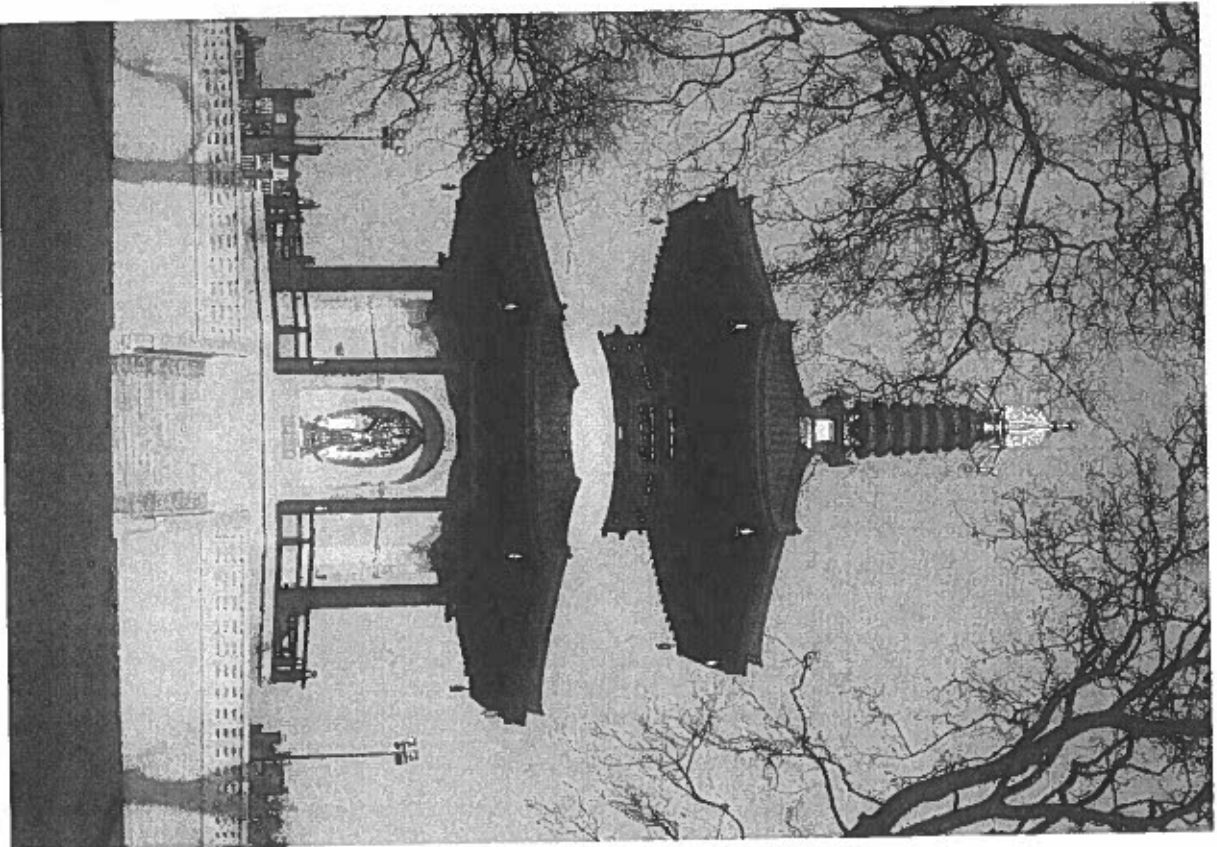


AN INTRODUCTION TO
BUDDHISM

Teachings, History and Practices

SECOND EDITION
PETER HARVEY



Frontispiece: The 'Peace Pagoda' in Battersea Park, London

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May any karmic fruitfulness (*punnā*) generated by writing this work
be for the benefit of my parents, wife and daughter, all who read this
book, and indeed all beings.

Namo tassa Bhagavato Arhato Samma-sambuddhassa
Honour to the Blessed One, Arhat,
perfectly and completely Awakened One!



The author (second from the right) accompanied by two Samatha Trust teachers at a festival at Ratanagiri Vihara, Northumberland, UK, giving alms to Ajahn Sumedho, then head of the Forest Sangha.

The Buddha and his Indian Context

Indian culture has not been as concerned with recording precise dates as have Chinese or Graeco-Roman cultures, so datings cannot always be arrived at with accuracy. All sources agree that Gotama was eighty when he died (e.g. *D.ii.100*), and the Pali sources of Theravāda Buddhism say that this was 218 years before the inauguration of the reign of the Buddhist emperor Asoka (Skt *Aśoka*): the 'long chronology'. Sanskrit sources preserved in East Asia have a 'short chronology', with his death 100 years or so before Asoka's inauguration. Based on a traditional date of the inauguration, Pali sources see Gotama's dates as 623–543 BCE. However, references in Asokan edicts to named Hellenistic kings have meant that modern scholars have put the inauguration at c. 268 BCE (giving c. 566–486 BCE for Gotama) or, more recently, anywhere between 267 and 280 BCE. Richard Gombrich¹ has argued that '218' and '100' are best seen as approximate numbers, and sees 136 as more likely, based on figures associated with a lineage of Buddhist teachers in the *Dīpaṅkasa*, a chronicle of Sri Lanka – with the '218' in this text (6.1) as from its misunderstanding of figures in its earlier part. With various margins of error, Gombrich sees Gotama's death as between 422 and 399 BCE, with c. 404 as most likely, giving his dates as c. 484–404 BCE.

BACKGROUND TO THE LIFE OF THE BUDDHA²*Brahmanism*

The Buddha taught in the region of the Ganges basin in north-east India, where the dominant religion was Brahmanism, administered by priests

