Buddha is very different from a Pacceka-Buddhas and the Arahats. The Buddha-Attributes and the Buddha-Virtues are the most excellent and the most exemplary of all attributes and virtues. A Buddha happens for the benefits of all living beings. Therefore, He is deeply venerated by human and celestial beings alike.

The Lord Buddha is the best role model in the world because He has trained Himself so rigorously and so continuously until His nature has been scrubbed clean of all defilements. We may not aspire to Buddhahood, still it is worth our while to train our self in the manner of a Bodhisatta, to cultivate good habits and the love for the pursuit of Perfections. This way we can continue to purify our mind and accumulate merit until such time as Nibbana can be attained.

### 3.1 Buddha-karaka-dhamma

The Lord Buddha started out as an ordinary person and had to undergo the round of rebirth countless times before he realized that **life as we know it was filled with suffering**. This analytical reflection caused him to want to escape from the prison which was the round of rebirth but he did not want to escape alone. He wanted to help others to escape as well. Therefore, he had tried to find ways to accumulate good deeds ever since he first had the thought of escaping from Samsara.

The continuous pursuit of Perfections by putting his life on the line throughout countless existences is necessary because it is the only way that defilements can be gradually scrubbed out of his consciousness. A Bodhisatta's continuous pursuit of Perfections takes unwavering resolve and perseverance. This special virtue is called '**Buddha-karaka-dhamma**'<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> **Buddha-karaka-dhamma** means the qualities or factors which are necessary to make someone a Buddha.

### 3.1.1 The Meaning of 'Perfections' [Parami]

The Pali word for '**Perfections**' [parami] is derived from '**Pura**' which means the fullest extent, supreme, perfect. When merit is continuously accumulated, it results in the 'Merit Sphere'. When merit is accumulated to the point where one is willing to put one's life on the line for the sake of accumulating merit, the 'Merit Sphere' will be transformed into the 'Perfections Sphere'.

In practice, Perfections have two meanings. **One, Perfections mean very special merit in that it is made by putting one's life on the line.** Therefore, Perfections mean the highest quality merit. **Two, Perfections mean making a habit out of putting one's life on the line** in order to make the highest quality merit. It is through the habit of putting one's life on the line in continuing to perform the most wholesome deeds that defilements can eventually be removed from one's mind.

### 3.1.2 The Necessity to Pursue Perfections

All of us have both good and bad habits. Habits are formed by repeated thought, repeated word, repeated action. If we repeatedly think good thoughts, speak honest, useful words, and act honestly and decently, then we will have good habits. On the contrary, if our thoughts, words, and action are repeatedly dishonest and bad, then we will have bad habits.

Personal habits are like personal programming. Bad habits arise when we fall under the dominion of defilements which are inherent in our mind. Defilements consist of three main families: the greed family (Lobha), the anger family (Dosa), and the ignorance family (Moha). These families of defilements are constantly exerting pressure on us. If we are unaware of them and succumb to their pressure then our thoughts, words, and acts will be repeatedly unwholesome and bad habits will result.

Some habits follow us from our past existences. We call this type of deep-rooted habits inborn traits. Some habits are formed in the present existence. Good habits are opposite in character to defilements. For examples, we develop the habit of giving alms regularly to combat our greed. We develop the habit of keeping the Precepts regularly to combat our anger. We develop the habit of practicing meditation regularly to combat our ignorance.

It is obvious that our bad habits lead us astray. Our bad habits are obvious enough but the root causes of our bad habits are not as obvious to us because we cannot see defilements. However, to counteract our defilements, we must act in a way which opposes them all the time. This way we can weaken our defilements and keep them from rearing their ugly heads. To combat our bad habits, we must replace them with good habits. We must make a conscious effort in repeatedly thinking good thoughts, speaking honest, useful words, and act honestly and decently.

The Buddha-to-be must put his life on the line to cultivate good habits so that he can pursue Perfections to the fullest extent. He continuously starves his defilements through the pursuit of the Ten Perfections until eventually no defilements remain.

### 3.1.3 What Are the Ten Perfections?

The Ten Perfections which every Buddha-to-be must pursue to the fullest extent before he can become enlightened as a Buddha include Generosity Perfection, Precepts Perfection, Renunciation Perfection, Wisdom Perfection, Endeavor Perfection, Patience Perfection, Truthfulness Perfection, Resolution Perfection, Loving-kindness Perfection, and Equanimity Perfection. Details of each of the Perfections are as follows:

1. **Generosity Perfection [*Dāna Pārami*]:** It is about giving and sharing what one has with others. This is the first Perfection which must be cultivated. To become enlightened as a Buddha and to establish and propagate Buddhism, team members and funds are an absolute necessity. The pursuit of Generosity Perfection through alms- and aid-giving is the true source of material wealth and retinue wealth.

Every Buddha-to-be began his pursuit of Perfections by starting with Generosity Perfection. Generosity Perfection serves two purposes - one is to make provisions for future existences in terms of material wealth so that the Buddha-to-be does not have to spend time making a living; therefore, he can more easily pursue other Perfections; two is to gradually erode away the miserliness inherent in his mind. Miserliness originates from greed.

**It is necessary that every Buddha-to-be practices generosity throughout each and every one of his existences. The manner with which he practices generosity can be compared to turning a water-jar upside down until not a drop of water is left in it. Every Buddha-to-be has given away everything until nothing is left be it material possessions, position, wife, children, major and minor organs.**

2. **Precepts Perfection [*Sila Pārami*]:** It is about keeping the body and the word clean and pure. Next to Generosity Perfection, every Buddha-to-be must be determined to keep the Precepts immaculately so that he can ensure that his rebirth will only take place in the Human Realm or the Celestial Realm. This way he can continue to pursue Perfections continuously. Any mistakes made by not keeping the Precepts will result in rebirth in the Animal Realm, the Peta Realm, the Asurakaya Realm, or the Hell Realm where it will not be possible to continue pursuing Perfections. Precepts act as one's protection which shields one from harm. Moreover, Precepts help one to refine one's body, word, and mind such that meditation practice will be facilitated.

**Therefore, every Buddha-to-be will put his life on the line in order to keep the Precepts immaculately such that he would rather give up his life than transgressing any of the Precepts just like a yak which would rather give up its life than damage the hair on its tail.**

- 3. Renunciation Perfection [*Nekkhamma Pāramī*]:** It means leaving the householder's life to take up the religious life in order to abstain from sense-pleasures. This Perfection allows the Buddha-to-be to more conveniently pursue the rest of the Perfections. Sense-pleasures are what keep living beings trapped in the round of rebirth. If one is reborn a wealthy human being but spends one's life immersing in sense-pleasures, then one's life is practically wasted. When one's consciousness is dominated by sense-pleasures, it will become very difficult for one to pursue Perfections and to eventually achieve Emancipation.

**Therefore, instead of losing time by being immersed in sense-pleasures, and to create freedom from the obligations of a householder's life, every Buddha-to-be seeks to pursue Renunciation Perfection by practicing chastity throughout his countless existences. This pursuit predisposes him to want to leave the ocean of suffering which is the round of rebirth in the same way that a prisoner wants to escape from prison.**

- 4. Wisdom Perfection [*Paññā Pāramī*]:** It means possessing a breadth of knowledge and an understanding of the way things really are. It means an accumulation of knowledge which comes from listening to learnt and knowledgeable individuals. This is called Suta-maya-panna. It means an accumulation of knowledge which comes from one's analytical reflection. This is called Cinta-maya-panna. It means an accumulation of knowledge which comes from countless existences of meditation practice. This is called Bhavana-maya-panna. Accumulation of these three kinds of knowledge will facilitate our emancipation from the round of rebirth.

**Therefore, every Buddha-to-be seeks knowledge from people of every social caste for the purpose of applying the knowledge gained to the removal of his defilements. This search for knowledge is like a monk who is willing to receive alms from any household regardless of its social status. Moreover, he is willing to exchange his life for knowledge.**

- 5. Endeavor Perfection [*Viriya Pāramī*]:** It means having the courage to face any obstacle in life. It means cultivating the effort and determination needed in the pursuit of Perfections. The pursuit of Endeavor Perfection helps the Buddha-to-be to be familiar with goodness and to stay away from any unwholesomeness. The Pali word for endeavor is 'Vira' which means courage. It means that every Buddha-to-be has the courage to improve himself by working to overcome his shortcomings. It means the courage to abstain or avoid what unwholesomeness he is used to doing and to improve the quality of his life by thinking, speaking, and doing only good deeds however difficult they may be and even at the cost of his life.

**Every Buddha-to-be has the courage to change his life for the better by endeavoring to accumulate as many wholesome deeds as possible for the sake of Buddhahood. It is like a Rajasiha<sup>2</sup> king which exercises care in its every movement.**

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<sup>2</sup> A **Rajasiha** is a celestial animal which lives in the Himavanta Forest of the first celestial realm called 'Catu-maha-rajika'.

- 6. Patience Perfection [*Khanti Pārami*]:** It means putting up with obstacles and all kinds of hardship. The pursuit of Patience Perfection helps the Buddha-to-be to persist in the pursuit of Perfections in the face of obstacles and hardships. He has to endure taunts, pranks, etc., from those who do not understand his aspiration. Not only must a Buddha-to-be learn to put up with obstacles and hardships, he must also learn to put up with admiration and vilification. That is, he is not affected by either admiration or vilification.

**Therefore, every Buddha-to-be works to cultivate patience by endeavoring to do good deeds in the face of hardships which may come from the elements, illnesses, conflicts, temptations. He does not allow his mind to be swayed by the current of defilements. The kind of patience a Buddha-to-be has to have is akin to the ground which is not affected by all the dirty stuff which is being dumped on it.**

- 7. Truthfulness Perfection [*Sacca Pārami*]:** It means being truthful. It means doing what one says one will do. It means staying true to one's aspiration in the face of obstacles. Truthfulness Perfection makes it possible for a Buddha-to-be not to allow gain, position, praises or problems to get in the way of his aspiration.

**The pursuit of Truthfulness Perfection can be compared to the orbiting path of Venus which remains constant regardless of the season.**

- 8. Resolution Perfection [*Adhitṛāhāna Pārami*]:** It means having the resolve to work toward one's goal in spite of obstacles and problems which present themselves along the way. It may be that out of jealousy, some people may try to derail a Buddha-to-be's effort to accumulate good deeds.

**In such a situation, a Buddha-to-be does not respond in kind but will continue to work toward his aspiration. The pursuit of Resolution Perfection can be compared to a gigantic monolith which is unshakable by the most violent storm. A Buddha-to-be repeatedly resolves to become enlightened as a Buddha one day.**

- 9. Loving-Kindness Perfection [*Mettā Pārami*]:** It means feeling love and goodwill towards all beings. It means the wish to help friends and foes alike to meet with happiness and prosperity. A Buddha-to-be views all beings as his compatriots in the ocean of suffering. Since it is his wish to help all beings out of suffering, the pursuit of Loving-kindness Perfection is an absolute necessity.

**Every Buddha-to-be is loving and kind to people of every caste, gender, age, and race. He regards all beings as his family because he wishes to lead all of them out of the round of rebirth. He is like water which cools and cleanses everybody alike.**

**10. Equanimity Perfection [*Upekkhā Pāramī*]:** It means keeping the mind neutral, peaceful, unbiased, and unaffected by love, hatred, pleasure, displeasure. This Perfection helps the Buddha-to-be to cultivate the love for justice. He is not biased against any person or anything. In the face of happiness and suffering alike, he remains neutral. He continues to keep his mind pure. A Buddha-to-be is not affected by the eight worldly conditions (*Loka-dhamma*) which include gain, loss, position, the loss of position, admiration, villification, happiness, and unhappiness.

**Equanimity can be compared to the ground on which clean and dirty things alike are dumped, yet it does not react in any way, it continues to remain impervious. A Buddha-to-be pursued Equanimity Perfection so that he can be like the ground, completely unmoved by anything in his life.**

These Ten Perfections are what every Buddha-to-be must pursue by putting his life on the line lifetime after lifetime until they reach the fullest extent in order to finally become enlightened as a Buddha and lead other beings out of the round of rebirth with him.

It behooves us then to exercise resolve and persistence when it comes to the accumulation of good deeds. We should abandon all unwholesome deeds and perform only wholesome deeds. We should strive to keep our mind bright and clear day after day, lifetime after lifetime until such time as we can attain Enlightenment after the manner of the Lord Buddha.

### 3.3.4 Levels of Perfections

Perfections can be divided into three levels depending on the intensity of the pursuit which in turn depends on the available opportunities in each existence. The three levels of Perfections are as follows:

- 1. Parami:** It means the pursuit of Perfections at an ordinary level. This includes giving away one's possessions. This is the first level.
- 2. Upa-parami:** It means giving away as alms not only one's possessions but also one's body parts such as one's blood, eye, and flesh. This is the second level.
- 3. Para-mattha-parami:** It means giving away as alms one's possessions, one's body parts, and one's life. This is the third level.

Every Buddha-to-be must pursue the Ten Perfections at all three levels over and over again like an oil press which presses the seeds over and over again until all the oil is removed. Or it is like using the great Mount Sineru as a gigantic mill to stir the great oceans of the universe. The pursuit of these three levels of the Ten Perfections go to refine the Buddha-to-be until he is completely pure and ready to become enlightened as a Buddha.

Once a Buddha-to-be aspires to Buddhahood, he will continue throughout countless lifetimes and despite difficulties to pursue these Perfections. By so doing, he can continue to cleanse and purify his nature as his courage and boldness are bolstered in such a way that by putting his life on the line lifetime after lifetime he can eventually pursue the Ten Perfections at all three levels.

**The three levels of the Ten Perfections [*Pārami*] can be summarized as follows:**

1. **Generosity Perfection [*Dāna Pārami*]:** It involves the intention to be selflessly giving by sharing what one has with others. It is the intention to remove selfishness from one's nature while at the same time it is the intention to make provisions for future existences. It is the intention to destroy the poverty mentality.
2. **Precepts Perfection [*Sila Pārami*]:** It involves the intention to gain self-composure by protecting oneself and other people. It is the intention to make sure that one does not harm oneself or other people. It is the intention to destroy conflicts.
3. **Renunciation Perfection [*Nekkhamma Pārami*]:** It involves the intention to remove big and small worries alike and to put sense-pleasures under control by leaving the householder's life.
4. **Wisdom Perfection [*Paññā Pārami*]:** It involves the plan to garner all kinds of knowledge, to train in the way of analytical thinking for the increase in knowledge and wisdom until such time as Enlightenment can be attained.
5. **Endeavor Perfection [*Viriya Pārami*]:** It involves the intention to continue training oneself in the areas of one's body, word, and mind until they are without any blemish. It means the courage to change and improve oneself under the guidance of awareness and self-possession.
6. **Patience Perfection [*Khanti Pārami*]:** It involves the intention to overcome with patience and without taking a single step backward all obstacles big and small be they the elements, the power of defilements, pressure, illnesses.
7. **Truthfulness Perfection [*Sacca Pārami*]:** It involves the intention to stay true, earnest, and staunch to one's noblest goal. It means training oneself to be sincere, honest and impartial with everyone alike. It means keeping one's word. It means being a true friend. It means sticking with one's friends through thick and thin.
8. **Resolution Perfection [*Adhitṭhāna Pārami*]:** It involves the intention to be wise and prudent in the way of performing good deeds. It means setting a worthwhile goal and resolutely accomplishing the goal so that the intended good deeds can be brought to pass.
9. **Loving-Kindness Perfection [*Mettā Pārami*]:** It involves the intention to cultivate love for every being. It means feeling love and goodwill for every being. It means being considerate. It means helping others out in times of need. It means treating everyone like one's relatives.
10. **Equanimity Perfection [*Upekkhā Pārami*]:** It involves the intention to cultivate impartiality and calmness of mind. It means the absence of all biases. It means valuing justice more than life.

The Ten Perfections at all three levels serve as a blueprint for cultivating good habits and for removing bad habits. This blueprint is a long-term plan which consists of different stages and takes countless existences to complete. Once the blueprint is created, every Buddha-to-be must resolve to follow the blueprint until every detail of the blueprint is accomplished. He endeavors to follow the blueprint in the face of obstacles and difficulties until his lofty aspiration can be realized.

### **Conclusion**

The Ten Perfections must be pursued to the fullest extent by putting one's life on the line throughout countless lifetimes. Not only does this apply to every Buddha-to-be but also to every Arahant-to-be. In fact, the pursuit of Ten Perfections applies to all of us as well because it is the best way to design our future existences so that our life will not take a precipitous turn downward; so that goodness can be instilled in our consciousness. Even if we had unwittingly committed bad Kamma in our previous existences, by accumulating a lot of good deeds in this existence, we can cause our previous bad Kamma not to have the opportunity to send forth its fruit.

## **3.2 The Disposition of a Buddha-To-Be**

The Lord Buddha is recognized and deeply venerated by beings in the Three Spheres of existence as **“possessing sublime virtues, being more excellent than other beings, being incomparable, etc.”** This is because the Lord Buddha has pursued Perfections to the fullest extent by putting His life on the line lifetime after lifetime. Throughout His countless lifetimes, He has endeavored to remove every bad habit and cultivate only the best habits until His nature is scrubbed clean of all defilements at the time of His Self-Enlightenment.

To succeed, every Buddha-to-be must work to instill good habits within him. This is called the disposition of a Buddha-to-be. A Buddha-to-be is pre-disposed to pursuing Perfections and staying the course by cultivating the six wholesome habits as follows.

- 1. Nekkhamma-Majjhasaya:** It means being content with the religious life. He sees the harm in sensual pleasure and knows that there is happiness beyond sensual pleasure and that is the happiness which comes from attaining Nibbana.
- 2. Vivekajasaya:** It means being content with quietude and solitude. He sees the harm in being in the company of others but is pleased to be in a place where he can keep his mind quiet.
- 3. Alobhaj-Jhasaya:** It means being content with alms-giving. He gives alms whenever he can and does so generously and wholeheartedly. He is pleased to keep the company of those who are not greedy and miserly.
- 4. Adosaj-Jhasaya:** It means being content with not being angry. He endeavors to keep his anger at bay by practicing loving-kindness and having the wish to see his fellow-beings emancipated from the suffering of Samsara.

5. **Amohaj-Jhasaya:** It means being content with destroying ignorance and gaining insight by practicing meditation. He sees merit, demerit, virtues, and depravity for what they are. He is pleased to keep the company of the good and the wise.
6. **Nissara-Najjhasaya:** It means being content with lifting himself out of the spheres of existence. He sees the harm in the round of rebirth. He has only one goal and that is the attainment of Nibbana.

These make up the disposition of a Buddha-to-be. These are the habits specifically cultivated for the pursuit of Perfections to the fullest extent in order to attain Buddhahood. Such a disposition does not come naturally but has been accumulated throughout each and every lifetime. It behooves each of us to consider our self and see whether we have instilled such habits within us so that we can follow in the footsteps of our Lord Buddha and continue to work our way upward until such time that we can attain Nibbana.

### 3.3 Dhamma-Samo-Dhana

The thought of wishing to attain Emancipation, hence Nibbana and to lead other beings out of suffering is something which rarely ever occurs to an individual. But once a Buddha-to-be has this thought, he sticks with it without any regard to how long it will take him before his Perfections reach the fullest extent and his lofty aspiration is realized. The heart of a Buddha-to-be is greater and stouter than that of ordinary human beings. A Buddha-to-be never does anything mediocre but repeatedly puts his life on the line in order to work toward his uncommon goal.

Every Buddha-to-be is the supreme pursuer of Perfections because he has dedicated his life in the pursuit of Perfections throughout countless existences. Although he has no idea how many existences it will take before his goal can be realized, he continues to pursue Perfections to the best of his ability. All he knows is that one day when his Perfections have reached the fullest extent his lofty aspiration will be realized. It is not unlike a person who studies and works hard to get one's assignment done. The difference is in the scale of the assignment and the efforts needed to complete it. When a person aspires to become enlightened as a Buddha one day in the far distant future, he will diligently train himself by pursuing the Ten Perfections at all three levels lifetime after lifetime until all Ten Perfections have reached the fullest extent.

In order to reach this loftiest aspiration, a Buddha-to-be must possess eight very special attributes which are termed 'Dhamma-samo-dhana'. These very special attributes will make it possible for a Buddha-to-be to succeed in the end. Therefore, 'Dhamma-samo-dhana' or the eight very special attributes are the very basic attributes which a Buddha-to-be must possess. Without them, a Buddha-to-be or Bodhisatta will never be able to receive the Buddha-Forecast which confirms his success at a specified time in the future.

These very special eight attributes of Dhamma-samo-dhana include:

- 1. The wish to be a human being:** It means that a Buddha will only give the Buddha-Forecast to a human being and not to other beings such as a celestial being however high-ranking he may be. Moreover, a human being is in a better position to pursue Perfections than a celestial being, a Form Brahma being, a Non-Form Brahma being or an animal. Therefore, rebirth in the Human Realm is crucially important.
- 2. Having the right gender:** It means that a Buddha will only give the Buddha-Forecast to a man and not to a woman or a gay person or a lesbian or a transvestite. The reason is that the male gender shares the closest characteristics with the Perfect Man. Moreover, the male gender is the best gender in accumulating merit and pursuing Perfections.
- 3. Having the appropriate motive:** It means that a Buddha-to-be or Bodhisatta must already possess a very strong Arahant attribute. A person who has not yet possessed an Arahant attribute will never receive the Buddha-Forecast. It means that to receive the Buddha-Forecast the Bodhisatta must already be able to attain Arahantship once he has the opportunity to listen to the Lord Buddha's Dhamma lecture. However, the Bodhisatta will not yet wish to attain Arahantship simply because he is working toward Buddhahood. Nonetheless, the Arahant attribute must be present in a Buddha-to-be in order to receive the Buddha-Forecast.
- 4. Having met a Buddha:** It means that a Buddha-to-be or Bodhisatta must have many opportunities to offer great alms to the assembly of Buddhist monks presided over by the Lord Buddha. He must also have the opportunity to express his loftiest aspiration in the presence of the Lord Buddha. A Buddha-to-be must receive the Buddha-Forecast from a Buddha, not from a Pacceka-Buddha or an Arahant.
- 5. Having ordained:** It means that a Buddha-to-be has the penchant to leave the householder's life to practice chastity and renunciation either as a monk in Buddhism or outside of Buddhism. He has the belief that merit and demerit exist in that he reaps what he sows. It means that he has faith in the religious life. A householder can never become enlightened as a Buddha. A householder will not receive the Buddha-Forecast because the obligations of a householder are too many.
- 6. Having the appropriate virtues:** It means that a Buddha-to-be must possess supernormal powers and meditative attainments in order to receive the Buddha-Forecast because these are superhuman virtues. It means that to succeed a Buddha-to-be must have a penchant for practicing renunciation and meditation.
- 7. Superiority:** It means performing acts which are above and beyond those of ordinary human beings especially in terms of exceptional good deeds which lead to Nibbana. What ordinary human beings do not dare think, say or do, a Buddha-to-be dares think, say or do. A Buddha-to-be dares give away his life as alms for the sake of Buddhahood. Only such a person will receive the Buddha-Forecast because he has dedicated his life to the pursuit of Perfections.

- 8. Satisfaction:** It means that throughout countless rebirths as a human being or an animal, a Buddha-to-be remains faithful to his loftiest aspiration to Buddhahood. He is not deterred by obstacles and is willing to suffer in the Hell Realm for the entire four Asankheyyas and 100,000 Kappas for the sake of Buddhahood. Only such an individual will receive the Buddha-Forecast because he has resolutely and continuously demonstrated his love for Buddhahood.

These are the eight special virtues or Dhamma-samo-dhana. They are needed for the attainment of Buddhahood. These are superhuman virtues and when a Buddha-to-be has possessed all eight virtues at the fullest extent, he will receive the Buddha-Forecast.

Moreover, these special virtues ensure that the Buddha-to-be or Bodhisatta will not meet with the following 18 unfortunate circumstances in his subsequent rebirths.

1. When reborn a human being, he will not be blind.
2. When reborn a human being, he will not be deaf.
3. When reborn a human being, he will not be insane.
4. When reborn a human being, he will not be mute.
5. When reborn a human being, he will not be a dwarf or a cripple.
6. When reborn a human being, he will not be born in a primitive culture where he will not have the opportunities to be educated and to meet with true and wise friends who can give him useful advice.
7. When reborn a human being, he will not be conceived in the womb of a female slave where freedom will be denied him.
8. When reborn a human being, he will not be entrenched in Wrong View as a Niyata-miccha-ditthi person where the path to the Celestial Realm and the path toward Nibbana are denied him.
9. When reborn a human being, he will not be born a woman, a gay person or a hermaphrodite.
10. When reborn a human being, he will not commit the five grave misdeeds (A-nanta-riya-kamma) of patricide, matricide, killing an Arahant, causing the Buddha to sustain a contusion, causing division among the Buddhist monks.
11. When reborn a human being, he will not be inflicted with leprosy or other serious diseases.
12. When reborn an animal, he will not be smaller than a weaverbird or bigger than an elephant.
13. He will be not be reborn a Khupa-pipa-sika Peta (a Peta which suffers from constant hunger and thirst), a Nijjhama-tanhika Peta (a Peta which suffers from the fire of desire), or a Kala-kanjika-sura Peta (a Peta which has a gargantuan body).

14. He will not be reborn in the Aveci Hell or the Loganta Hell.
15. When reborn a celestial being, he will not be a member of the wrong-viewed or Mara celestial beings.
16. He will not be reborn an A-sanni Brahma being that has a physical form but is devoid of feelings and thoughts or a Suddhavas Brahma being who will soon attain Arahathship.
17. He will not be reborn in the Non-Form Brahma Realm because the lifespan there is prohibitively long.
18. He will not be reborn in another universe.

In addition, the eight special virtues give rise to one more benefit which is called 'A-dhi-mutta-kala-kariya'. It means that whenever a Buddha-to-be is reborn a celestial or a Brahma being and should grow tired of the celestial ecstasy or the Brahman raptures, he can make a deliberate wish to cease-to-be in the respective realm in order to be reborn a human being so that he can continue to accumulate more and more merit. A-dhi-mutta-kala-kariya is attainable only by a Bodhisatta or a Buddha-to-be.

### **3.4 Buddha-Bhumi-Dhamma**

A Buddha-to-be or Bodhisatta who is working toward Buddhahood is an extremely rare breed of men, since it is nearly impossible to find anyone who is willing to put his life on the line lifetime after lifetime training himself through the pursuit of Perfections. In the quest for Buddhahood, the Bodhisatta needs not only dedicate his life for his own training but also for the training of others who will eventually help him propagate Buddhism during his final rebirth. These others whom he trains also bear witness to the fact that he is working toward Buddhahood. As a result of having dedicated his life in the pursuit of Perfections and in training many others for countless existences, the Buddha-to-be comes to possess four very special characteristics which are called 'Buddha-bhumi-dhamma'. These four very special characteristics are:

- 1. Ussaha:** A Buddha-to-be is persistent in his effort to put his life on the line for the purposes of accumulating merit and pursuing Perfections. He does not let anything big or small stand in his way, for he realizes that the quest for Buddhahood takes super-human efforts.
- 2. U-ma-magga:** A Buddha-to-be has the wisdom to teach himself and others. His wisdom is innate in that before he does anything, he will reflect upon it to see if it is something which ought or ought not to be done and once it is done, if it is beneficial to himself and to others. Such innate wisdom teaches him to perform only wholesome deeds. Therefore, his wisdom is constantly sharpened and it becomes the inner resource which propels him to continue pursuing his Perfections ever increasingly from one lifetime to the next.

3. **A-vata-thana:** A Buddha-to-be has the ability to clearly plan out his life. His resolve has been drilled into his mind. It means that after each merit-making activity, he will make the deliberate wish for Buddhahood. This resolve is constantly being drilled into his mind every time he performs a good deed until it becomes a part of his nature. Even in the lifetimes when he is reborn an animal, the resolve still stands firm. He spends every lifetime cultivating ever increasing Perfections.
4. **Hita-cariya:** A Buddha-to-be is loving and kind because he has practiced loving-kindness repeatedly over countless lifetimes until it becomes innate. A Buddha-to-be never thinks of saying or doing something to harm another person. He rejoices and expresses pleasure at another person's success. He is deeply empathic. He is in the habit of helping those in need and does everything he can to benefit the public at large.

These four very special characteristics are necessary in the process of working toward Buddhahood. A Buddha-to-be gives selflessly of himself in order to benefit every being until he achieves his goal which is the attainment of Buddhahood. The four very special characteristics can be summarized into two parts as follows:

1. The dedication of one's life to help all beings.
2. The pursuit of Perfections for the attainment of Buddhahood.

Every Buddha-to-be or Bodhisatta lives his countless lifetimes for the above two purposes which are interrelated and mutually dependent. The reason is that the dedication of one's life to help all beings leads to the pursuit of Perfections for the attainment of Buddhahood whereas the pursuit of Perfections leads to the dedication of one's life to help all beings.

Therefore, the Lord Buddha is our best role model and we must endeavor to follow the exemplary way in which He had worked toward Buddhahood, toward Nibbana where there is pure and permanent bliss. We are indeed very fortunate to be born a human being and to have found Buddhism. We should do our best to accumulate the most merit we can and to repeatedly state our well thought-out wishes each time after we make merit by way of designing our future lives. We should constantly remind our self and train our self regularly so that we can develop only good habits which will follow us to our future existences until such time that we can attain Enlightenment and Nibbana.

### 3.5 The 32 Physical Features of the Perfect Man

One of the most important aspects of the Lord Buddha is the physical body. Therefore, every Buddha-to-be or Bodhisatta endeavors to pursue Perfections in such a way that in his final rebirth as a Buddha, he will have the body of the Perfect Man. It has been said that **a human body is like the body of a car, if the body is strong then it can be driven anywhere but if the body is flawed, then it cannot be properly utilized.**

The Perfect Man body is the only body suitable for a Buddha. The Perfect Man body is glorious, powerful, and possesses great supernormal powers and strength. The level of perfection varies with different Buddhas depending on the details of their pursuit of Perfections. Nonetheless, every Buddha possesses the Perfect Man body.

The Lord Buddha says that **the Perfect Man body results from the merit and Perfections which have been accumulated to the fullest extent. An individual possessing the Perfect Man body will be the greatest Universal Monarch as a householder. Should he leave the householder's life to practice renunciation, he will become enlightened as a Buddha.**

From this teaching of the Lord Buddha, it means that the 32 physical features of the Perfect Man are characteristic of the world leader or the Dhamma leader. If the individual remains a householder, he will become a Universal Monarch. But if he takes up the religious life, he will attain Buddhahood. For our Lord Gautama Buddha, before He left the palaces to take up the religious life, Mara<sup>3</sup> tried to prevent Him from leaving by asking him to wait seven more days when all the worldly wealth of a Universal Monarch will become his. Although theoretically an individual who possesses the 32 physical features of the Perfect Man can be either the greatest Universal Monarch or a Buddha, in practice every Perfect Man leaves the householder's life to practice renunciation and eventually becomes enlightened as a Buddha.

The attainment of the Perfect Man body is extremely difficult because it signifies the end of the round of rebirth for the individual who possesses such a body. Every Buddha-to-be or Bodhisatta will attain the Perfect Man body only once and only in the final rebirth when he becomes enlightened as a Buddha. The Perfect Man body is a result of Perfections which have been cultivated to the fullest extent throughout incalculable existences. **The 32 physical features of the Perfect Man** are as follows.

- 1. Both feet are full and level:** It means that when standing the feet touch the ground at every point. This causes the Buddha to walk in a straight, gentle, and dignified manner like the majestic movement of a royal elephant. When a Buddha walks, the upper body remains immobile. It makes His walk appear more like a floating movement because He proceeds lightly without moving from side to side. His weight is evenly distributed by the level feet; therefore, his walk is extraordinarily graceful.

What gives rise to this special physical feature? It comes from all of the wholesome deeds which the Buddha has performed throughout His countless existences through the body, word, and thought. They include alms-giving, keeping the Precepts, supporting His parents, the ascetics, and the monks, showing respect toward His elders, and making great merit with humility.

- 2. On the sole of each foot is the outline of a wheel which consists of 1,000 spokes, the rim and the hub.** The Buddha is the turner of the Dhamma-Wheel. He leads living beings to attain Enlightenment and Nibbana. This special feature allows the Buddha to be nimble on His feet because the soles of His feet are extraordinarily flexible.

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<sup>3</sup> **Mara** means the force which obstructs the performance of all good deeds.

What gives rise to this special physical feature? It comes from the fact that He has brought so much happiness to the masses as a leader throughout His countless existences. He has ruled righteously. He has assuaged the people's fear. He has given alms regularly.

- 3. The heels are just the right length:** It means that His weight is well and evenly distributed to give Him added strength. For example, our Lord Gautama Buddha can jump to the height of 20 meters when standing. This special physical feature also adds to the grace and dignity of His body.

What gives rise to this special physical feature? It comes from not killing and not injuring other living beings all throughout His countless existences.

- 4. The fingers and toes are long and slender:** It means that the Buddha's fingers are of equal length and so are His toes. They are slender and strong. This enables Him to walk a long distance comfortably without experiencing undue aches or pain.

What gives rise to this special physical feature? It comes from not killing and not injuring other living beings all throughout His countless existences.

- 5. The palms and the soles are as soft as cotton-wool:** It means that the Buddha's palms and soles are soft and are devoid of bumps or calluses. It means that the muscles in these areas are highly flexible. Muscles which have high flexibility possess enormous strength. They are the reason the Perfect Man body is extraordinarily powerful and agile.

What gives rise to this special physical feature? It comes from having benefited the masses through the practice of the Four Principles of Service and Social Integration<sup>4</sup> all throughout His countless existences.

- 6. The palms and the soles contain an outline of a net:** It means that the Buddha's palms and soles show thin, faint lines which cross at regular intervals. With the exception of the thumbs and the big toes, the four fingers and the four toes touch without any space in between. Both the palms and the soles are full and soft which are indicative of their great strength and suppleness.

What gives rise to this special physical feature? It comes from having benefited the masses through the practice of the Four Principles of Service and Social Integration all throughout His countless existences.

- 7. The foot looks like an inverted conch:** It means that the Buddha's ankle is about an inch higher than that of ordinary people. This special feature together with other special features which include an elongated heel and long toes make His foot look like an inverted conch. The foot is full without the slightest imperfection. These perfect feet and ankles allow the Buddha's stance to be firm, His steps balanced, His jumps far and high due to the unusual flexibility and strength of the feet and ankles.

<sup>4</sup> These include the giving of gifts, the practice of kind speech, the practice of altruism, and the knowing of one's place.

What gives rise to this special physical feature? It comes from saying useful and honest words which benefit the masses. It comes from treating Dhamma knowledge with the utmost respect. It comes from putting his life on the line lifetime after lifetime in order to further his Dhamma knowledge. It comes from the abstention of nonsensical speech.

- 8. The calf is as slender as a deer's leg:** It means each calf is slender, round, long, straight and beautiful and is exactly proportionate to the elevated ankle, the full foot, the long toes and the elongated heel. The calf is so smooth and round that there are no signs of tendons and bones. Yet it is powerful and agile.

What gives rise to this special physical feature? It comes from the intention to teach all the arts to the best of his ability to enable his students to learn quickly and to benefit from the knowledge gained. It comes from the willingness to teach everything he knows.

- 9. In a standing position, the hands can touch the knees:** It means that the Buddha's body is perfectly proportioned and this makes His body extraordinarily graceful and handsome. When He stands with his arms extended upward, the middle point coincides with the seventh base of the body exactly.