known as Brahmins (*Brāhmanas*). Later, around 200 BCE, this tradition began to develop into the religion now known as Hinduism. Brahmanism had entered the north-west of the Indian sub-continent from around 1500 BCE, brought by a nomadic people who seem to have come from an area now in eastern Turkey, southern Russia and northern Iran. In this area, people spoke a postulated Aryan (Skt *Arya*) language – the basis of a number of 'Indo-European' languages spread by migration from there to India, Iran, Greece, Italy and other parts of Western Europe. The form of the language spoken in India was Sanskrit (from which Pali is derived), which is thus linked, through Greek and Latin, to modern European languages. The influx of the Aryans seems to have overlapped with the decline of the Indus Valley Civilization, a sophisticated city-based culture which had existed in the region of Pakistan since around 2500 BCE. The religion of the Aryans was based on the *Veda*, a body of 'revealed' oral teachings and hymns: the *Rg Veda Samhitā* (c. 1500–1200 BCE), three other *Veda Samhitās*, and later compositions known as *Brāhmanas* and *Upaniśads*. The Aryans worshipped 'thirty-three' mostly male gods known as *devas*, or 'illustrious ones': anthropomorphized principles seen as active in nature, the cosmos and human life. The central rite of the religion was one in which the priests sang the praises of a particular *deva* and offered him sacrifices by placing them in a sacrificial fire. In return, they hoped for such boons as health, increase in cattle, and immortality in the afterlife with the *devas*. In the *Brāhmanas* (c. 1000–800 BCE), animal sacrifices came to be added to the earlier offerings, such as grain and milk. The enunciation of the sacred sacrificial verses, known as *mantras*, was also seen as manipulating a sacred power called *Brahman*, so that the ritual was regarded as actually coercing the *devas* into sustaining the order of the cosmos and giving what was wanted. The great responsibility of the priests in this regard was reflected in them placing themselves at the head of what was regarded as a divinely ordained hierarchy of four social classes, the others being those of the *Kṣatriyas* (Pali *Khattiyas*) or warrior-leaders of society in peace or war, the *Vaiśyas* (Pali *Vessas*), or cattle-rearers and cultivators, and the *Sūdras* (Pali *Suddas*), or servants. A person's membership of one of these four *varnas*, or 'complexions' of humanity, was seen as determined by birth; in later Hinduism the system incorporated thousands of lesser social groupings and became known as the *jāti*, or caste, system. Members of the top three *varnas* were seen as *āryans*, or 'noble ones', and seen as socially superior due to the claimed purity of their descent.

Brahmins learnt of yogic techniques of meditation, physical isolation, fasting, celibacy and asceticism from ascetics whose traditions may have

¹ 1991–1992 and 2000, cf. Cousins, 1996c; Harvey, 2007d, 109b–107a.

² For early Indian religion, see Basham, 2005: 234–98, 289–300; Flood, 1996: 30–102; and Olivelle, 1996.

gone back to the Indus Valley Civilization. Such techniques were found to be useful as spiritual preparations for performing the sacrifice. Some Brahmins then retired to the forest and used them as a way of actually carrying out the sacrifice in an internalized, visualized form. The *Upanisads* were composed out of the teachings of the more orthodox of these forest dwellers. Of these, the pre-Buddhist ones are the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* and *Chāndogya* (seventh to sixth centuries BCE) and probably the *Taittirīya*, *Āitareya* and *Kaṣṭhīki* (sixth to fifth centuries BCE). In these, *Brahman* is seen as the substance underlying the whole cosmos, and as identical with the *Ātman*, the universal Self which the yogic element of the Indian tradition had sought deep within the mind. By true knowledge of this identity, it was held that a person could attain liberation from reincarnation after death, and merge back into *Brahman*. The idea of reincarnation seems to have developed as an extension of the idea, found in the *Bṛhadmanas*, that the power of a person's sacrificial action might be insufficient to lead to an afterlife that did not end in another death. The *Upanisads*, perhaps due to some non-Aryan influence, saw such a death as being followed by reincarnation as a human or animal. Non-Aryan influence was probably more certain in developing the idea that it was the quality of a person's *karma*, or 'action', that determined the nature of their reincarnation in an insecure earthly form; previously, '*karma*' had only referred to sacrificial action. Nevertheless, Brahmanism continued to see karma in largely ritual terms, and actions were judged relative to a person's *varna*, their station in society. Gombrich argues that the Buddha's central teachings came in response to those of the early *Upanisads*, notably the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka*, especially its ideas on *Ātman* (1996: 31). Moreover, in Buddhism the ethical quality of the impulse behind an action was the key to its being good or bad, rather than its conformity with ritual norms (2006: 67–70; 2009: 19–44).

A key term of Brahmanical thought was *Dharma*, seen as the divinely ordained order of the universe and human society, as seen in the specific duties (*dharma*s) assigned to each *varna*. *Dharma* includes both how things are (cf. a 'law' of physics) and how they should be (cf. a legal 'law'); it is the existent ideal standard (cf. the standard metre rule in Paris). In Buddhism, *Dharma* (Pali *Dhamma*) is also a central term. Here, the emphasis is not on fixed social duties, but primarily on the nature of reality, practices aiding understanding of this and practices informed by an understanding of this, all aiding a person to live a happier life and to move closer to liberation. Interest in the *Dharma* of things, their basic pattern or order, is also seen in the early Indian concern with enumerating the various elements of a person and the cosmos. In Buddhism, one sees this in various analytical lists, such

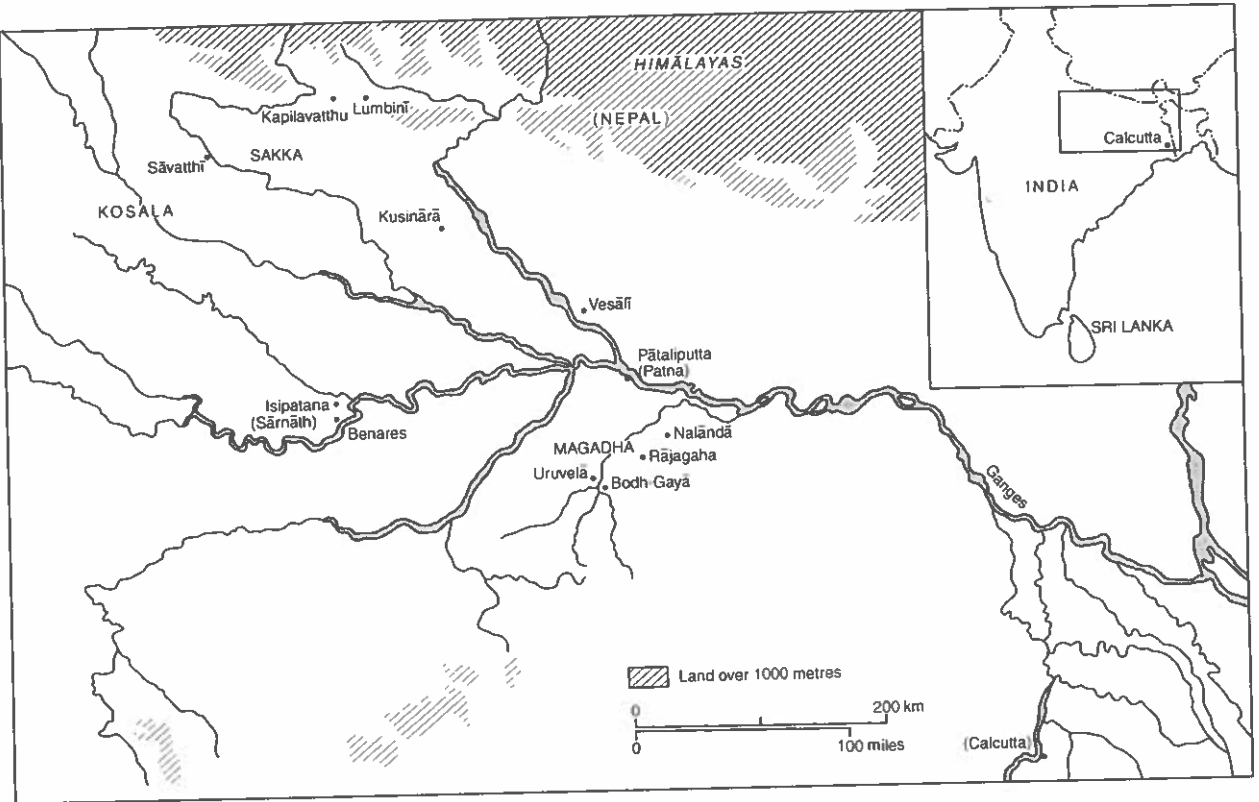
as the six elements (earth, water, fire, wind, space and consciousness), or five rebirth realms.

At the time of the Buddha, most Brahmins aimed at attaining the heaven of the creator god Brahmā (also known as Prajāpati) by means of truthfulness, study of the Vedic teachings, and either sacrifice or austerities. Some were saintly, but others seem to have been haughty and wealthy, supporting themselves by putting on large, expensive and bloody sacrifices, often paid for by kings. At its popular level, Brahmanism incorporated practices based on protective magic spells, and pre-Brahmanical spirit-worship no doubt continued.

The Samanas

The time of the Buddha was one of changing social conditions, where the traditions of small kin-based communities were being undermined as these were swallowed up by expanding kingdoms, such as those of Magadha and Kosala (Gombrich, 2006: 49–60). A number of cities had developed which were the centres of administration and of developing organized trade, based on a money economy. The ideas expressed in the *Upanisads* were starting to filter out into the wider intellectual community and were being hotly debated, both by Brahmins and by *Samanas* (Skt *Śramanas*), wandering 'renunciant' thinkers who were somewhat akin to the early Greek philosophers and mystics. The *Samanas* rejected the Vedic tradition and wandered free of family ties, living by alms, in order to think, debate and investigate. Many came from the new urban centres, where old certainties were being questioned, and increasing disease from population-concentration may have posed the universal problem of human suffering in a relatively stark form. They therefore sought to find a basis of true and lasting happiness beyond change and insecurity.

In its origin, Buddhism was a *Samana*-movement. Its description and assessment of the other *Samana* groups are contained in the *Sāmaññaphala Sutta* (D.I. 47–86 (SB.5–36)). One of the major *Samana* groups comprised the Jains. Jainism was founded, or at least led in the Buddha's day, by Vardhamāna the Mahāvīra, or 'Great Hero'. It teaches that all things, even stones, are alive, each containing a *jiua*, or 'life-principle'. These are seen as individually distinct, rather like the Western idea of a 'soul' but unlike the universal *Ātman* of the *Upanisads*, and to be naturally bright, omniscient and blissful. The aim of Jainism is to liberate one's *jiua* from the round of rebirths by freeing it from being weighed down by an encrustation of karma, seen as a kind of subtle matter. The methods of doing so are



Map 2: The region where the Buddha lived and taught.

primarily austerities such as fasting, going unwashed and pulling out the hair, so as to wear out the results of previous karma, and self-restraint, total non-violence to any form of life, and vegetarianism, so as to avoid the generation of new karma. The free-will of the *jiva* is emphasized, though even actions such as unintentionally killing an insect are held to generate karma. While the Buddha agreed with the jains on such matters as rebirth and non-violence, he saw their theory of karma as somewhat mechanical and inflexible, and opposed their asceticism as too extreme.³

A group of *Samanas* that rivaled the Buddhists and jains in their early centuries was that of the *Ājīvikas* (Basham, 1981). Their founder was Makkhali Gosāla (Skt Maskarin Gosāla), but according to the Pali tradition they also drew on ideas from Pūraṇa Kassapa (Skt Purna Kāśyapa) and Pakuddha Kaccāyana (Skt Kakuda Kāyāyana). Gosāla's key doctrine was that *niyati*, or impersonal 'destiny', governed all, such that humans had no ability to affect their future lives by their karma: actions were not freely done, but were determined by *niyati*. Gosāla thus believed in rebirth, but *not* in the principle of karma as that which regulates the level of a person's rebirth. The 'life-principles' of living beings are driven by *niyati* alone through a fixed progression of types of rebirths, from a low form of animal to an advanced human who becomes an *Ājīvika* ascetic. The *Ājīvikas* practised rigorous asceticism such as fasting, nakedness and perhaps also disfiguring initiations, and aimed to die by self-starvation (as Vardhamāna in fact did), as a fitting way to end their last rebirth. Both Vardhamāna, who had originally been on good terms with Gosāla, and the Buddha criticized *Ājīvika* fatalism as a pernicious denial of human potential and responsibility.

Two other small groups of *Samanas* were the Materialists and the Skeptics. According to the Pali tradition, in the Buddha's day their main spokesmen were, respectively, Ajita Kesa-Kambali (Skt Ajita Keśa-kambalin) and Saṅgiya Belatthaputta (Skt Saṅgiy Vairatiputra). The Materialists' aim was to lead an abstemious, balanced life which enjoyed simple pleasures and the satisfaction of human relationships. They denied any kind of self other than one which could be directly perceived, and held that this was annihilated at death. They therefore denied the idea of rebirth, and also those of karma and *niyati*. Each act was seen as a spontaneous event without karmic effects, and spiritual progression was not seen as possible. The Buddha characterized the Materialists' theory as the extreme view of 'annihilationism', and saw most other views of the day as some form of the opposite extreme, 'eternalism', which says that what survives death is some

³ Gombrich, 2009: 45–60 discusses Jain antecedents to some Buddhist ideas.

eternal Self or Life-principle. The Skeptics responded to the welter of conflicting theories on religious and philosophical issues, and the consequent arguments, by avoiding commitment to *any* point of view, so as to preserve peace of mind. They held that knowledge on such matters was impossible, and would not even commit themselves to saying that other people's views were wrong. The Buddha saw this evasive stance as 'eeling', though he shared the wish to step aside from the 'jungle' of conflicting views, and avoid dogmatic assertions built on flimsy grounds. This common emphasis is perhaps reflected in the fact that the Buddha's two chief disciples, Śāriputra (Skt Śāriputra) and Moggallāna (Skt Maudgalyāna), were originally Skeptics. The Buddha also shared the Materialists' emphasis on experience as the source of knowledge, and thus shared a critical evaluation of current beliefs on rebirth, karma and Self. He saw the Materialists and Skeptics as going too far, however, in denying or doubting the principles of karma and rebirth, which he held were shown to be true by (meditative) experience (*M.1.402*). Buddhism, then, did not uncritically absorb belief in karma and rebirth from existing Indian culture, as is sometimes held. These ideas were very much up for debate at the time.