What gives rise to this special physical feature? It comes from having the ability to treat people accordingly. It means that he treats every person according to the person's merit-power and station in life without any biases. For example, in offering food as alms, he will first offer the food to the monks, then to the novice monks, to male lay devotees, and to female lay devotees respectively. He is deferential and respectful to holy individuals and practices according to their teachings.

- 10. The male sexual organ is hidden inside the sheath:** It means that the Buddha's sexual organ is not like ordinary men in that it does not hang loosely but is completely hidden like that of a male elephant.

What gives rise to this special physical feature? It comes from fostering harmony and closeness among relatives and friends. It comes from uniting loved ones who have been long separated.

- 11. The complexion is as radiant and glorious as gold:** It means that the Buddha's body looks like it is wrapped in a gold sheet. His complexion is most attractive. It possesses good touch perception and it helps the body not to experience aches and pain easily.

What gives rise to this special physical feature? It comes from giving alms and spending time working for the Buddhist Faith such as sweeping the ground around the Cetiya, etc. It comes from not being vengeful. It comes from putting away anger.

- 12. The skin is so fine that dust cannot adhere to it:** It means that the Buddha possesses such an extraordinarily fine skin that dirt and dust cannot adhere to it. The quality of His skin is such that waste materials can be removed from the skin very effectively. When He sustains a lesion, it will heal very quickly. The skin is also highly elastic and the Buddha does not tire or get worn out easily.

What gives rise to this special physical feature? It comes from approaching monks and ascetics in order to learn from them about merit, demerit, virtues, and depravity.

- 13. There is only one hair per hair follicle:** It means that every hair is of equal size and is equally beautiful. This facilitates the production of sweat to keep the body cool and aids the body's metabolism to keep the body strong.

What gives rise to this special physical feature? It comes from not speaking false words but speaking only truthful words.

- 14. Each hair coils in a clockwise direction with its end curling subtly upward and has the dark green color of the butterfly pea flower.**

What gives rise to this special physical feature? It comes from speaking only truthful words and abstaining from false speech.

- 15. The body is as erect as that of King Maha-brahma:** It means that the Buddha's body is erect and does not tilt forward or backward. It is as erect as the body of a Brahma being. The body is erect and graceful. The left and the right sides of the body are exactly balanced so that it does not sway easily.

What gives rise to this special physical feature? It comes from not killing, from putting down every kind of weapons. It comes from being loving, kind, and compassionate to all beings.

- 16. The seven places of the body are full.** These include the back of both hands, the back of both feet, the shoulders, the neck, and the throat. They are full and smooth. The tendons, the veins, and bones are covered over completely. The Adam's apple is not visible. These special features add to the Lord Buddha's physical strength and endurance. The full and round throat enhances the Buddha's glorious voice and enhances the swallowing of food.

What gives rise to this special physical feature? It comes from the offering as alms delicious and dainty food to monks and ascetics for countless lifetimes.

- 17. The body is as perfect as the front part of a Raja-siha<sup>5</sup> king:** It means that the Buddha's chest and shoulders are perfectly erect and perfectly formed. This feature enhances the internal organs to function very well.

What gives rise to this special physical feature? It results from the aspiration to benefit all living beings.

<sup>5</sup> **Raja-siha** is a celestial animal which lives in the Himavanta Forest of the Jatu-maha-rajika Realm. It looks like a male lion on earth except it is perfectly handsome.

- 18. The back is smooth and full:** It means that in the back from the waist up to the neck, it is completely level unlike ordinary human beings' backs. This special feature makes the Buddha's back extraordinarily strong and elastic.

What gives rise to this special physical feature? It comes from the aspiration to benefit all living beings.

- 19. The body has a special dimension:** It means that when the Buddha extends his arms fully to the sides, the distance between the left fingers at one end to the right fingers at the other end is equal to His height. This does not occur in the case of ordinary human beings. The Buddha's body is perfect for sitting in meditation for an extended period of time.

What gives rise to this special physical feature? It comes from giving alms to the monks, the ascetics as well as the poor with appropriate respectfulness.

- 20. The throat is round and smooth:** It means that when the Buddha speaks, neither His veins nor His Adam's apple are visible. It means that the Buddha's throat never wrinkles or sags. His voice is always sonorous and He never suffers from a cold.

What gives rise to this special physical feature? It comes from wishing all beings to be happy.

- 21. The taste buds consist of 7000 nerve endings:** It means that the Buddha can taste everything in such a way that it spreads throughout His body. By comparison, the taste buds of ordinary human beings are like those of crocodiles. These nerve endings also enhance the absorption of nutrients such that He can survive on a small amount of food. For example, during the period when our Bodhisatta underwent self-mortification, he had starved himself to the point that when he touched his stomach, he could feel his spine. Yet, he was able to survive that terrible ordeal. On the day of his Enlightenment, he was offered 49 pieces of a very special rice pudding by a woman named Sujada. These pieces of rice pudding could sustain our Lord Gautama Buddha for a period of 49 days subsequent to His Enlightenment, for He had spent the entire period in meditation.

What gives rise to this special physical feature? It comes from not injuring or not killing other beings with the hand, a piece of wood, a stone or a sharp weapon.

- 22. The chin looks like the jaw of a Raja-siha:** It means that the Buddha's chin is as beautiful and well-formed as the curve of the moon and can be compared to the chin of a Raja-siha king. It means that the Buddha's teeth are very strong and firmly rooted.

What gives rise to this special physical feature? It comes from not speaking nonsense but speaking the right words at the right time.

- 23. There are forty teeth in the mouth:** It means that the Buddha has forty teeth which cause His facial skin to be taut and the corners of His mouth to turn up slightly as if there is a slight smile on His face at all times. Since He can chew his food very effectively, it spares the digestive tract the energy in digesting food. Therefore, He is very strong because He receives full nutrients from the food which He eats.

What gives rise to this special physical feature? It comes from abstaining altogether from using divisive speech or words which cause dissension.

- 24. The teeth are even:** It means that the Buddha's teeth are neatly and beautifully arranged. His teeth can chew his food very well and are not prone to any dental problem.

What gives rise to this special physical feature? It comes from not being involved in wrong livelihood.

- 25. There are no gaps in the teeth:** It means that the teeth are perfectly sized and arranged such that food cannot get stuck between them. This condition enhances oral hygiene and oral health. The upper front teeth extend slightly forward to enhance the chewing mechanism of the teeth.

What gives rise to this special physical feature? It comes from abstaining completely from using divisive speech or words which cause dissension.

- 26. All four canines are as white and as radiant as pearls:** The Buddha's canines are so translucent that when He smiles, His canines reflect the sunlight in the same way that a mirror does.

What gives rise to this special physical feature? It comes from not being involved in wrong livelihood.

- 27. The tongue is big and long:** It means that the Buddha's tongue is softer, wider, and longer than that of an ordinary human being. He can reach His ear as well as the top of His forehead with His tongue and He can cover the forehead with His tongue. He can roll up His tongue into a cylindrical shape. The Buddha's tongue contains 7,000 nerve-endings. He has exceptional taste-buds. He gets over his ailment quickly and easily.

What gives rise to this special physical feature? It comes from abstaining completely from using offensive speech but using only endearing speech.

- 28. The voice is like that of King Maha-brahma's:** It means that the Buddha's voice is as sonorous as a nightingale's. It is a voice which commands the attention of human beings, celestial beings, and animals alike. There are eight characteristics to the Buddha's voice in that it is elegant, easily recognizable, melodious, attractive, flowing, never hoarse, deep, and resonant. The quality of the Buddha's voice is brought about by His full and round neck, the size and length of His tongue, and the perfection of His teeth.

What gives rise to this special physical feature? It comes from abstaining completely from using offensive speech but using only endearing speech.

- 29. The irises are as black as onyx:** It means that the Buddha's irises are dark-green in color. The eyes exude dignity and power as well as loving-kindness and compassion. Moreover, the eyes can see quickly, clearly and very far away even in the dark.

What gives rise to this special physical feature? It comes from not staring or casting a sideways glance at anyone, and from not giving anyone a dirty look. It comes from looking at everyone directly and lovingly.

- 30. The eyes are as clear and bright as the eyes of a new-born calf:** It means that the Buddha's eyes are very bright and clear. They are devoid of deceit but they express loving-kindness and affection.

What gives rise to this special physical feature? It comes from looking at everyone with joyful and loving eyes.

- 31. There is an 'Una-loma' between the eyebrows:** It means that at the center of the forehead, there is an appearance of a tuft of soft, white hair with each hair coiling around itself in a clockwise direction and the end curving subtly upward. This very special feature accentuates the Buddha's extraordinarily handsome face and head.

What gives rise to this special physical feature? It comes from abstaining completely from offensive language, from nonsensical speech. It comes from speaking only truthful words.

- 32. The shape of the head is perfectly beautiful:** It means that the part of the head from the right ear to the left ear is full. The top of the head is beautifully and proportionately raised so that it looks as though the Buddha is wearing a crown. The hairline frames the face perfectly and both sides of the face are symmetrical. The skull is beautifully and perfectly shaped. Each coil of hair has just the right size and adheres to the scalp gracefully. There is a specific number of hair to each coil and a specific number of coils on the head. All the coils are arranged in an orderly fashion.

What gives rise to this special physical feature? It comes from encouraging the masses to perform wholesome deeds like making merit with an upturned face and a heart filled with joy.

These are the 32 special physical features of the Perfect Man. It is the most perfect body, the strongest body, and the most glorious body.

Moreover, **the Perfect Man possesses 80 additional minor features** which include:

1. The fingers and toes have a beautiful golden hue.
2. The fingers and toes are slender and tapered from the base to the tip.
3. The fingers and toes are perfectly round.
4. The fingernails and toenails are red in color.
5. The fingernails and toenails curve subtly upward.
6. The fingernails and toenails are perfectly smooth.
7. The wrists and ankles are covered over with flesh.
8. Both feet are exactly the same size.
9. He has the walk of a high-born elephant.
10. He has the walk of a Raja-siha king.
11. He has the walk of a swan.
12. He has the walk of a noble bull.
13. When He walks, He will first lift His right foot so that the right side of His body moves toward the right.
14. The knees are full and round. The kneecaps are invisible.
15. He has the mannerism of a gentleman.
16. The belly button was perfectly round.
17. The stomach is perfectly flat.
18. In the stomach area, there are faint lines which curve clockwise.
19. Both legs look like the trunks of a golden banana tree.
20. Both arms look like the tusks of the celestial elephant Era-vanna, King Sakka's personal transport.
21. Every part of the body is perfect.
22. The body is thick where it should be thick and thin where it should be thin.
23. There is no extra flesh anywhere.
24. There are no blemishes in the forms of moles, birthmarks, etc., in the entire body.
25. The top and the bottom parts of the body is perfectly balanced.

26. The body is beautiful and flawless.
27. The body is extraordinarily powerful and is as strong as 10,000 million elephants or one trillion human beings.
28. The bridge of the nose is perfectly formed.
29. The shape of the eyebrows is beautiful.
30. The lips are perfectly aligned and are as red as the ripe fruit of a gourd plant.
31. The teeth are pure and flawless.
32. The teeth are the color of a conch shell.
33. The teeth are perfectly smooth.
34. The five sense-faculties such as the eyes are perfectly beautiful.
35. The four canines are perfectly round.
36. The shape of the face is oval.
37. Both cheeks are equally radiant.
38. The lines in the palms are deeply etched.
39. The lines in the palms are long.
40. The lines in the palms are straight not curved.
41. The lines in the palms are gloriously red in color.
42. The personal radiance extends outward all around the body.
43. The jowls are firm.
44. The width and length of the eye sockets are beautifully proportioned.
45. All five components of the eyes such as the white of the eye are pure and bright.
46. The end of the body hair is not twisted.
47. The tongue has a beautiful shape.
48. The tongue is soft and deep red in color.
49. The ears are long like a lotus petal.
50. The ear canal is round and beautiful.
51. The lines of the hair are perfectly aligned.

52. The lines of the hair are hidden under the flesh and not exposed like those of ordinary human beings’.
53. The head has a beautiful shape.
54. The forehead is beautifully proportioned.
55. The shape of the forehead is beautiful.
56. The eyebrows are beautifully curved like the curve of a bow.
57. The hair of the eyebrows is very fine.
58. The hair of the eyebrows lays flat against the skin.
59. The eyebrows are wide.
60. The end of the eyebrow and the end of the eye line up perfectly.
61. The skin is very fine all over the body.
62. The entire body is glorious.
63. The body is glorious at all times.
64. The body is as fresh as a lotus.
65. The skin is perfectly soft.
66. The body exudes a perfume like that of the eaglewood bloom.
67. All the hair is of the same size.
68. The body hair is very fine.
69. The breaths coming in and going out of the nostrils are delicate.
70. The mouth curves upward in a slight smile.
71. The breath is as fragrant as a lotus.
72. The hair is a glorious black.
73. The perfume exuded from the hair pervades the air.
74. The hair smells like water-lily flowers.
75. Every hair is round and sleek.
76. Every hair is jet black.
77. Each head hair is very fine.
78. The head hair is not disheveled.

79. Every head hair coils around itself in a clockwise fashion.
80. There are rays of light above the Buddha's head.

The 32 special physical features and the 80 minor features make the Buddha uniquely different from ordinary human beings. These special features result from the wholesome deeds which the Buddha has accumulated to the fullest extent throughout His countless existences. These are the features of the Perfect Man. The Perfect Man body is very similar to the Dhammakaya or the Inner Buddha who is the entity that leads to Enlightenment.

The Perfect Man body is the best body. It is the body of the Knower. It is the body of one who will be enlightened as a Buddha. It is the body of one who penetrates the Truth. It is the body worthy of admiration. It is a very powerful body. It results from countless lifetimes of putting one's life on the line in order to pursue Perfections to the fullest extent which takes at least 20 Asankheyyas and 100,000 Kappas. It is not designed by any celestial or Brahma being but it results from the merit which has been accumulated to the fullest extent.

Therefore, a Buddha has accumulated merit to the fullest extent in order to attain the Perfect Man body as well as Buddhahood so that He can teach the enlightened Knowledge to human and celestial beings. It is the body which inspires deep veneration and faith. It is the body which inspires human and celestial beings to rigorously accumulate merit so that one day in the not so distant future they too can have the Perfect Man body. The Perfect Man body is every human being's original body. That is, originally every human started out with the Perfect Man body. However, as a result of defilements, the Perfect Man body has been corrupted to the point where no trace of it is left. Therefore, we must all hasten to accumulate merit after the manner of every Buddha. We should also encourage others to do the same.

## **Conclusion**

The aspiration to Buddhahood requires the aspirant to pursue Perfections for countless existences. It is only when all ten Perfections at all three levels have been cultivated to the fullest extent that the aspirant can become enlightened as a Buddha. Such pursuit of Perfections is called 'Buddha-karaka-dhamma'. The pursuit of Perfections is what causes the Buddha-to-be or the Bodhisatta to develop good and wholesome habits and to attain his goal at the shortest possible time.

Good habits lead to virtues and the resolve to continue working toward Buddhahood. A Bodhisatta must love the pursuit of Perfections so much that he is willing to give up his life for the purpose. He must also cultivate the eight attributes or Dhamma-samo-dhana before he can receive the Buddha-Forecast which confirms the fulfillment of his lofty aspiration.

It necessarily takes every Buddha countless lifetimes to cultivate Perfections to the fullest extent and to finally possess the Buddha-Virtues and the Perfect Man body. The Buddha is

therefore every being's role model and deserves our utmost reverence. He is the most sublime being in all the Three Spheres of existence.

Every human being needs to pursue Perfections everyday because we are here only for a short while. Our life on earth is like a dew drop at the end of the glass blade. As soon as sunlight shines on it, it disappears. The Lord Buddha said, "The day and night pass by, what are we doing now?" With the passing day and night, we age and our health becomes more and more delicate. We cannot afford to live life recklessly because every minute on earth counts. We must spend our time prudently by accumulating merit regularly.

We are here on earth to pursue Perfections because the human form provides us with the best opportunity for pursuing Perfections. As soon as we have an understanding about demerit, merit, virtues, and depravity, we will naturally want to accumulate as much merit as possible because that is what makes our life truly worthwhile. Every Bodhisatta has rigorously pursued Perfections in every existence whether as a human being or an animal starting from the first existence which he aspired to Buddhahood.

As a human being, we must endeavor to pursue Perfections to the best of our ability. We should not merely work for a living and become immersed in sense-pleasures. We should take every opportunity to accumulate good deeds all of our life hence make our every breath worthwhile.

## **Exercises**

After completing this chapter, take the test and complete the exercises provided in the workbook before beginning Chapter 4

## CHAPTER 4

# THE LORD GAUTAMA BUDDHA'S PREVIOUS EXISTENCES

### TOPICS COVERED IN CHAPTER 4 THE LORD GAUTAMA BUDDHA'S PREVIOUS EXISTENCES

- 4.1 The Birth of a Bodhisatta**
- 4.2 Making a Deliberate Wish to Become a Buddha**
- 4.3 Receiving the Buddha-Forecast**
- 4.4 The Final Period of the Pursuit of Perfections**

## CONCEPTS

1. A Bodhisatta started out as an ordinary human being but is endowed with life experiences and merit which have been accumulated throughout countless existences. These two factors cause a Bodhisatta to be extraordinarily wise such that when faced with a life-changing experience, he realizes on his own that the world is full of suffering and the round of rebirth is full of suffering. It then occurs to him that he wants to leave the round of rebirth. Moreover, he wants to lead as many beings out of the round of rebirth with him. It is for this reason that he is called a Bodhisatta which means an individual who is working toward Buddhahood.
2. Although someone has been working toward Buddhahood by continuing to accumulate as much merit as he can, he may not attain his lofty goal. In this case, he is called an Unconfirmed Bodhisatta. Only when his pursuit of Perfections has proceeded beyond a certain point and he has firmly developed definite attributes within his nature to be given a Buddha-Forecast that he is called a Confirmed Bodhisatta. Receiving the Buddha-Forecast means that he will definitely within the specified time become enlightened as a Buddha.
3. Every Confirmed Bodhisatta must continuously put his life on the line to pursue Perfections. He never neglects to cultivate Perfections wherever his rebirth takes him. He continues to pursue Perfections in every existence and with the resolve that one day he will definitely become enlightened as a Buddha.

## OBJECTIVES

1. To enable the student to know and understand the ways in which our Lord Gautama Buddha had pursued Perfections.
2. To enable the student to know and correctly explain what a Bodhisatta is.
3. To enable the student to correctly describe the meaning, the characteristics, and the types of Bodhisattas.
4. To enable the student to emulate the way a Bodhisatta pursues Perfections.



## THE LORD GAUTAMA BUDDHA'S PREVIOUS EXISTENCES

### Introduction

From the materials covered in Chapters 2 and 3, the student should have already appreciated the fact that the happening of a Buddha is an extremely rare occurrence, since it is very difficult to find someone with the great insight to know that he wants to leave the round of rebirth. He also has to be a very extraordinary individual to want to spend countless existences pursuing Perfections for the sake of Buddhahood.

Since the happening of a Buddha is an extremely rare occurrence, it follows that within the never ending round of rebirth, it is nearly impossible to be reborn a human being at the time when the Lord Buddha is living or when His Teachings are still available. It is for these reasons that the happening of a Buddha is the greatest occurrence in the universe and is very much anticipated by all wise beings in the universe. Some years before our great Bodhisatta became enlightened as a Buddha, there had been an on-going debate not only in the Human Realm but in the Celestial and the Brahma Realms as well about what gave rise to life's blessings. Of all the beings in the universe at the time, only the Brahma beings dwelling within the Suddhavas realms had any idea about what life's blessings might be but could not explain them in details. Therefore, these Brahma beings informed the celestial beings that twelve years hence, there would be the happening of a Buddha and that the question should be addressed to the Most Enlightened One then. At this most auspicious news, there was a widespread commotion. However, it was a commotion which arose from great joy. Therefore, as soon as our great Bodhisatta became enlightened as the Buddha, a host of celestial and Brahma beings led by King Sakka came to see the Lord Buddha and presented the question to Him. On that occasion, the Lord Buddha made known to those beings exactly what constituted life's blessings.

It is obvious that without the Buddha, the Truth about life can never be known. Without any knowledge of the Truth, it is very easy to make mistakes by committing unwholesome deeds or to harbor Wrong View (Micca-ditthi). And that will be a real calamity. **There are altogether six calamities that a living being can encounter.** These include:

1. **The Calamity of Time (Vipati-kala):** It encompasses the time period where Buddhism is absent either because there is no happening of a Buddha or the Buddha's Teachings have disappeared altogether. It means that any human being that is reborn during such a period will not have any opportunity to learn about the Truth of life.
2. **The Calamity of Rebirth (Vipati-gati):** It means that at the time when there is the happening of a Buddha or where His Teachings are still available, one is reborn in one of the States of Loss and Woe and misses the opportunity to listen to the Dhamma.

- 3. The Calamity of Country (Vipati-pradesa):** It means that one is reborn in a non-Buddhist country where Buddhism is not taught and practiced. One is not aware of the value of the Lord Buddha's Teachings and lives his life in ignorance of the Truth. In such a situation, it is very easy to live life incorrectly, hence, put his present and future lives in jeopardy.
- 4. The Calamity of Clan (Vipati-trakula):** It means that one may be reborn in a Buddhist country but is part of a family that does not learn and practice the Lord Buddha's Teachings. Moreover, one may learn to view Buddhism antagonistically or contemptuously. In this case, one can unwittingly incur retribution and rob his present and future lives of happiness and success.
- 5. The Calamity of Form (Vipati-Upadhi):** It means that one may be reborn in a Buddhist family with Right View but is physically handicapped such as being insane, mute, blind, deaf, etc., which disallows one to truly understand the value of the Lord Buddha's Teachings.
- 6. The Calamity of View (Vipati-ditthi):** It means that one may be reborn in a Buddhist family with Right View and possess a normal body but harbors Wrong View and disbelieves in the Lord Buddha's Teachings. That is, one does not believe in merit and demerit.

These six calamities cause beings to miss the opportunity to learn about the Truth of life which enables them to live their lives correctly. Without true knowledge, one can easily turn down the wrong path, the consequences of which are horrific pain and suffering for an unimaginably long time. One also has to blindly undergo the round of rebirth endlessly.

The Lord Buddha happens in order to bring light to the world. This light can lead beings out of the darkness of ignorance into the brightness of the Dhamma. Our Lord Gautama Buddha had spent 20 Asankheyyas and 100,000 Kappas in the pursuit of Perfections in order to attain Buddhahood so that He could lead Himself out of the prison of Samsara and lead as many beings out of the prison with Him. In the next section, the student will learn about the way our Lord Gautama Buddha pursued Perfections in His previous lifetimes starting from the lifetime in which He first aspired to Buddhahood.

## 4.1 The Birth of a Bodhisatta

All beings must undergo the round of rebirth. In some existences, rebirth may take place in the Human Realm, in the Celestial Realm, or in the Brahma Realm. In other existences, unwholesome deeds were committed and rebirth may take place in the States of Unhappiness as an animal, as a hell being, as a Peta, or as an Asurakaya. The round of rebirth continues on endlessly. The Lord Buddha teaches that there is only suffering in the round of rebirth. Suffering which arises from being parted from the person or the thing that one loves. Suffering which arises from meeting the thing or the person that one dislikes. Suffering which arises from birth, aging, illnesses, and death. All the tears which have been shed because of

one's suffering all throughout one's countless existences exceed the amount of water in the four oceans. All the bones accumulated as a human being pile higher than a mountain.

In the endless round of rebirth and its accompanying suffering, it is possible that after countless life experiences, there will happen an extraordinarily wise individual who after having encountered a life-changing experience will suddenly realize that **“This world is a huge prison. My fellow beings and I are all prisoners of this prison. All of us must undergo the endless round of rebirth; therefore, I must find a way to escape from this prison which is Samsara.”** Out of his deep compassion, he thinks further that “When the day comes for me to escape from this prison, I will not go alone but will take the rest of the people in the world with me.” Afterward, he has rigorously accumulated good deeds for countless lifetimes until he earns the title of ‘Bodhisatta’ which means a being who aspires to Buddhahood. Therefore, a Bodhisatta is an individual who possesses an incomparably noble heart. He has this aspiration in spite of the fact that he still has no idea about how to escape. All he knows is that he must escape one day. From that moment on, he has resolutely pursued Perfections in every rebirth regardless of the realm of his rebirth. He is not discouraged even when someone sets out to deter him in every way. He continues to pursue Perfections until he can be his own true friend and a good role model for other people. His pursuit of Perfections causes him to be loving and kind and to have great compassion for the beings in all the Three Spheres of existence. It also earns him veneration.

#### **4.1.1 A Bodhisatta's Spirits**

A Bodhisatta is an individual who possesses an incomparably noble heart. Not only does he have the wisdom to realize the suffering of the round of rebirth and the wish to escape it but he also wishes to help others to escape with him. Therefore, a Bodhisatta who aspires to Buddhahood must possess the greatest resolve and must be willing to go through everything necessary to realize his aspiration. This greatest resolve and courage can be compared to the following three scenarios:

**Scenario 1:** If the universe was like a bamboo forest filled with sharp thorns covering the distance of 19,687,200 kilometers, a Bodhisatta would be willing to walk through the thorn field bare-footed the entire way.

**Scenario 2:** If the universe was filled with hot coals, a Bodhisatta would be willing to walk over the hot coals all the way through 10,000 universes.

**Scenario 3:** If the universe was filled with burning iron mountains and the ground between the mountains are filled with molten copper, a Bodhisatta would be willing to swim in the molten copper all the way through 10,000 universes.

These are the reasons that a Bodhisatta possesses an incomparably noble heart. He wishes to help all beings including those in the States of Loss and Woe out of suffering. He also wishes to help beings who are reaping the rewards of their merit in the Celestial and Brahma Realms to know the everlasting bliss of Nibbana and to cut short their round of rebirth.

With unwavering resolve and courage, a Bodhisatta puts his life on the line in order to pursue Perfections to the best of his ability in every existence. He boldly and increasingly disciplines and trains his consciousness for the sake of Buddhahood. However great his love for his parents, spouse, and children may be, his love for Buddhahood is that much greater. In the existence as Phra Vessan-dara, he said,

**“It’s not that my two children are not cherished by me. It’s not that my wife Madri is not cherished by me. It’s just that my love for Buddhahood is greater; therefore, I’ve given away my beloved children and wife.”**

A Bodhisatta is willing to give up something or someone precious because he knows that when he eventually attains Buddhahood, he will be in the position to help his family and relatives as well as all other beings.

Given a Bodhisatta's incomparably noble heart and deep compassion, **a Bodhisatta naturally possesses the ten characteristics of an exemplary man. These ten attributes include:**

- 1. A-ge-thata:** It means **not being attached to a thing or a person.** It means that a Bodhisatta is only attached to the pursuit of Perfections in order to one day escape the round of rebirth and attain Nibbana.
- 2. Nirala-yata:** It means **not being attached to external objects.** It means that a Bodhisatta is determined to attain purity, hence emancipation.
- 3. Cago:** It means **making sacrifices.** It means that a Bodhisatta loves to give more than to receive. It means that a Bodhisatta is best at making sacrifices. It means that a Bodhisatta is a true philanthropist.
- 4. Pahanan:** It means **the ability to let go.** It means that a Bodhisatta does not get angry, does not feel offended. All he thinks about is merit-making.
- 5. Apuna-ravat-tina:** It means **not being fickle.** It means that a Bodhisatta is a truthful person. He speaks his thought and walks his talk.
- 6. Sukhu-matta:** It means **prudence.** It means that a Bodhisatta is thorough. He is not reckless but does every job to the best of his ability whether he is working for himself or for others. He is not biased.
- 7. Mahan-tatta:** It means **greatness.** It means that a Bodhisatta thinks big and has a heart which is as huge as an ocean.
- 8. Dura-nubo-dhatta:** It means **being unfathomable.** It means that a Bodhisatta is above and beyond all ordinary human beings because he possesses the noblest mind. His predominant thought is how he can help others out of suffering while ordinary human beings are more concerned about what's in it for me.

**9. Dulala-bhatta:** It means **being very rare**. It means that a Bodhisatta can do what is extremely difficult. It means that a Bodhisatta is capable of making easy what is difficult, of making small a big problem. To a Bodhisatta, there is only one major issue. And that has to do with the removal of defilements so that he can end suffering and help others to do the same.

**10. A-sa-disata:** It means **being peerless**. It means that a Bodhisatta is peerless. He is the leader in the pursuit of Perfections. His words and his acts are peerlessly sublime. Wherever his rebirth takes him, he will always assume a position of leadership.

These ten attributes characterize an extraordinarily generous and compassionate individual in the person of a Bodhisatta. Not only does he wish to know ease and happiness, he also wishes to help others to know them.

These attributes are what our Lord Gautama Buddha had cultivated for countless lifetimes until they became His habits. They are the habits of an individual who is most generous; who wishes to help his fellow beings wherever his rebirth takes him. Even during one rebirth as a monkey, our Bodhisatta put his life on the line in order to save his fellow monkeys' lives. Therefore, loving-kindness has very much been a part of our Bodhisatta's nature.

#### **4.1.2 Events Surrounding a Bodhisatta's Final Rebirth**

There are events which accompany every Bodhisatta's final rebirth and they include:

1. The Bodhisatta ceases to be from the Tusita Realm (the fourth celestial realm) and enters his mother's womb in a fully conscious state.
2. When he enters his mother's womb, a very bright light appears in the world and 10,000 universes tremble.
3. Four celestial beings appear on earth in order to guard the Bodhisatta and his mother in the north, east, south, and west directions.
4. The Bodhisatta's mother regularly keeps the Five Precepts.
5. The Bodhisatta's mother has no sexual feeling toward any man and no man can approach her sexually.
6. The Bodhisatta's mother experiences huge gains and abundant sense-pleasures in the five areas of form, sound, smell, taste, and touch.
7. The Bodhisatta's mother does not experience any illness. She can see the Bodhisatta in her womb the way she can see a thread inside a precious gem. (The third, fourth, fifth, sixth, and seventh events occur during her pregnancy.)

8. Seven days after the birth of the Bodhisatta, the Bodhisatta's mother will die and return to the Tusita Realm.
9. Ordinary pregnancy usually lasts about nine months but the Bodhisatta remains in his mother's womb for ten full months.
10. Ordinary women give birth sitting or lying down but the Bodhisatta's mother gives birth standing up.
11. When the Bodhisatta is born, he is first received by celestial beings, then by human beings.
12. When the Bodhisatta is born, he is received by celestial beings before his feet touch the ground. They present him to his mother and tell her that her son is a great being.
13. During the birth process, the Bodhisatta is not tainted with blood, mucus, or amniotic fluid. He is born completely clean and pure.
14. When the Bodhisatta is born, streams of hot and cold water appear in the sky to give the Bodhisatta and his mother a glorious shower.
15. As soon as the Bodhisatta is born, he turns his face toward the north, takes seven steps and makes the pronouncement, "I am the most sublime being in the world and this is my final rebirth."
16. When the Bodhisatta is born, a bright light appears in the world and 10,000 universes tremble.

Besides these ten events which surround a Bodhisatta's final rebirth, as a Bodhisatta and later as a Buddha, He also experiences the following 30 events:

1. In his final rebirth, the Bodhisatta enters his mother's womb in a fully conscious state.
2. The Bodhisatta sits inside his mother's womb facing the front in a half-lotus position.
3. The Bodhisatta's mother gives birth in a standing position.
4. The Bodhisatta will only be born in a natural surrounding.
5. The Bodhisatta is born with his feet coming out first. He stands on a gold sheet as he turns to the north, takes seven steps, and checks the four directions before making his pronouncement.
6. After the Bodhisatta's heir was born, the Bodhisatta witnesses the four signs and leaves the householder's life to take up the religious life.

7. The Bodhisatta wears the saffron robe of an Arahant and practices meditation for at least seven days before attaining Enlightenment.
8. He partakes of a meal consisting of a special rice pudding on the day of his Enlightenment.
9. He sits on a bed of grass when he attains Enlightenment
10. He practices meditation by focusing on his breathing.
11. He quells the Mara troop
12. On the throne of Enlightenment, the Lord Buddha attains the Higher Knowledges such as the Threefold Knowledge.
13. He spends seven weeks near the throne of Enlightenment.
14. King Maha-brahma of the Brahma Realm entreats the Lord Buddha to teach the Dhamma.
15. The Lord Buddha teaches the Wheel of the Doctrine at the Deer Sanctuary.
16. On the 15<sup>th</sup> day of the 3<sup>rd</sup> waxing moon (Magha Day), the Lord Buddha teaches the Fundamental Precepts for monks (Pati-mokkha) to the assembled Perfected Disciples.
17. The Lord Buddha stays at the great Jetavana Temple.
18. The Lord Buddha works the 'Yamaka Miracle' near the city gate of Savatthi
19. The Lord Buddha teaches the Higher Doctrine (A-bhi-dhamma) in the Tavatimsa Realm.
20. The Lord Buddha returns to earth from the Tavatimsa Realm near the city gate of Sankassa City.
21. The Lord Buddha is immersed in His meditative attainments at all times
22. The Lord Buddha employs His Insight to see whom He can save twice a day
23. Only when the situation calls for it will the Lord Buddha legislate a disciplinary rule.
24. The Lord Buddha will mention the stories of His previous lives only when there is a leading event.
25. The Lord Buddha tells His family and relatives about the lives of the previous Buddhas.
26. The Lord Buddha welcomes visiting monks with hospitality.

27. During the Rains-Retreat, the monks cannot leave the monastery without the Lord Buddha's permission.
28. The Lord Buddha performs His work before and after His morning and midday meals. He works every night as well.
29. On the day of the attainment of complete Nibbana, the Lord Buddha has a meal consisting of meat.
30. The Lord Buddha enters 24 trillion meditative attainments before attaining the complete Nibbana.

Every Bodhisatta who later becomes enlightened as a Buddha will follow this pattern and will never deviate from it. It may be said that these events form the Bodhisatta-Buddha pattern which has been followed by every Bodhisatta-Buddha to date and will continue to be followed by every future Bodhisatta-Buddha.

#### 4.1.3 Types of Bodhisattas

Every Bodhisatta starts out as an ordinary person and has to spend many Asankheyyas or incalculable Kappas repeatedly putting his life on the line in order to pursue Perfections. Such supreme endeavors take super-heroic and superhuman efforts and not every Bodhisatta succeeds in completing these nearly impossible endeavors. These Bodhisattas may after an interminable period decide to deviate from their aspiration to Buddhahood and change to an aspiration to Arahatsip instead. They subsequently pursue Perfections in order to become a Perfected Disciple<sup>1</sup> of a future Buddha. Examples of such Bodhisattas include Phra Maha-kacca-yana, the Brahmin Bavari, etc.

Therefore, the pursuit of Perfections is like a test to determine the strength of a Bodhisatta's resolve and aspiration to Buddhahood. Only a Bodhisatta, who passes the most rigorous test, will receive the Buddha-Forecast from one of the Buddhas he will meet along the way. As long as the Bodhisatta has not yet received the Buddha-Forecast, he will have to continue with his resolute pursuit of Perfections. Therefore, all of the Bodhisattas, who have been working toward Buddhahood, can be divided into two categories as follows:

1. **The Unconfirmed Bodhisattas [Aniyata-Bodhisattas]:** These Bodhisattas have not yet received the Buddha-Forecast and their aspiration to Buddhahood cannot yet be confirmed in spite of the fact that these Bodhisattas may have already been on the quest for several Asankheyyas already.
2. **The Confirmed Bodhisattas [Niyata-Bodhisattas]:** These Bodhisattas have already received the Buddha-Forecast which tells them that their aspiration to Buddhahood will be fulfilled at the specified time in the future.