THE LIFE OF THE BUDDHA⁴

We know that Gotama was born in the small republic of the Sakka (Skt Śākya) people, which straddles the present border with Nepal and had Kapilavastu (Skt Kapilavastu) as its capital. From his birth among these people, Gotama is known in Mahāyāna tradition as Śākya-muni, 'the Sakyan sage'. The republic was not Brahmanized, and rule was by a council of household-heads, perhaps qualified by age or social standing. Gotama was born to one of these rulers, so that he described himself as a *Kṣatriya* when talking to Brahmins, and later tradition saw him as the son of a king.

In the early Buddhist texts, there is no *continuous* life of the Buddha, as these concentrated on his teachings. Only later, between 200 BCE and 200 CE, did a growing interest in the Buddha's person lead to various schools producing continuous 'biographies', which drew on scattered accounts in the existing *Sutta* and *Vinaya* collections, and floating oral traditions. These 'biographies' include the Lokaravādin *Mahāvastu* (Mav.; first century CE), the Mahāyānized Sarvāstivādin *Lalitavastu* (Bays, 1983; from the first century CE), Aśvaghosa's poem, the *Buddhacarita* (Johnston, 1972, *BSJ*:34–66); second century CE), and the Theravādin *Nidānakathā*

(*Ndk.*: second or third century CE). The details of these are in general agreement, but while they must clearly be based around historical facts, they also contain legendary and mythological embellishments, and it is often not possible to sort out one from the other. While the bare historical basis of the traditional biography will never be known, as it stands it gives a great insight into Buddhism by enabling us to see what the *meaning* of the Buddha's life is to Buddhists: what lessons it is held to contain.

The traditional biography does not begin with Gotama's birth, but with what went before it, in his many lives as a *Bodhisatta*, a being (Pali *satta*) who is dedicated to attaining *bodhi*: 'enlightenment', 'awakening', 'buddhahood'. At *bodhi*, there arises 'vision, knowledge, wisdom, true knowledge, and light' (*S.v.422*) and '*bodhi*' is related to '*bujjhati*', 'understands', in the sense of 'rising from the slumber of the continuum of the (moral and spiritual) defilements' (*Asl.217*). As an 'awakening', *bodhi* is not the awakening of something, that is, a beginning of something, but a final awakening *from* delusion etc. '*Bodhi-satta*' was originally equivalent to Sanskrit '*bodhi-sakta*', meaning 'one bound for/seeking/directed towards awakening', though in time it came to be Sanskritized as '*Bodhi-sattva*', a 'being (for) awakening'. It is held that a 'hundred thousand eons and four incalculable periods ago', in one of his past lives, Gotama was an ascetic named Sumedha (or Megha) who met and was inspired by a previous Buddha, Dipaṅkara (Skt Dipaṅkara).⁵ He therefore resolved to strive for Buddhahood, by becoming a *Bodhisatta*. Sumedha knew that, while he could become an enlightened disciple of Dipaṅkara, an *Arahat*, the path he had chosen instead would take many lives to complete. It would, however, culminate in his becoming a perfect Buddha, one who would bring benefit to countless beings by rediscovering and teaching the timeless truths of *Dhamma* in a period when they had been forgotten by the human race (*Bums.2A.56*). He then spent many lives, as a human, animal and god, building up the moral and spiritual perfections necessary for Buddhahood. These lives are described in what are known as *Jataka* stories (*Jat.*, e.g. *BSJ.24–30*). Over the eons, he also met other past Buddhas (Collins, 2010: 126–71; Harvey, 2007d: 161a–165a); the *Digha Nikāya* names six (*D.11.2–9*), and the *Buddhavaṃsa*, twenty-three. In his penultimate life he was born in the Tusita (Skt Tustita) heaven, the realm of the 'delighted' gods. This is said to be the realm where the *Bodhisatta* Metteyya (Skt Maitreya) now lives, ready for a future period in human history when Buddhism will have become extinct, and he can become the next Buddha.⁶

⁵ *Bums.* ch. 2: *Ndk.1–19* (*BTTA.72*); *Mvs.* 1.231–9 (*BSJ.19–24*); *Diyāvatandhu* 246–53 (*ER.4.1*).

⁶ *D.11.1.76*; *BTTA.22*; *BSJ.238–42*; *BS2.12*; *ER.1.9*.

⁴ On this, see: Nānamoli, 2003; Ray, 1994: 44–78; Strong, 2001; Thomas, 1949.

It is said that Gotama chose the time in human history in which to be reborn for the last time (*Ndk.*48–9), with the *Suttas* saying that he was ‘mindful and fully aware’ when he was conceived in his mother’s womb (*M.*iii.119 (*BW.*50–4)).

The early texts clearly see the conception and the other key events of Gotama’s life, such as his birth, awakening, first sermon and death, as events of cosmic importance; for at all of them they say that light spread throughout the world and the earth shook. *Ndk.*50 relates that at the time of the conception, Mahāmāyā, his mother, dreamt that she was transported to the Himālayas where a being in the form of an auspicious white elephant entered her right side. On recounting this dream to her husband, Suddhodana (Skt Śuddhodana), he had it interpreted by sixty-four Brahmins. They explained that it indicated that his wife had conceived a son with a great destiny ahead of him. Either he would stay at home with his father and go on to become a *Cakkavatti* (Skt *Cakravartin*), a compassionate Universal Emperor – which the *Suttas* say that he had been in many previous lives (*A.*iv.89) – or he would leave home and become a great religious teacher, a Buddha.

This paralleling of a *Cakkavatti*⁷ and a Buddha is also made in relation to other events of Gotama’s life, and indicates the idea of a Buddha having universal spiritual ‘sovereignty’ – i.e. influence – over humans and gods. It also indicates that Gotama renounced the option of political power in becoming a Buddha. He certainly had no political pretensions, as Muhammad had, and was not seen as a political threat by the rulers of his day, as was Jesus. He did, however, teach kings and give teachings on how best to govern a realm.

*Ndk.*52–3 relates that, near the end of her pregnancy, Mahāmāyā journeyed from Kapilavastu to the home of her relatives to give birth, as was the custom. On the way, she and her party passed the pleasant Lumbini grove, where she stopped to enjoy the flowers and birdsong. Here she went into labour and, holding on to a Sāl tree, gave birth standing up. The birth of Gotama under a tree fits the pattern of the other key events in his life: attaining awakening under another tree, giving his first sermon in an animal (perhaps deer) park, and dying between two trees. This suggests his liking for simple natural environments where he could be in harmony with all forms of life. The *Suttas* accounts say that the baby was set down on the ground by four gods, and that a warm and cool stream of water appeared

from the sky as a water-libation for mother and child. He immediately stood, walked seven paces, scanned in all directions, and said in a noble voice that he was the foremost being in the world, and that this would be his last rebirth (*M.*iii.123).

As his mother had died a week after giving birth (*M.*iii.122), Gotama was brought up by his father’s second wife, Mahāmāyā’s sister, Mahāpajāpatī (Skt Mahāprajāparī). The *Suttas* say little on his early life, except that it was one of lily pools, fine clothes and fragrances, with female musicians as attendants in his three mansions (*A.*i.145). The later biographies portray him as having been an eager, intelligent and compassionate youth. They relate that his father was keen that he should stay at home to become a great king, and so surrounded him with luxuries to ensure that he remained attached to the worldly life. At sixteen, he was married, and at twenty-nine had a son named Rāhula. In Theravāda texts, his wife is generally called ‘Mother of Rāhula’ (Rāhula-mārā, *Ndk.*58), but other names used in these and other texts are Bhaddakaccā, Bimbā-devī, Yaśodharā and Gopā.⁸

The renunciation and quest for awakening

It was from a pleasant and wealthy background, then, that Gotama renounced the worldly life and set out on his religious quest. The lead-up to this crucial transition is described in different ways in the early and later texts. The *Suttas* portray it as the result of a long consideration. Even from his sheltered existence, he became aware of the facts of ageing, sickness and death. Realizing that even he was not immune from these, the ‘vanities’ of youth, health and life left him (*A.*i.145–6). He therefore set out to find the ‘unborn, unaging, undecaying, deathless, sorrowless, undefiled, uttermost security from bondage – *Nirvāṇa*’ (*M.*i.163). He realized, though, that:

Household life is crowded and dusty; going forth [into the life of a wandering *Saṃveta*] is wide open. It is not easy, living life in a household, to lead a holy-life as utterly perfect as a polished shell. Suppose I were to shave off my hair and beard, put on saffron garments, and go forth from home into homelessness? (*M.*i.240)

The later texts say that the transition occurred at the age of twenty-nine, just after the birth of his son (*Ndk.*61–3),⁹ portraying it as arising from a sudden realization rather than from a gradual reflection. In this, they follow

⁷ For example at *D.*ii.142, 169–99 (*SB.*98–103), iii.142–79; *A.*i.109–10 (*BW.*15–16); Harvey, 2007d: 153–154.

⁸ Harvey, 2007d: 117a–121a, for a nineteenth-century Thai text ‘Bimbā’s Lament’, see *BP.*43.

⁹ Though the Sarvāstivāda tradition (*EA.*i.3) has Rāhula being conceived on the night of the renunciation, thus ensuring Gotama’s family line is continued.

the model of a *Sutta* story of a previous Buddha (*D.ii.22–9*), which sees the lives of all Buddhas as following a recurring pattern (*ahammarā*). *Ndk.58–9* relates that, on three consecutive days, Gotama visited one of his parks in his chariot. His father had had the streets cleared of unpleasant sights, but the gods ensured that he saw an age-worn man, a sick man and a corpse. He was amazed at these new sights, and his charioteer explained to him that ageing, sickness and death came to all people, thus putting him in a state of agitation at the nature of life. In this way, the texts portray an example of the human confrontation with frailty and mortality; for while these facts are 'known' to us all, a clear realization and acceptance of them often does come as a novel and disturbing insight. On a fourth trip to his park, Gotama saw a saffron-robed *Samana* with a shaven head and a calm demeanour, the sight of whom inspired him to adopt such a life-style. That night, he left his palace, taking a long last look at his son, who lay in his sleeping wife's arms, knowing it would be difficult for him to leave if she awoke. His renunciation of family life stands as a symbolic precedent for the monastic life of Buddhist monks and nuns.

The Buddhist tradition sees his leaving of his family as done for the benefit of all beings; moreover, after he became a Buddha, he is said to have returned to his home town and taught his family, with his son ordaining under him as a novice monk, and his father becoming a 'non-returner' (*Ndk.91–2*): one with liberating insight just less than that of the *Arahant* (Skt *Arahat*; see p. 86). After his father's death, his stepmother, Mahāpajāpati becomes a nun who goes on to become an *Arahant*, and whose death is compared to that of the Buddha (*BP.9*). It is also said in the Theravāda commentaries that his ex-wife ordained as a nun (*Jat.ii.392–3*), and she may be identical with the nun known as Bhaddakaccānā, seen as the nun who was pre-eminent in 'higher knowledges' (such as memory of past lives; *A.1.25*).

The *Suttas* say that Gotama sought out teachers from whom he could learn spiritual techniques, going first to Ālāra Kālāma (Skt *Arāḍa Kālāma*).¹⁰ Gotama soon mastered his teachings and then enquired after the meditational state on which they were based. This was the 'sphere of nothingness', a mystical trance probably attained by yogic concentration, in which the mind goes beyond any apparent object and dwells on the remaining 'nothingness'. After Gotama quickly learnt to enter this state, Ālāra offered him joint leadership of his group of disciples, but he turned down the offer

as he felt that, while he had attained a refined inner calmness, he had not yet attained awakening and the end of suffering.