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<sup>1</sup> **A Perfected Disciple** means a Buddha's disciple who has attained Arahatsip.

A person, who aspires to Buddhahood and has spent countless lifetimes in the pursuit of Perfections, is given the name 'Bodhisatta'. A Bodhisatta must by trials and errors determine how to go about pursuing Perfections and may at times make a mistake and have to serve time in the States of Loss and Woe. Yet, as soon as he is reborn in the Human Realm, he will by trials and errors continue to cultivate Perfections. Such a Bodhisatta is called an Unconfirmed Bodhisatta.

A Bodhisatta, who becomes a **Confirmed Bodhisatta**, will resolutely pursue Perfections. He is not deterred by any obstacles and has more determination and perseverance than the Unconfirmed Bodhisatta, since he has already received the Buddha-Forecast. He is absolutely motivated because he knows that his aspiration will definitely be fulfilled.

Every Bodhisatta must pursue Perfections by putting his life on the line in the way that no ordinary beings can do. Regardless of where his rebirth takes him, a Bodhisatta never abandons his pursuit of Perfections. He spends every lifetime cultivating Perfections by bearing in mind that he is working toward Buddhahood.

Beings that have no idea about what they should do with their lives will meet with hardships. They can easily spend countless lifetimes aimlessly and it is nearly impossible for them to have accumulated enough merit to finally have the opportunity to listen to the Lord Buddha's Teachings. By the time they finally get the idea that we are here to pursue Perfections, countless lifetimes have already been wasted. To know the Lord Buddha's Teachings is to know the way to escape from the prison which is the round of rebirth.

## 4.2 Making a Deliberate Wish to Become a Buddha

The happening of a Buddha is an extremely rare event. In some Kappas and in some ages, the world has to be without the knowledge of the Truth and living beings have to fall into the darkness which is Avijja or ignorance and cannot find their way out. It cannot be over-emphasized that the happening of a Buddha is for the benefits of all beings. A Buddha's boundless compassion has moved Him to pursue Perfections to the fullest extent so that He can escape from the round of rebirth and help as many living beings to escape with Him.

As a Buddha, He has taught living beings about the Truth in an effort to help them practice according to His Teachings and find their way out of our suffering. The pursuit of Perfections has been fraught with so many obstacles that only an exceptionally resolute and disciplined individual can complete the course. Here, the student will learn about the way our Lord Gautama Buddha pursued Perfections from the time when He first thought about finding the way out of suffering.

### 4.2.1 The Aspiration to Buddhahood

Our Lord Gautama Buddha belongs to the category of Buddhas that is called 'Panna-dhika'. It means that He possesses sublime wisdom and it is the reason that He can take the shortest time to pursue Perfections to the fullest extent. Still, this shortest time period lasted 20 Asankheyyas and 100,000 Kappas and involved countless existences.

The accounts of our Lord Gautama Buddha's pursuit of Perfections are very succinct and they began in the existence when he was a young man swimming in the sea while carrying his mother on his back after the ship, which they had been travelling in, was wrecked by the storm. In the midst of the strong winds and high waves, he was determined to carry his mother safely to the shore. He did not care how long he had to swim and how exhausted he would be. The only thing he cared about was to carry his mother safely to the shore.

As the young man swam in the sea with his mother on his back all day and all night long, as exhaustion overtook him, the merit which he had accumulated in his past existences gave him a sudden insight and he thought, **"The round of rebirth is so filled with suffering and the human life is no different from swimming in the sea of suffering. If I must die by drowning in the sea along with my mother, then may the merit earned from carrying my mother on my back and trying to get her to safety, make it possible for me to swim across the sea of suffering some time in the future."** As the young man made this deliberate wish, he added, **"When the time comes for me to successfully cross the sea of Samsara<sup>2</sup>, may I be able to lead other living beings to cross it with me."** As a result of having made such a deliberate wish, the young man was immediately elevated to the status of 'Bodhisatta'. As a result of this deliberate wish, our Bodhisatta was suddenly inspired and miraculously revived to the point where he had the strength and stamina to continue swimming for a few more days with his mother on his back until he finally reached the shore and succeeded in saving his own as well as his mother's lives.

Once the young man and his mother reached the shore safely, they went to stay in a village. Our Bodhisatta worked hard to support his mother and himself until his mother died. After our Bodhisatta died, he was reborn in the Celestial Realm. This is the story of the first existence in which our Bodhisatta had the aspiration to lead himself and other beings out of the sea of suffering. In other words, it was the existence in which our Bodhisatta first aspired to Buddhahood. Therefore, this existence is called **'Pathama-citta-tupa-pada-kala'** which means **the first time that our Bodhisatta aspired to Buddhahood.**

From that existence onward, our Bodhisatta had gone through the round of rebirth in different realms of existence. Whenever he was reborn in the Human Realm, he was gifted with the awareness, the discrimination, and a sharp intellect to realize the suffering within the round of rebirth. Therefore, he would endeavor to accumulate as many good deeds as he could.

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<sup>2</sup> **Samsara** is a Sanskrit word and it means the round of rebirth.

## 4.2.2 The Period during Which the Aspiration Is Nurtured

### King Sattu-tapana

The existence after the ‘Pathama-citta-tupa-pada-kala’, our Bodhisatta was reborn a prince and later ascended the throne as King Sattu-tapana. He practiced the ten sovereign virtues but he had a real penchant for auspicious elephants. Whenever he heard of one in any part of his kingdom, he would have it captured. Once, he heard from a hunter that there was an auspicious elephant which possessed all the prominent characteristics. The hunter said that in all of his life, he had never seen such an elephant before. The king had the hunter lead the royal procession to go and capture the elephant. The king was so pleased to see the elephant and it was eventually captured. The elephant was being trained by the master mahout. However, the king was in a hurry because he intended to ride this elephant for the festival which was to take place 7-8 days hence. The master mahout had to give the elephant food and drug in order to bring about a quick result.

When the day of the festival arrived, the king rode the elephant along the outskirts of the city which was adjacent to the forest. However on the previous night, a herd of elephants had passed by the area and left their droppings there. Therefore, when the newly tamed elephant smelled the droppings of the female elephants, it went wild with desire and ran after the herd of elephants, paying no mind to all the human beings riding on its back. As a result, everyone but the king fell off the elephant. The king was frightened but tried to compose himself. Finally, he got a hold of a branch and bailed himself out leaving the elephant to continue running. By the time the soldiers reached the king, he was furious.

When the king arrived back at the palace, he summoned the master mahout immediately and questioned him about the elephant’s behavior. The master mahout explained to the king, “The elephant was out of control because it smelled the female elephants from their droppings in the forest and desired to mate with them. Therefore, it paid no heed to the injury inflicted by the hook to keep it under control. It cared not about its own death. But once the auspicious elephant has mated with the female elephants, it will be back and under the power of the spell once more.”

The next day the auspicious elephant did return and did everything the mahout wanted it to do including using its trunk to pick up a hot piece of iron. King Sattu-tapana was struck by the great power of lust which could not be curbed even by the magic spell. He realized that it was the fire of lust which kept all beings trapped within the round of rebirth. The king was determined to remove himself from the power of lust; therefore, he ceded the throne and took up the religious life as an ascetic. He practiced chastity for the rest of his life. This existence marked the beginning of our Bodhisatta’s pursuit of Perfections during the first stage where he cherished the aspiration to Buddhahood in his mind. This period lasted seven A-san-kheyyas.

### 4.2.3 The Period during Which the Aspiration Is Verbally Expressed

#### The Ascetic Brahma-kumara

In this important lifetime, our Bodhisatta was reborn in a very wealthy Brahmin family. He was named Brahma-kumara. Our Bodhisatta later became a teacher of the Three Vedas. After his parents died, our Bodhisatta summoned his 500 students to a meeting and reminded them not to be reckless in life. He also told them that he would take up the religious life in order to search for the way out of suffering. He divided his fortune among his students. Our Bodhisatta subsequently became an ascetic living near the Pandara Mountain. As for his former students, as soon as their parents died, they joined our Bodhisatta and practiced asceticism rigorously. One day, our Bodhisatta and one of his followers went up to the top of the Pandara Mountain to look for some fruits.

During the search, our Bodhisatta happened to look down at the foot of the mountain and saw a tigress with its newborn cub. The tigress looked so emaciated because she had gone without any food for many days. It looked at its cub with the intention to eat it. Our Bodhisatta saw the tigress and knew that it would surely eat its cub and he thought, "How tragic is the life of living beings! This tigress is going to eat its own cub just to save its own life. The round of rebirth is just so filled with suffering and danger. It's truly frightening!" Our Bodhisatta told his follower to quickly fetch any carcass leftover by a lion or a tiger and the follower immediately obeyed. Our Bodhisatta waited a while for his follower to return. Meanwhile, our Bodhisatta had a sudden insight, "This body of mine has no real substance and is still filled with unwholesomeness which has been accumulated for countless lifetimes. This body is the cause of all suffering. How can I find the way to eliminate suffering? I can do it only by pursuing Perfections. The pursuit of all the Perfections is extremely difficult and cannot be accomplished if I cannot give up what is most difficult to give up, if I cannot give away what is most difficult to give away, if I cannot endure what is most difficult to endure."

Our Bodhisatta realized how the body was filled with suffering which arose from the need to nourish it, and how it could not last and had to die. He realized how the mind, which dwelled within his body, did not possess one-pointedness. It was impermanent and constantly changing. "Now I will give up my body and my life as alms to the famished tigress in order to save the cub's life." He subsequently made a deliberate wish, "**By the power of this merit, may I attain in the future the enlightened Knowledge which will lead me out of suffering. May I also be able to help all beings to leave the suffering of the round of rebirth.**" With his deliberate wish in mind, our Bodhisatta addressed all the celestial beings, "To all the celestial beings that dwell everywhere: earth sprites, tree nymphs, sylphs, all the way to the four great kings of the first celestial realm, come and assemble in this place to bear witness to my future Enlightenment and to rejoice in the giving of my life as alms on this occasion."

Having made sure that the celestial beings bore witness to his deliberate wish our exceptionally bold and courageous Bodhisatta jumped from the top of the mountain, and landed right in front of the famished tigress. As a result, the tigress left its cub to feed

on our Bodhisatta instead. Our Bodhisatta died and was reborn in the Celestial Realm as a result of the wholesome deeds which had been accumulated in that existence. His follower did eventually return with some meat but could not find his master anywhere. He searched for his master until he saw his master's remnants at the foot of the mountain. He was grief-stricken. He recalled his master's virtues and practiced his teachings for the rest of his life.

Our Bodhisatta pursued Perfections with insight, boldness, and resoluteness even when it meant giving up his life. He had given up his life countless times during his pursuit of Perfections. The existence as the ascetic Brahma-kumara was the first existence that our Bodhisatta expressed verbally his aspiration to Buddhahood. From this existence, he would continue to pursue Perfections for nine more A-san-kheyyas before he would receive the first Buddha-Forecast.

### 4.3 Receiving the Buddha-Forecast

Sixteen Asankheyyas went by, our Bodhisatta had undergone the round of rebirth in different realms countless times and had continued to pursue Perfections. During one Kappa in the 17<sup>th</sup> Asankheyya which was called '**Sara-manda-kappa**', there happened four Buddhas and their names were the Lord Tanhankara Buddha, the Lord Medhankara Buddha, the Lord Saranankara Buddha, and the Lord Dipankara Buddha.

Our Bodhisatta had met the first three Buddhas but did not receive the Buddha-Forecast because his merit did not reach a specified level yet. However, during the time of the Lord Dipan-kara Buddha, our Bodhisatta received the first Buddha-Forecast that his lofty aspiration to Buddhahood would be fulfilled. In that existence, our Bodhisatta was an accomplished ascetic. His story is as follows:

Four Asankheyyas and 100,000 Kappas ago, there was a city called 'A-mara-vadi'. It was a city of great abundance and many meritorious people lived there. Our Bodhisatta was born in a very wealthy Brahmin family and his name was Sumedha. He was a handsome man with a radiant complexion. He was educated in the Three Vedas and all the other branches of the arts. Later, when our Bodhisatta was still a young man, both his parents passed away. The attendant who had been in charge of the family fortune opened the treasury so that Sumedha could see all the gold, silver, and precious gems that had been kept there. The attendant said to his master, "This treasure which has been accumulated throughout seven generations is now yours."

Sumedha thought to himself, "My parents, my grandparents, and my great grandparents had accumulated all of this wealth but when they went to the hereafter there was not a thing that they could take with them. However, I mean to take all of this treasure with me to the hereafter." Afterward, Sumedha went up to the top of the castle to contemplate, "Birth brings suffering, illnesses bring suffering, death brings suffering. All beings have to face birth, aging, illnesses, and death. I ought to look for the Eternal Truth (A-mata-dhamma) which can put an end to birth, aging, illnesses, and death; the way to end suffering and lead to pure happiness. I ought to use this body of mine which is filled with filth to search for an end to

suffering. Happiness is opposite to suffering. If there is rebirth then an end to the round of rebirth must exist as well. When there is heat, there is chill to quench the heat. There must then exist the tranquility which can quench the heat of greed, anger, and ignorance. When there is wickedness, there exists goodness. When there is birth, the absence of birth must exist as well.

He considered further what it was like not to search for a way out of suffering by using the following scenarios:

1. When a person, who fell into a fecal pit, sees a pond filled with clean water but does not bother to clean himself up, it's hardly the pond's fault. Likewise, when the eternal truth, which can remove defilements, exists and a person does not bother to seek it, it's hardly the fault of the eternal truth.
2. When a person is surrounded by an enemy force and there is a way of escape but the person does not use it, it is hardly the fault of the escape route. Likewise, a person who is thick with defilements and the way to the great eternal city exists but the person does not seek it, it is hardly the fault of the eternal city.
3. When a person is ill but the person does not let the physician cure him, it is hardly the physician's fault. Likewise, when a person is plagued with defilements but does not bother to seek the knower, it is hardly the knower's fault.

Our Bodhisatta later considered how he should not have any worry, he should not have any want, and he should not feel tied to his body which was like a walking corpse in the following scenarios:

1. It is normal for a boat owner to abandon an old and leaky boat without sadness. Likewise, I can abandon this body from whose nine orifices flow unclean things without sadness in order to enter the great eternal city.
2. A person, who carries with his person precious gems, is traveling in the company of thieves can see that his treasure may be at risk and will try to separate himself from the thieves. Likewise, this body is like a jewel thief because when desire appears within it, the precious Truth, which is the Sublime Path of the Holy Life, will be destroyed. Therefore, I will abandon this body which has already been robbed in order to arrive at the eternal city which is the Eternal Truth.

As a result of his in-depth reflection, our Bodhisatta Sumedha was determined to take up the religious life in order to search for the way out of suffering. He gave away his entire fortune to the poor, the needy, the homeless itinerants, etc. Afterward, Sumedha left the city of A-mara-vadi alone and went to the mountains in the Himavanta Forest. King Sakka of the Tavatimsa Realm saw with his Celestial Eye that our Bodhisatta was on his way to the Himavanta Forest and would need a shelter after a day's travel. Therefore, he commanded the celestial being Vissu-kamma to come to earth and create a shelter for Sumedha. Vissu-kamma created an ashram and a place for doing walking meditation in the quietude of the forest. He also created flowering plants and fruit trees as well as a well filled with clear, clean water.

The area was devoid of wild animals and birds whose calls were shrill and disturbing. The place was highly conducive to meditation practice. Vissu-kamma also created two shelters at both ends of the place for doing walking meditation. They were made of green slabs. Inside the ashram, he created the articles necessary for an ascetic such as cloths made from tree-bark. He also engraved these words at the wall of the ashram, “Whoever wishes to take up the religious life can make use of these articles.” After Vissu-kamma was finished with his assignment, he returned to the Celestial Realm.

Our Bodhisatta Sumedha arrived at the ashram which had been created by Vissu-kamma. He did not see any footprints around and thought that the residents had to have gone out to beg for food in the village. He sat down to wait for them to return. Since no one showed up after a long while, our Bodhisatta decided to go inside the ashram to look around. Upon entering the ashram, he saw the engraved words on the wall and decided to take up the religious life there in the ashram. He practiced meditation by doing walking meditation. He thought about his religious life and believed it to be the best lifestyle. He felt encouraged to practice meditation rigorously, since he derived so much happiness from it. The sort of happiness attainable by a monk such as Sumedha is called ‘Samana-sukha’. There are **eight aspects of ‘Samana-sukha’** and include:

1. Not being chained to one’s wealth and other valuable possessions because a monk’s life is lived for the purpose of seeking the Truth only.
2. Begging for food which means that one never has to kill anything for food, neither does one any cooking.
3. Eating food without being under the influence of desire.
4. Being relieved of the pressure to pay taxes; being venerated by people of every social class.
5. Having no need for personal belongings; therefore, one is relieved of the burden of taking care of them.
6. Having no fear of being robbed.
7. Not having to associate with kings and ministers; therefore, one can live in quietude and solitude.
8. Not being obstructed in all four directions, one is like a bird which is free to go anywhere it wishes.

As a result of Samana-sukkha, our Bodhisatta Sumedha had the luxury of spending all of his time practicing meditation. Soon afterward Sumedha perceived the harm of living in the ashram so he left it to go deeper into the forest. He went to live at the foot of a tree instead. One morning, Sumedha went into the village to beg for food. He received a huge amount of food. After his meal, he returned to his tree to continue with his rigorous meditation practice. It only took him seven days to attain the Eight Meditative Attainments and the Five Super-knowledges. He spent the following days and nights being immersed in the bliss of his

meditative attainments. Therefore, he was completely unaware when the Lord Buddha Dipankara happened in the world. He was also completely unaware that the 10,000 universes had trembled and 32 miraculous events had taken place during the happening of the Lord Dipankara Buddha.

One day the Lord Dipankara Buddha along with His 400,000 Perfected Disciples<sup>3</sup> went to the city of Ramma in order to go to the Sudas-sana Temple. As soon as the masses heard about this news, they went to work on clearing and leveling the path as well as scattering flowers and popped rice on it. The path was decorated with banners. The path was also lined with banana trees and water jars that had been beautifully decorated.

At the time, Sumedha came out of his meditation in order to change his routine by traversing the air. He passed by Ramma City in the air and saw the masses engaged in the joyful activities of decorating the city and he wondered what was going on; therefore, he descended from the sky to make some enquiries. When he found out what was going on and heard the word 'Buddho', our Bodhisatta was so overjoyed that he wanted to take part in helping the people prepare the path for the Lord Buddha and His Perfected Disciples.

However, before the path was completely finished, the Lord Dipankara Buddha and His disciples had already arrived. Our Bodhisatta decided to offer his body up by lying down over the unfinished section of the path to form a bridge for the Lord Dipankara Buddha and His disciples to walk across. As he did so, he thought, "If I wish to become the Lord Dipankara Buddha's disciple, I could within today completely destroy all of my defilements. But if I did that, I could benefit only myself by learning the Dhamma from the Lord Buddha and attaining Nibbana without anybody else knowing about this. By the power of the wholesome act of giving up my life as a token of worship to the Lord Buddha, let me succeed in becoming enlightened as a Buddha in the future so that I can take the myriad beings across to Nibbana with me. I will cut short the current of the round of rebirth. I will utterly destroy all defilements and elevate myself as the Dhamma Vessel to carry human and celestial beings across the round of rebirth to Nibbana with me."

When the Lord Dipankara Buddha and the 400,000 Arahats came to the place where Sumedha was lying down and ready to offer up his life as a token of worship to the Lord Buddha. The Lord Buddha knew by the Buddha-Insight that Sumedha was an accomplished ascetic and had attained the Five Super-knowledges and the Eight Meditative Attainments; that he aspired to Buddhahood and would indeed succeed in becoming a Buddha one day and his name would be 'Gautama'. The Lord Dipankara Buddha fulfilled Sumedha's wish by walking on his body. After the Lord Buddha walked across, He gave the Buddha-Forecast in the midst of the Four Buddhist Communities, "This ascetic aspires to Buddhahood. His aspiration will come to fruition four Asankheyyas and 100,000 Kappas hence. His name will be Gautama Buddha. He will live in the city of Kapila-vastu. His mother will be named Queen Siri-maha-maya. His father will be named King Suddho-dana. After his Perfections have reached the fullest extent, he will take up the religious life to search for Enlightenment. On the day of his Enlightenment, he will be offered the special dish of rice pudding at the foot of the banyan

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<sup>3</sup> who were all Arahats.

tree. He will eat the rice pudding by the bank of the Neran-jara River before he went to the Bodhi Tree to sit at the foot of the Bodhi Tree. There he will become enlightened as a Buddha. His chief right-hand disciple's name will be Phra Sari-putra. His chief left-hand disciple's name will be Phra Mogga-lana. His personal assistant's name will be Phra Ananda. His two chief female disciples' names will be Phra Khema and Phra Upala-vanna.”

After the Buddha-Forecast, the 400,000 Arahats rejoiced in the future fulfillment of Sumedha's aspiration and circumambulated his person. Afterward, the Lord Dipankara Buddha and His Perfected Disciples continued on their way to the city. Our Bodhisatta Sumedha was so overjoyed by the Buddha-Forecast that he felt as if he was going to become enlightened as the Buddha the next day. As he realized that his aspiration would definitely be fulfilled, Sumedha searched within him for the practices which would lead him to attain Buddhahood. That was when he understood the 'Buddha-karaka-dhamma' which had been practiced by every Confirmed Bodhisatta. It consists of the Ten Perfections; the first of which is Generosity Perfection. He realized that these Ten Perfections could not be found anywhere else except in his mind. He reviewed the Ten Perfections forward and backward and every which way until he learnt them well. Later he made a deliberate wish to pursue all Ten Perfections to the fullest extent. Afterward, he traversed the air back to the forest to continue practicing meditation until he died. He was reborn in the Brahma Realm.

In that existence, our Bodhisatta Sumedha learnt that his aspiration to Buddhahood would definitely be fulfilled. Having received the Buddha-Forecast, Sumedha became a Confirmed Bodhisatta. He was greatly encouraged by the Buddha-Forecast and was resolved to pursue Perfections to the fullest extent.

Since we are here on earth to live in peace and prosperity together as well as to pursue Perfections, it is necessary that we encourage each other especially those who are endeavoring to do good deeds so that we can all be motivated to do more and more good deeds together.

#### **4.4 The Final Period of the Pursuit of Perfections**

Once the ascetic Sumedha gained the insight that he would have to pursue all Ten Perfections, he started working on them right away throughout the time of the Lord Dipankara Buddha. He had subsequently gone through the round of rebirth for four Asankheyyas and 100,000 Kappas and had spent every rebirth pursuing all Ten Perfections until they eventually reached the fullest extent which enabled him to attain Enlightenment as our Lord Gautama Buddha. Here we will present a brief summary of the way our Bodhisatta pursued Perfections during the time of each of the Buddhas he had met during the four Asankheyyas and 100,000 Kappas. Only some of our Bodhisatta's existences will be mentioned here including the next to his final rebirth in an existence as Phra Vessan-dara.

#### **4.4.1 The Pursuit of Perfections during the Time of the Lord Kondanna Buddha**

During the time of the Lord Kondanna Buddha, our Bodhisatta was a king by the name of Viji-tavi. He was a virtuous king. One day, he offered alms to the Lord Kondanna Buddha and 100,000 million Arahats. On that occasion, he received the Buddha-Forecast that he would definitely become a Buddha in the future. Right after he received the Buddha-Forecast, King Viji-tavi abdicated and ordained as a Buddhist monk under the Lord Kondanna Buddha. He had studied the Suttas and the Dhamma-Discipline and later worked to propagate Buddhism. Our Bodhisatta practiced meditation until he achieved the Eight Meditative Attainments and the Five Super-knowledges. As a result, he was later reborn in the Brahma Realm.

#### **4.4.2 The Pursuit of Perfections during the Time of the Lord Padu-muttara Buddha**

During the time of the Lord Padu-muttara Buddha, our Bodhisatta was a fire-worshipping ascetic called 'Ratthika'. He had made an offering of cloths and food to the Lord Padu-muttara Buddha and His disciples. On that occasion, while being seated in the midst of the disciples, the Lord Padu-muttara Buddha gave our Bodhisatta the Buddha-Forecast that he would be a Buddha in the future. The ascetic was so filled with joy that he vowed to increasingly pursue the Ten Perfections.

#### **4.4.3 The Pursuit of Perfections during the Time of the Lord Vipassi Buddha**

During the time of the Lord Vipassi Buddha, our Bodhisatta was a Phya Naga who possessed great supernatural powers and merit. His name was 'Atula'. One day he went to see the Lord Vipassi Buddha along with tens of millions of his Naga attendants. The Phya Naga visitors played celestial music for the Lord Buddha and made an offering of a gold couch decorated with precious gems, pearls, and celestial cloths to the Lord Vipassi Buddha.

On that occasion, while being seated in the midst of the disciples, the Lord Vipassi Buddha gave Atula, the Phya Naga the Buddha-Forecast that he would be a Buddha in the future. He was so delighted that he vowed to increasingly pursue the Ten Perfections.

#### **4.4.4 The Pursuit of Perfections during the Time of the Lord Kaku-sandha Buddha**

During the time of the Lord Kaku-sandha Buddha, our Bodhisatta was a king by the name of 'Khema'. He had made an offering of alms-bowls, robes, eye ointments, licorice, and other exquisite requisites to the Lord Kaku-sandha Buddha and His disciples.

On that occasion, the Lord Kaku-sandha Buddha gave King Khema the Buddha-Forecast that he would be a Buddha in the future. He was so delighted and moved that he vowed to increasingly pursue the Ten Perfections.

#### **4.4.5 The Pursuit of Perfections during the Time of the Lord Kassapa Buddha**

During the time of the Lord Kassapa Buddha, our Bodhisatta was a young man by the name of ‘Joti-pala’. He was learnt in the Three Vedas and completed the study of the text which detailed the making of a prediction based on a person’s physical features as well as the ‘Iti-hasa’ Scripture. He was learnt in the way of land surveying and climate prediction. One day, a lay devotee of the Lord Kassapa Buddha by the name of ‘Ghatikara’, took ‘Joti-pala’ to go and pay homage to the Lord Buddha. Having heard the Dhamma lecture from the Lord Kassapa Buddha, our Bodhisatta decided to ordain as a monk under the Lord Kassapa Buddha. He was diligent and well-versed in all the virtuous practices. He obeyed the Lord Buddha in every way. He was learnt in the Dhamma-Discipline and helped propagate Buddhism.

On that occasion, the Lord Kassapa Buddha gave our Bodhisatta the Buddha-Forecast that he would become the next Buddha. Our Bodhisatta was greatly motivated to continue pursuing the Ten Perfections and abstaining from all misdeeds.

#### **4.4.6 The Pursuit of Perfections during the Existence as Phra Vessan-dara**

Our Bodhisatta was reborn Phra Vessan-dara during this Bhadara Kappa long after the happening of the Lord Kassapa Buddha. In that existence, our Bodhisatta had pursued Generosity Perfection to the fullest extent. He had done what was most difficult for ordinary people to do but to him attaining Enlightenment and becoming a Buddha was worth every difficulty.

The story of the existence as Phra Vessan-dara has been told among the Buddhist Communities throughout the years. It is referred to as the Great Lifetime of Phra Vessan-dara. In the northeastern part of Thailand, it is referred to as Phra Ves Lecture. The reason this story has been so popular is that it is the existence where our Bodhisatta pursued Generosity Perfection to the fullest extent in the face of obstacles and hardships. Phra Vessan-dara is the best role model where the pursuit of Generosity Perfection is concerned.

Phra Vessan-dara’s mother was Queen Phusadi, the wife of King Saya-jaya in the city of Jetu-dara. As soon as Phra Vessan-dara was conceived, the queen had a strong wish to give great alms. Therefore, she had six almonries built; one at each of the city gates to the north, east, south, and west of the city, one at the city-center, and one in front of the palace gate. She donated money for alms-giving in the amount of 600,000 kahapanas everyday.

The Brahmins learnt in the art of making predictions told the queen that her strong wish to give alms came from the fact that an extraordinarily generous individual was growing in her womb. Ever since Queen Phusadi conceived, the king’s income from duties and taxes significantly increased. Other kings in what is now India sent gifts to King Saya-jaya daily. These special events occurred as a result of our Bodhisatta’s merit-power. When Queen Phusadi was ten months pregnant, she had the wish to visit the city and told her husband about it. The royal procession was going around the city when the queen experienced birth pangs. A temporary pavilion was erected for the queen immediately.

As soon as our Bodhisatta was born, he opened his eyes, extended one hand out toward his mother and said, "Mother, I wish to give alms. Can I have some money?" Queen Phusadi placed a bag containing 1,000 kahapanas on the new-born infant's little hand and told him to give away whatever he wished.

On the naming day, the royal family members named our Bodhisatta Vessan-dara because he was born on merchants' street. On the day of his birth, a celestial female elephant flew to the palace and deposited her pure white elephant calf there for our infant Bodhisatta and left.

When Phra Vessan-dara was four years old, the king had some jewelry made for him. It was worth 100,000 kahapanas. He wore the jewelry only once before he gave them away to his nursemaids. They returned them to him but he refused to take them back. The nurse-maids informed the king about the situation and the king had new jewelry made for Phra Vessan-dara.

When Phra Vessan-dara was eight years old, he went to the top of the castle and thought, "I've given away material wealth, but that kind of giving does not truly delight me. I wish to give away my body parts. Should anyone ask me for my heart, I shall cut open my chest, pull out my heart, and give it to him. Should anyone ask for my eyes, I will gouge them out for him. Should anyone ask for my flesh, I will slice it for him. Should anyone ask for my blood, I will give it to him. Should anyone ask me to be his slave, I will be his slave."

When Phra Vessan-dara was 16 years old, he was educated in every branch of the arts. King Saya-jaya deemed it was time to abdicate so that his son could assume the throne. He discussed the matter over with Queen Phusadi and other royal family members. Later, King Saya-jaya arranged the marriage between Phra Vessan-dara and the beautiful princess by the name of 'Madri'. She was the daughter of Queen Phusadi's brother of the Maddaraj House. She was put in charge of 16,000 women and became queen as soon as Phra Vessan-dara assumed the throne.

Phra Vessan-dara continued to depend on his merit-power and donated alms worth 600,000 kahapanas daily ever since he became king. He also rode his auspicious elephant to visit the almonries six times a month. His reputation spread far and wide. Some time later, Queen Madri gave birth to a son named Prince Jali. When Prince Jali started walking, she gave birth to a daughter named Princess Kanha-jina.

At that time, the kingdom of Kalin-garath experienced a prolonged drought which caused severe food shortage and many people began to suffer hunger. Thieves were everywhere. The king of Kalin-garath decided to solve the problem by keeping the Eight Precepts for an entire week. Even then, the drought persisted. The people begged the king to send envoys to ask for the auspicious elephant from Phra Vessan-dara because this elephant could cause the rain to fall seasonally. The king appointed eight Brahmins to rush to the city of Jetu-dara to ask for the auspicious elephant. As soon as the Brahmins reached the city, they disguised themselves as poor, pitiable beggars, and went to wait for Phra Vessan-dara at one of the almonries.

Early that morning, when the eight Brahmins saw Phra Vessan-dara out visiting the almonies, they went to sit near the auspicious elephant. Phra Vessan-dara asked the Brahmins what they needed and found out that they wished to ask for the elephant to go and help alleviate the drought situation in their kingdom. After the Brahmins received the elephant from Phra Vessan-dara, they led the elephant through the city and past the throng. The people found out that the auspicious elephant had been given away to another kingdom and they were furious at Phra Vessan-dara. The people which included royalties, merchants, farmers, Brahmins, etc., assembled at the palace to entreat King Saya-jaya to banish Phra Vessan-dara from the Sibi Kingdom and to go and live in the Vongkot Mountain<sup>4</sup>.

King Saya-jaya could not go against the voice of the majority and agreed to let Phra Vessan-dara stay one more night in the palace before leaving in the morning. Even then, Phra Vessan-dara did not waver, neither was he discouraged that he should be penalized for his great alms-giving. He was pleased to give away as alms the remaining of all of his material wealth the next day before he left for the Vongkot Mountain.

He commanded the chief minister by the name of 'Gutata' to make ready the great alms which was called 'Satta-sataka'<sup>5</sup>. As a result of our Bodhisatta's great merit-power, Gutata had no trouble getting everything ready at such a short notice.

In the same night, Phra Vessan-dara went to see Queen Madri to tell her about what had happened and reminded her to continue giving alms. He told her to care for the king father and the queen mother with respect. However, Queen Madri wished to go with her husband to the mountain.

The next day, Phra Vessan-dara joyfully gave away the great 'Satta-sataka' Alms from morning until evening. Later, he went to say his goodbye to his parents and relatives. Queen Madri asked for permission to take up the religious life but initially King Saya-jaya did not give her permission to do so. But Queen Madri was finally able to convince the king

<sup>4</sup> The people were furious because the auspicious elephant was resplendently decorated with precious jewelry: four pieces at the four ankles which cost 400,000; two pieces at the sides which cost 200,000 a piece; three kinds of nets covering the back, one was made of diamond and pearl, one was made of precious gems, and one was made of gold which cost altogether 300,000; small bells on both sides which cost 200,000; a blanket made of the finest wool which cost 100,000; decorations for the forehead which cost 100,000; three girths which cost 300,000; tassels for the ears which cost 200,000; tusk covers which cost 200,000; decoration for the trunk which cost 100,000; decoration for the tail which cost 100,000. The total cost of large and small pieces was 2.2 millions. When the seat and the tub were included, it was 2.4 millions. Besides these precious articles, there were also valuable jewels and pearl necklaces which were the elephant's personal jewelry. Moreover, the masses deemed the elephant as the elephant of state and not Phra Vessan-dara's personal elephant.

<sup>5</sup> **Satta-sataka** meant seven kinds of alms, which consisted of 700 elephants, each was decorated with gold articles and came with a mahout; 700 royal steeds resplendently decorated, each came with a rider wearing a protective shield and carrying a bow and arrows; 700 carriages covered with tiger skins and were well-appointed, each came with a driver; 700 high-born ladies, one in each of the carriages, each lady had on gold jewelry and a yellow robe, each had large, beautiful eyes, each smiled before speaking, each had a beautiful form; 700 milk cows which were specially selected and each could yield a pot of milk a day; 700 female slaves and 700 male slaves, all were well trained; along with an enormous supply of food and beverages.

father to give her his consent. Moreover, she was taking the children along. She said to her father-in-law, "As long as the two of us are still alive, our children will be all right."

Once the farewell was made, Phra Vessan-dara and his family set off immediately. Queen Phusadi knew how much her son loved to give alms, so she sent several wagons filled with seven kinds of precious gems and all kinds of fabrics along for Phra Vessan-dara to give away on his way out of the city. He also removed jewelry from his person 18 times to give to the poor who came to beg from him. After the royal family was a little way out of the city, four Brahmins, who did not arrive in time to receive the 'Sattasataka' Alms, hurried after Phra Vessan-dara to ask for the four horses which were drawing the royal carriage. After having given away the four horses, the royal family set out for the Vongkot Mountain on foot.

When they came across other travelers, Phra Vessan-dara would ask them for directions to get to the Vongkot Mountain and learn that it was very far away. It took 80 kilometers from the city of Jetu-dara to the Suvan Mountain. It took 80 kilometers from the Suvan Mountain to the Konati-mara River. It took 80 kilometers from the Konati-mara River to the Anjana Mountain. It took 80 kilometers from the Anjana Mountain to the house of the Brahmin named 'Tunna-vithana-lidanda'. It took 160 kilometers from the Brahmin's house to the city of Matula. Therefore, the total distance between the cities of Jetu-dara and Matula was 480 kilometers. Yet, amazingly certain celestial beings had shortened the distance such that it only took the royal family one day to travel from Jetu-dara City to Matula City.