He then went to another yoga teacher, Uddaka Rāmaputra (Skt *Udraka Rāmaputra*), and again quickly grasped his doctrine and entered the meditational state on which it was based, the 'sphere of neither-perception-nor-non-perception'. This went beyond the previous state to a level of mental stilling where consciousness is so attenuated as to hardly exist. In response, Uddaka acknowledged him as even his own teacher, for only his dead father, Rāma, had previously attained this state. Again Gotama passed up a chance of leadership and influence on the grounds that he had not yet reached his goal. Nevertheless, he later incorporated both the mystical states he had attained into his own meditational system, as possible ways to calm and purify the mind in preparation for developing liberating insight. He in fact taught a great variety of meditational methods, adapting some from the existing yogic tradition, and can be seen as having been one of India's greatest practitioners of meditation.

After having experimented with one of the methods of religious practice current in his day, Gotama went on to try another: ascetic self-mortification. The *Suttas* tell that he settled in a woodland grove at Uruvelā (Skt *Uruvilvā*) and resolved to strive earnestly to overcome attachment to sensual pleasures by intense effort, trying to dominate such tendencies by force of will (*M.1.240–6*). He practised non-breathing meditations, though they produced fierce headaches, stomach pains, and burning heat all over his body. He reduced his food intake to a few drops of bean soup a day, till he became so emaciated that he could hardly stand and his body hair fell out. At this point, he felt that it was not possible for anyone to go further on the path of asceticism and still live. Nevertheless, though he had developed clarity of mind and energy, his body and mind were pained and untranquil, so that he could not carry on with his quest. He therefore abandoned his practice of harsh asceticism, which the later texts (*Ndk.67*) say lasted for six years.

At this point, he might have abandoned his quest as hopeless, but he thought 'might there be another path to awakening?' (*M.1.246*). He then remembered a meditative state that he had once spontaneously entered, sitting at the foot of a tree while his father was working (the commentary says: ceremonially ploughing). He recollected that this state, known as the 'first *jhāna*' (Skt *dhyāna*), was beyond involvement in sense-pleasures, which he had been attempting to conquer by painful asceticism, but was accompanied by deep calm, blissful joy and tranquil happiness. He remembered having wondered whether it was a path to awakening, and as he now

¹⁰ *M.1.160–75* (*BW.54–9*, *69–75*; *BS2.141*); see also *M.ii.91–7* (*SB.173–94*).

saw that it was, he resolved to use it. The above sequence, of course, implies that the two mystical states he had earlier attained were not entered via the *jhānas*, although this became the route to them in the Buddhist meditative system, where they are the top two of four 'formless' (*arūpa*) attainments.

When Gotama took sustaining food to prepare himself for attaining *jhāna*, his five companions in asceticism shunned him in disgust, seeing him as having abandoned their shared quest and taken to luxurious living. One *Sutta* (*Sn.425–49*) outlines a temptation sequence which the later texts (*Ndk.72–4*) put at this juncture. It refers to a Satan-like figure known as Māra, a deity who has won his place by previous good works, but who uses his power to entrap people in sensual desire and attachment, so as to stay within his realm of influence (Ling, 1962). This is the round of rebirth and repeated death, so that Māra is seen as the embodiment of both sense-desire and death. Māra came to the emaciated ascetic with honeyed words. He urged him to abandon his quest and take up a more conventional religious life of sacrifice and good works, so as to generate good karma. In response, Gotama replied that he had no need of more good karma, and scorned the 'squadrons' of Māra: sense-desire, jealousy, hunger and thirst, craving, dullness and lethargy, cowardice, fear of commitment, belittling others, obstinate insensitivity and self-praise. Māra then retreated in defeat.

This account, clearly portraying the final inner struggle of Gotama, gains dramatic colour in the later texts, where Māra's 'army' of spiritual faults bore witness to the fact that he had done many charitable acts in previous lives. Taunting Gotama that he had no-one to bear witness to *his* good deeds, Māra tried to use the power derived from his own good karma to throw Gotama off the spot where he was sitting. Gotama did not move, however, but meditated on the spiritual perfections that he had developed over many previous lives, knowing that he had a right to the spot where he sat. He then touched the earth for it to bear witness to the good karma he had generated in past lives. The earth quaked, and the earth goddess appeared, wringing from her hair a flood of water, accumulated in the past when Gotama had formalized good deeds by a simple ritual of water-pouring (Strong, 2001: 72). At the quaking and flood, Māra and his army fled. This 'conquest of Māra' is commemorated as a victory over evil by countless images and paintings. These show Gotama, as in Plate 1, seated cross-legged in meditation with his right hand touching the earth: the 'conquest of Māra' (Pali *māra-vijaya*) or 'earth-witness' (Skt *bhūmi-sparśā*) gesture.

The idea of the earth goddess acting as witness to Gotama's perfections is suggestive of the spiritual need to be mindfully 'earthed'. Indeed in his

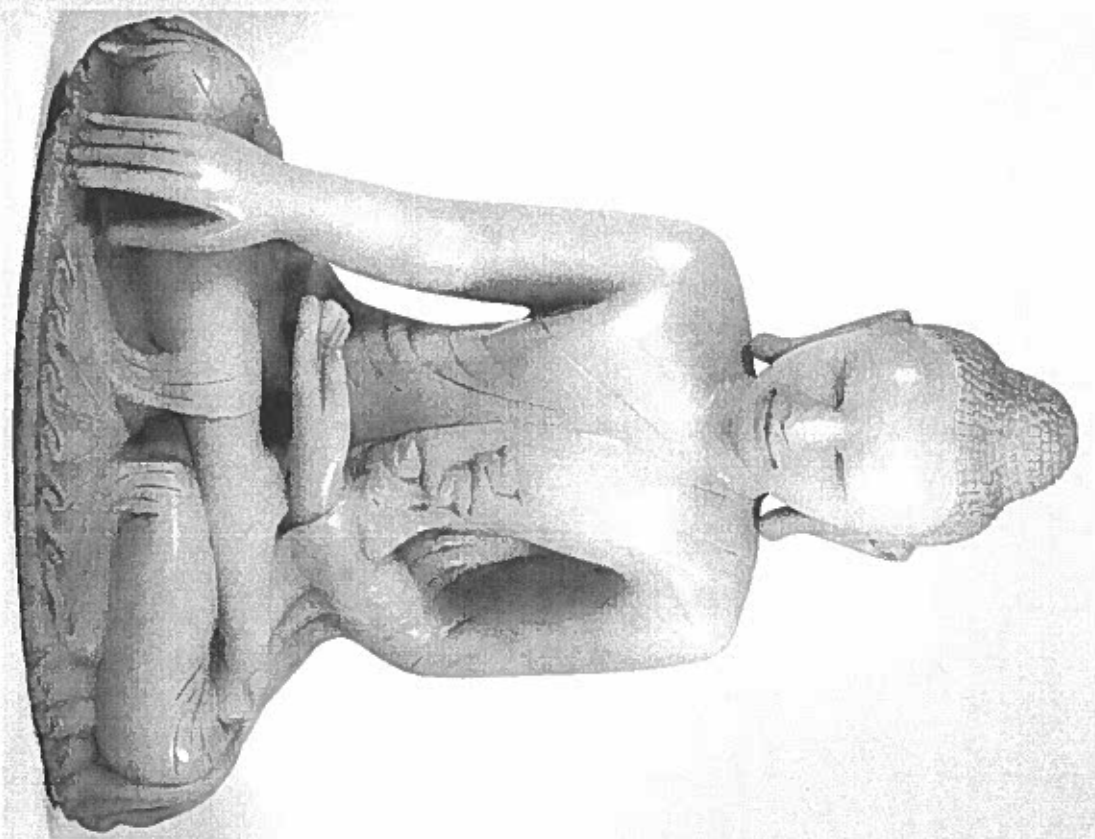


Plate 1: A nineteenth-century Burmese image, showing Gotama at his 'conquest of Māra', just prior to his awakening.

spiritual quest, it is notable that Gotama turned to a path of *mindful awareness of the body*, especially breathing, to induce joyful *jhāna*, rather than *not attending* to the physical in formless states or trying to *forcefully repress* the body and its needs in the painful ascetic way.

The awakening and after

Free of spiritual hindrances, Gotama then developed deep meditations as a prelude to his awakening, seated under a species of tree which later became known as the *Bodhi*, or 'Awakening' tree. The *Sutta* account (*M.1.247–9* (*BW.64–7*)) describes how he entered the first *jhāna*, and then gradually deepened his state of concentrated calm till he reached the fourth *jhāna*, a state of great equanimity, mental brightness and purity. Based on this state, he went on to develop, in the course of the three watches of the moonlit night, the 'threefold knowledge': memory of many of his countless previous lives, seeing the rebirth of others according to their karma, and knowing the destruction of the *āsavas* (Skt *āśravas*) – spiritual 'taints' or 'cankers' which fester in the mind and keep it unawakened. The third knowledge, completed at dawn, brought the perfect awakening he had been seeking, so that he was now, at the age of thirty-five, a Buddha, with joyful direct experience of the unconditioned *Nirvāna*, beyond ageing, sickness and death.

The Canonical account (*Vin.1.1–8; M.1.167–70*) then says that the new Buddha stayed under or near the *Bodhi*-tree for four or more weeks, at the place now called Bodhi-Gayā. After meditatively reflecting on his awakening, he pondered the possibility of teaching others, but thought that the *Dhamma* he had experienced was so profound, subtle and 'beyond the sphere of reason', that others would be too subject to attachment to be able to understand it. At this, the compassionate god Brahmā Sahampati – whom the Buddhist tradition saw as a long-lived 'non-returner' who had been taught by a previous Buddha (*S.v.232–3; Sn-a.476*) – became alarmed at the thought that a fully awakened person had arisen in the world, but that he might not share his rare and precious wisdom with others. He therefore appeared before the Buddha and respectfully asked him to teach, for 'there are beings with little dust in their eyes who, not hearing the *Dhamma*, are decaying'. The Buddha then used his mind-reading powers to survey the world and determine that some people were spiritually mature enough to understand his message, and so decided to teach. The entirety of the compassionate Brahmā is seen by Buddhists as the stimulus for the unfolding of the Buddha's compassion, the necessary complement to his awakened wisdom for his role as a perfect Buddha, a 'teacher of gods and humans'. The words attributed to Sahampati are now used as a Theravāda chant to formally request a monk to teach.

Gotama wished to teach his two yoga teachers first of all, but gods informed him that they were now dead, a fact which he then confirmed by his meditative awareness. He therefore decided to teach his former

companions in asceticism. Intuiting that they were currently in the animal park at Isipatana (Skt *Rṣipatana*; now called Sarnāth) near Varanasi (Benares), he set out to walk there, a journey of about one hundred miles.

The first sermon and the spread of the teachings

The Canonical account (*Vin.1.8–21*) relates that, on arriving at the animal park, his five former companions saw him in the distance, and resolved to snub him as a spiritual failure. As he approached, however, they saw that a great change had come over him and, in spite of themselves, respectfully greeted him and washed his feet. At first they addressed him as an equal, but the Buddha insisted that he was a *Tathāgata*, a 'Thus-gone' or 'One-returned-to-reality' (cf. *A.11.23–4* (*BW.421–3*)), who had found the Deathless and could therefore be their teacher. After he twice repeated his affirmation, to overcome their hesitation, the ascetics acknowledged that he had a new-found assurance and were willing to be taught by him.

Gotama, usually referred to as the 'Lord' or 'Blessed One' (*Bhagavat*) in the *Suttas*, then gave his first sermon. This commenced with the idea that there is a 'middle way' for those who have gone forth from the home life, a way which avoids both the extremes of devotion to mere sense-pleasures and devotion to ascetic self-torment. Gotama had himself previously experienced both of these spiritual dead-ends. The middle way which he had found to lead to awakening was the *Aryya* (Skt *Ārya*), or Noble, Eight-factored Path (*Mārga*, Skt *Mārga*). He then continued with the kernel of his message, on the four True Realities for the Spiritually Ennobled (generally translated as 'Noble Truths'), which are four crucial dimensions of existence: the painful aspects of life; craving as the key cause of rebirth and these associated mental and physical pains; the cessation of these from the cessation of craving; and the way of practice leading to this cessation, the Noble Eight-factored Path. He then emphasized the liberating effect on him of his full insight into and appropriate responses to these realities, such that he was now a Buddha.

As a result of this instruction, one member of Gotama's audience, Koṇḍañña (Skt *Kauṇḍinya*), gained experiential insight into the four True Realities, so that Gotama joyfully affirmed his understanding. This insight is described as the gaining of the stainless '*Dhamma-eye*', by which Koṇḍañña 'sees', 'attains' and 'plunges into' the *Dhamma*, free from all doubt in the Buddha's teachings. This is a person's first spiritual breakthrough, involving the first glimpse of *Nirvāna*. In most cases, as with Koṇḍañña, it makes a person a 'stream-enterer': one who has entered the

path that will ensure the full attainment of *Nirvāna* within seven lives at most. Koṇḍañña's gaining of the *Dhamma-eye* is clearly seen as the climax of the first sermon, for as soon as it occurs, the exultant message is rapidly transmitted up through various levels of gods that 'the supreme *Dhamma-wheel*' had been set in motion by the 'Blessed One', and could not be stopped by any power: an era of the spiritual influence of the *Dhamma* had begun. The 'Setting in motion of the *Dhamma-wheel*' (*Dhamma-cakka-ppavattana*, Skt *Dharma-cakra-paravartana*) thus became the title of the *Sutta* of the first sermon (S.v. 420–4).