It was in the evening when Phra Vessan-dara and his family arrived at Matula City. In those days, the city of Matula was ruled by a company of 60,000 royalties. When the city residents learnt that Phra Vessan-dara and his family had arrived on foot from the city of Jetu-dara, they went and informed their rulers about it. The 60,000 rulers went immediately to welcome Phra Vessan-dara. The reception was a very warm one, for the rulers treated Phra Vessan-dara like a long lost relative. They wanted to know the reason that Phra Vessan-dara was there. When they heard the reason, they all felt very sorry for Phra Vessan-dara that he had to be punished for having done such a great deed. They requested Phra Vessan-dara to stay in their kingdom of Cetarath while they went to entreat the king father to forgive him and allow him to return to Jetu-dara City.

Phra Vessan-dara explained to the rulers that he was banished from his kingdom because he had been misunderstood by the people and his parents had nothing to do with it. The rulers of Cetarath decided to request Phra Vessan-dara to stay and rule their kingdom for them. However, Phra Vessan-dara refused the offer but asked to stay there for the night. He wished to leave in the morning in order to take up the religious life in the forest. The 60,000 rulers and a large number of officials accompanied the royal family on their way to the Vongkot Mountain for 240 kilometers. By the merit-power of Phra Vessan-dara, the distance had been shortened such that it only took him a few hours to arrive at the entrance of the forest. The Cetarath rulers appointed a hunter by the name of Ceta-putra to guard the forest entrance and make sure that no one disturbed or harm Phra Vessan-dara and his family before they returned to their city.

At that moment, the celestial couch of King Sakka became uncomfortably warm. He employed his Celestial Eye to see what could have caused it. He hurried to command the gentleman celestial being named 'Vissu-kamma' to create accommodation in the Vonkot Mountain for our Bodhisatta. Vissu-kamma created two ashrams and two areas for doing walking meditation; one shelter for the night and one shelter for the day. He also created all the ascetic requisites and engraved on the ashrams the followings words, "Whoever wishes to take up the religious life, please feel free to use these requisites." He also made sure that there were no non-humans, deer, or birds which made loud calls in the vicinity.

When Phra Vessan-dara and his family arrived at the Vonkot Mountain and saw the ashrams, he and his family began to take up the religious life together there. Queen Madri performed the duty of caring for her husband and children which included looking for fruit and roots in the forest. During this period, Phra Vessan-dara and Queen Madri agreed to practice chastity.

There was at the time an old Brahmin by the name of 'Jujok' from the village of 'Dunna-vittha' in the kingdom of Kalin-garath. He begged for a living by wandering from place to place. He had saved up 100 kahapanas and asked a close friend to keep the money safe for him. Later, he wandered off to resume his begging. In the meantime, his friend had spent all of his money. When Jujok came back for his money, his friend repaid him by giving him his daughter 'Amittata'. Jujok and his young bride traveled back to his home and Amittata had cared for him well in every way.

All the young Brahmins in the village saw how well Amittata took care of her aged husband and began to criticize their own wives for not being as good a wife as Amittata. The women were resentful and found ways to taunt Amittata in order to hurt her feeling. When Amittata went to the landing to fetch water, the women would heap insults on her. Amittata felt terribly embarrassed and told her husband about what happened. Jujok wanted to appease Amittata and said that he would be the one to fetch water. However, Amittata could not let Jujok do it because it was her duty so she told Jujok to ask for slaves from Phra Vessan-dara. If he failed then she would no longer be able to live with him.

Jujok was alarmed at the prospect of not having Amittata with him so he decided to do as Amittata asked. He did not care how difficult it would be for him to make the trip and went all the way to the city of Jetu-dara only to find out that Phra Vessan-dara had been banished to the Vonkot Mountain. He also found out that Phra Vessan-dara did not go alone but his family went with him as well. He subsequently set off for the Vonkot Mountain with the intention to ask for Prince Jali and Princess Kanha.

When Jujok reached the entrance of the great forest, he was chased by the hunter's ferocious hounds so he quickly climbed up a tree. 'Ceta-putra' the hunter, who had been assigned to guard the forest entrance wanted to kill Jujok because he knew that Jujok might harm Phra Vessan-dara and the family. But Jujok employed his quick wit to lie to the hunter by saying that he was a messenger from King Saya-jaya and was there to ask Phra Vessan-dara to return to the city of Jetu-dara. The hunter Ceta-putra believed

Jujok's lie and gladly gave Jujok detailed directions to get to the ashrams where Phra Vessan-dara and his family were living. Jujok continued his travel until he reached the ashram of a Yogi named 'Accuta'.

Jujok went to greet the Yogi and started asking about Phra Vessan-dara. The Yogi had a feeling that Jujok might harm the royal family so he refused to give out any information. Again, Jujok employed his quick wit and made up stories to convince the Yogi that he meant the royal family well. The Yogi finally gave him directions to get to the ashrams. Jujok arrived at the ashrams in the evening and decided to rest for the night before approaching Phra Vessan-dara in the morning.

Near dawn the next morning, Queen Madri had a dream that a man holding a weapon approached her and injured her with the weapon. She was startled awake and went to Phra Vessan-dara's ashram immediately. Phra Vessan-dara told her that she should not come to his ashram at such an hour so Queen Madri told him about her nightmare. Phra Vessan-dara knew that he would be able to pursue his Generosity Perfection to the fullest extent on that day. He tried to comfort his wife before sending her back to her own ashram and to begin her chores for the day.

When it was light enough outside, Queen Madri picked up her basket and went in search of fruit and roots in the forest as usual. Jujok made sure that Queen Madri had departed before he went to Phra Vessan-dara's ashram. When our Bodhisatta saw Jujok, he knew immediately that Jujok came to beg something from him so he welcomed Jujok and asked about his purpose for being there. Jujok told Phra Vessan-dara that he had come to ask for the prince and the princess. Phra Vessan-dara was delighted at Jujok's request and asked him to stay overnight with them. However, Jujok knew that if he spent the night with them, he would not succeed in obtaining the prince and the princess. Therefore, he tried to talk Phra Vessan-dara into giving up the children immediately.

Prince Jali and Princess Kanha-jina found out that they would be given to Jujok, they felt their hair stand on end and were frightened that they would have to go with Jujok. They went to hide in the lotus pond by covering themselves up with lotus leaves. They were both very shaken up and tears streamed down their faces. When Jujok did not see the children, he launched into a tirade against Phra Vessan-dara. Our Bodhisatta knew that the children were hiding in the lotus pond and went out to talk to them. He told them about the reason for giving them away to Jujok. The royal children understood their father and came out of their hiding place. They cried tears of love for their father. Our Bodhisatta comforted them the best he could and set a price on both of them before he poured water from a gourd onto Jujok's hand to signify his alms-giving. As he did so, he spoke of his ultimate love for Buddhahood.

Having given the children away to Jujok, our Bodhisatta felt overjoyed at having been able to overcome his love for his children by bearing in mind his ultimate love for Buddhahood. In the meantime, Jujok found a long vine and used it to tie Prince Jali's right hand to Princess Kanha-jina's left hand. He also found a stick and used it to beat the children with. He beat the children in front of Phra Vessan-dara and ordered them to stop crying. He subsequently dragged the children along and left the forest. In the

meantime, three celestial beings transformed themselves into a lion and two tigers and came to lie down in the path to prevent Queen Madri from returning to the ashrams until it was dusk. They wanted to make sure that our Bodhisatta's alms-giving proceeded smoothly. Queen Madri felt very anxious because during the course of the day, several things had happened to her: the spade fell from her hand, the basket slipped from her shoulder, her right eye twitched, the trees which used to be laden with fruits were bare, the trees which used to be bare were laden with fruits, she could not determine the four directions (north, east, south, west), and she came across a lion and two tigers. She was scared as she begged the animals to move out of her way but they did not budge until it was dusk. As soon as the animals left, Queen Madri rushed back to the ashrams.

Upon her return, she could not find her children and went to see Phra Vessan-dara to ask him about the children. Phra Vessan-dara did not give her any answer but reproached her for returning so late. Queen Madri told Phra Vessan-dara what had happened to her during the day. That was when Phra Vessan-dara told his wife that he had given the children away. The grief was so unbearable that Queen Madri fainted. Phra Vessan-dara tried to revive her. When she came to, she begged her husband to forgive her and expressed her rejoice in her husband's great alms-giving.

The next day, King Sakka transformed himself into a Brahmin and went to see Phra Vessan-dara in order to ask for Queen Madri. Our Bodhisatta joyfully gave away his wife. Afterward, King Sakka praised our Bodhisatta and Queen Madri for their uncommon valiance. He told our Bodhisatta to ask for eight wishes which our Bodhisatta did. King Sakka said that our Bodhisatta's wishes would come true.

Jujok took the children all the way to the city of Jetu-dara. At that moment, King Saya-jaya was looking out the window toward the street and saw the children. He was surprised that the children looked like his own grandchildren so he told the minister to invite Jujok and the children to come and see him. Upon further investigation, King Saya-jaya found that Phra Vessan-dara had given the children away to Jujok. King Saya-jaya could not understand Phra Vessan-dara's action but Prince Jali explained everything to his grandfather and also told him about their prices.

King Saya-jaya paid Jujok for the prince and the princess and welcomed him as a guest. Jujok, who did not exercise moderation in the way of eating, over-ate and died as a result. King Saya-jaya had the money put back into the treasury because there was no one else there to claim it in Jujok's place. Afterward, King Saya-jaya got ready to make the trip to the Vonkot Mountain. Once all the preparations had been made, King Saya-jaya led the army to go and see Phra Vessan-dara. The meeting between Phra Vessan-dara and King Saya-jaya was filled with emotions. King Saya-jaya requested Phra Vessan-dara to return to the city of Jetu-dara but when he refused everyone in the army got down on their knees and begged him to return. Phra Vessan-dara finally returned to the city of Jetu-dara with the army and ruled the kingdom righteously. For the rest of his life, he had continued to practice the Ten Sovereign Virtues and give alms. After he died, he was reborn King Santu-sita, ruler of the Tusita Realm.

This existence demonstrates the way our Bodhisatta gave alms by putting his life on the line. When the merit earned from such peerless deeds gave its fruit, it benefited not only our Bodhisatta but all beings as well. Our Bodhisatta was a true visionary. Everything he thought, everything he said, everything he did, was geared toward the peace and prosperity of humanity. He is our greatest role model in terms of the pursuit of Perfections.

After the existence as King Santu-sita, our Bodhisatta would have his final rebirth in order to become enlightened as the Buddha. In other words, our Bodhisatta's Perfections had reached the fullest extent during the existence as Phra Vessan-dara.

## **Conclusion**

In this chapter, the student has learnt that when our Lord Gautama Buddha first aspired to Buddhahood, He was an ordinary human being just like us. The only difference was that during His countless existences, He had accumulated enough wisdom to know that the world was full of suffering and so was the round of rebirth. Therefore, He had the deepest wish to leave the round of rebirth. Moreover, He did not want to escape alone but He wanted to lead as many beings as possible out of suffering with Him. For these reasons, He was called a Bodhisatta.

Once our Bodhisatta aspired to Buddhahood, he had put his life on the line continuously in order to pursue Perfections throughout countless lifetimes. The length of time in which our Lord Gautama Buddha had spent in pursuing Perfections is 20 Asankheyyas and 100,000 Kappas. This period can be divided into three stages: The first stage lasted 7 Asankheyyas and 100,000 Kappas, it was the time period in which he kept the aspiration to Buddhahood to himself. The second stage lasted 9 Asankheyyas and 100,000 Kappas, it was the time period in which he expressed verbally his aspiration to Buddhahood. The third stage lasted 4 Asankheyyas and 100,000 Kappas; it started after he had already cultivated a certain level of Perfections to receive the first Buddha-Forecast.

As soon as our Bodhisatta received his first Buddha-Forecast from the Lord Dipankara Buddha that he would definitely become enlightened as a Buddha in the future, our Bodhisatta's status changed from an Unconfirmed Bodhisatta to a Confirmed Bodhisatta. He could have attained Enlightenment as an Arahant under the Lord Dipankara Buddha but his boundless compassion moved him to continue pursuing the Ten Perfections to the fullest extent for an additional period of 4 Asankheyyas and 100,000 Kappas. However difficult it might be and however many obstacles stood in his way, he never wavered. He continued to staunchly pursue Perfections until they reached the fullest extent during his existence as Phra Vessan-dara. In the next chapter, the student will learn about our Lord Buddha's final rebirth.

## **Exercises**

After the student finishes studying this chapter, complete the test and the exercises for this chapter before proceeding Chapter 5.

## CHAPTER 5

# THE FIRST PART OF THE LORD GAUTAMA BUDDHA'S BIOGRAPHY

### TOPICS COVERED IN CHAPTER 5

#### THE FIRST PART OF THE LORD GAUTAMA BUDDHA'S BIOGRAPHY

- 5.1 Celestial Beings Requested Our Bodhisatta to Cease to Be from the Tusita Realm**
- 5.2 The Birth of Our Bodhisatta**
- 5.3 Brahmin Sages Made Their Predictions Based on Our Bodhisatta's Physical Features**
- 5.4 An Important Event Which Occurred on the Day of the Planting Ceremony**
- 5.5 Reminders in the Forms of Celestial Messengers**
- 5.6 Leaving the Householder's Life to Seek for True Happiness**
- 5.7 Life before Enlightenment**

## CONCEPTS

The first part of the Lord Gautama Buddha's Biography began when as a Bodhisatta he ceased to be from the Tusita Realm. He was reborn in the Human Realm in the Jambu Continent in order to become enlightened as the Lord Buddha and to benefit all living beings. Our Lord Buddha's life was perfect from the time He was born. His talents and abilities were peerless. Although He had known ease, comforts, and material wealth since birth, the Perfections, which had been cultivated throughout countless existences, along with His resolve reminded Him to become bored with the householder's life after he witnessed the four celestial messengers. He knew then that the time had come for Him to take up the religious life and search for the way out of suffering. Even Phya Mara could not deter Him.

## OBJECTIVES

1. To enable the student to know the thinking and the way of life of an individual who is to become the Buddha.
2. To enable the student to describe the first part of our Lord Buddha's biography.
3. To enable the student to learn about the birth of Buddhism as documented in the Tripitaka.
4. To enable the student to know our great Bodhisatta's resolve from the beginning until the time he attained Enlightenment.



# THE FIRST PART OF THE LORD GAUTAMA BUDDHA'S BIOGRAPHY

## Introduction

Our current Kappa or Earth Age is called the Bhadara Kappa. It is the most advanced Kappa because it will witness the happening of five Buddhas altogether. Four Buddhas had already happened in this Bhadara Kappa. Presently we are still in the time of the fourth Buddha by the name of the Lord Gautama Buddha. In earlier chapters, the student has already learnt about the way our Lord Buddha pursued Perfections as a Confirmed Bodhisatta. In chapter 4, the student has learnt about some of our Lord Buddha's previous existences beginning from the existence which He first aspired to Buddhahood and ending with the existence where He pursued Generosity Perfection to the fullest extent.

In Chapters 5 to 7 the student will learn about our Lord Gautama Buddha's final rebirth which began when celestial beings from 10,000 universes requested Him to cease to be from the Tusita Realm and to be reborn in the Human Realm as Prince Siddhattha. The student will learn about many important events which include the Lord Buddha's birth, His search for Emancipation, His Enlightenment, the propagation of Buddhism, and His attainment of complete Nibbana. The details are arranged into three time periods specifically for this course and they include:

**The First Period:** This period began when our great Bodhisatta ceased to be from the Tusita Realm and was reborn in the Human Realm until the time just before he attained Enlightenment. The First Period is presented in Chapter 5.

**The Second Period:** This period began when our great Bodhisatta became enlightened as the Buddha until the time when He foretold His physical death. The Second Period is presented in Chapter 6.

**The Third Period:** This period began with events which took place in the three months before our Lord Buddha attained complete Nibbana until the time He attained complete Nibbana. The Third Period is presented in Chapter 7.

In terms of the Lord Buddha's biography, not all details will be presented here but only the parts that are most illustrative of His exemplary conduct and boundless compassion so that we can be inspired to follow in His footsteps.

The study of the Lord Buddha's biography allows us to understand that every detail about our Lord Buddha's final rebirth has been well documented. This should inspire faith in the non-believers while increase faith on the part of the believers. We can all take pride in having a Master Teacher like our Lord Gautama Buddha.

The student will also learn how our Bodhisatta's aspiration to Buddhahood came to fruition as a result of his resolve to continue working toward it by putting his life on the line lifetime after lifetime until after countless lifetimes of pursuit, his aspiration for Buddhahood was finally realized in his final rebirth. The Lord Buddha is a peerless role model for all humankind. He has shown us how an ordinary human being can be inspired to work toward Buddhahood for his own benefits as well as for the benefits of all living beings.

## **The First Period**

The first period is the beginning of our Bodhisatta's final rebirth which was perfect and amazing as befitting the Master Teacher who is more sublime than all human and celestial beings; who has taught us to free ourselves from Phya Mara's domination and to achieve emancipation.

Our Bodhisatta ceased to be from the Tusita Realm in order to be reborn in the Jambu Continent in the present day country of Nepal which used to be a part of India. India in those days was a land of prosperity. It was the land which fostered a large number of different faiths; all of which subscribed to Wrong View. Our Bodhisatta was born Prince Siddhattha in the city of Kapila-vastu.

Prince Siddhattha's life was perfect from the very beginning. He possessed peerless talents and abilities. He lived the life of ease and comfort afforded by his great material wealth. Yet, he did not abandon himself to sense-pleasures. In fact, when the time came, he had the insight to know that he had to search for the way out of suffering and out of the round of rebirth. He entertained questions and tried to search for answers. Finally, when he encountered the four celestial messengers, he decided to take up the religious life and go in search of the way out of suffering.

In this chapter, the student will learn about Prince Siddhattha's life, which was admirable in the beginning, in the middle, and in the end. The student will learn about how Prince Siddhattha's huge amount of merit blessed his life from the time of his birth until the time he went in search of the way out of suffering.

### **5.1 Celestial Beings Requested Our Bodhisatta to Cease to Be from the Tusita Realm**

The Tusita Realm is the fourth celestial realm and belongs to the Sense Sphere. The ruler of this realm is called King Santu-sita. The average lifespan of celestial beings in this celestial realm is 4,000 Celestial Years which are equivalent to 576 million earth years. It has been said that this celestial realm is pervaded by the scent of the Dhamma. It is the abode of individuals firmly planted in the Dhamma. While the Bodhisatta was living there as its ruler and waiting for the proper time to be reborn in the Human Realm, he had done the work of teaching the Dhamma to celestial beings.

After the existence as Phra Vessan-dara, our great Bodhisatta was reborn King Santu-sita, the ruler of the fourth celestial realm. Like all the great Bodhisattas before him, during his existence as King Santu-sita, he often taught the Dhamma to other celestial beings.

It was recorded in both the ‘Lalita-visa-tara’ Scripture and the ‘Pathama-sama-bodhi-gatha’ Scripture that the happening of the fourth Buddha was known among the celestial beings 100,000 years before the fact. The Lord Kassapa Buddha’s Teachings had completely disappeared from the earth by then. An announcement was made throughout 10,000 universes by the Brahma Beings who dwell in the five realms of ‘Suddha-vasa’<sup>1</sup>. After the announcement, celestial beings from these 10,000 universes assembled to discuss the identity of the individual who would be reborn in the Human Realm to become enlightened as the next Buddha. The search had taken 100,000 years such that once King Santa-tusita showed signs of his decease, the celestial beings knew that he was the one to become enlightened as the next Buddha. The news of King Santu-sita’s impending decease spread across the 10,000 universes. Brahma and celestial beings starting from the Maha-brahma realm to the Catu-maha-rajika realm assembled and went together to the Tusita Realm to request King Santu-sita to be reborn in the Human Realm in order to become enlightened as the next Buddha and lead beings out of suffering.

#### **Our Great Bodhisatta Subsequently Considered the Five Factors (Panca-maha-vilo-kana)**

At the celestial and Brahma beings’ request, our Bodhisatta considered the five important factors which would be conducive to his rebirth in the Human Realm.

**He considered the time** to see if it was suitable for his rebirth. Specifically, he considered the average lifespan of human beings at the time. If it exceeds 100,000 years, the time will not be suitable because at such a long lifespan, the issues of birth, aging, and death could not be clearly understood. Besides, when the Lord Buddha teaches about The Three Characteristics of impermanence, suffering, and the absence of true selfhood, the teaching will be lost on the people. When that is the case, the different stages of holiness cannot be attained. Without such attainments, Buddhism cannot be established. However, if the average human lifespan is lower than 100 years, then the time will not be suitable because humanity will be thick with defilements. To teach such people will be like trying to write on the surface of the water. The most suitable time is when the average human lifespan is between 100 and 100,000 years old. It so happened that at the time, the average human lifespan was 100 years. Therefore, the time was suitable for our Bodhisatta to be reborn in the Human Realm.

**He considered the Human Continents** which include Uttara-kuru, A-para-goyan, Pubba-vidheha, and Jombu and found that all the past Buddhas were reborn only in the Jombu Continent. The reason is that human beings in the Jombu Continent possess the attributes to learn the Lord Buddha’s Teachings. Moreover, he discovered that his birth parents were already living in the Jombu Continent. Therefore, the Jombu Continent would be the destination of his final rebirth.

<sup>1</sup> **Inhabitants of the five Suddha-vasa realms** are individuals who have attained the third stage of holiness. They are called ‘A-na-gamis’ or ‘Non-Returners’. They will attain Nibbana directly from these special Form Brahma realms.

**He considered the country** or the part of the Jombu Continent suitable as the birthplace of a Buddha. He found that the Jombu Continent was divided into two parts: the border area and the mainland. The mainland consisted of 16 kingdoms at the time. They were developed in the areas of politics, economics, education, art and culture. Therefore, he picked the kingdom whose capital city was Kapila-vastu.

**He considered the lineage of his birth** from the four castes of royalty, Brahmin, Vaisya, and Sudra. The Royalty and Brahmin Castes are considered to be noble lineages. All of the past Buddhas had been born either as a royalty or a Brahmin depending on which caste was socially accepted as the noblest at the time. At the time of our great Bodhisatta, the Royalty Caste was considered to be the noblest lineage. Therefore, our Bodhisatta would be reborn the son and heir to King Suddho-dana.

**He considered his birth mother.** Generally a woman who can serve as the Buddha's mother will need to have pursued Perfections continuously for 100,000 Kappas. Our Bodhisatta found the woman in the person of Queen Siri-maha-maya. She had kept the Five Precepts since she was born. Moreover, after the ten-month pregnancy and the delivery, she would live for only seven more days as was customary for every Buddha's birth mother. Once the five factors were in place, our Bodhisatta agreed to be reborn in the Human Realm.

### **Our Bodhisatta Granted the Celestial Beings' Request**

Having considered the five important factors, our Bodhisatta decided to grant the celestial beings' request to be reborn in the Human Realm in order to become enlightened as a Buddha. He sent the celestial beings away before he went to the Nandavan Park in the company of a host of celestial beings in the Tusita Realm. They reminded our Bodhisatta of all the wholesome deeds that he had accumulated throughout his countless existences. And while our Bodhisatta was walking around the park, he ceased to be and entered Queen Siri-maha-maya's womb.

**In the 'Visudha-jana-tila-sini' Commentary Khuddaka-nikaya-a-pa-dana**, it was recorded that at the time there was an 8<sup>th</sup> lunar month festival in the city of Kapila-vastu. The masses were busily celebrating the festival. Queen Siri-maha-maya also celebrated the festival. On the 7<sup>th</sup> day of that month, she woke up early in the morning and was dressed in her royal attire before she gave alms which were worth 400,000 and requested the Eight Precepts.

On that night, she dreamt that the Four Great Kings<sup>2</sup> came and lifted her bed up as she was lying in it and took her to the celestial forest of Himavanta. They placed the bed on a slab about 960 square kilometers in size under the shorea tree which was 112 kilometers high. Afterward they went to stand at the outer edge of the area. The wives of the Four Great Kings came to lead Queen Siri-maha-maya to the Anodat Lake in order to wash away human impurities before dressing her in celestial attire, applying perfumes on her skin, and decking her with celestial flowers.

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<sup>2</sup> These are the celestial kings that rule the first celestial realm of Catu-maha-rajika.

Not too far from the gigantic slab, there was a silver mountain in which stood a gold castle. A celestial bed was placed in the gold castle with its head toward the east and the four celestial queens asked Queen Siri-maha-maya to lie down on the bed. In the meantime, our Bodhisatta in the form of a gloriously white elephant king had been walking around a gold mountain which was not too far away from the silver mountain. He went to the silver mountain from the northern direction and held a white lotus in his silver trunk. He trumpeted loudly as he went into the gold castle. He circumambulated Queen Siri-maha-maya's celestial bed three times and entered her womb from the right side.

## **5.2 The Birth of Our Bodhisatta**

Queen Siri-maha-maya exercised her womb for the entire ten months of pregnancy. As she neared her term of pregnancy, she had the wish to return to her ancestral home in the city of Deva-daha to give birth to her baby. King Suddho-dana gave her permission to make the trip and commanded the path between the cities of Kapila-vastu and Deva-daha to be leveled and decorated with banana trees, water jars, banners, etc. Queen Siri-maha-maya traveled in a gold palanquin carried by 1,000 ministers and accompanied by a large retinue.

Along the way, she passed a park called Lumbini. At the time the shorea trees were blooming profusely from the foot of the tree all the way to the end of the branches. Bees of five different colors and a large number of birds were humming and singing a delightful chorus all around the flowers and the branches. Queen Siri-maha-maya had the wish to visit the park and went to rest at the foot of the shorea tree. Whichever branch she wished to hold onto the branch would bend down toward her until it touched her hand.

While she was holding on to a branch of the shorea tree, she felt the birth pangs. Her retinue rushed to build a temporary pavilion and hung curtains for her. She gave birth to our Bodhisatta in a standing position.

At that instant, four Maha-brahma kings received the infant with a gold net and showed the baby to his mother and said, "My lady, be happy, for you've just given birth to a great and powerful son." All other beings born of the womb are naturally tainted with the birth fluids but our Bodhisatta's little body was completely clean as he extended his feet and his arms and left his mother womb in a standing position. He appeared as clean, pure, and bright as a crown jewel on a velvet cloth. Therefore, the ensuing streams of hot and cold water which appeared in the air to bathe the bodies of mother and son were a token of worship to both of them.

Later, the Four Great Kings lifted our Bodhisatta from the Maha-brahma kings' gold net and placed him on a soft leopard skin, which was deemed to be auspicious. Later on still, human beings placed the infant Bodhisatta on a cushion made of the finest material. In that same instant, our Bodhisatta stood up and looked toward the east. Thousands of universes were as one; celestial and human beings alike worship our Bodhisatta with scented articles and flowers and said to him, "Oh Perfect One, you are peerless."

Our Bodhisatta looked in all ten directions and could not see anyone who was his equal. He then turned to the west and took seven baby steps. The Maha-brahma kings held the umbrella of state for him, the celestial being 'Suyama' carried the imperial fan, some celestial beings carried other imperial items, followed by a host of celestial beings. As the infant Bodhisatta walked on the ground without any clothes on, he appeared however to the masses as a sixteen-year old youth in his full regalia walking in mid air. At the seventh step, our infant Bodhisatta with the roar of a lion, made this bold pronouncement,

**“Aggo-ha-masami lokassa Cettho-ha-masami lokassa Settho-ha-masami lokassa  
a-ya-mantima jati natthi-dani punub-bhavoti”**

**“I am the most superb being on earth. I am the supreme being on earth.  
I am the most sublime being on earth.  
This is my final rebirth. There shall be no more rebirths for me.”**

It needs to be pointed out here that there have been many debates about the fact that the infant Bodhisatta came out of his mother's womb in a standing position and subsequently took seven steps. The debates are based on current medical science or scientific evidences and some have gone so far as to say that these impossible events were made up in order to make our Bodhisatta's birth appear miraculous. But in the view of genuine students of Buddhism, we know that an inordinate amount of supernormal events can accompany an individual whose Perfections has reached the fullest extent. In fact, supernormal feats are most ordinary to an individual who is born for the purpose of becoming enlightened as a Buddha. The sort of supernormal feats and miracles associated with the Lord Buddha is unthinkable and beyond the reasoning ability of mere human intellect.

### **Saha-jati (Individuals, animals, and things that came into being at the same time as our Bodhisatta)**

The birth of our great Bodhisatta not only was witnessed by the tremors and rumbles which resonate throughout the 10,000 universes, but was also accompanied by the birth of the following seven individuals, animal, and things as stated in the **Mathu-rattha-tila-sini Scripture:**

1. Princess Yaso-dhara-bimba.
2. Prince Ananda.
3. Channa.
4. Kalu-dayi.
5. Kanthaka, the royal steed.
6. The Great Bodhi Tree.
7. The four treasure troves.

### 5.3 Brahmin Sages Made Their Predictions Based on Our Bodhisatta's Physical Features

The people from both cities escorted the infant Bodhisatta to the city of Kapila-vastu. On that day, celestial beings in the Tavatimsa Realm rejoiced in the fact that a precious son was born to King Suddho-dana, and in time the prince would surely sit under the Bodhi Tree and become enlightened as the Lord Buddha.

At that time, there was a Yogi by the name of Kala-devila. He had achieved the Eight Meditative Attainments and was acquainted with King Suddho-dana's family. He had learnt from the celestial beings in the Tavatimsa Realm that a son was born to King Suddho-dana and this prince would definitely become enlightened under the Bodhi Tree. Therefore, Kala-devila descended from the Celestial Realm and went to visit King Suddho-dana. He said to the king, "Great King, I heard that a prince was born to you. May I see him, please?" King Suddho-dana had the prince dressed and brought out so that he could pay homage to the Yogi. However, the infant Bodhisatta rose into the air so that his feet were above the Yogi's headgear. The reason is that it is highly unnatural for our great Bodhisatta to bow to another being.

Moreover, should an ignorant person place our infant Bodhisatta's head at the Yogi's feet, the Yogi's head would burst into seven pieces. Knowing this fact and not wanting to invite disaster upon himself, Kala-devila hurried to get up out of his seat and pay homage to our Bodhisatta. King Suddho-dana was so amazed that he too paid his son homage. Kala-devila noticed our Bodhisatta's sublime features and knew with his foreknowledge that the little prince would definitely attain Enlightenment as the Buddha.

On the fifth day after his birth, members of the royal family deemed it appropriate toathe the infant Bodhisatta's head and give him a name. The palace was painted with four kinds of perfume and strewn with flowers and popped rice. A special rice pudding was prepared and 108 Brahmins learnt in the Vedas were invited to the meal of special rice pudding. The Brahmins were also presented with many gifts. After the meal, eight Brahmins were selected to make predictions based on the infant Bodhisatta's sublime features.

Seven out of eight Brahmins predicted that with such sublime features, the little prince would be a Universal Monarch if he remained as a householder. However, if he took up the religious life, he would become enlightened as the Lord Buddha. Only one Brahmin, who was the youngest of the group by the name of Kondanna, predicted that the little prince would definitely leave the householder's life and become a Buddha.

On that day, members of the royal family gave the little prince the name of 'Siddhattha' because he would bring fulfillment to humanity. King Suddho-dana wanted to know what would cause the prince to take up the religious life, the Brahmins told him that when he saw the four signs which included an old person, an ill person, a dead person and a monk. As a result, the king commanded all the ministers to make sure that these four signs were absent from the palace grounds. He did not want his son to become a Buddha but wanted him to rule the four Human Continents along with their 2,000 territories.

As soon as the learnt Brahmins arrived back to their respective homes, they called their sons to them and told them that they might not live long enough to see the Enlightenment of Prince Siddhattha but their sons would. The Brahmins told their sons to ordain as soon as Prince Siddhattha became enlightened as a Buddha. As time passed, only one out of the eight Brahmins survived to witness Prince Siddhattha's Enlightenment and it was the youngest Brahmin Kondanna.

Later, Kondanna learnt that our Bodhisatta had taken up the religious life. Therefore, he encouraged the other Brahmins' sons to take up the religious life as well. Out of the eight Brahmin's seven sons, only four decided to take up the religious life and they appointed Kondanna as the head of the group. These five Brahmins were later called The Five Ascetics or Panca-vaggiya.

In the same period, members of 80,000 royal families assembled to decide that each family would pledge a son to follow Prince Siddhattha so that he would be surrounded by royalties either as a Buddha or a Universal Monarch.

On the part of Queen Siri-maha-maya, seven days after she gave birth to Prince Siddhattha, she passed away. Therefore, King Suddho-dana placed Prince Siddhattha under the care of his aunt, Queen Paja-bodi-gotami.

Once the learnt sages saw our Bodhisatta's sublime features, which resulted from the Perfections that had been cultivated to the fullest extent, they understood the importance of the happening of a Buddha. They wished to remain near and witness such a happening. Even when they could not, they wished for their sons to take their places.

#### **5.4 An Important Event Which Occurred on the Day of the Planting Ceremony**

On the day of the Planting Ceremony when Prince Siddhattha was just seven years old, King Suddho-dana and a huge retinue left the city along with Prince Siddhattha to preside over the royal ceremony. Near the ceremonial site, there was a Java Plum tree which was lush with leaves and provided a cool shade. The king commanded a couch to be placed under the tree for the prince. Partitions were placed all around the tree and our Bodhisatta was surrounded by his nannies.

King Suddho-dana went to preside over the Planting Ceremony. As he began to move the ploughshare, a great treasure trove suddenly appeared. All the nannies went to look at the treasure trove. Our Bodhisatta woke up from his nap and did not see anyone around so he sat up in a half-lotus position and closed his eyes to practice meditation. As he sat immersed in the First Absorption, the nannies came rushing back to check on the prince. When they opened the partition, they saw our Bodhisatta seated in a half-lotus position on the couch and noticed a miracle in that the shade of the Java Plum tree was exactly the same as before even though it was already afternoon. They went to tell the king about it. The king rushed to the tree and witnessed the miracle himself. He paid homage to his son for the second time since the prince was born.

When our Bodhisatta was 16 years old, King Suddho-dana had three castles built to accommodate our Bodhisatta for the three different seasons. King Suddho-dana subsequently ceded the throne to Prince Siddhattha and arranged his marriage to Princess Yaso-dhara-bimba. She was the daughter of King Suppa-buddha of the city of Deva-daha. Princess Yaso-dhara was put in charge of 40,000 ladies-in-waiting.

Prince Siddhattha's life had deliberately been surrounded with sense-pleasures because his father had no desire to see him take up the religious life. Still, all the sense-pleasures could not satisfy the prince and he eventually became bored with the householder's life and left the palaces.

## 5.5 Reminders in the Forms of Celestial Messengers

One day during the period in which Prince Siddhattha became bored with life in the palaces, he ordered his driver to take him out of the palace grounds. The driver's love for the prince caused him to go against King Suddho-dana's command by driving the prince out to the royal park. Prince Siddhattha saw something which he had never seen before. It was an old man whose hair was completely gray. He was using a cane to support himself as he walked slowly by. The prince asked his driver, **"Driver, what is that thing? Why does it look that way?"** The driver said, **"That is called an old man, sire. When I get older, my black hair will also turn gray. My strong body will become weak and I will need a cane to prop me up. This happens to everyone, sire."** The depressing image caused the prince to return to the palace right away.

On the second day, again on the way to the royal park, Prince Siddhattha saw a sick person moaning in pain. He asked his driver, **"What's the matter with that person?"** The driver answered, **"He is sick, sire. It's what happens when a person becomes ill."** Again, the depressing image caused the prince to return to the palace right away.

On the third day, Prince Siddhattha saw a dead person lying as still as a log so he asked the driver, **"Why is that person lying so still?"** The driver answered, **"That is a dead person, sire. A dead person no longer breathes or moves. His body is waiting to become food for the worms. No one in the world can escape death. I too must die. Those people crying near the dead person are his relatives mourning for his death like someone trying to call the moon to come to him."** Prince Siddhattha became sadder than the first two days.

On the fourth day, the sky was clearer than the first three days, Prince Siddhattha saw a man wearing a robe the color of tree-bark. His face was radiant. His head was shaved and he was walking with calm composure. Prince Siddhattha asked his driver, **"Why is that person unlike other people?"** The driver answered, **"He is an ascetic, sire. An ascetic leaves the householder's life in order to search for the way out of suffering which arises from birth, aging, illnesses, and death."** Prince Siddhattha was delighted with his driver's answer. He continued to watch the ascetic for as long as he could even after the royal carriage had already passed him by. He thought to himself, **"The life of an ascetic appears peaceful. It's a life unlike any other."**

It was our Bodhisatta's Perfections that reminded him about the harm of aging, illnesses, and death, and caused him to become unbearably bored with the householder's life. Such signs had no meaning for ordinary people because they see them all the time and they are facts of life. Moreover, ordinary people have not yet accumulated enough Wisdom Perfection to know any better. We are too concerned about earning a living and the idea of leaving the round of rebirth cannot be further from our minds.

## 5.6 Leaving the Householder's Life to Seek for True Happiness

One night in the palace there was music, singing, and dancing as usual except that Prince Siddhattha did not join in like he had done every night. He went to his bedchamber early that night. When he woke up in the middle of the night and looked at all the female retinue that were lovely during the day as they fell asleep in the great hall. Some women had their mouths open and they were drooling as their arms and legs lay on top of each other. Some were snoring. Some were sleep-talking. Some women's robes were undone. Our Bodhisatta thought, **"These women were beautiful when they were awake but now they don't look any different from the corpses which lie in the corpse-yard. The house-holder's life is indeed unbearably boring. One day these women will have to die and their once beautiful bodies will become food for the worms. Every life is impermanent and the passing time only brings life closer to death."** Prince Siddhattha picked up his dagger and left the castle to find his page Channa. Channa was told to saddle the royal steed Kanthaka. With a sense of deep longing, the prince went to Princess Yaso-dara's bedroom and saw her asleep holding their newborn son Rahula. He wanted to hold the infant but was afraid of waking the princess so he decided to tear himself away and left the princess' bedchamber. Prince Siddhattha subsequently left the palace on the royal steed Kanthaka with his page Channa.

As soon as the prince went outside the palace gate, Phya Mara Vasa-vati, who was evil personified and would do what he could to obstruct good deeds, appeared to the prince and said, **"Prince Siddhattha, don't take up the religious life just yet, for in seven days you will become a Universal Monarch. You will possess stupendous wealth. Your retinue will be countless. You will be supremely happy as a Universal Monarch."** Prince Siddhattha said to Phya Mara, **"There's no point in trying to stop me, Phya Vasa-vati. I've already made up my mind. All the wealth of a Universal Monarch has absolutely no meaning for me if living beings still suffer endlessly. Get out of my way. I am determined to search for the way out of suffering."** At the prince's response, Phya Mara disappeared from sight instantly.

Near dawn, Prince Siddhattha arrived at the Anoma River. His merit-power caused the celestial beings from the different celestial realms to leave their celestial castles in order to descend to earth and make sure that the prince crossed the Anoma River safely. As soon as Prince Siddhattha was outside the border of Kapila-vastu City, he dismounted and went to sit on the white beach of the Anoma River's bank. He said to Channa, **"Channa, I will now take up the religious life and spend the rest of this life to search for the way out of suffering."** He immediately used the royal dagger to cut off his top-knot and threw it up into the air as he made a wish, **"If I can attain Enlightenment and become a Buddha, then let this top-knot not fall down to the ground. But if I can't succeed, then let it fall back down."**

Again, due to the prince's merit-power, celestial beings got hold of the top-knot and placed it on a diamond platter. When Prince Siddhattha saw that his severed top-knot still remained in the air and did not fall back down to earth, he was filled with tremendous joy and felt greatly encouraged.

At the same time, Ghata-kara, a Brahma Being from one of the Suddhavas realms appeared with a monk's requisites which included an alms-bowl, etc., and gave them to the prince. When Channa saw Prince Siddhattha wearing the saffron robe, he started to cry. Prince Siddhattha had been transformed into a homeless ascetic. He had abandoned a life of great luxury and ease to take up a life of renunciation instead. When the monk Siddhattha saw that Channa was crying, he said to Channa gently, "Channa, don't cry. I did not die. I merely changed my status from a prince to a monk in order to search for the truth about life. Now take my clothes and bring them back to Kapila-vastu. Tell my father and my aunt that after I've found the Higher Knowledge which leads to the end of suffering, I will go back to see them." Channa could only look at his beloved master's face with deep sadness before he bowed low at his master's feet and left. He led the royal steed Kanthaka away and went back in the same way that they came from except that they were returning without Prince Siddhattha.

The royal steed Kanthaka kept his eyes on his beloved master and kept looking back at his master until he could no longer see Prince Siddhattha. Struck with overwhelming grief which tore his heart asunder, the horse died and Channa had to return to the city of Kapila-vastu alone. The news of the prince's and Channa's disappearance spread throughout the city. Upon his return, Channa went to see King Suddhodana and told him everything that had happened.

Prince Siddhattha was surrounded with every sense-pleasure which included form, taste, smell, sound, and touch. He lived the life of ease and comfort afforded by his great material wealth. Whatever he wished was easily fulfilled. Having seen the four celestial messengers and in spite of his perfect householder's life, he suddenly became unbearably bored with everything worldly and wished only to search for Emancipation. He eventually decided to leave all of the material wealth, his beloved wife and son behind in order to search for the way to realize his most cherished aspiration which was Buddhahood. His resolve was such that it is like an arrow leaving the fully-drawn bow to seek out its target. Even Phya Mara could not entice him with the stupendous wealth of a Universal Monarch. His goal was Enlightenment and he was going to achieve it.

## **5.7 Life before Enlightenment**

Having decided to take up the religious life, our Bodhisatta felt relieved and free. This was the beginning of his earnest search for Emancipation. He went into the Mango Grove in the locality of 'A-nu-piya' to practice meditation. For seven days, he did not have anything to eat. It was only on the eighth day that he went to beg for alms in the city of Rajagaha of the Magadha Kingdom. Bimbisara, the king of the Magadha Kingdom, noticed our Bodhisatta's calm and composed manner and felt very impressed with him. Therefore, the king sent a page to find out what he could about the young monk. Having received his page's report, he came to have faith in the monk. He wanted to share his kingdom with the monk because he was mistaken that the monk Siddhattha, who was previously a prince, had taken up the religious

life as a result of a political conflict. However, the monk Siddhattha refused King Bimbisara's offer because he left the throne voluntarily. He promised King Bimbisara that he would return to save him as soon as he attained Buddhahood.

### **The Search for Teachers**

There were at the time many creeds in the kingdom of Magadha but there were two which were the most famous ones. The monk Siddhattha went to study under these creed leaders in the hope that they could point the way to Emancipation for him. First he went to study under the Yogi 'Alara Kalama-gotara'. It only took our Bodhisatta a short while to attain the Seven Meditative Attainments which included four Form Absorptions and three Non-Form Absorptions. The Yogi Alara had nothing higher to teach him. The monk Siddhattha knew that he had still not achieved what he was after; therefore, he went to study under the other famous creed leader, the Yogi 'Udaka Rama-putara'. There, it took our Bodhisatta a short while to attain all Eight Meditative Attainments. Once again, the Yogi Udaka had nothing higher to teach him.

### **Making the Decision to Search for the Truth on His Own**

When the monk Siddhattha realized that the Yogi Udaka could not help him achieve the way out of suffering, he decided to search for the way on his own. He had faith in his merit-power, in the predictions made by the learnt Brahmins when he was an infant, and in the fact that his severed top-knot never failed back to the ground.

Our Bodhisatta trekked to different places within the Magadha Kingdom until he arrived at the locality of Uruvela. It was a place which was very conducive to the practice of renunciation. It had nice woods and a river whose water was clean, clear and constantly flowing with a convenient landing. There were also houses nearby where he could beg for alms. Our Bodhisatta decided to stay in Uruvela.

It was in this place that our Bodhisatta came up with the three analogies which he had never known or heard from anyone before. These three analogies are as follows:

1. Any monk or ascetic whose body and mind are still involved in sense-desire; still satisfied with sense-desire, still attracted to sense-desire, still immersed in sense-desire, still thirsty for sense-desire, still experiencing the heat of sense-desire, still unable to abandon it, and still unable to quell it from within, such a monk or ascetic in spite of earnestly or not earnestly undergoing the severest forms of self-mortification, is not equipped to know and see the supreme Enlightenment. He is like a fresh log which is immersed in water. A man fetches the wet log with the intention of making kindling out of it with the hope of building a fire. He will not succeed, since the log is still fresh and sappy and has been soaked in water. The man will only waste his energy.
2. Any monk or ascetic whose body and mind are far away from sense-desire but is still satisfied with sense-desire, still attracted to sense-desire, still immersed in sense-desire, still thirsty for sense-desire, still experiencing the heat of sense-desire, still unable to abandon it,

and still unable to quell it from within, such a monk or ascetic in spite of earnestly or not earnestly undergoing the severest forms of self-mortification, is not equipped to know and see the supreme Enlightenment. He is like a fresh and sappy log which has been placed on dry land and away from water. A man fetches the log with the intention of making kindling out of it with the hope of building a fire. He will not succeed, since the log is fresh and sappy even though it has been placed on dry land and away from water. The man will only waste his energy.

3. Any monk or ascetic whose body and mind are far away from sense-desire; is not satisfied with sense-desire, is not attracted to sense-desire, is not immersed in sense-desire, is not thirsty for sense-desire, is not experiencing the heat of sense-desire, is able to abandon and quell it from within, such a monk or ascetic in spite of earnestly or not earnestly undergoing the severest forms of self-mortification is equipped to know and see the supreme Enlightenment. He is like a dry log which has been placed on dry land and away from water. A man fetches the log with the intention of making kindling out of it with the hope of building a fire. He will succeed in doing so because the log is completely dry and has been placed on dry land and away from water.

Once our Bodhisatta formed these three analogies, the thought of searching for Enlightenment through the practice of self-mortification occurred to him. He was attended to by the Five Ascetics because they thought that once the monk Siddhattha attained Enlightenment, he would teach them to do the same. Our Bodhisatta's practice of self-mortification proceeded as follows:

**During the First Period:** Our Bodhisatta pressed his upper teeth and lower teeth together as hard as he could while pressing his tongue against the roof of his mouth. The practice was so painful that sweat poured out of his armpits. Yet, no matter how much pain his body suffered, he was able to keep his mind composed. His mindfulness was intact and once he realized that it was not the way to attain Enlightenment he changed to a different method.

**During the Second Period:** Our Bodhisatta severely restricted the flow of his breath. When the air could not easily pass through his nose and mouth, it pressed against the inside of his ears until he suffered a tremendous headache. He also experienced a severe pain in his stomach. Yet, his mindfulness was intact and once he realized that it was not the way to attain Enlightenment he changed to a different method.

**During the Third Period:** Our Bodhisatta went through another extreme form of self-mortification by gradually starving his body by decreasing his food intake daily until he almost took nothing in. His body shriveled up. His complexion turned sallow. He became so thin that he was all skin and bones. When he ran his hand over his body, all the hair fell out. He was so emaciated and weak. Yet, his mindfulness was intact.

After having practiced these extreme forms of self-mortification, our Bodhisatta still could not attain Enlightenment and received only tremendous suffering. He thought, "Any monk or ascetic in the past, in the future, and in the present, who suffers great pain through the practice of self-mortification, cannot exceed what I have gone through. Yet, in spite of the tremendous suffering, I still cannot gain

the Higher Knowledge which is above and beyond human knowledge. Therefore, the practice of self-mortification cannot be the way to attain Enlightenment. There has to be some other way.”

Our Bodhisatta recalled the incident during the Planting Ceremony when he was still a child. He had been seated in the cool shade of the Java Plum tree. While he experienced the absence of sense-desire, and the absence of unwholesomeness, he was able to attain the First Absorption which was characterized by Vitaka (Initial Application), Vicara (Sustained Application), Piti (Joy), and Sukkha (Happiness). There was only Viveka (Seclusion). Therefore, our Bodhisatta decided that what he had experienced once in his childhood could be the way to attain Enlightenment. He posed himself a question, “Should I fear happiness which is derived from the absence of sense-desire, and the absence of unwholesomeness?” He gave himself an answer, “I do not fear that sort of happiness. However, that sort of happiness cannot be realized when the body is emaciated. I must first regain my strength and vitality by taking in food.” Therefore, our Bodhisatta began to take in food again as he started the practice of meditation.

The Five Ascetics, who had waited on our Bodhisatta for six years, misunderstood his change of conduct as abandoning the pursuit of Enlightenment and returning to the consumption of sense-pleasures. They lost their faith in our Bodhisatta and left him to go and live in the Deer Park in the city of Benares.

## **Conclusion**

The first part of the Lord Gautama Buddha's biography begins with our Bodhisatta's decease from the Tusita Realm and his rebirth in the womb of Queen Siri-maha-maya. The queen was a high-born lady who was pure in body, word, and thought. She was suitable to be our Bodhisatta's birth mother. Upon conceiving our Bodhisatta, the queen had an auspicious dream. She gave birth to a male infant who was complete with the special features of the Perfect Man. He performed a miracle by taking seven baby steps right after he was born and made the great pronouncement that he was the most superb being on earth and he would not be reborn again. It was the first indication that he would become enlightened as a Buddha. When the Yogi acquainted with the royal family saw the infant Bodhisatta and his sublime features, he bowed low at the infant's feet because he was certain that the infant would grow up to be a Buddha. Other learnt Brahmins had also made the same prediction. Our Bodhisatta's merit-power made it possible for the learnt sages to give an accurate prediction about his future.

King Suddho-dana listened to the prediction with some trepidation because he did not want his only son and heir to become a Buddha. He had tried to do everything to make sure that his son would carry on the royal lineage by keeping his son immersed in all forms of sense-pleasures. Yet, our Bodhisatta's great merit-power caused him to become bored with the householder's life as soon as he witnessed the four celestial messengers, he knew that it was time to go in search of the way out of suffering. He made the decision to leave the life of ease and comfort and his loved ones behind in order to search for the greatest happiness of all which was the way out of suffering. Even Phya Mara could not dissuade him from his decision to leave the householder's life.

When Prince Siddhattha took up the religious life, he felt a tremendous sense of relief. He went about immediately to search for Emancipation. Initially he had searched for wise teachers that could

help point the way to him but after having learnt everything from the teachers, he realized that he was still nowhere near what he was searching for. Therefore, he left his teachers to go in search of Emancipation on his own. He had tried the practice of extreme forms of self-mortification which was popular among the ascetics at the time. He had practiced self-mortification for six years to the point of nearly losing his life when he decided to practice the Middle Way.

Events leading up to this point indicated very clearly how our Bodhisatta was determined to do what he had been born to do, which was to become enlightened as a Buddha. In spite of difficulties, our Bodhisatta continued relentlessly with his pursuit. His great merit-power guided him through every endeavor and finally led him to the right path.

### **Exercises**

After having studied Chapter 5, the student should complete the test and the exercises provided in the workbook before beginning Chapter 6.



## CHAPTER 6

# THE LORD GAUTAMA BUDDHA'S MIDDLE YEARS

### TOPICS COVERED IN CHAPTER 6 THE LORD GAUTAMA BUDDHA'S MIDDLE YEARS

#### **6.1 Attaining Enlightenment**

#### **6.2 The First Dhamma Lecture**

#### **6.3 The Propagation of Buddhism**

- 6.3.1 The Dhamma Lecture Given to the Gentleman 'Yasa'
- 6.3.2 Sending His Perfected Disciples Out to Propagate Buddhism
- 6.3.3 Propagating Buddhism in the Locality of Uruvela
- 6.3.4 The Arrival of the Chief Disciples
- 6.3.5 Giving the Special Ovada-pati-mokkha Lecture
- 6.3.6 Saving Relatives in the City of Kapila-vastu
- 6.3.7 The Birth of Female Monks or Bhikkunis
- 6.3.8 Saving His Mother
- 6.3.9 Foretelling the Time of His Death

## CONCEPTS

1. The Lord Buddha's Teachings are relevant to every aspect of human life and can be practiced by every human being.
2. The Lord Buddha has discovered the natural law which governs existence; He has discovered the truth about life.
3. The Lord Buddha's Teachings can indeed lead humanity out of suffering; they are about cause and effect.
4. The Lord Buddha's conduct serves as the best role model for human and celestial beings.

## OBJECTIVES

1. To enable the student to get a clear picture of how our Bodhisatta had worked toward the attainment of Enlightenment.
2. To enable the student to know about the Lord Buddha's Teachings so that he/she can practice them in his/her daily life.
3. To enable the student to understand the way the Lord Buddha propagated Buddhism.

## THE LORD GAUTAMA BUDDHA'S MIDDLE YEARS

### Introduction

In Chapter 5 the student has learnt about how our Bodhisatta had pursued Perfections to the fullest extent and was waiting for the right time to become enlightened as a Buddha. When the right time came, celestial and Brahma beings went to entreat our Bodhisatta to cease to be from the Tusita Realm and to be reborn in the Human Realm for the specific purpose of becoming enlightened as a Buddha. Our Bodhisatta considered the Five Factors and found them to be in place; therefore he was reborn in the Human Realm as Prince Siddhattha. He had lived a life of ease and comfort for 29 years before he took up the religious life in order to search for the way out of suffering. He began by practicing self-mortification for six years but it did not lead him to Enlightenment. He eventually abandoned self-mortification and practiced the Middle Way instead. In this chapter, we will cover the Lord Buddha's middle years where He attained Enlightenment and spent many years teaching the Dhamma and propagating Buddhism up until the time He foretold His passing.

### 6.1 Attaining Enlightenment

After our Bodhisatta left the Yogis Alara and Udaka, he had gone in search of Emancipation on his own. It was in the locality of Uruvela that the three analogies occurred to him. Later he took up the practice of self-mortification but after six years of extreme endeavors, he still did not attain Enlightenment but had merely experienced tremendous physical suffering. He realized that there had to be some other way and he recalled the experience that he had as a child during the Planting Ceremony under the shade of the Java Plum tree. He thought that meditation practice could be the way to attain Enlightenment. At this juncture, our Bodhisatta heard the sound of a harp playing and it caused him to reflect that when the strings of the harp were strung too tight, they could break after being played for a time; if they were strung too loosely, not much sound could be produced; if they were strung at just the right tension, beautiful music can be produced. Therefore, he concluded that being just right or the Middle Way was the path which could lead to Emancipation. Having thus considered the situation, our Bodhisatta decided to give up self-mortification and resume eating. The Five Ascetics, who had remained close to our Bodhisatta for six years with the hope that after attaining Enlightenment our Bodhisatta could teach them to attain it as well, felt disillusioned and left him because they believed that our Bodhisatta had given up the cause. They went to live in the Deer Park.

On the morning of the Enlightenment Day, a woman by the name of Sujada, who was the daughter of a wealthy man in the locality of Uruvela, offered our Bodhisatta a very special rice pudding on a gold platter. After our Bodhisatta ate the rice pudding, he placed the gold platter in the river and made a deliberate wish, **“If I can attain Enlightenment today, then let this platter float against the current.”** Indeed, the gold platter did float against the current and the miraculous event made our Bodhisatta feel confident that he would definitely attain Enlightenment. Afterward, he went to rest inside the Shorea Grove. On that same evening he

made his way to the Bodhi Tree. On his way to the Bodhi Tree, he met a man named 'Sotthiya' who offered our Bodhisatta eight bunches of fresh grass with which our Bodhisatta made a seat for himself under the Bodhi Tree. As he prepared to go into meditation, he made a vow that his flesh and blood could dry up leaving only skin, tendons, and bones he would not leave the seat until he could attain Enlightenment. Celestial beings across the 10,000 universes rejoiced and sang 'Sadhu'.

At that time, Phya Mara and his army appeared with the intention of destroying our Bodhisatta's resolve. All the celestial beings, who had been rejoicing close by, fled to the edge of the universe leaving our Bodhisatta alone. However, our Bodhisatta was not perturbed by Mara and his army. He continued to remain seated under the Bodhi Tree as he recalled the Ten Perfections which he had pursued to the fullest extent at all three levels throughout 20 Asankheyyas and 100,000 Kappas. Finally, there was not a thing the Phya Mara and his army could do to deter our Bodhisatta and they retreated to their own abode. Once Phya Mara and his army retreated, our Bodhisatta continued with his meditation.

Initially he attained the First, Second, Third, and Fourth Form Absorptions followed by the First, Second, Third, and Fourth Non-Form Absorptions. He continued to meditate until during the first watch, he attained the Super-knowledge called 'Pubbe-nivasa-nussati-nana' where he could recall his previous existences. During the second watch, he attained the Super-knowledge called 'Cutu-papata-nana' where he could recall other beings' previous existences. During the third watch, he attained the Super-knowledge called 'A-savak-khayanana' where defilements in his mind were completely destroyed. Our Bodhisatta continued to contemplate his enlightened Knowledge until he became enlightened as the Buddha early the following morning. Since the Lord Buddha is free from defilements, He is called 'A-ra-han'; since the Lord Buddha is self-enlightened, He is called 'Samma-sam-buddho'

Immediately after Enlightenment, our Lord Buddha felt so blissfully joyous that he uttered, **"I was looking for a craftsman, a house-builder that represents craving; when I couldn't see him, I had to undergo the round of rebirth for a long time. Frequent rebirth means frequent suffering. Behold, house-builder, I see you now. You can no longer build any more houses from now on, for all of your ribs I've broken; the attic of the house, I have already destroyed; my mind has attained the Unconditioned or Nibbana; I have reached the end of craving."** Afterward, the Lord Buddha continued to meditate and considered the Dhamma as follows:

**In the First Week:** Our Lord Buddha thought, "I've spent four Asankheyyas and 100,000 Kappas working for this very throne. I've cut off my head in exchange for knowledge countless times for this very throne. I've gouged my eyes out, I've pulled out my heart, I've given away my son Jali, my daughter Kanha-jina, and my wife Madri to be someone else's slaves for this very throne. This is the throne of victory. This is my sublime throne. Until my contemplation is complete, I will not rise from this throne." Our Lord Buddha spent the following seven days in meditative bliss. Therefore, the seat is called '**The Bodhi Throne.**'

**In the Second Week:** After seven days of meditative bliss on the Bodhi Throne, our Lord Buddha left it and went toward the northeastern direction to look at the great Bodhi Tree for seven days. This area is called **‘The A-ni-misa Cetiya’**.

**In the Third Week:** Our Lord Buddha created a place for doing walking meditation in between the great Bodhi Tree and the A-ni-misa Cetiya. He did His walking meditation facing the north of the Bodhi Tree for seven days. This area is called **‘The Precious Place for Doing Walking Meditation’**.

**In the Fourth Week:** Our Lord Buddha considered the Higher Doctrine (the A-bhi-dhamma) in the crystal pavilion created for Him by celestial beings. It was located to the northwestern direction of the great Bodhi Tree. He considered His enlightened Knowledge there for seven days. This area is called **‘The Precious Ghara Cetiya’**.

**In the Fifth Week:** Our Lord Buddha went to sit and meditate under the banyan tree for seven days. There a Brahmin who had the habit of shouting at others by saying ‘Huh, huh’ came to ask our Lord Buddha about the virtues which made one a Brahmin, and the Lord Buddha gave him an answer.

**In the Sixth Week:** Our Lord Buddha went to sit and meditate under the Barringtonia tree. At the time dark rain clouds were forming; therefore, the Phya Naga ‘Muca-linda’ coiled his body around the Lord Buddha’s seat and spread his hood to protect our Lord Buddha from the heat, the sun, the wind, and the rain. After seven days, the Phya Naga transformed himself into a young man and came to pay a deep homage to the Lord Buddha.

**In the Seventh Week:** Our Lord Buddha went to sit and meditate under the Spanish Cherry tree. He was immersed in meditative bliss there for seven days. At the end of the 49<sup>th</sup> day, King Sakka offered our Lord Buddha some T. citrine fruits. It is a type of herbs.

**It was in this place that the Four Great Kings offered our Lord Buddha a stone alms-bowl. It was in this place that the first pair of lay devotees appeared. Their names were ‘Tapussa’ and ‘Bhallika’.** They were brothers and merchants and they offered our Lord Buddha Sattu rice in both the lump and powder forms. They vowed to be lay devotees and to take refuge in the Lord Buddha and the Dhamma. At the time there were not yet any Buddhist monks or Sangha.

## **6.2 The First Dhamma Lecture**

At the end of the seventh week, our Lord Buddha emerged from meditative bliss and went from the Spanish Cherry tree to the Barringtonia tree. He was concerned that His enlightened Knowledge was so profound that people would have great difficulty in seeing and knowing it. The Dhamma was profound, elaborate, and refined and only wise sages could penetrate it. If He were to teach the Dhamma, people would not be able to penetrate it. In that case, He would only be wasting His time and effort. At that point, our Lord Buddha was inclined to be reserved and

not wishing to teach the Dhamma to other beings<sup>1</sup>. The Brahma king, 'Saham-bodi' understood our Lord Buddha's reserve and hastened to come and entreat our Lord Buddha to teach the Dhamma to all living beings. Out of His boundless compassion, our Lord Buddha decided to agree to the Brahma king's request. He employed the Buddha-Insight to scan human beings and find them to belong to four main types which could be compared to four types of lotuses.

1. **U-ga-ghati-tannu:** Human beings that possess high intelligence and can understand the Dhamma just by listening to the topic. These are like lotuses that have risen above the water and will bloom as soon as they receive the sun's rays.
2. **Vipaci-tannu:** Human beings that possess medium intelligence and can understand the Dhamma once the topic of the Dhamma has been elaborated upon. These are like lotuses on the surface of the water which will bloom in the next morning.
3. **Neyaya:** Human beings that can be instructed and can be taught and trained to gain some understanding of the Dhamma. These are like lotuses underneath the water surface which will bloom in the next few days.
4. **Pada-parama:** Human beings that possess low intelligence and can be taught to know the topic, the words, the alphabets of the Dhamma but cannot understand its meaning. These are like lotuses that are buried in the mud and will become food for fish and turtles.

Once our Lord Buddha made the decision to teach the Dhamma, He considered the people that would be worthy to hear the first Dhamma lecture. He thought about the Yogi Alara Kalamagotara. He was a sage who could quickly penetrate the Dhamma. But when He checked with His Dhammakaya-Eye, He found out that the Yogi died only seven days earlier. Next, He thought about the Yogi Uddaka Rama-putara but the Yogi had also just died the evening before. He then thought about the Five Ascetics and decided to give His first Dhamma lecture to them.

Early the next morning, our Lord Buddha went to the Deer Park where the Five Ascetics were living at the time. On the way there, He met an ascetic by the name of U-paka. He did not believe that our Lord Buddha was self-enlightened. Upon our Lord Buddha's arrival at the Deer Park, the Five Ascetics saw him and agreed among themselves not to make Him welcome because they still felt disappointed that He had abandoned the practice of self-mortification. However, due to the vast amount of merit that they had accumulated together with our Lord Buddha in previous existences, they could not help themselves but eagerly got

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<sup>1</sup> According to the book about the highly venerated monk Guna-nanda who revived Buddhism in Sri Lanka, he said, "The fact is every Lord Buddha is inclined to save all beings. At the time our Lord Gautama Buddha was merely considering the fact that the Dhamma was so profound that it was difficult to teach it to others because living beings harbored craving in that they desired to have, they desired to be. They were so used to craving and they never stopped. To teach them to stop would be most difficult. Yet, our Lord Buddha never felt discouraged about teaching the Dhamma. The reason the Brahma king came to entreat our Lord Buddha to teach the Dhamma is that it was a customary practice. This happens with every Buddha. It is like when we offer alms to the Sangha, we need a master of ceremonies to officiate the offering. Of course, we can make the offering without the master of ceremonies but it generally is not done that way. In the same manner, the Brahma king was doing the job of a master of ceremonies.

up to welcome Him as soon as He came near them. They were also willing to listen to our Lord Buddha.

Our Lord Buddha gave the Five Ascetics the first Dhamma lecture which is called 'The Dhammacak-kappa-vattana Sutta'. The occasion coincided with the 15<sup>th</sup> day of the 8<sup>th</sup> waxing moon. The Sutta deals with the two extremes which one should not practice but that one should practice the Middle Way which includes the Noble Eightfold Path. The Noble Eightfold Path in turn leads to the truth about life which is called the Four Noble Truths. In this first Dhamma lecture, the ascetic Kondanna was able to attain the Path of Stream-Entrance or Sota-patti-magga. When the Lord Buddha realized this fact, He uttered, "Annasi vata bho Kondanna" and ordained Kondanna in a supernormal ordination which is called 'E-hi-bhikku-u-pa-sampada' by saying, **"Let you become a monk. Practice what I teach you and practice chastity in order to put an end to suffering."** Soon afterward, the rest of the ascetics which included Vappa, Bhaddiya, Maha-nama, and Assaji also attained the Path of Stream-Entrance. They were also given the 'E-hi-bhikku-u-pa-sampada' Ordination by the Lord Buddha. After their ordination, our Lord Buddha gave another Dhamma lecture called the 'A-natta-lakkhana Sutta' which say that the Five Aggregates are impermanent and should not be adhered to. Such understanding can lead to the end of defilements. At the end of this Dhamma lecture, the former Five Ascetics attained Arahatship and became Arahats.

### **6.3 The Propagation of Buddhism**

After the first Dhamma lecture, the Triple Gem came into existence and Buddhism appeared on earth once again to benefit all living beings by revealing to us the truth about life and the way to be emancipated from the round of rebirth. It also attests to the fact that the Dhamma can be directly experienced by everyone in the same way as the former Five Ascetics. It also shows that everyone should study the Dhamma in order to form Right View and see the round of rebirth for what it really is.

At the time there were five monks to bear witness to our Lord Buddha's Enlightenment, yet five monks were hardly enough to propagate Buddhism in a land which was replete with so many different creeds. Next, our Lord Buddha had to amass a Dhamma army in order to save as many human beings as possible from false beliefs. To this end, He had to gather as many witnesses to His Enlightenment as possible.

#### **6.3.1 The Dhamma Lecture Given to the Gentleman 'Yasa'**

At that time, there was a gentleman by the name of 'Yasa'. He was the son of a wealthy man living not too far away from the Deer Park. He had grown tired of the householder's life and decided to go into the Deer Park. As he did so, he kept muttering, "This place is chaotic. This place is filled with obstacles." As he walked past our Lord Buddha's abode, He heard Yasa's utterance and said, "This place is not chaotic.

This place is not filled with obstacles. Come hither and I will give you a Dhamma lecture.” ‘Yasa’ did as he was told and our Lord Buddha gave him a Dhamma lecture called, the ‘A-nu-puba-bikatha’ followed by the Four Noble Truths. At the end of the lecture, Yasa became a Stream-Enterer.

The next morning, Yasa’s father was out looking for him and heard the same Dhamma lecture from the Lord Buddha. Yasa listened to the Dhamma lecture for the second time and attained Arahatsip. He was given the ‘**E-hi-bhikku-u-pa-sampada**’ Ordination by the Lord Buddha. Yasa’s father attained Stream-Entrance and vowed to be a lay devotee. Later, Yasa’s mother and former wife had the opportunity to listen to our Lord Buddha’s Dhamma lecture and vowed to become lay devotees. They requested the Triple Gem to be their refuge. Some time later, the monk Yasa’s 54 friends heard about his ordination and came to see him. They listened to the same Dhamma lecture from our Lord Buddha and attained Arahatsip. As a result, there were altogether 61 Arahats at the time.

### **6.3.2 Sending His Perfected Disciples Out to Propagate Buddhism**

The fact that ‘Yasa’ became a Buddhist monk proved highly beneficial to Buddhism because he had many friends. The increased number of monks especially when they were all Arahats made it possible for the work of propagating Buddhism to begin. Our Lord Buddha deemed it fit to send out His Perfected Disciples to propagate Buddhism far and wide. Before they left, our Lord Buddha said to them,

**“Behold, monks, I’ve been emancipated from all bonds be they celestial or human. All of you are also emancipated from all bonds be they celestial or human. You should trek everywhere for the benefits and happiness of the masses, for the sake of the world, for the benefits and happiness of celestial and human beings alike. No two of you should take the same road. Let your Dhamma lectures be lovely in the beginning, in the middle, and in the end. Proclaim the practice of chastity. Let your lectures be perfect and pure with alphabets and contents. There are indeed beings that have a small amount of dust in their eyes and are low in defilements. They are in need of the Dhamma. There are also some that can penetrate the Dhamma.”**

As a result of our Lord Buddha’s and the Arahats’ efforts, many people came to have faith in Buddhism. More and more men ordained as Buddhist monks and Buddhism was successfully propagated as in the case of what happened in the locality of Uruvela.

### **6.3.3 Propagating Buddhism in the Locality of Uruvela**

On His way to the locality of Uruvela, our Lord Buddha went to rest under a great tree. Thirty men passed by and asked our Lord Buddha, “Have you seen a prostitute pass by this way?” Our Lord Buddha answered, “Do you wish to search for the female thief or for yourself?” The men answered, “We’d rather search for ourselves, Lord.” The Lord Buddha gave them a Dhamma lecture which consisted of the ‘A-nu-pubba-bigatha’ and

the Four Noble Truths, and the men attained the first stage of holiness which is Stream-Entrance. They were given the ‘E-hi-bhikku-u-pa-sampada’ Ordination by our Lord Buddha. Our Lord Buddha continued to teach the Dhamma to the new monks until they finally attained Arahatship. It meant that at the time there were altogether 90 Arahats in the world.

Our Lord Buddha continued on His way to Uruvela to save the three ascetic brothers who practiced fire-worshipping. The eldest brother’s name was Uruvela-kassapa, he had a retinue of 500. The middle brother’s name was Nadi-kassapa, he had a retinue of 300. The youngest brother’s name was Gaya-kassapa, he had a retinue of 200. The Lord Buddha had to work a total of 16 miracles before the ascetic brothers and their 1,000 attendants could be converted. They asked to be ordained and were given the ‘E-hi-bhikku-u-pa-sampada’ Ordination by our Lord Buddha. Afterward, our Lord Buddha gave them a Dhamma lecture called the ‘A-ditta-pari-yaya Sutta’ which had to do with the six external sense objects and the six internal sense objects and how they were fiery. By the end of the lecture, the three former ascetics and their attendants attained Arahatship.

Later, our Lord Buddha went to the city of Rajagarh in the company of the new Arahats in order to teach the Dhamma to King Bimbisara and the wealthy Brahmins of the Magadha Kingdom. They were all wondering in their minds that between Uruvela-kassapa and the Lord Buddha, who was the superior of the two. The Lord Buddha knew their thought and wished to let the people know the truth so He said to Uruvela-kassapa, “Behold, Uruvela-kassapa, you used to be the teacher of the fire-worshipping ascetics, what made you abandon your fire-worshipping practice?” The Arahats Uruvela-kassapa answered, “All sacrificial offerings admire form, sound, smell, taste and women as being desirable. I know now that these things are laden with contaminants; therefore, I no longer take pleasure in worshipping fire.” The Lord Buddha asked him another question, “Behold, Kassapa, your mind no longer takes delight in the form, sound, smell, and taste; what then do you take delight in? Do you take delight in the celestial realm or the human realm?” The Arahats Uruvela-kassapa answered, “I have experienced the peaceful path which is devoid of burden and worries. It is unattached to the Sense-Sphere. It is changeless. It is not suggested by others. Therefore, I no longer take delight in worshipping fire. The Arahats rose from his seat and bowed low at the Lord Buddha’s feet as he said, “The Most Exalted One is my Master and I am your disciple.” The incident proved to King Bimbisara and the wealthy Brahmins that their venerated teacher came to regard the Lord Buddha as his master; therefore, they too came to believe in the Lord Buddha.

On this occasion, the Lord Buddha gave the Dhamma lecture which consisted of the ‘A-nu-paba-bigatha’ and the Four Noble Truths. King Bimbisara and 11,000 attendants attained Stream-Entrance and another 10,000 attendants took the Triple Gem as their refuge. King Bimbisara and his attendants became lay devotees. They offered food and other alms to the Sangha<sup>2</sup> which consisted of 1,000 Arahats and presided over by the Lord Buddha. Being concerned that the masses should learn the Dhamma and wishing

<sup>2</sup> **Sangha** means more than four Bhikkus or Buddhist monks.

to provide the Lord Buddha and the Arahats a place to stay, King Bimbisara had a monastery built within the Bamboo Grove. This is considered the first Buddhist temple in the world.

There were two reasons that our Lord Buddha went to the locality of Uruvela. One was to fulfill the promise He had given King Bimbisara earlier when He first took up the religious life. Two was to establish Buddhism in the city of Rajagarh, which was a prosperous city and the center of many creeds. However, to establish Buddhism in a place where so many different creeds had flourished was not an easy task and it sometimes called for the Lord Buddha to first convert the creed leaders especially someone like the former ascetic Uruvela-kassapa who was considered to be the most venerated of all the creed leaders at the time and even King Bimbisara had a great respect for him.

It was for these reasons that the Lord Buddha went to save Uruvela-kassapa first. His conversion was instrumental to the quick establishment of Buddhism in the city of Rajagarh. Since Rajagarh was a trading center and frequented by many people from other parts of the kingdom, Buddhism could be easily spread to the rest of the kingdom.

#### **6.3.4 The Arrival of the Chief Disciples**

The propagation of Buddhism by the Lord Buddha and His Perfected Disciples enabled many people from different places to be converted to Buddhism and many men were ordained as Buddhist monks. It was through the Arahats Assaji that the future Chief Disciples came to know Buddhism. At the time, these future Chief Disciples namely Phra Sari-putra and Phra Maha Mogga-lana had subscribed to another belief. Their former names were U-pa-tissa and Kolita. These two men were close friends and each had a retinue of 250. They lived in the city of Rajagarh and took up the religious life under a creed leader by the name of 'Sanjaya'. They had learnt everything from their master and still could not find what they were searching for.

Therefore, they promised each other that they would go their separate ways to look for a teacher who could tell them the real truth about life and whoever found the teacher first would tell the other about it. Finally U-pa-tissa met the Arahats Assaji one day and was very impressed by the Arahats. U-pa-tissa approached the Arahats Assaji and asked, "Who is your master and what does he teach?" The Arahats Assaji answered, "Any phenomenon which has a cause, my Master teaches about the causes of those phenomena and the end of the phenomena. These are what my Master teaches." As a result of the Wisdom Perfection which U-pa-tissa had accumulated over countless lifetimes, he was able to attain Stream-Entrance just by hearing the Arahats Assaji's answer. He hastened to find his friend Kolita so that he could share the Dhamma with him. Upon hearing it, Kolita too attained Stream Entrance.

The two men went to tell their master Sanjaya about the news but Sanjaya was indifferent to it. Therefore, the two men along with their retinue left and went to see the Lord Buddha. They wished to be ordained so they were given the 'E-hi-bhikkhu-u-pa-

sampada' Ordination by the Lord Buddha. Some time later, both monks attained Arahatship and the Lord Buddha gave them a new name to honor their respective mothers. U-pa-tissa was given the name Sari-putra because his mother's name was Sari. Kolita was given the name Mogga-lana because his mother's name was Moggali. Later still, the Lord Buddha named them His Chief Disciples.

### 6.3.5 Giving the Special Ovada-pati-mokkha Lecture

Initially, all of the Lord Buddha's disciples were Arahats. As soon as the monks attained Arahatship, they went their separate ways in order to propagate Buddhism. They went far and wide. On the 15<sup>th</sup> day of the 3<sup>rd</sup> waxing moon, a miraculous event took place in that all 1,250 Perfected Disciples came as one to the Velu-vana Temple without any prior arrangement. This coming together of the Perfected Disciples on this occasion is called '**Catu-ronga-sanni-pata**' because it was characterized by four factors as follows:

1. It was the Uposatha Day (Buddhist Holy Day): the 15<sup>th</sup> day of the 3<sup>rd</sup> waxing moon.
2. The monks came together without any prior arrangement.
3. All of the monks were Arahats.
4. They were all given the 'E-hi-bhikku-u-pa-sampada' Ordination by the Lord Buddha.

On this very special occasion, the Lord Buddha gave them the Ovada-pati-mokkha Lecture which contains the heart of Buddhism and the policy by which Buddhism should be propagated. This lecture was provided as a guideline to enable the Sangha or Buddhist monks to practice accordingly. The contents of the lecture consist of three parts as follows:

1. The ideal or the highest aim in life: patience, Nibbana is most excellent, any monk who harms or hurt others is not a Buddhist monk.
2. The Buddhist way of life means the abandonment of all misdeeds, the performance of all wholesomeness, and keeping the mind clear and bright.
3. The means to achieve the Buddhist Ideal and the Buddhist way of life is by abstaining from maligning others, from hurting others; by being cognizant of the Pati-mokkha; by knowing moderation when it comes to food; by choosing to sit and lie down in quiet places and by practicing mental discipline (meditation).

The Ovada-pati-mokkha Lecture has been given by every previous Buddha. The only differences are the number of times the meeting is held and the number of the attending Arahats. We can see that the method of propagation is the same for every Buddha in that the first group of Arahats or Perfected Disciples is trained to be good role models before they are sent out to propagate Buddhism. Afterward, when the Arahats come to see the Lord Buddha together, they are given the policy for propagating Buddhism so that they can lead living beings out of the ocean of suffering and into Nibbana.

### 6.3.6 Saving Relatives in the City of Kapila-vastu

Ever since Prince Siddhattha took up the religious life when he was 29 years old, King Suddho-dana had kept himself informed of all the news about the prince. Certain celestial beings sent him news from time to time even during the prince's practice of self-mortification. Later, King Suddho-dana was informed that Prince Siddhattha had become enlightened as the Buddha. At the time, our Lord Buddha was staying in the Velu-vana Temple in the city of Rajagarh; therefore, King Suddho-dana sent a minister along with a retinue of 1,000 to request the Lord Buddha to pay a visit to the city of Kapila-vastu. King Suddho-dana had sent altogether 9,000 envoys but none reported back to him. The reason was that whenever each group of envoys arrived and had the opportunity to listen to our Lord Buddha's Dhamma lecture, every envoy attained Arahatsip and ordained as a Buddhist monk. The royal message was therefore never delivered. Finally, King Suddho-dana had to ask Kalu-dayi, the minister who had been born on the same day as our Lord Buddha to invite the Lord Buddha to visit Kapila-vastu. He made Kalu-dayi promise that whether or not he would become ordained, he had to report back to the king. Kalu-dayi and a retinue of 1,000 heard the Lord Buddha's Dhamma lecture and attained Arahatsip. They were given the 'E-hi-bhikkhu-pa-sampada' Ordination by the Lord Buddha.

The Arahat Kalu-dayi waited for the right time to say to the Lord Buddha, "Most Exalted One, King Suddho-dana wishes to see you. May it please the Most Exalted One to go and save the royal relatives." Our Lord Buddha agreed to go and left the city of Rajagarh along with 20,000 disciples for the city of Kapila-vastu. The trip took two months.

When our Lord Buddha arrived at Kapila-vastu, He knew that His relatives' stubborn pride prevented them from paying proper homage to Him. Therefore, He worked the 'Yamaka Miracle' in order to destroy their stubborn pride. Being in complete awe of the miracle, King Suddho-dana paid homage to our Lord Buddha at the same time that all the relatives lost their stubborn pride and went down on their knees to bow low at the Lord Buddha's feet. At that moment there fell a special rain called 'Boka-khara-passa'<sup>3</sup>. On that occasion, our Lord Buddha told His relatives about His previous existence as Phra Vessan-dara.

The next morning, our Lord Buddha and the disciples went into the city to allow the people to make merit by offering them food as alms. King Suddho-dana heard about the alms-round and came to ask the Lord Buddha to stop, since begging for alms was not the practice of royalty. Our Lord Buddha gently said to the king, "I am no longer a royalty. I've taken up the religious life to follow in the footsteps of the previous Buddhas. I belong to the Buddha-Lineage and it has been every Buddha's practice to beg for alms." Our Lord Buddha then gave the king a Dhamma lecture, at the end of which King Suddho-dana attained the Fruit of the Once-Returner (Saka-dagami). King Suddho-dana

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<sup>3</sup> This special rain will only wet those who wish to be wetted; others will remain dry.

then carried the Lord Buddha's alms-bowl and requested the Lord Buddha and His disciples to take their meal in the palace.

Having established King Suddho-dana in the Fruit of the Once-Returner, our Lord Buddha went to save Princess Yaso-dhara-bimba (His former wife) and Prince Rahula (His son). On this occasion, our Lord Buddha had Prince Rahula ordained as a novice monk. He also had Prince Nanda follow Him back to the city of Rajagarh and Prince Nanda ordained as a monk there.

After the Lord Buddha left the city of Kapila-vastu, He went to stay overnight in the locality of 'A-nu-piya' of the kingdom of 'Malla'. There, six Sakya princes and a barber by the name of U-pali requested to be ordained. The names of the princes were Bhaddiya, A-nu-ruddha, Ananda, Bhagu, Kimbila, and Devadat. Phra Ananda eventually became our Lord Buddha's personal assistant.

From this point on Buddhism continued to flourish. Kings and people from different kingdoms became Buddhists. One very important Buddhist was the millionaire 'Sudatta' but was more frequently referred to by the people as 'A-natha-pindika'. He met the Lord Buddha in the city of Rajagarh and became a fervent devotee. He had a Buddhist temple built in the city of Savatthi of the Kosala Kingdom. The king of Kosala by the name of 'Pasendi-kosala' became a lay devotee and Buddhism flourished in the Kosala Kingdom.

In the city of Vesali of the Vajji Kingdom which was adjacent to King Bimbisara's Magadha Kingdom, there were also a large number of Buddhists. Once when the city of Vesali encountered a natural disaster where a large number of people starved to death and there were corpses everywhere. The stench of the corpses attracted non-humans<sup>4</sup> to enter the city and wreak havoc in the city by causing more people to die from an epidemic. Royalties of the House of 'Licchavi' requested our Lord Buddha to come to the city. As soon as He stepped inside the city border on the bank of the Ganges which was adjacent to the Magadha Kingdom, a torrential rain fell. The water flushed all the corpses down the Ganges and the ground was cleansed.

The Lord Buddha stood near the city gate and told Phra Ananda to chant the 'Ratana Sutta' and invoke the virtues of the Triple Gem as he went along the city wall to rid the city of the scourge of epidemic and drought. Phra Ananda also sprinkled sacred water all over the city and on the 'Licchavi' rulers. As soon as Phra Ananda began chanting the 'Ratana Sutta' with the words '**Yankinci**', all the non-humans fled the city and all the problems began to disappear. The masses came out to pay homage to the Lord Buddha with flowers and scented items. The Lord Buddha taught the 'Ratana Sutta' to celestial and human beings for seven additional days. At the end of the seventh day, peace and happiness were restored for the rulers and the people.

<sup>4</sup> These are the low-born Yakkhas or ogres that may at times feed on human beings.

### 6.3.7 The Birth of Female Monks or Bhikkunis

Queen Maha-paja-bodi, who was the Lord Buddha's aunt, wished to ordain and had very hurt and decided to shave her head and put on a saffron robe at any rate. She took up the religious life together with many female royalties from different kingdoms. They set out on foot and went to the Lord Buddha's dwelling to ask for permission to ordain once again.

When they reached the gate of the monastery, they were greeted by Phra Ananda. When Phra Ananda learnt about their plight, he volunteered to ask the Lord Buddha on their behalf. Phra Ananda did ask the Lord Buddha's permission to allow women to ordain and thrice, the permission was not given. Finally Phra Ananda asked,

“If a woman takes up the religious life, practices meditation until she can attain the Inner Dhamma, is well-versed in the Lord Buddha's Teachings, can this woman ordain, Most Exalted One?”

The Lord Buddha said, “Of course, Ananda.”

Phra Ananda said, “If so, then pray give permission for Queen Paja-bodi to ordain.”

The Lord Buddha said, “Ananda, I have not permitted women to ordain because if I do then the Dhamma-Discipline will not last long. However, I will legislate Eight Garu-Dhamma which will act like a retaining wall that prevents the water from overflowing the lake. If she accepts these Garu-Dhamma, then she can ordain.”

After Phra Ananda learnt the Eight Garu-Dhamma, he went to explain them to Queen Paja-bodi. The queen was overjoyed and happily agreed to practice the Eight Garu-Dhamma. These Eight Garu-Dhamma are as follows:

1. A Bhikkuni may have ordained for 100 years but will have to pay respect to a Bhikku who has ordained for just one day.
2. A Bhikkuni does not spend the Rains-Retreat in any monastery which has no Bhikkus.
3. A Bhikkuni must study the Dhamma on the Uposatha Day and seek the Bhikku-Sangha's advice every half-a-month.
4. After the Rains-Retreat, a Bhikkuni must Pavarana; that is, must be willing to receive admonition from both the Bhikkuni-Sangha and the Bhikku-Sangha<sup>5</sup>.
5. Once a Bhikkuni commits an offence, she must confess the offence to both the Bhikkuni-Sangha and the Bhikku-Sangha.

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<sup>5</sup> **Bhikku** means a male monk. **Bhikkuni** means a female monk. **Sangha** means more than four monks.

6. A Bhikkuni must seek the ordination of a female novice who has completed a probationary period of two years from both the Bhikkuni-Sangha and the Bhikku-Sangha.
7. A Bhikkuni must never vilify a monk.
8. A Bhikkuni is forbidden to teach a Bhikku but a Bhikku can teach a Bhikkuni.

From that point on, the Lord Buddha had given permission for Bhikkus to ordain Bhikkunis and that was how Bhikkunis had their birth.

### **6.3.8 Saving His Mother**

After the Lord Buddha worked the ‘Yamaka Miracle’ to convert other cult leaders and the people of the city of Savatthi, He went to the Tavatimsa Realm to spend the Rains-Retreat and save His mother there. Our Lord Buddha was seated on King Sakka’s celestial throne under the celestial Pari-chatta Tree. He was surrounded by King Sakka and many high-ranking celestial beings. Our Lord Buddha’s birth mother came down from the Tusita Realm to preside over the celestial assembly. The Lord Buddha taught the Seven Canons of the Higher Doctrine (A-bhi-dhamma) to His birth mother and the celestial congregation.

When it came time to go on an alms-round, the Lord Buddha created an exact copy of Himself to continue giving the Dhamma lecture while He went to have His meal by the Anodat Lake in the celestial Himavanta Forest in the Catu-maha-rajika Realm. Our Lord Buddha said to Phra Sari-putra who was there to attend to Him, “Sari-putra, today I gave the Dhamma lecture called ‘Dhamma-sangani’ to my mother and all the celestial beings in the Tavatimsa Realm. Relay this Dhamma lecture to your 500 disciples.” Phra Sari-putra did as he was told and the Dhamma lecture made it possible for the 500 Bhikkus to attain the Dhamma.

The Lord Buddha spent the entire three months teaching the A-bhi-dhamma in the Tavatimsa Realm. At the end of this period, the Lord Buddha’s birth mother attained the Fruit of Stream-Entrance. At the end of the Rains-Retreat, the Lord Buddha departed from the Tavatimsa Realm and returned to earth at the city gate of Sankassa on Mahapava-rana Day which was the 15<sup>th</sup> day of the 11<sup>th</sup> waxing moon. The masses knew about His return through Phra Maha-mogga-lana. He and the masses waited for the Lord Buddha’s return in the city of Sankassa. On the way down, the Lord Buddha worked a most spectacular miracle by enabling all beings in the Three Spheres to see each other. On that occasion, the masses became believers and many beings aspired to Buddhahood. It was due to this most spectacular miracle that at the end of the Rains-Retreat every year, there will appear fiery orbs from the Mekong River which rise slowly into the sky. These fiery orbs are emitted by the Phya Nagas that witnessed the miracle on that day. They emit the fiery orbs as a token of worship to the Lord Gautama Buddha in remembrance of the day that He returned from the Tavatimsa Realm.

The events given above are but some examples of how Buddhism had spread far and wide all over India. The Lord Buddha had spent 45 years teaching the Dhamma. He encountered some obstacles but His Perfections made it possible for Him to establish Buddhism and many of those who initially opposed His Teachings became believers.

### **6.3.9 Foretelling the Time of His Death**

The Lord Buddha had worked very hard to propagate and establish Buddhism for 45 years in the midst of the many different creeds in India. By the time our Lord Buddha was 80 years old, His health began to suffer. Nonetheless, He continued to perform the duty of the Master Teacher until His very last breath.

For His last Rains-Retreat, our Lord Buddha went to stay in the village of 'Veluva' of the city of 'Vesali' and 'Vajji' Kingdom. He went to stay at the 'Pavala' Cetiya and Phra Ananda was by His side. There, our Lord Buddha had given Phra Ananda two opportunities to request Him to continue living in this world by saying, "Behold Ananda, the city of Vesali is pleasant. The 'U-den' Cetiya is pleasant. The 'Gota-maka' Cetiya is pleasant. The 'Sattamba' Cetiya is pleasant. The 'Saranda' Cetiya is pleasant. The 'Pavala' Cetiya is pleasant. Behold, Ananda, whoever practices the Four Paths of Accomplishment to the point where they practically assume the material form of a vehicle and continue to practice them always, behold, Ananda, that person if he wishes can live as long as an entire Kappa or beyond. Behold Ananda, I have practiced the Four Paths of Accomplishment until they become a vehicle as though they have a material form and continue to practice them always. Behold, Ananda, if I so wish, I can live for an entire Kappa or beyond." This saying is called 'Nimit-o-bhasa'

Although the Lord Buddha made the comment twice, Phra Ananda still could not understand what the Lord Buddha meant by the comment because the working of his mind was being deliberately blocked by Phya Mara. Therefore, he did not request the Lord Buddha to continue living in this world. Our Lord Buddha then told Phra Ananda to go and practice meditation. In the meantime, Phya Mara came to ask the Lord Buddha to attain complete Nibbana. Our Lord Buddha consented and determined in His mind that He would leave His physical body three months hence. As He did so, the ground trembled.

## **Conclusion**

The Lord Gautama Buddha's middle years demonstrate to us His resolve to do whatever necessary in order to become enlightened as a Buddha. He had practiced extreme forms of self-mortification for six whole years before He realized that it was not the way to attain Enlightenment. Nonetheless, He eventually found the way out of suffering.

He was not deterred by any obstacles not even Phya Mara's army. He continued to practice meditation until Phya Mara and the Mara army had to retreat. Finally, He was able to destroy

all defilements and attain Enlightenment. The lofty aspiration which He had worked toward since the existence that He swam in the sea carrying His mother on his back was finally realized.

His boundless compassion, which had been accumulated for countless lifetimes, caused Him to teach the Dhamma to the multitudes so that they would learn the truth about life and work their way out of suffering. For 45 years, the Lord Buddha had gone to different places in order to propagate Buddhism. He had taught living beings all His life and helped the masses to have faith in Buddhism and renounced their old beliefs.

The Dhamma or the Lord Buddha's Teachings are precious and infinitely powerful. Whoever practices according to the Dhamma will meet with happiness and prosperity in life and will eventually be able to destroy all of his inherent defilements. The Lord Buddha's enlightened Knowledge can be directly experienced by anyone. It is timeless. "sandit-thiko a-kaliko e-hi-passiko o-pana-yiko patcattan vedi-tabbo vinnuhi."

## **Exercises**

After the student finishes studying this chapter, take the test and complete the exercises provided in the workbook before proceeding to Chapter 7.



## CHAPTER 7

# THE LORD GAUTAMA BUDDHA'S FINAL YEARS

### TOPICS COVERED IN CHAPTER 7 THE LORD GAUTAMA BUDDHA'S FINAL YEARS

#### **7.1 The Places where the Lord Buddha Visited before Attaining Complete Nibbana**

- 7.1.1 The Village of 'Bhanda'
- 7.1.2 The Story about 'Cunda Kammara-putra'
- 7.1.3 The Practices of the Four Buddhist Communities
- 7.1.4 Praising Phra Ananda and Giving Him a Dhamma Lecture
- 7.1.5 The History of the Town of 'Kusinara'

#### **7.2 The Last Perfected Disciple**

#### **7.3 The Lord Gautama Buddha's Final Words**

#### **7.4 The Attainment of Complete Nibbana**

#### **7.5 Events after the Lord Gautama Buddha's Complete Nibbana**

- 7.5.1 The Cremation
- 7.5.2 Distribution of the Holy Relics

## CONCEPTS

1. The Lord Buddha is our role model as far as the making of sacrifices is concerned. If He had not decided to take up the religious life, there can be no Dhamma today.
2. The Lord Buddha is the Master Teacher who can teach all beings to become emancipated from the round of rebirth.
3. The Lord Buddha had spent His time and efforts in establishing Buddhism.
4. The Lord Buddha did not appoint anyone to take His place but taught that the Dhamma would guide the conduct of Buddhists.

## OBJECTIVES

1. To enable the student to picture the way the Lord Buddha taught the Dhamma.
2. To enable the student to picture the life of a Buddhist in the Lord Buddha's time.
3. To enable the student to learn about the way Buddhism had been propagated before the Lord Buddha attained complete Nibbana.



## THE LORD GAUTAMA BUDDHA'S FINAL YEARS

### Introduction

In Chapter 6, the student has learnt about the way our great Bodhisatta resolutely put his life on the line in order to become enlightened as a Buddha. On the night of His Enlightenment, He had made a vow before He went into meditation. Phya Mara and his Mara army tried to destroy His concentration but due to His Perfections which had been pursued to the fullest extent for 20 Asankheyyas and 100,000 Kappas, Phya Mara and his Mara army had to finally retreat.

Eventually our Bodhisatta's lofty aspiration was fulfilled when he attained Buddhahood. After Enlightenment, our Lord Buddha spent all of His time performing all three duties of the Master Teacher. These include imparting benefits as a Buddha or '**Buddhattha-cariya**', imparting benefits to His relatives or '**Natattha-cariya**', and imparting benefits to all beings or '**Lokattha-cariya**'. He had performed these duties tirelessly for 44 years. In the last Rains-Retreat, although His health was failing, He still trekked everywhere to save as many beings as possible during the final days of His life.

In this chapter, the student will learn about **our Lord Buddha's final years** or '**Pacchim-kala**' and the final period of His teaching. The 'Perfect Man' body came to an end but His glorious Dhammakaya went to the land of eternal bliss which is Nibbana.

### 7.1 The Places Where the Lord Buddha Visited before Attaining Complete Nibbana

The Lord Buddha had expressed the 'Nimit-o-bhasa' to Phra Ananda for a total of 16 times to give Phra Ananda the opportunity to ask Him to continue living in this world but Phya Mara caused Phra Ananda not to comprehend what the Lord Buddha was saying. Finally, the Lord Buddha told Phra Ananda to go and practice meditation. In the meantime, Phya Mara approached the Lord Buddha and requested Him to attain complete Nibbana. This time, the Lord Buddha consented and determined that He would attain complete Nibbana three months hence. At the time, the ground trembled.

Phra Ananda witnessed the ground trembling and went in to ask the Lord Buddha about the causes of an earthquake. The Lord Buddha told Phra Ananda that earthquakes were caused by eight different events.

1. Behold Ananda, the landmass sits on water while water sits on air and air rests on space. Whenever there are gale-force winds, they can make the water move. Once the water moves, it causes the ground to move as well.

2. Behold Ananda, when a powerful celestial being, a monk or an ascetic, who possesses supernatural powers because of his mental expertise, practices lightly the 'Tathavi-sanna', and seriously the 'A-po-sanna', he can cause the ground to quake.
3. Behold Ananda, whenever a Bodhisatta ceases to be from the Tusita Realm and is reborn fully conscious in his mother's womb, the ground can quake.
4. Behold Ananda, whenever the fully conscious Bodhisatta comes out of his mother's womb, the ground can quake.
5. Behold Ananda, whenever a Bodhisatta attains Enlightenment, the ground can quake.
6. Behold Ananda, whenever the Buddha starts moving the Dhamma Wheel, the ground can quake.
7. Behold Ananda, whenever the fully conscious Buddha determines the time of His passing, the ground can quake.
8. Behold Ananda, whenever the Buddha attains complete Nibbana via 'A-nu-padi-sesa-nibbana-dhatu', the ground can quake.

When Phra Ananda heard about the eight reasons which could cause an earthquake, he immediately requested the Lord Buddha to continue living in this world but the Lord Buddha forbade him because it was too late and He could not go back on his word. The Lord Buddha then told Phra Ananda about the 16 times where He expressed the 'Nimit-o-bhasa' but its meaning eluded Phra Ananda. Afterward, the Lord Buddha called a meeting of the disciples and said to them,

**“Behold, monks, the Dhamma pertaining to the Fourfold Sati-patthana, the Fourfold Sammap-pathana, the Fourfold Iddhi-bada, the Fivefold Indriya, the Fivefold Bala, the Sevenfold Boja-jhonga, and the Eightfold Noble Path, I have already taught them to you for your edification.”** The Lord Buddha continued, **“All conditioned things must undergo decay. Let all of you make sure that you are never reckless, for soon I will attain complete Nibbana. In three months' time, I will attain complete Nibbana.”**

The Lord Buddha gave His disciples the following scriptural verse:

**“All human beings be they children, adults, fools, sages**

**rich, poor, all have death before them;**

**All earthenware small, large, baked, unbaked,**

**will eventually disintegrate;**

**So will every life.”**

### 7.1.1 The Village of ‘Bhanda’

The next morning, our Lord Buddha went on His alms-round in the town of Vesali. On the way back, He turned around to look at the town before He went with a large group of monks to the village of Bhanda. The Lord Buddha said to monks,

**“It was because we did not know about the Four Noble Dhamma which includes Precepts, Concentration, Insight, and Emancipation that you and I had had to wander aimlessly and endlessly. I have already penetrated the sublime Precepts, Concentration, Insight, and Emancipation, hence craving has been uprooted. The craving which leads to rebirth is gone. There will be no more rebirths for me.”**

### 7.1.2 The Story about ‘Cunda Kammara-putra’

From the village of Bhanda, the Lord Buddha went to the city of Bhoga by passing through the villages of Hatthi, Amba, and Jambu respectively. In the city of Bhoga, our Lord Buddha stayed at the Ananda Cetiya. There, He gave a lecture on the Fourfold Maha-padesa as a tool to analyze the Dhamma-Discipline. He also gave many lectures to all the monks.

Later, the Lord Buddha went to the town of Pava and stayed at the Mango Grove which belonged to a man called ‘Cunda Kammara-putra’. He requested the Lord Buddha and the monks to have a meal at his house the next day.

In the morning, when the Lord Buddha and the monks arrived at Cunda’s house, he offered them a dish which was called ‘Sukara-maddava’. The Lord Buddha told him to serve the dish to Him only and to bury the rest because only His body could digest the food. The Lord Buddha requested Cunda to serve other food to the monks.

After the Lord Buddha ate the ‘Sukara-maddava’, He fell gravely ill. He vomited blood and had a bloody diarrhea. He was near His time of passing. However, He was fully conscious and suffered His illness in silence. He said to Phra Ananda, “Ananda, I will go to the city of Kusinara.”

On the way, He rested at the foot of a tree by the road and asked Phra Ananda to fetch Him some water to drink. Phra Ananda said that the water was still muddy because 500 wagons had just passed by and asked the Lord Buddha to walk to the ‘Kakudha River’ which was not too far away. Our Lord Buddha had to make the same request thrice before Phra Ananda obeyed and fetched the water for Him. It turned out that when he did go to fetch water for the Lord Buddha it was clean and clear and Phra Ananda told the Lord Buddha about it.

After the Lord Buddha had a drink of water, a man called ‘Pukkusa Mallaputra’, who was a disciple of the Yogi Alara, had been travelling from Kusinara to the town of Pava. He saw the Lord Buddha at the foot of a tree and went in to pay Him homage. After he heard the ‘Santi-vihara’ Dhamma lecture from the Lord Buddha, he became a believer and requested the Triple Gem as his refuge. He made an offer of two pieces of the ‘Lingi-vanna’ cloth to the Lord Buddha. The Lord Buddha accepted one piece and told the man to offer the other piece to Phra Ananda.

After 'Pukkusa Mallaputra' left, Phra Ananda put the new cloth on our Lord Buddha. The cloth had the color of burning charcoals and made our Lord Buddha's perfect complexion glow beautifully. Phra Ananda complimented the Lord Buddha and the Lord Buddha said, "Ananda, there are two occasions that my complexion glows exceptionally gloriously: the night of my Enlightenment and the night of my passing into complete Nibbana via 'A-nu-padi-sesa-nibbana'."

"Ananda, in the last watch of this night, I will attain complete Nibbana between two sala trees in the Salavana Park belonging to the Malla rulers in the town of Kusinara. Come, Ananda, I will now go to the Kakudha River.

At the Kakudha River, the Lord Buddha had a drink of water and a bath before He continued on to the Mango Grove. There Phra Cundaka had covered the ground with a monk's robe so that the Lord Buddha could take a nap on it.

The Lord Buddha woke up from His nap and said to Phra Ananda, "Ananda, should in the future anyone give Cunda a hard time by saying that it was his food which caused the Lord Buddha to attain complete Nibbana, you must alleviate Cunda's anxiety by telling him that all the food which is offered as alms bears similar fruit. There are only two occasions which the food given as alms bears greater fruit: one is the food offered to me prior to my Enlightenment; two is the food offered to me before I attain complete Nibbana. The latter was offered by Cunda."

This is a moot point among the Buddhists and many cannot understand the reason for the Lord Buddha's concern for Cunda's feeling. Although everything about this incident was clearly recorded in the Tripitaka, here is a good opportunity to put the matter to rest.

The Lord Buddha had already pre-determined the time of His passing three months in advance. He had already been seriously ill before He had His last meal at Cunda's house. Our Lord Buddha's attainment of complete Nibbana was witnessed by Phra A-nu-ruddha who was recognized by the Lord Buddha as being most excellent in the area of Celestial Eye. Therefore, whatever the Lord Buddha ate, He would still pass away on that day. So instead of saying that the Lord Buddha attained complete Nibbana because He ate the 'Sukara-maddava' dish, one should say that the Lord Buddha had the 'Sukara-maddava' dish on the day that He attained complete Nibbana.

### **7.1.3 The Practices of the Four Buddhist Communities**

#### **To Worship the Lord Buddha**

After the Lord Buddha had a rest at the Mango Grove, He continued on to the Salavana Park which belonged to the Malla rulers in the town of Kusinara. He told Phra Ananda to make a place for Him to lie down between the two sala trees. Lying with His head toward the west, our Lord Buddha lied down for the last time on his right side (Sihaseyya).

At the time, although it was out of season, the sala trees bloomed profusely and the blooms fell on and about the Lord Buddha as a token of worship. At the time, the celestial Monda-raba blooms and celestial sandalwood powder also fell from the air on and all around our Lord Buddha as a token of worship. Celestial music was played to worship the Lord Buddha.

The Lord Buddha then said to Phra Ananda, “Members of the Buddhist Communities who practice appropriate virtues and worship me with this thing or something greater is not said to be paying me a true homage. However, any Bhikku, Bhikkuni, Upasaka, Upasika or anyone who practices the sublime Dhamma, who studies and practices according to the Dhamma, is said to pay me a true homage.”

### **Remembrances of the Lord Buddha**

At the time, Phra Ananda asked the Lord Buddha what could be used as remembrances of the Lord Buddha after He attained complete Nibbana. The Lord Buddha said, “Ananda, they are the Four Holy Places of Buddhism.

1. The birthplace of the Lord Buddha.
2. The place where the Lord Buddha attained Enlightenment.
3. The place where the Lord Buddha initiated the Dhamma Wheel.
4. The place where the Lord Buddha attained complete Nibbana.

These Four Holy Places of Buddhism are places that should be seen and thought of by the Buddhist Communities. Anyone who believes in the Lord Buddha and visits these places with a heart filled with faith is destined for the States of Happiness, the Celestial Realm.”

### **How a Bhikku Should Behave Toward a Woman?**

When asked this question by Phra Ananda, the Lord Buddha said,

1. It is good for a Bhikku not to look at a woman.
2. If a Bhikku must look at a woman, then it is appropriate not to say anything to her.
3. If a Bhikku must speak to a woman, he is to keep his mindfulness intact and not to be influenced by lust.

### **How Is the Lord Buddha’s Body To Be Treated?**

Phra Ananda asked the Lord Buddha as to how to treat His body. The Lord Buddha said, “Ananda, all of you shouldn’t be enthusiastic about worshipping my body but you should continue to practice what is beneficial to you; you should not be reckless where what is beneficial is concerned; you should endeavor to attain the ultimate of chastity. There are kings, Brahmins, and wealthy folk who have faith in me, let them be the ones to worship my body.” Due to his meticulous nature, Phra Ananda asked the Lord Buddha how the people should treat His body and the Lord Buddha answered that in the same manner as the Universal Monarch.

Phra Ananda asked the Lord Buddha what that manner was and the Lord Buddha said, "People wrap the Universal Monarch's body with a layer of new cloths, a layer of cotton-wool, and another layer of new cloths using 500 pairs of cloth altogether. Place the wrapped body in a gold casket and fill it with perfume. Place the gold casket inside another gold casket and put the casket on the pyre built from fragrant logs. Later, have a stupa built at a large intersection and place the Holy Relics inside it.

**The Lord Buddha also talked about the four types of individuals whose cremated remains should be housed inside a stupa.** These individuals are called collectively as 'Thupa-raha' and they include **the Lord Buddha, the Pacceka-Buddha, the Lord Buddha's Perfected Disciples<sup>1</sup>, and the Universal Monarch.**

#### **7.1.4 Praising Phra Ananda and Giving Him a Dhamma Lecture**

When the time of our Lord Buddha's attainment of complete Nibbana was at hand, Phra Ananda, who had not yet attained the higher stages of holiness, could not contain his grief. He went to be by himself and lamented the fact that for years he had been the Lord Buddha's personal assistant and yet he could not attain Arahatsip even when the Lord Buddha was about to depart from this world. When the Lord Buddha learnt of Phra Ananda's grief, He summoned Phra Ananda to His side and said, "Being parted from loved ones is the natural order of things. Everything that comes into being, has been conditioned, and will come to an end. Ananda, you have assisted me for so long physically, verbally, and mentally with loving-kindness and helpfulness which has given me immeasurable happiness that is second to none. You have already made great merit. Continue with your meditation practice and you will instantly be devoid of defilements." The Lord Buddha praised Phra Ananda for being the best personal assistant, for being a scholar, for being mindful and prudent, for being persistent, for having the wisdom to know the right time and place, and whoever was near Phra Ananda was pleased to hear and penetrate the Dhamma lectures which he gave. The person was joyful and wished to hear more.

#### **7.1.5 The History of the Town of 'Kusinara'**

After the Lord Buddha comforted Phra Ananda until he felt better, he asked the Lord Buddha to attain complete Nibbana in other cities such as Rajagarh, Savatthi, etc., because they were great and prosperous cities with wealthy Brahmins and wealthy folk. Moreover, they were all Buddhists. Any of these cities would be more suitable than the town of Kusinara, which was a small and insignificant place.

The Lord Buddha told Phra Ananda not to say such a thing because in the past, Kusinara was a great and prosperous city. It was the seat of the Universal Monarch by the name of 'Maha-sudas-sana'. He was a virtuous king and his sovereignty reached the four great oceans. He possessed all seven precious treasures. The city from which he ruled

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<sup>1</sup> Those who have attained Arahatsip.

was called ‘Kusa-vadi’. It was 192 kilometers long and 112 kilometers wide. It was a very prosperous city with a large population. It was a land of plenty and the city resounded with the ten noises both day and night<sup>2</sup>.

Later, the Lord Buddha told Phra Ananda to inform the rulers of the Malla Kingdom about His impending passing. They were grief-stricken and rushed to the Lord Buddha’s side in the Salavana Park. Phra Ananda arranged for them to see the Lord Buddha in groups according to their lineage within the first watch of the night.

This demonstrated Phra Ananda’s special ability in knowing when and what to do in a certain situation. In this case, the Malla rulers were many in number and if each ruler saw the Lord Buddha individually, too much time would have been needed and it would also cause discomfort for our Lord Buddha, since He was gravely ill at the time.

At this point, it is appropriate to clear up another moot point. Many people have wondered why the Lord Buddha, who had been gravely ill, needed to travel quite a distance in order to attain complete Nibbana in the town of Kusinara when He could have gone to any other city which was closer. According to the Lord Buddha, there were three reasons for having gone to Kusinara. These include:

1. The Lord Buddha wished to teach the Maha-sudas-sana Sutta which concerned the Universal Monarch by the name of ‘Maha-sudas-sana’. He used to rule Kusinara in ages past. The teaching could further inspire the masses to do only wholesome deeds.
2. The Lord Buddha wished to save the wandering religious mendicant named ‘Subhadda’ who came in to the Salavana Park to ask the Lord Buddha some Dhamma questions. He subsequently requested to be ordained. After having learnt meditation practice from the Lord Buddha, he was able to attain Arahatsip almost immediately and became the last Perfected Disciple to see the Lord Buddha alive. In a previous life, ‘Subhadda’ was slower than his older brother in making merit. He waited until he was finished with planting rice while his older brother wanted to make merit before he started working. In this existence, the older brother was reborn Kondanna who became the first monk in our Lord Gautama’s Buddha’s time and the younger brother was reborn Subhadda and became the last monk to see the Lord Buddha alive.
3. The Lord Buddha had chosen a town like Kusinara to attain complete Nibbana in order to prevent all the major powers to wage war against each other in order to claim ownership of the Holy Relics. As it was, the Brahmin ‘Dona’ did the job of an arbitrator and divided the Holy Relics among the rulers of all the kingdoms. In this way, no one major power could claim the Holy Relics for itself by waging wars with other powers.

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<sup>2</sup> These noises come from elephants, horses, carriages, ordinary drums, double-headed drums, harps, bells, singing, music, and the hawking of wares.

## 7.2 The Last Perfected Disciple

The wandering mendicant 'Subhadda' of Kusinara heard the news that the Lord Buddha was going to attain complete Nibbana, he wanted to see the Lord Buddha in order to ask some of the questions that had been on his mind. He had asked Phra Ananda for permission to see the Lord Buddha three times but the request was denied since the Lord Buddha was feeling very poorly. The Lord Buddha heard the exchange between Phra Ananda and Subhadda and told Phra Ananda to allow Subhadda to come near the Lord Buddha. Subhadda asked the Lord Buddha about the six famous creed leaders at the time who claimed to be Arahats and whether or not their claim was true.

The Lord Buddha said to Subhadda, "Behold, Subhadda, no other religions teach about the Noble Eightfold Path; therefore, they do not have the First, Second, Third and Fourth Monks<sup>3</sup>. But any religion which teaches about the Noble Eightfold Path, in that religion there are the First, Second, Third, and Fourth Monks. Since my religion teaches about the Noble Eightfold Path; therefore, it has the First, Second, Third, and Fourth monks in my religion. If all the Buddhist monks continue to practice according to the Noble Eightfold Path, this world will not be without an Arahata. Other religions do not have the First, Second, Third, and Fourth Monks; therefore, they are without Monks who are Knowers."

After the Dhamma lecture, Subhadda was filled with faith and requested an ordination. The Lord Buddha told him about 'Tita-thiya-pari-vasa' which meant that a heretic had to go through a probationary period of four months before he could be ordained as a Buddhist monk. Subhadda accepted the condition gladly saying that he was willing to wait four years if needed be. As a result, the Lord Buddha told Phra Ananda to ordain Subhadda right away. Subhadda learnt meditation practice from the Lord Buddha and practiced it until he attained Arahatship before the Lord Buddha attained complete Nibbana.

## 7.3 The Lord Gautama Buddha's Final Words

Once all the Buddhist monks had gathered around the Lord Buddha, He gave them a lecture with the following details:

1. After my complete Nibbana, do not think that the Master is no more because the Dhamma and the Discipline which I have legislated will take my place as the Master.
2. Since all monks have addressed each other as 'A-vuso' regardless of the monks' seniority but from now on an older monk will call a younger monk by his surname or by the word 'A-vuso'. A younger monk will address an older monk as '**Bhante**' or '**A-yasama**'.
3. If the Buddhist monks wish to cancel some minor rules of discipline after my complete Nibbana, they are allowed to do so.

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<sup>3</sup> The First Monk means the Stream-Enterer; the Second Monk means the Once-Returner; the Third Monk means the Non-Returner; and the Fourth Monk means the Arahata.

4. I give Phra Ananda permission to punish Phra Channa by not allowing other Buddhist monks to teach, admonish, and associate with him.

The Lord Buddha then gave the monks three opportunities to ask any questions they might have about the Triple Gem or other Buddhist practices but no monks had any question. The Lord Buddha said that in that assembly of 500 monks, there were Stream-Enterers and above; therefore, they would never fall foul of the Dhamma and would all attain Enlightenment in the future.

The Lord Buddha's final words to the Four Buddhist Communities were, **“Behold monks, I wish to remind you that all conditioned things undergo decay. May all of you make sure that you are not reckless.”**

## 7.4 Attaining Complete Nibbana

Afterward, the Lord Buddha was quiet and began to enter into the Nine Meditative Attainments both forward and backward. He began with the First Absorption. Having left the First Absorption, He entered the Second Absorption. Having left the Second Absorption, He entered the Third Absorption. Having left the Third Absorption, He entered the Fourth Absorption. Having left the Fourth Absorption, He entered the First Non-Form Absorption (A-kasa-nanca-yatana). Having left the First Non-Form Absorption, He entered the Second Non-Form Absorption (Vinna-nanca-yatana). Having left the Second Non-Form Absorption, He entered the Third Non-Form Absorption (A-kin-canya-yatana). Having left the Third Non-Form Absorption, He entered the Fourth Non-Form Absorption (Neva-sannana-sanna-yatana). Having left the Fourth Non-Form Absorption, He entered the Sanna-veda-yita-nirodha.

Phra Ananda, who watched the Lord Buddha closely, finally asked Phra A-nu-ruddha who was sitting close by about the Lord Buddha's progress in attaining complete Nibbana. Phra A-nu-ruddha, who had been following the holy process with his Celestial Eye from the beginning, answered that the Lord Buddha had not yet attained complete Nibbana. He reported that the Lord Buddha had left the Sanna-veda-yita-nirodha and entered the Fourth Non-Form Absorption. Having left the Fourth Non-Form Absorption, He entered the Third Non-Form Absorption. Having left the Third Non-Form Absorption, He entered the Second Non-Form Absorption. Having left the Second Non-Form Absorption, He entered the First Non-Form Absorption. Having left the First Non-Form Absorption, He entered the Fourth Absorption. Having left the Fourth Absorption, He entered the Third Absorption. Having left the Third Absorption, He entered the Second Absorption. Having left the Second Absorption, He entered the First Absorption. Having left the First Absorption, He entered the Second Absorption. Having left the Second Absorption, He entered the Third Absorption. Having left the Third Absorption, He entered the Fourth Absorption and attained complete Nibbana.

As soon as the Lord Buddha attained complete Nibbana, the earth quaked loudly; the oceans stirred forcefully; gale-winds forces blew violently while celestial drums resounded.

## 7.5 Events after the Lord Gautama Buddha's Complete Nibbana

In the morning, Phra A-nu-ruddha asked Phra Ananda to let the Malla rulers know about the Lord Buddha's complete Nibbana. The Malla rulers in turn made the news known to the people. For the next six days, masses of lay devotees and ascetics came to worship the Lord Buddha's body with scented articles.

On the seventh day, the Malla rulers made the decision to move the Lord Buddha's body to the south of Kusinara in order to cremate it but the body could not be moved. They consulted Phra A-nu-ruddha and learnt that what the Malla rulers wanted to do was opposed to what the celestial beings wished. The celestial beings wanted to move the Lord Buddha's body to the north and to the northern gate of the city into the town center and out the eastern gate to the Makut-pandhana Cetiya to be cremated there.

### 7.5.1 The Cremation

After the Lord Buddha's body was moved to the Makut-pandhana Cetiya, everything was done according to the instruction given by the Lord Buddha to Phra Ananda. When the time came, the four Malla royalties started the fire but time and time again, the fire could not be lit. Once again, Phra A-nu-ruddha was consulted. Phra A-nu-ruddha said that the celestial beings wished to wait for Phra Maha-kassapa's arrival.

In the meantime Phra Maha-kassapa and his company of monks numbering 500 had left the town of Pava as soon as they heard that the Lord Buddha had gone to the town of Kusinara. On the way, they rested under a shady tree by the road. They saw an ascetic holding a Mondaraba flower coming from the direction of Kusinara and using the flower as an umbrella to shield him against the hot sun. As soon as Phra Maha-kassapa saw the Mondaraba, which was a celestial flower, he knew that these special flowers would only fall to earth on the day and time of the Bodhisatta's birth, of his taking up the religious life, of His Enlightenment, etc. Upon questioning the ascetic, he learnt that the Lord Buddha had already attained complete Nibbana.

At the news, the monks who were ordinary individuals were grief-stricken while the monks who were Arahats were reminded of the truth about conditioned things. A monk by the name of Subhadda, who ordained when he was old, told the monks to stop crying. He told them to be glad about the Lord Buddha's passing, since there would no longer be anyone to tell them what to do. Phra Maha-kassapa felt disappointed with Phra Subhadda's attitude and wanted to punish him but since the time was not right for it so he comforted the monks and then pressed on to Kusinara.

As soon as Phra Maha-Kassapa arrived at the Makut-pandhana Cetiya, he circumambulated the Cetiya three times and stood at the feet of the Lord Buddha's body. He made a wish for the Lord Buddha's feet to extend outside the gold casket and they did immediately. Phra Maha-kassapa held the Lord Buddha's feet and put his head under them by way of worship. As soon as he was done, the feet disappeared back inside the casket without moving the cloth which covered the gold casket or the pyre. It was indeed a miraculous event.

At that time, there was more crying from the masses which consisted of celestial and human beings than on the day that the Lord Buddha attained complete Nibbana. Another miraculous event took place in that the fire at the pyre started by itself. When the fire went out, the bones, the head-hair, the body hair, the nails, the teeth, the cloths which wrapped the Lord Buddha's body, and the outermost cloth were not touched by the fire but the rest disappeared. A stream of water poured down from the sky and a fountain sprouted from the sala tree to quench the fire, aided by the pouring of scented water by the Malla rulers. The Holy Relics were transported to the 'Santha-gara' Pavilion in the town of Kusinara. They were guarded by soldiers carrying bows and arrows. A seven-day festival was subsequently held to worship the Holy Relics.

### **7.5.2 Distribution of the Holy Relics**

Once the news about the Lord Buddha's attainment of complete Nibbana and the cremation of His body reached the different kingdoms, kings from seven kingdoms such as King Ajata-sattu, King Licchavi sent emissaries to ask for a share of the Holy Relics. They wanted to house their share of the Holy Relics in a stupa where people could go to worship. Each emissary was accompanied by troops. As a result, Kusinara was surrounded by troops from different kingdoms. At the time, the Malla rulers felt possessive of the Holy Relics and did not want to share them with anyone. The kings of the respective kingdoms were incensed and were ready to wage war with the Malla rulers.

Fortunately, there was a resident of Kusinara by the name of 'Dona'. He was a well-respected teacher and all the kings in India at the time were once his students. He used his influence to persuade every party to conclude the matter peacefully. As a result, the Malla royalties agreed to share the Holy Relics with other kings. Therefore, 'Dona' the arbitrator divided up the Holy Relics in equal parts to all concerned. Later on the Moriya royalties, who received the Holy Ashes from the Malla rulers, housed them in a stupa in a place called Pipa-phali-vana.

Three months later, Phra Maha-kassapa deemed it necessary to hold a Council in order to settle questions of doctrine as a result of Phra Subhadda's disrespectful comment. The meeting place was set at a cave called 'Satta-banna' in the 'Vebhara' Mountain in the city of Rajagarh of the Magadha Kingdom. Phra Maha-kassapa would chair the Council and address appropriate questions regarding doctrine and Phra U-pali would provide answers where they concerned the Discipline; Phra Ananda would provide answers where they concerned the Suttas and the Higher Doctrine (A-bhi-dhamma). King Ajata-sattu sponsored the Council which lasted a total of seven months.

These events concerned the last part of our Lord Buddha's perfect life. They demonstrated how the Lord Buddha is the Master Teacher of all beings. He was a Master Teacher all the way to the end in spite of His illness. Wherever He went, He would teach the Truth to every living being there. Compassionate to the very end, He made sure that the Holy Relics would not be the cause of wars among the kings of the different kingdoms.

Even a man possessing the Perfect Man body like the Lord Buddha, endowed with all the 32 very special features and 80 very special minor attributes could not escape physical death as mandated by Phya Mara. He admonishes all of us not to be reckless because all conditioned things must come to an end. As long as Buddhism flourishes in the world, the world will continue to benefit from the happening of our Lord Gautama Buddha. The world will continue to worship the Lord Buddha as it reflects on the incomparable Buddha-Virtues and Buddha-Power.

## Conclusion

The Lord Buddha is incomparable because he has pursued Perfections to the utmost extent since His existence as a young man swimming in the sea carrying his mother on his back. Wherever His rebirth takes him, He has never felt discouraged but continued to pursue Perfections as best as He can. The Perfections, which have been cultivated to the fullest extent, endow Him with the 32 major features and the 80 minor attributes of the Perfect Man. They also endow Him with the admirable conduct which makes Him suitable as the role model and the Master Teacher of all beings. These include:

1. When He walks, He steps forward with His right foot. His step was just the right length and His pace was just the right speed.
2. When He walks, His thighs or His ankles do not rub against each other. He does not raise His chest; He does not throw His upper body backward; His chest does not move or receive any impact from His movement.
3. When He walks, His upper body remains immobile; His body does not expend energy when He walks.
4. When He looks at something, He looks with His entire body. He does not look upward or downward. He does not cast His eyes about when He walks. He keeps His gaze at about 2-3 meters ahead of Him. Moreover, He possesses Perfect Knowledge.
5. When He walks into a house, He does not extend his body upward or lower it. He does not round His shoulders. He does not move the rest of His body.
6. When He sits down, He does not sit too close or too far. He does not support Himself by putting his hand against the floor. He does not rest His back on anything.
7. When He sits down in someone's house, he does so in a graceful manner. He does not sit with one knee up. He does not fold His feet under Him. He does not rest his chin on his hand.
8. When He sits down in someone's house, He is never anxious, fearful, cowardly or startled. He does not get goose bumps.

9. When He sits down in someone's house, He sits in a quiet place.
10. When He receives water to wash His alms-bowl with, He does not raise the alms-bowl, neither does He lower it. He does not stare at the alms-bowl. He does not swing the alms-bowl to and fro. He takes just the right amount of water.
11. He does not swoosh the water about when washing His alms-bowl. He does not turn it around. He does not put the bowl on the ground but holds it in his hand while He rinses it.
12. After He washes His hands, it means that the washing of the bowl is complete.
13. He pours the water out of the bowl in an appropriate place not too close or too far and He pours it out without causing a splash.
14. When He receives cooked rice, He does not lower the alms-bowl; He does not stare at the bowl; He does not swing the bowl to and fro.
15. He takes just the right amount of cooked rice, that is, only the amount He intends to eat.
16. He does not consume the savory dishes more than the rice but consume them in more or less equal amounts. He eats only half a mouthful at a time. He chews it a few times before swallowing. No food is ever stuck between His teeth or anywhere inside the mouth.
17. He can taste everything very well while He is eating but He does not partake of food out of any fondness for its taste. He does not eat for enjoyment. He does not eat to indulge His taste buds. He does not eat for physical beauty. He does not eat to promote good looks. He eats purely to sustain the body. He eats so that He can live. He eats to prevent suffering. He eats to help others. Therefore, He only eats just enough to rid His body of hunger, to give His body enough energy to do His work.
18. After having His meal, He places the alms-bowl at just the right distance. He is neither negligent nor possessive of the bowl.
19. After the meal, He sat quietly for a moment before He rejoices in the merit. He does not find fault with the food or expect any other food. He advised the lay people to be bold and joyful in the Dhamma.
20. After He rises from His seat, He departs in a way which is not too hurried or too quickly.
21. His robe is not worn too high or too low, not too tight or too loose. The breeze could not part His robe and dust does not adhere to His body.
22. After He arrives back at the temple, He is seated in an appointed seat before washing His feet. He then sits in a half-lotus position and goes into meditation. He does not exploit Himself or others with His thought. His thoughts are for His own benefits and the benefits of others. His thoughts are for the benefits of all living beings.

23. At the temple, He gives Dhamma lectures to the Buddhist Communities. He does not flatter them. He is not aggressive toward them. He teaches them to penetrate the Truth, to be bold and joyful in the Dhamma.
24. He possesses a resounding voice which has eight characteristics. It is well-arranged, clear, lovely, easy on the ear, harmonious, not shaky, deep, and resonating.

The Lord Buddha's conduct result from the Perfections which have been accumulated to the fullest extent. Anyone who sees the Lord Buddha cannot help but feel the deepest respect and awe for Him. Throughout His countless existences, He has resolved to pursue all the Perfections for the purpose of becoming enlightened as a Buddha and to lead living beings to Nibbana. Even in His final existence, He has put His life on the line for however long it takes for him to find the way out of suffering.

Once enlightened, the Lord Buddha has performed all the duties of every Buddha before Him by teaching the Dhamma, propagating and establishing Buddhism. He has helped beings out of suffering and brought them untold happiness. Wherever He is, He continues to perform the five Buddha-Duties. In the morning, He goes on His alms-round. In the evening, He teaches the Dhamma to the people. At night, He teaches the monks. Late at night, He solves the celestial beings' problems. At dawn, He checks all beings to see who may possess the Perfections to attain Enlightenment and will go to save them.

The Lord Buddha performs the Buddha-Duties in all three manners. **Buddhattha-cariya**, it means providing benefit as the Buddha. **Yatattha-cariya**, it means benefiting the relatives. **Lokattha-cariya**, it means benefiting all living beings. The Lord Buddha has worked tirelessly everyday and without any regard for hardship from the time of His Enlightenment until the time He attains complete Nibbana which lasts altogether 45 years.

Within these 45 years, the Lord Buddha had spent the Rains-Retreat in different places. The events which took place in these places can be summarized as follows:

**The First Rains-Retreat:** At the Deer Park in the city of Benares in order to save the company of five ascetics.

**The Second to Fourth Rains-Retreat:** at the Veluvana Temple in the city of Rajagarh in order to save King Bimbisara and his relatives as well as the millionaire Anatha-pindika.

**The Fifth Rains-Retreat:** at the Kuta-gara Pavilion in the Mahavana Forest in the city of Vesali to give His father his last Dhamma lecture before the final release from the round of rebirth (Nibbana) and to teach His relatives to stop quarreling with each other.

**The Sixth Rains-Retreat:** at the Makula Mountain in order to work the Yamaka Miracle.

**The Seventh Rains-Retreat:** in the Tavatimsa Realm to save His mother.

**The Eighth Rains-Retreat:** at the Kesa-kala-vana near the city of Sunsu-mara-giri of the Bhagga Kingdom to save Nakula's parents.

**The Ninth Rains-Retreat:** at the Kosita Temple in the city of Kosambi.

**The Tenth Rains-Retreat:** in the forest of the locality of Pari-leya-yaka near the city of Kosambi in order to quell some Buddhist monks' conflict.

**The Eleventh Rains-Retreat:** at the village of the Brahmin A-kanala.

**The Twelfth Rains-Retreat:** at the city of Veranja.

**The Thirteenth Rains-Retreat:** at the Caliya Mountain.

**The Fourteenth Rains-Retreat:** at the Jetavana Temple.

**The Fifteenth Rains-Retreat:** at the Nigrodha Temple in the city of Kapila-vastu.

**The Sixteenth Rains-Retreat:** at the city of Alavi to teach the Yakkha Alavaka.

**The Seventeenth Rains-Retreat:** at the Veluvana Temple of the city of Rajagarh.

**The Eighteenth & nineteenth Rains-Retreat:** at the Caliya Mountain.

**The Twentieth Rains-Retreat:** at the Veluvana Temple in the city of Rajagarh to save Onguli-mala.

**The 21<sup>st</sup> to 44<sup>th</sup> Rains-Retreat:** alternating between the Jetavana Temple and the Pubba-rama Temple in the city of Savatthi.

**The 45<sup>th</sup> Rains-Retreat:** at Veluva-gama in the city of Vesali.

All throughout the 45 years and until the final moments, our Lord Buddha has performed the duty of the Master Teacher perfectly. For as long as Buddhism still flourishes, the world will never forget the Lord Buddha's incomparable virtues and all that He has done for living beings in order to lead them out of the suffering of the round of rebirth. The Lord Buddha is the Supreme Being in all the Three Spheres of existence.

The Lord Buddha did not appoint anyone to take His place but said that the Dhamma and the Discipline would serve as the Master Teacher. As long as the Four Buddhist Communities continue to cherish and uphold the Dhamma, it will be around to teach living beings to conduct their lives accordingly for their happiness and prosperity in this and future existences and until such time that their defilements can be so completely removed that they can attain Nibbana.

## Exercises

After finishing studying this chapter, take the test and complete the exercises provided in the Workbook before proceeding to Chapter 8.



## CHAPTER 8

# THE PATH TOWARD BUDDHAHOOD

### TOPICS COVERED IN CHAPTER 8 THE PATH TOWARD BUDDHAHOOD

#### **8.1 The Meaning of the Word 'Buddha'**

#### **8.2 The Middle Way Is the Way toward Buddhahood**

8.2.1 The Meaning of the Middle Way

8.2.2 The Practice of the Middle Way Leads to Emancipation

8.2.3 The Middle Way In Practice

8.2.4 The Simultaneous Process of the Noble Eightfold Path

#### **8.3 The Practice which Leads to the Different Stages of Buddhahood**

#### **8.4 The Main Points about Buddhahood**

## CONCEPTS

1. The word 'Buddha' means one who knows, one who is awake, one who is joyful. There are three categories of 'Buddha': the Lord Buddha, the Pacceka-Buddha, and the Lord Buddha's Perfected Disciple.
2. The practice which leads to Buddhahood is the practice of the Middle Way. The Middle Way is the practice which leads to Emancipation and consists of eight parts. They include Right View, Right Thought, Right Speech, Right Action, Right Livelihood, Right Effort, Right Mindfulness, and Right Concentration. The Noble Eightfold Path exists in the four spheres of existence which include the Sense Sphere, the Form Sphere, the Non-Form Sphere, and the Supra-mundane Sphere (Lokuttara). In the Supra-mundane Sphere, it is called the Supra-mundane Path. In the Mundane Sphere, it is called the Mundane Path. The Mundane Path includes the accumulation of merit via the practices of alms-giving, Precepts, and meditation. The Supra-mundane Path is the employment of Right Concentration to envelop the other seven parts as a means of removing defilements in a process called 'Magga-samangi'. The Noble Eightfold Path in practice means bringing the mind to a standstill in the middle or at the center of the human body. To find this center, one can imagine pulling two strings tautly across, one string from the navel straight to the back and the other from the left side to the right side. The point where these strings intersect is called the sixth base of the body, two fingers breadth upward from this point is called the center of the body or the seventh base.
3. When one practices the Noble Eightfold Path correctly and perfectly according to the Middle Way, the practitioner's mind will be devoid of both pleasure and displeasure. The mind is in a state of equanimity where it is full of liveliness, mindfulness, and insight. This is the point where the mind attains the First Absorption Sphere or the Dhamma Sphere. When the mind is kept at the center of this Dhamma Sphere, soon the 'Magga-samangi' will expand and the mind will continue moving toward the Precepts Sphere (Sila), the Concentration Sphere (Samadhi), the Insight Sphere (Panna), the Emancipation Sphere (Vimutti), and the Perfect Knowledge Sphere (Vimutti-nana-dassana) respectively. These spheres are arranged in a consecutive order, one on top of another. When the mind continues to move inward, it will meet the Inner Bodies in accordance with the Four Foundations of Mindfulness as taught by the Lord Buddha. These Inner Bodies range from the Mundane Bodies which still possess the Three Characteristics<sup>1</sup> to the Supra-mundane Bodies or the Dhammakayas which are above and beyond the Three Characteristics. The Mundane Bodies include the Refined Human Body (Astral Body), the Coarse Celestial Body, the Refined Celestial Body, the Coarse Form Brahma Body, the Refined Form Brahma Body, the Coarse Non-Form Brahma Body, and the Refined Non-Form Brahma Body. The Supra-mundane Bodies or the Dhammakayas do not possess the Three Characteristics because the feeling, the perception, the compounded things, and the consciousness within the Dhammakayas have been refined to the point of purity. Still, the Dhammakayas do differ depending on their levels of purity.

<sup>1</sup> **The Three Characteristics** include impermanence, suffering, and the absence of true selfhood.

The most basic Dhammakaya is located next to the refined Non-Form Brahma Body and is called the Coarse Gotrabhu Dhammakaya. From the Coarse Gotrabhu Dhammakaya, there follow the Refined Gotrabhu Dhammakaya, the Coarse Sotapana Dhammakaya, the Refined Sotapanna Dhammakaya, the Coarse Sakida-gami Dhammakaya, the Refined Sakida-gami Dhammakaya, the Coarse A-na-gami Dhammakaya, the Refined A-na-gami Dhammakaya, the Coarse Arahata Dhammakaya, and the Refined Arahata Dhammakaya. There are altogether ten Dhammakayas.

### OBJECTIVES

1. To enable the student to correctly describe the meaning of the word Buddha.
2. To enable the student to correctly describe the practice which leads to Buddhahood in both the theoretical part and the practical part?
3. To enable the student to correctly describe the different stages of Buddhahood.
4. To enable the student to apply what he/she has learnt to his/her life for the purpose of making him/her a better person.



## THE PATH TOWARD BUDDHAHOOD

### Introduction

In order for the Lord Buddha to discover the path toward Buddhahood, He had had to put His life on the line for countless lifetimes in order to pursue Perfections to the fullest extent. Along the way, He had met with countless obstacles, yet He had never wavered from His aspiration to Buddhahood. His continuous and determined efforts eventually led Him to find the way out of the round of rebirth.

This way is called the Middle Way. The Middle Way consists of both the theoretical part and the practical part. The Middle Way is also called the Noble Eightfold Path, which amazingly encompasses all 84,000 Buddhist Scriptures. It means that all of the Lord Buddha's Teachings can be summarized into the Noble Eightfold Path which is both gloriously illuminating and practical.

The pure insight to penetrate the truth about life in terms of cause and effect can never happen if the person has not endeavored continuously for countless lifetimes to search for the way which leads to Emancipation. But when a person is willing to put his life on the line over and over again to pursue Perfections to the fullest extent until he finally discovers the way out of suffering, that person is called '**Buddha**'. Therefore, a Buddha is someone who knows, who is awake, who is joyful because his mind is devoid of all defilements.

This chapter summarizes the science which leads to Buddhahood. The student will have the opportunity to study in depth the theoretical part which is recorded in the Tripitaka and the practical part which has been taught by the Most Venerable Phra Monkolthepmuni (Luang Pu Wat Paknam). The Most Venerable Phra Monkolthepmuni is the Discoverer of Vijja Dhammakaya. He was supreme in his knowledge of the Dhamma and supreme in his practice of the Dhamma. He had to put his life on the line in order to follow in the Lord Buddha's footsteps until he finally discovered the Lord Buddha's Vijja Dhammakaya and bring it back to the world once again. Ever since its discovery, Vijja Dhammakaya has been taught widely to many people both within Thailand and abroad. There have been many accomplished practitioners who can bear witness to the fruits of Vijja Dhammakaya. Luang Pu's lectures were succinct and made the connection between the theoretical part and the practical part of the Dhamma so clearly and so amazingly well.

## 8.1 The Meaning of the Word ‘Buddha’

The Buddhist Scriptures have given many meanings to the word ‘**Buddha**’ but only a few will be presented here.

**Buddha** means one who has attained Enlightenment, one who is awake, and one who is joyful.

**Buddha** means the destroyer of the harm which plagues all beings; He leads living beings toward good and beneficial things and away from unbeneficial things.

**Buddha** means one who attains Self-Enlightenment in order to leave behind all of the suffering of the round of rebirth. He sees that rebirth is the cause of all suffering; therefore, the end of rebirth is the end of suffering. The enlightened Knowledge consists of the Eight Ariya Individuals<sup>2</sup>.

**Buddha** means one who has attained Enlightenment, one who penetrates the Four Noble Truths. The Commentaries divided all the Buddhas into three categories as follows.

1. **The Lord Buddha:** He attains Self-Enlightenment and teaches His enlightened Knowledge to other beings.
2. **The Pacceka-Buddha:** He attains Self-Enlightenment but does not teach His enlightened Knowledge to other beings.
3. **The Lord Buddha’s Perfected Disciple:** He attains Enlightenment by following the Lord Buddha’s Teachings. He is also called an A-nu-buddha.

The overall meaning of the word ‘**Buddha**’ is **one who knows, one who is awake, and one who experiences inner joy.**

In this chapter, the student will learn about the attainment of Buddhahood via the attainment of the Inner Buddhas or the Dhammakayas as exemplified by Phra Annakondanna who was the first Buddhist monk and the first person to bear witness to the Lord Buddha’s Enlightenment.

## 8.2 The Middle Way Is the Way toward Buddhahood

The fact that living beings are still caught within the trap of suffering makes us incapable of understanding the true condition of our suffering. Our ignorance in turn causes us to undergo the endless cycle of suffering. Even the Celestial Realm where we are reborn after we die still contains suffering even though it contains mostly happiness. Should we be reborn in the States of Loss and Woe, our suffering will be manifold and constant. But happy or unhappy, we will eventually have to undergo rebirth once again and for countless times.

<sup>2</sup> These include the Path and the Fruit of Stream-Enterers (Sotapannas), the Path and the Fruit of Once-Returners (Sakida-gamis), the Path and the Fruit of Non-Returners (A-na-gamis), and the Path and the Fruit of Arahats.

Out of all the myriad living beings still trapped within the round of rebirth, once in a very great while, there is one very exceptional being who wishes to search for the way out of this vicious trap. When he finally succeeds, he is called the Buddha. **The Buddha is the discoverer of the Middle Way which leads to Emancipation. That is, the Buddha is one who practices the Middle Way until he attains Emancipation.**

Back when Prince Siddhattha was searching for the way out of suffering, he had tried extreme forms of self-mortification which was popular among the ascetics at the time just to see if it was the way out of suffering. He discovered that it was not. Before he took up the religious life, he had experienced incomparable forms of sense-pleasures. He had everything he wanted in life and had not a single concern. Yet, for all the ease and comfort in his life, he could not find the way out of suffering. Near the end of the practice of extreme self-mortification, he happened to hear some harp music. He thought if the strings of the harp were strung too tightly, it would break. If the strings were strung too loosely, it would not make much sound. If they were strung at just the right tension however, it would produce a lovely sound. And that was how he came to realize the importance of **the Middle Way.**

And it was through the practice of the Middle Way that our Bodhisatta attained Buddhahood. The student will next learn about both the theoretical part and the practical part of Buddhahood through the analysis of the Dhammacak-kappa-vattana Sutta which was the first Dhamma lecture that our Lord Buddha gave to the company of the Five Ascetics. At the end of the lecture, one of them Phra Anna-kondanna was able to attain Stream-Entrance which is the first stage of Buddhahood. It means that the practice of this particular Sutta is conducive to the attainment of Buddhahood.

### **8.2.1 The Meaning of the Middle Way**

The Middle Way may sound simple but its practice is highly profound. The Middle Way has the following meanings:

**The Middle Way means Majjhima-pati-pada.**

**The Middle Way** means a practice which is neither too lax nor too taut. It means the abstention of two things: Self-Indulgence (Kama-sukhala-likanu-yoga) and Self-Mortification (Atta-kilama-thanu-yoga). The Middle Way is the appropriate means of reaching the end of defilements and suffering. It is the means of attaining complete Emancipation.

The Middle Way means the Noble Eightfold Path.

Therefore, **the Middle Way** means the middle way of practice in order to achieve Emancipation which consists of the Noble Eightfold Path: **Right View, Right Thought, Right Speech, Right Action, Right Livelihood, Right Effort, Right Mindfulness, and Right Concentration.**

## 8.2.2 The Practice of the Middle Way Leads to Emancipation

The theoretical part of the Middle Way appears in the Tripitaka under the Vibhanga Sutta. The Lord Buddha gave a Dhamma lecture about Dukkha-nirodha-gamini-pati-pada-ariyasac in the Dhammacak-kappa-vattana Sutta as follows. Behold, monks, the practice of the Noble Eightfold Path can end suffering and lead to Nibbana. This is true of all Ariya individuals such as the Buddha. Every Ariya individual has practiced the Noble Eightfold Path because it is the means of quashing defilements and attaining Nibbana.

### Components of the Noble Eightfold Path

The Noble Eightfold Path consists of Right View, Right Thought, Right Speech, Right Action, Right Livelihood, Right Effort, Right Mindfulness, and Right Concentration. These eight components can be summarized as the Threefold Training: Precepts, Concentration, and Insight. Details of the Noble Eightfold Path are as follows:

#### 1. Right View

Basically, Right View means right understanding about life and the world in that alms-giving bears fruit, aid-giving bears fruit, respecting those who are worthy of respect bears fruit, good Kamma bears fruit, so does bad Kamma, this world and the hereafter exist, we owe our parents a debt of gratitude, etc. Such a correct understanding constitutes the basis of Right View. In the absence of Right View, it is difficult for noble virtues to be cultivated.

At a more elevated level, Right View means the Higher Knowledge pertaining to the Four Noble Truths as stated in the Pali language:

*“katama ca bhikkhave sammaditthi yank ho bhikkhave dukkhe nanan dukkhasamudaye nanan dukkhanirodhe nanan dukkharodhagaminiya patipadaya nanan ayan vuccati bhikkhave sammaditthi”*

The word ‘nana’ here means the Three Nanassas as related to the Four Noble Truths which are Sacca-nana, Kicca-nana, and Kata-nana. An individual with perfect Right View must be able to abstain completely from all defilements. He must penetrate the Cause of Suffering (Dukkha-samudaya-ariyasac), the Cessation of Suffering (Dukkha-nirodha-ariyasac), the Path that leads to the Cessation of Suffering (Dukkha-nirodha-gamini-pati-pada-ariyasac). He must be able to remove ignorance (Avijja) and craving (Tanha), and see everything for what it really is because he knows what lies behind all events.

#### 2. Right Thought

Basically, Right Thought means thinking in such a way that it is beneficial for oneself and others such as having a decent intention, having the intention to overcome obstacles. The Lord Buddha stresses the importance of thought as follows: “manopubbabangama dhamma manosettha manomaya manasa ce padutthena bhasati va karoti va tato nan dukkhamanveti cakkam va vaho padan.” It means everything is presided over by thought. Thought is important. Thought creates success. If one has bad thought, one has bad speech and bad action and suffering will follow in the same way that the wheels of a cart follow the tracks of the team of oxen that pull it.

At a more elevated level, the Lord Buddha says,

*“katamo ca bhikkhave sammāsankappo yo kho bhikkhave nekkhammasankappa abayapadasankappo avihi sāsankappo ayan vuccati bhikkhavesammāsankappo.”*

It means **“Behold, monks, what is Right Thought? It means thinking about abandoning sense-desire, thinking about not seeking revenge, thinking about not harming others. I call such thinking Right Thought.”** This saying can be further elaborated as follows:

### **1. Thinking about abandoning sense-desire (Nekkhamma-sankappa)**

- a. Why must one think about abandoning sense-desire? It is necessary to first understand that the Noble Eightfold Path at a more elevated level is the way which leads to Emancipation, to the end of rebirth in the Sense Sphere, the Form Sphere, and the Non-Form Sphere. Therefore, in order to abandon sense-desire, one must continuously cultivate Renunciation Perfection in every existence.
- b. An individual who has the insight to abandon sense-desire has the advantage of an unfettered mind and the experience of a new condition, a new life in a new world. This new world is lit by the insight which allows him to know that this new world is a great deal better, cleaner, and happier than the old one.

### **2. Thinking about not seeking revenge (Abaya-pada-sankappa)**

- a. Not seeking revenge means not wishing someone to meet with misfortune in terms of his life or his possessions. In other words, not seeking revenge means not wishing anyone to meet with ill but to wish him well.
- b. Revenge is an inner fire which has the power to burn the mind of the person who harbors it. The more he harbors it, the more his mind burns and he can cause others trouble.
- c. A wise person will not think of seeking revenge because he sees the advantages of not doing it. He would rather be forgiving in that he does not seek to destroy someone’s life, someone’s material possessions, and someone’s feeling. Forgiveness is one type of alms-giving and it is the practice of sages.

### **3. Thinking about not harming others (A-vi-hinsa-sankappa)**

- a. When a person harms or exploits others for his own gain or convenience, he is motivated by greed, anger, or ignorance. Harming others is different from seeking revenge in that the latter is specific to a person or a group of people whereas the former can happen even to those that have never wronged the person.
- b. Greed, anger, and ignorance are the root causes of all unwholesomeness or evil. A person harms or exploits others out of greed, anger, or ignorance or a combination of these three defilements. It can be said that a person who thinks of harming or exploiting others will first harm himself and spread the harm outward to others.

- c. Thinking about not harming others causes the person to be gentle and kind. These qualities make him happy and attractive. They inspire love and respect from whomever he meets. Even a mean person can sense his kindness and may turn into a nicer person.

### 3. Right Speech

There is one saying of the Lord Buddha's, "Katama ca bhikkhave sammavaca yak ho bhikkave musavada veramani, pisunaya vacaya veramani pharusaya vacaya veramani samphappalaveramani ayan vuccati bhikkhave sammavaca" which means "**Behold, monks, Right Speech means the abstention from false speech, divisive speech, offensive speech, and nonsensical speech. Such abstention is called Right Speech.**"

Right Speech consists of the four following forms of verbal honesty:

1. **Musa-vada vera-mani:** It means abstaining from lying, deception, or any type of words designed to deceive others for one's own material gain.
2. **Pisuna-vaca vera-mani:** It means abstaining from divisive speech, speech which causes others trouble, anger, and ruin.
3. **Pharusa-vaca vera-mani:** It means abstaining from offensive language
4. **Samphap-palapa-vaca vera-mani:** It means abstaining from cracking jokes, from speaking nonsense.

### 4. Right Action

There is a saying of the Lord Buddha's, "Katamo ca bhikkhave sammakammanto yak ho bhikkhave panatipata veramani, adinnadana veramani ayan vaccati bhikkhave sammakammanto" which means "**Behold monks, Right Action means the abstention from killing, from stealing, from sexual misconduct. Such abstention is called Right Action.**"

Right Action consists of the three following parts:

1. **Pana-tipata vera-mani:** It means abstaining from taking life.
2. **A-dinna-dana vera-mani:** It means abstaining from stealing, from taking what belongs to others without their permission.
3. **Kame-sumiccha-cara vera-mani:** It means abstaining from adultery.

### 5. Right Livelihood

The Lord Buddha talks about Right Livelihood where it has direct relevance to the Buddhist monks. He tells them to abstain from Wrong Livelihood which consists of A-ne-sana. A-ne-sana means deceiving others by boasting about one's virtues, by asking things from an inappropriate person, by investing for gain, or by increasing one's gain by engaging in sorcery, the healing art, etc. For Buddhists, the Lord Buddha has this to say, "**Buddhist lay devotees should not engage in the five following areas of trading:**

1. Trading weapons.
2. Trading human beings.
3. Trading animals to be used for food.
4. Trading alcohol.
5. Trading poisons.

The Lord Buddha teaches that such forms of trading bring one trouble later on but Right Livelihood earns the praises of Ariya individuals.

## 6. Right Effort

Right Effort is a very important virtue and is praised by learned sages. Effort in itself is a neutral quality and as such can be a double-edged sword because it depends on what one spends his effort on. If it is right effort, then it can bring about happiness and prosperity. If it is wrong effort, then it can bring suffering and ruin.

In the Khuddaka-nikaya of the Tripitaka, it was written, “Behold, the Lord Buddha teaches that laziness is harmful but effort is a good virtue and should be practiced.”

At the time when our Bodhisatta was ready to become enlightened as a Buddha, he vowed to exercise effort in the following way: **“The blood and flesh in my body can dry up leaving only tendons and bones. As long as I cannot attain Enlightenment, I will never cease the effort.”** Such an exercise of effort is done by putting one’s life on the line. In the Magga-vibhanga Sutta, Right Effort is explained as follows:

1. **Sanvara-padhana:** It means the effort spent on guarding oneself against all unwholesomeness.
2. **Pahana-padhana:** It means the effort spent on abandoning any unwholesomeness which has already occurred.
3. **Bhavana-padhana:** It means the effort to engage in wholesome activities which have not yet occurred.
4. **A-nurak-khana-padhana:** It means the effort to continue and foster wholesomeness which has already occurred.

The Lord Buddha teaches us to spend our effort in preventing unwholesomeness from occurring, in abandoning unwholesomeness which has already occurred, in conducting wholesome activities, and in continuing and fostering wholesome activities.

## 7. Right Mindfulness

The Magga-vibhanga Sutta states that the Four Foundations of Mindfulness include contemplation of the body, contemplation of feelings, contemplation of mind, and contemplation of mind-objects. Such contemplations allow one to know and understand them for what they really are at any given point and time. In regards to the mind and mind-objects, the objective is to know what thoughts and ideas degrade the mind and what thoughts and ideas improve the mind.

In regards to the Four Foundations of Mindfulness, the Lord Buddha has this to say, “Akayano ayan bhikkhave maggo sattanan visudhiya.....” which means **“Behold, monks, this is the main path which leads all those beings who tread upon it to attain purity for the sake of Emancipation or to cross over from all forms of pain and suffering to the place where they are absent for the sake of attaining the Dhamma which should be known and knowable for the sake of making clear the path of Nibbana. Such are the Four Foundations of Mindfulness.”**

At the basic level, Right Mindfulness means being mindful of merit in that one thinks about giving alms, keeping the Precepts, recalling the virtues of the Triple Gem, recalling the virtues of one's parents, teachers, etc.

At the elevated level, Right Mindfulness means practicing the Four Foundations of Mindfulness. In order to understand this practice clearly, we will study the Dhamma lecture given by the Most Venerable Phramonkolthepmuni on the subject as follows.

**Contemplation of the Body (Kaya-nupassana):** It means contemplating on the Inner Bodies frequently. The Inner Bodies mean the different bodies which are located inside the Coarse Human Body starting from the Refined Human Body or Astral Body to all the Dhammakayas at different levels.

**Contemplation of Feelings (Vedana-nupassana):** It means contemplating on the external and internal feelings frequently. At the basic level, it means seeing happiness, suffering, and the state of neither happiness nor suffering of the Inner Bodies. External feelings are those of the Coarse Human Body whereas internal feelings are those of the Inner Bodies starting from the Astral Body.

**Contemplation of the Mind (Citta-nupassana):** It means contemplating on the external and internal minds frequently. It means clearly knowing the condition of the minds at all times. One knows if the mind is tainted with lust or anger or ignorance or if it is emancipated or not. The external mind is that of the Coarse Human Body whereas the inner minds are those of the Inner Bodies starting from the Astral Body.

**Contemplation of the Mind-Objects (Dhamma-nupassana):** It means contemplating on internal and external Dhamma frequently. To see the Inner Dhamma means to experience the Dhamma Sphere which gives rise to each of the Inner Bodies starting from the Astral Body. To contemplate on the external Dhamma means to see the Dhamma Sphere which gives rise to the Coarse Human Body. Without these Dhamma Spheres, the different bodies cannot exist.

## **8. Right Concentration**

Concentration is the basis of every success because concentration is needed in every undertaking be it simple or complex. Concentration differs in strengths and levels.

**Concentration** means the state of mind which is firm and focused. It is not diffuse or affected by external causes. A concentrated mind can be compared to the pillar of a building which is steady and stable. The current of the mind is like the current of the river, if it flows together in one direction, the current will be strong but if it scatters into different directions then its strength will be scattered as well. Concentration is instrumental in the successful practice of wholesomeness.

There are **three levels of concentration** as follows:

**Khanika-samadhi:** It means the kind of concentration which lasts in short durations such as that experienced by ordinary individuals. The type of concentration, which last as long as the flickering of an elephant's ear, is called Khanika-samadhi.

**U-pa-cara-samadhi:** It means the kinds of concentration which approach the First, Second, Third, and Fourth Absorptions.

**Appana-samadhi:** It means the kinds of concentration at the absorption level starting from the First Absorption.

In his Dhamma lecture on concentration, the Most Venerable Phra Monkolthepmuni divided concentration into the basic and elevated levels. Concentration at the basic level is derived from the Pali words 'Idha ariyasavako' which means the Ariya individuals who practice according to the Dhamma-Discipline. 'Vossaggarammanan karitava' which means to be removed from the six emotions through the eyes (rupa-ramana), the ears (saddha-ramana), the nose (gandha-ramana), the tongue (rasa-ramana), the body (photthabba-ramana), and the mind (dhamma-ramana). The mind is free from emotions and is concentrated to one-pointedness. To achieve such a state of mind in practice, one begins by concentrating on an object of concentration which one must initially form in the mind. When the mind attains the U-pa-cara-samadhi in the place of Khanika-samadhi, it will 'see' the object more clearly than with the physical eyes. Once the object of concentration changes into a mental object and U-pa-cara-samadhi is perfectly established then the mental object changes into the conceptualized image. As such, its size and shape can be changed at will. When the mental object and the subsequent conceptualized image can be sustained until Appana-samadhi or Absorptions can be attained, then concentration at the elevated level is achieved.

In other words, Right Concentration at the basic level means the determination to give alms, keep the Precepts, practice meditation, and listen to Dhamma lectures. The mind is in the states of Khanika-samadhi and U-pa-cara-samadhi. **Right Concentration at the elevated level** means concentration at the Appana-samadhi level which is the state where the mind is removed from subjective sensuality and objective sensuality and enters upon the First, Second, Third, and Fourth Absorptions. Right Concentration at the elevated level is required to attain the Paths and Fruits of Nibbana. Therefore, Right Concentration is praised by all Ariya individuals.

## Conclusion

The Paths and Fruits of Nibbana support one another and every part must be present. Theoretically, when we practice the Noble Eightfold Path by accumulating wholesome deeds such as alms-giving, keeping the Precepts, practicing meditation in an ever-increasing manner, one will reap their respective benefits. One is said to have Right View. A person, who endeavors to perform only wholesome deeds and abstain from unwholesome deeds through the body and the word as well as abstaining from wrong livelihood is said to have Right Effort in his nature.

A person, who thinks often of performing wholesome deeds, is said to have Right Mindfulness in his nature. A person, who endeavors to keep his mind trained on one-pointedness, is said to have Right Concentration in his nature.

The Noble Eightfold Path can occur in the four spheres of existence which include the Sense Sphere, the Form Sphere, the Non-Form Sphere, and the Supra-mundane Sphere (Lokuttara). When it occurs in the Supra-mundane Sphere, it is called Lokuttara-magga. When it occurs in the Sense Sphere, it is called Loka-magga. Whenever a person gives alms, keeps the Precepts, practices meditation, and listens to Dhamma lectures, he/she is cultivating the Noble Eightfold Path because the Fruit of the Noble Eightfold Path occurs with each wholesome deed.

### 8.2.3 The Middle Way in Practice

The Middle Way as described in 8.2.2 pertains to the theoretical part of the Noble Eightfold Path. It enables us to understand the Middle Way at one level. However, in practice, the Most Venerable Phra Monkothepmuni had explained the Dhammacak-kappa-vattana Sutta in a lecture given on January 3, 1955 that this Middle Way was a very profound subject. No one really knew or understood the fact that the Middle Way meant sending our mind to rest at the center of our human body. We could locate the center of our body by imaging two strings being pulled tautly across, one from the navel through the spine to the back and another from the left side of the body to the right side of the body. The point at which the strings intersect which is as small as a pinhead is the Sixth Base of the body. Two fingers breadth upward from this point is called the Seventh Base or the center of the body.

The Seventh Base or the center of the body is the permanent dwelling of our mind. Moreover, the Seventh Base is the dwelling of the Dhamma Sphere which gives rise to our human body. This Dhamma Sphere is the size of an egg yoke. It is clear and pure. When we are reborn, our mind comes to dwell at the center of this Dhamma Sphere. When we sleep, our mind returns to the Dhamma Sphere. When we die, our mind also comes to rest within the Dhamma Sphere. Therefore, the Dhamma Sphere which gives rise to our human body is the dwelling place of our mind when we are born, when we die, when we fall asleep, and when we wake up. This applies to every human being.

The Most Venerable Phramonkolthepmuni further explained that when we could bring our mind to rest at the center of our body, when our mind stands completely still, all good and bad things disappear. That is, there is neither good nor bad; there is neither merit nor demerit. It is neutral. When we can still our mind, our mind is far removed from both extremes which are Self-Indulgence (Kama-sukhal-likanuyoga) and Self-Mortification (Atta-kilamatha-nuyoga). Since it is distant from both extremes, it is called the Middle Way and the Middle Way is in turn the means of attaining Arahatsip. Such is the true meaning of the Lord Buddha's words in Pali, 'Tathagatena-abhisambuddha' which means 'the Tathagata penetrates it with His great Insight'.

When we keep our mind still at the Dhamma Sphere until it is in just the right condition, the Noble Eightfold Path will come together at the Seventh Base or the center of our body and when that happens, there will appear a clear sphere which is called **‘The Pathama-magga Sphere’ or ‘The Dhamma-nupas-sana-sati-patthan Sphere’**. It is as clear as a mirror the size of the moon or the sun appearing within the Dhamma Sphere. When our mind is kept still in the middle of this ‘Pathama-magga Sphere’, at just the right condition there will appear ‘The Precepts or Sila Sphere’, the size of the moon or the sun. When our mind is kept still in the middle of ‘The Precepts Sphere’, at just the right condition there will appear ‘The Concentration or Samadhi Sphere’. When our mind is kept still in the middle of ‘The Concentration Sphere’, at just the right condition there will appear ‘The Insight or Panna Sphere’. When our mind is kept still in the middle of ‘The Insight Sphere’, at just the right condition there will appear ‘The Emancipation or Vimutti Sphere’. When our mind is kept still in the middle of ‘The Emancipation Sphere’, at just the right condition there will appear ‘The Perfect Knowledge or Vimutti-nana-dassana Sphere’. When our mind is kept still in the middle of ‘The Perfect Knowledge Sphere’, at just the right condition there will appear ‘The Refined Human Body or the Astral Body’.

This is the process by which our Lord Buddha and all the Arahats attained Enlightenment. Once the Astral Body is attained, the work of the Coarse Human Body is over. From this point on, the work is carried out by the Astral Body.

The mind of the Astral Body is kept still at the center of the Dhamma Sphere which gives rise to the Astral Body. At just the right condition, the Pathama-magga Sphere will appear. The Astral Body’s mind is kept still in the middle of the Pathama-magga Sphere. At just the right condition, the Precepts Sphere will appear. The Astral Body’s mind is kept still in the middle of the Precepts Sphere. At just the right condition, the Concentration Sphere will appear. The Astral Body’s mind is kept still in the middle of the Concentration Sphere. At just the right condition, the Insight Sphere will appear. The Astral Body’s mind is kept still in the middle of the Insight Sphere. At just the right condition, the Emancipation Sphere will appear. The Astral Body’s mind is kept still in the middle of the Emancipation Sphere. At just the right condition, the Perfect Knowledge Sphere will appear. The Astral Body’s mind is kept still in the middle of the Perfect Knowledge Sphere. At just the right condition, the Coarse Celestial Body will appear.

We can see that the processes by which the mind continues along **the Middle Way** from the Dhamma Sphere which gives rise to the Coarse Human Body to the Astral Body and from the Dhamma Sphere which gives rise to the Astral Body to the Coarse Celestial Body share the same characteristics.

It is through such a process that the Coarse Celestial Body’s mind attains the Refined Celestial Body and merges as one with the Refined Celestial Body’s mind. The Refined Celestial Body’s mind then attains the Coarse Form Brahma Body and the Refined Celestial Body’s mind merges as one with the Coarse Form Brahma Body’s mind. The Coarse Form Brahma Body’s mind will then attain the Refined Form Brahma Body and merges as one with the Refined Form Brahma Body’s mind. The Refined Form Brahma Body’s mind attains the Coarse Non-Form Brahma Body, from the Coarse Non-Form Brahma Body to the Refined Non-Form Brahma Body, and from the Refined Non-Form Brahma Body to the Dhammakaya.

The inward movement of the mind in these processes is what the Lord Buddha calls “the ‘seeing’ of the respective Inner Bodies”. We can see that the Dhamma Sphere, which gives rise to the Coarse Human Body all the way to the Dhammakaya, exist in sequence one after another at the Seventh Base which is the center of our body.

#### **8.2.4 The Simultaneous Process of the Noble Eightfold Path**

After Phra Anna-kondanna listened to the Dhammacak-kappa-vattana Sutta, the simultaneous process of the Noble Eightfold Path led him to attain the Fruit of Stream-Entrance (Sota-panna). He has Right View which includes Insight. He penetrates the Four Noble Truth in that the Five Aggregates of Clinging (U-pa-dana-khandha 5) are called the Noble Truth of Suffering (Dukkha Ariya-sacca) because they are the causes of all sufferings. He knows that craving, which gives rise to the Five Aggregates of Clinging, is called the Noble Truth of the Cause of Suffering (Dukkha-samudaya Ariya-sacca). He knows that the complete extinguishment of craving is called the Noble Truth of the Cessation of Suffering (Dukkha-nirodha Ariya-sacca). He knows that the Noble Eightfold Path is called the Noble Truth of the Path which leads to the Cessation of Suffering (Dukkha-nirodha-gamini-pati-pada Ariya-sacca).

Right Thought is achieved by abandoning completely the three wrong thoughts of sensual pleasures, ill-will, and violence.

Right Speech is achieved by abandoning completely the four wrong speech of lying, divisive speech, offensive language, and nonsensical speech.

Right Effort is achieved by abandoning completely any wrong effort from his nature while preventing future wrong effort from happening, by exercising new right effort which is attaining the Fruit of Stream-Entrance and by continuing to develop his existing right effort.

Right Mindfulness is achieved by contemplating the fact that the form aggregate falls under the Three Characteristics of impermanence, suffering, and the absence of true selfhood. He knows that the feeling aggregate is suffering; the consciousness aggregate, which is the mind, is impermanent. It is constantly undergoing birth and death. He knows that perception and compounded things are absent of true selfhood in that they cannot be controlled.

The Noble Eightfold Path occurs as a spontaneous process in the mind of the Stream-Enterer. Right Thought supports Right View in the way that our hands turn objects around for our eyes to see so that we can distinguish one object from another. Thoughts give rise to different emotions constantly. It is up to Right View to consider further how certain emotions belong to the Sense Sphere; certain emotions belong to the Form Sphere; certain emotions belong to the Non-Form Sphere and how they all fall under the Three Characteristics of impermanence, suffering, and the absence of true selfhood.

Right Speech and Right Action support Right Livelihood because once one’s action and words are honest, so will the means of earning one’s livelihood be.

Right Effort and Right Mindfulness give rise to Right Concentration. This scenario can be compared to three friends who are enjoying a walk in the park. They spot a nipa-palm flower but it is out of reach. So one friend bends over to let another friend get on top of his back while the third friend stands close by to let him hold on to his shoulder as he reaches up to pick the flower. Right Effort is like the friend who lends his back as a stepping stool. Right Mindfulness is like the friend who lends his shoulder as a support. And Right Concentration is like the friend who picks the flower with the help of his two friends. Right Effort and Right Mindfulness support Right Concentration for the attainment of Nibbana.

### **Conclusion**

The Noble Eightfold Path is the Ariya individuals' sublime virtue. It is like the Universal Monarch who rules supreme. It is where the thirty-seven qualities contributing to Enlightenment (Bodhi-pakkhiya-dhamma) come together. It consists of the Four Foundations of Mindfulness (Sati-patthana 4), the Four Great Efforts (Sammā-padhana 4), the Four Paths of Accomplishment (Iddhi-pada 4), the Five Sense-Faculties (Indriya 5), the Five Powers (Bala 4), and the Seven Constituents of Enlightenment (Bojjhanga 7).

The Noble Eightfold Path can also be grouped into three categories:

- 1) Insight (Panna) which includes Right View, and Right Thought;
- 2) Morality (Sila) which includes Right Speech, Right Action, and Right Livelihood;
- 3) Concentration (Samadhi) which includes Right Effort, Right Mindfulness, and Right Concentration.

The Ariya Individuals should destroy Avijja or ignorance with Insight; they should destroy anger or ill-will with Morality; and they should destroy greed with Concentration.

Therefore, the Middle Way, which consists of the Noble Eightfold Path, has all of the attributes to rid the mind completely of defilements the result of which is Emancipation and Buddhahood.

## **8.3 The Practice which Leads to the Different Stages of Buddhahood**

In order to attain the Inner Knower, one must practice the Middle Way which includes the Noble Eightfold Path. The practice of the Noble Eightfold Path has the power to destroy defilements. A lens can be used to concentrate sunlight to give heat and fire which can burn anything. In the same manner, when the mind can be concentrated to one-pointedness, it can destroy defilements. Therefore, concentration is instrumental in attaining the Inner Knower.

The practice of the Middle Way requires the practitioner to rest his/her mind in the middle of the respective Spheres and Bodies. As the mind attains the different Inner Bodies, defilements in the respective bodies are extinguished. In this topic, more explanation will be given in terms of the attainment of Buddhahood.

As the practitioner practices the Noble Eightfold Path correctly according to the Middle Way by bringing his/her mind to rest quietly at the Seventh Base which is the center of the body. The mind will be freed from external feelings. At just the right condition, a clear, clean, and pure sphere will appear at the Seventh Base, this is called the Pathama-magga Sphere. It can be as small as a star. It can be the size of a full-moon or as big as the midday sun. The Pathama-magga Sphere appears when the Noble Eightfold Path converges in a phenomenon called 'Magga-samangi'. This is the entrance point of the mind in its movement toward Nibbana.

Once the Pathama-magga Sphere is attained, if the mind is kept still in the same place, it can withdraw and return to the external feelings. Therefore, the Most Venerable Phra Monkothepmuni teaches the practitioner not to allow the mind to rest in one place but to continue its movement toward the middle of the Pathama-magga Sphere. Soon the Magga-samangi will expand and the mind continues to move toward the Precepts Sphere, the Concentration Sphere, the Insight Sphere, the Emancipation Sphere, and the Perfect Knowledge Sphere respectively. As the mind continues to move inward, it will meet the Inner Bodies in accordance with the Four Foundations of Mindfulness as taught by the Lord Buddha. He says that when the mind meets the Inner Bodies which are still governed by the Three Characteristics of impermanence, suffering, and the absence of true selfhood, the mind is to leave them and continue on until it meets the most refined form of the Dhammakaya.

The Inner Bodies, which are still governed by the Three Characteristics, lie between the Pathama-magga Sphere and the Dhammakaya. They include the Coarse and Refined Human Bodies, the Coarse and Refined Celestial Bodies, the Coarse and Refined Form Brahma Bodies, and the Coarse and Refined Non-Form Brahma Bodies. These bodies still possess the five aggregates of form, feelings, perception, compounded things, and consciousness.

The Dhammakayas are not governed by the Three Characteristics and they are called the Dhamma aggregates since feelings, perception, compounded things, and consciousness of the Dhammakayas are refined to the point of being clear, clean, and pure. Even then, the Dhammakayas are categorized with respect to their different levels of purity.

The Dhammakaya at the very first level is located next to the Refined Non-Form Brahma Body and is called the Coarse Gotrabhu Dhammakaya. Next to Him is the Refined Gotrabhu Dhammakaya. Next to the Refined Gotrabhu Dhammakaya are the Coarse and Refined Sotapanna Dhammakayas, the Coarse and Refined Sakida-gami Dhammakayas, the Coarse and Refined A-na-gami Dhammakayas, and the Coarse and Refined Arahat Dhammakayas respectively. There are altogether ten Dhammakayas.

As layers of defilements are peeled off when the practitioner practices the Noble Eightfold Path and the Middle Way correctly, the mind becomes void of positive and negative feelings. It will have only equanimity, the kind which is filled with vitality, mindfulness, and insight. This is the state of mind which will lead to Nibbana. Such equanimity is praised by the Lord Buddha. It happens when the mind is far removed from defilements. The further the mind is removed from defilements, the faster it will move through the Inner Bodies. Defilements in the Coarse Human Body consist of ignorance (Avijja), ill-will, and Wrong View. When the mind is devoid of these defilements, it will attain the Celestial Bodies.

Defilements in the Celestial Bodies consist of greed, anger, and ignorance. When the mind is devoid of these defilements, it will attain the Form Brahma Bodies. Defilements in the Form Brahma Bodies consist of lust, anger, and ignorance. When the mind is devoid of these defilements, it will attain the Non-Form Brahma Bodies.

Defilements in the Non-Form Brahma Bodies consist of sensual passion (Kama-raganusaya), repulsion (Patigha-nusaya), and ignorance (Avijja-nusaya). When the mind is devoid of these defilements, it will attain the Gotrabhu Dhammakayas. A practitioner who has attained the Gotrabhu Dhammakayas is called a Gotrabhu Individual.

Once the Gotrabhu Individual achieves meditative attainments and penetrates the Four Noble Truths in the Coarse and Refined Human Bodies forward and backward, the mind will attain the Coarse and Refined Sotapanna Dhammakayas. A practitioner who has attained the Coarse and Refined Sotapanna Dhammakayas is called a Sotapanna. He becomes an Ariya individual and is able to abandon the Three Fetters which include self-illusion (Sakkaya-ditthi), doubt (Vici-kiccha), and adherence to mere rules and rituals (Silab-bata-para-masa).

Next, the Sotapanna Dhammakaya achieves meditative attainments and penetrates the Four Noble Truths in the Celestial Bodies forward and backward and at the end of which process, three more defilements can be destroyed. These include lust, anger, and ignorance at the crude level. The mind will then attain the Sakida-gami Dhammakayas. The Ariya individual will then have been able to abandon the three defilements of self-illusion (Sakkaya-ditthi), doubt (Vici-kiccha), and adherence to mere rules and rituals (Silab-bata-para-masa) as well as decreasing the level of lust, anger, and ignorance.

The Sakida-gami Dhammakaya will then achieve meditative attainments and penetrate the Four Noble Truths in the Form Brahma Bodies forward and backward. At the end of the process, all the Lower Fetters can be completely removed. These include self-illusion (Sakkaya-ditthi), doubt (Vici-kiccha), adherence to mere rules and rituals (Silab-bata-para-masa), sensual passion (Kama-raga), and repulsion (Patigha). The Ariya individual will then attain the A-na-gami Dhammakayas. The A-na-gami Dhammakaya achieves meditative attainments and penetrates the Four Noble Truth in the Non-Form Brahma Bodies forward and backward. At the end of the process, the Ariya individual will have abandoned all of the Higher Fetters. These include desire for life in the world of form (Rupa-raga), desire for life in the non-form worlds (A-rupa-raga), conceit (Mana), restlessness (Uddhacca), and ignorance (Avijja). He will then attain the Arahats Dhammakayas. When all the fetters have been completely removed, there will be no defilements left.

It can be concluded that the Lord Buddha and all the Arahats abandon defilements layer by layer as described in the Commentary in the processes above.

Penetrating the Truth through the meditative absorptions of the Dhammakayas means that the practitioner's mind merges as one with the Gotrabhu Dhammakaya. As such, he is called a Gotrabhu Individual. The mind of the Dhammakaya consists of the Sight Sphere, the Memory Sphere, the Thought Sphere, and the Cognitive Sphere just like they are in the Human Body. The difference is that the Dhammakaya's mind can expand in a circle

having a diameter which corresponds with the width of the Dhammakaya's lap<sup>3</sup>. For example, if the Dhammakaya's lap is 10 meters wide, then the mind can have the diameter of 10 meters. This applies to the mind of the Dhammakayas at higher levels as well except the diameter increases correspondingly with the width of the lap of the Dhammakaya involved. The expanded mind is called 'Nana'.

Since the mind of the Gotrabhu Dhammakaya can expand outward as 'Nana', He can look back at the eight Bodies before Him very clearly from the Coarse Human Body to the Refined Non-Form Brahma Bodies. He can penetrate the fact that these bodies fall under the Three Characteristics of impermanence, suffering, and the absence of true selfhood. Such seeing is performed through the eyes of the Dhammakaya. Such knowing is the knowing through the Dhammakaya's 'Nana' and this is where Vipassana begins.

Once the practitioner continues with Vipassana Meditation, he/she will attain the Dhammakayas at higher levels all the way to the Refined Arahat Dhammakaya. At this point, the practitioner has done all the work which needs to be done. All his/her work is finished.

## 8.4 The Main Points about Buddhahood

This course material begins with the first chapter which explains the world in which we live as being a part of the Sense Sphere and how it is like a prison which keeps beings locked up in the never-ending suffering of the round of rebirth. Everything in the world falls under the Three Characteristics. If there is a super-heroic individual to lead himself and others out of this prison and into Nibbana, that individual will be the Lord Buddha. He understands the truth about existence and knows it to be a prison; therefore, he has put his life on the line to pursue Perfections to the fullest extent so that he can become enlightened as a Buddha. Once he attains Enlightenment, he can then teach his enlightened Knowledge to the rest of the beings so that they can practice what he teaches and achieve Emancipation.

For this reason, the Lord Buddha is the most important person in the world and it is necessary that we study about His present and previous lives; that we study and practice the Dhamma so that we can begin to work our way out of the prison of Samsara. Chapters 2 to 7 are all about the Lord Buddha. In Chapters 2 & 3, a general knowledge about every Buddha is presented starting from who the Buddha is, how rare the happening of the Buddha is, why no more than one Buddha happens at one time, the categories of Buddhas, and all the virtues which make someone a Buddha. These include the Ten Perfections, Dhamma-samo-dhana, Buddha-bhumi-dhamma, etc.

In Chapter 4, the previous lives of our Lord Gautama Buddha were presented beginning with the first lifetime in which He aspired to Buddhahood and ending with the existence as Phra Vessan-dara where He pursued Generosity Perfection to the fullest extent. Chapters 5 to 7 the current life of the Lord Gautama Buddha was presented starting from the first part, the middle years, and the final years. Only important events were presented starting from the time our great Bodhisatta was born Prince Siddhattha, the time where He took up the religious life, His Enlightenment, His propagation of Buddhism, to His attainment of complete Nibbana. The material presented allows the student to learn about the Lord Buddha's way, His incomparable virtues, and how He is our perfect role model in life.

<sup>3</sup> All the Inner Bodies are in a meditative pose or in a half-lotus position.

In the last chapter, Buddhahood and the practice which leads to Buddhahood are explained in details. The practice involves the attainment of the Inner Buddhas or the Dhammakayas.

It also presented material on the Middle Way which leads to the different stages of Buddhahood. The material was garnered from the Dhammacak-kappa-vattana Sutta which contains clear details about the practice that leads to Buddhahood. This Sutta is our Lord Buddha's first Dhamma lecture and it enabled Phra Anna-kondanna to become an Ariya individual and bear witness to the Lord Buddha's Enlightenment. The main points of the Sutta are to abandon both extremes of Self-Indulgence (Kama-sukhala-lika-nuyoga) and Self-Mortification (Attaki-lamatha-nuyoga) but to practice the Middle Way or Majjima-pati-pada. The Middle Way leads to Buddhahood. The word Buddha means one who knows, one who is awake, one who is joyful because one is devoid of all defilements. In theory, the Middle Way consists of the Noble Eightfold Path beginning with Right View and ending with Right Concentration. According to the Most Venerable Phra Monkolthepmuni, the Middle Way means the meditation practice in which the mind is kept still and quiet at the Seventh Base or the center of the body and continue to move through the center of the respective Spheres and Inner Bodies until all defilements can be removed.

As a matter of fact, there is no clear, detailed expression about the Middle Way in the theoretical part. We are very fortunate indeed to have been born in time to learn the teaching of the Most Venerable Phra Monkolthepmuni who had put his life on the line practicing meditation until he met with success and spread his teaching far and wide. His teaching besides citing the Lord Buddha's sayings in Pali contains a detailed practical method to the attainment of Buddhahood which further enhances our understanding of the subject. However, there may be questions and unfamiliar vocabulary in his teaching if the person has not had the benefit of attaining the Dhammakaya. Added information may be gained by studying his book which is called "The Dhamma Heritage". This book contains his teaching which includes 63 Dhamma lectures.

It is hoped that having studied this course material on Buddhahood, the student will have understood the way every Buddha pursues Perfections to the fullest extent. However, it is more important that the student applies the learning to his/her daily life. Should any student be inspired to work toward Buddhahood, then the ultimate purpose of this course will have been realized.

## **Exercises**

After finishing this chapter, complete the test and exercises provided in the workbook.