After Koṇḍañña was ordained, thus becoming the first member of the monastic *Saṅgha*, the Buddha gave more extensive explanations of his teachings to the other four ascetics, so that, one by one, they attained the *Dhamma-eye* and were then ordained. Later the Buddha gave his 'second' sermon (see p. 58), at which his disciples all attained the full experience of *Nirvāna* – as he himself had done at his awakening – so as to become *Arhats*.

Other disciples, monastic and lay, followed, so that soon there were sixty-one *Arhats*, including the Buddha. Having such a body of awakened monk-disciples, the Buddha sent them out on a mission to spread the *Dhamma*: 'Walk, monks, on tour for the blessing of the manyfolk, for the happiness of the manyfolk, out of compassion for the world, for the welfare, the blessing, the happiness of gods and humans' (*Vin.1.21* (BTTA.7)). As the teaching spread, Gotama in time gained his two chief disciples: Sāriputta, famed for his wisdom and ability to teach, and Moggallāna, famed for his psychic powers developed by meditation.¹¹ At some point during his life, Gotama initiated an order of nuns (see pp. 298–9), this being said to be in response to the repeated requests of his stepmother Mahāpajāpatī, and the suggestion of his faithful attendant monk Ānanda (*Vin.ii.253–83* (BTTA.3)).

The Canon gives only incidental reference to events between the sending out of the sixty *Arhats* and the last year of the Buddha's life. The general picture conveyed is that he spent his long teaching career wandering on foot, with few possessions, around the Ganges basin region. Though he was of a contemplative nature, loving the solitude of natural surroundings, he was generally accompanied by many disciples and spent much of his time in or near the new towns and cities, especially Savatthī, Rājagaha and Vesālī (Skt Śrāvastī, Rājagṛha, Vaiśālī). Here, there were many people of a questioning nature looking for a new spiritual outlook. The commentary to the *Thera-gāthā* and *Therī-gāthā* describes the background of 328 monks

and nuns (Gombrich, 2006: 56; Gokhale, 1994: 61) and indicates that over two-thirds came from urban areas. It also indicates that, as to their social backgrounds, 41 per cent were Brahmin, 23 per cent *Kṣātrīya*, 30 per cent *Vaiśya*, 3 per cent *Śūdra*, and 3 per cent 'outcaste' (below the *Śūdras* in the Brahmanical hierarchy). Of these, the Brahmins do not generally appear to have been traditional village priests, but urban dwellers perhaps employed as state officials. State officials and merchants were the dominant groups in urban society, but neither had an established niche in the *varna* system (though merchants later came to be seen as *Vaiśyas*). These groups, whose achievements depended on personal effort, seem to have been particularly attracted to the Buddha's message, which addressed people as individuals in charge of their own moral and spiritual destiny, rather than as members of the *varna* system (Gombrich 2006: 79–83); respect should be based on moral and spiritual worth, not birth: it had to be earned (*Sn.136*). The Buddha taught all who came to him without distinction: men, women, rich merchants, servants, Brahmins, craftsmen, ascetics, kings and courtisans, and made a point of insisting that social background was irrelevant to the position of individuals within the *Saṅgha* (A.iv.202). He also urged his disciples to teach in the local languages or dialects of their hearers (*Vin.ii.139*). In contrast, the Brahmins taught in Sanskrit, which had by now become unintelligible to those who had not studied it, and only made the Vedic teachings available to males of the top three *varnas*.

The Buddha's charisma and powers

The early texts portray the Buddha as a charismatic, humanitarian teacher who inspired many people. He even elicited a response from animals: for it is said that an elephant once looked after him by bringing him water when he was spending a period alone in the forest (*Vin.1.352*). A person who bore enmity towards him, however, was his cousin Devadatta, one of his monks. Jealous of his influence, Devadatta once suggested that the ageing Buddha should let him lead the *Saṅgha*, and then plotted to kill him when the request was turned down (*Vin.ii.191–5*). In one attempt on his life, Devadatta asked his friend, Prince Ajātasattu (Skt Ajāśattu), to send soldiers to waylay and assassinate the Buddha. Sixteen soldiers in turn went to do this, but all were too afraid to do so, and became the Buddha's disciples instead. In another attempt, the fierce man-killing elephant Nālagiri was let loose on the road on which the Buddha was travelling. As the elephant charged, the Buddha calmly stood his ground and suffused the elephant with the power of his

¹¹ For stories of his converting some key disciples, see BTTA.i, EB.2.1.1/3/5/6.

lovingkindness, so that it stopped and bowed its head, letting the Buddha stroke and tame it.

In gaining hearers for his message, the Buddha did not always rely on his charisma, reputation and powers of persuasion. Occasionally he had recourse to his psychic powers, though he forbade the mere display of these by his disciples (*Vin.11.112*). The results of such powers are not seen as supernatural miracles, but as the supernormal products of the great inner power of certain meditations. A late Canonical passage (*Patt.1.125*) describes his 'marvel of the pairs', which later legendary material ascribes to the Buddha while staying at Sāvārthi (*Dhp.2.111.204-16*): he rose into the air and produced both fire and water from different parts of his body. Occasionally, he used his powers to heal one of his devout supporters physically, such as bringing a long and very painful childbirth to an end (*Ud.15-16*), or curing a wound without leaving even a scar (*Vin.1.216-18*). The Buddha generally regarded psychic powers as dangerous, however, as they could encourage attachment and self-glorification. In a strange parallel to the temptation of Jesus in the desert, it is said that he rebuffed Mara's temptation to turn the Himalayas into gold (*S.1.116*).

The passing away of the Buddha

The *Mahāparinibbāna Sutta*¹² deals with the last year of the Buddha's life. During this period, he suffered an illness, and Ānanda asked about the fate of the *Saṅgha* after his death, clearly wondering who would lead it. In reply, the Buddha said that he had taught the *Dhamma* without holding anything back, and that the *Saṅgha* depended on the *Dhamma*, not on any leader, even himself.¹³ Members of the *Saṅgha* should look to their own self-reliant practice, with the clearly taught *Dhamma* as guide: with themselves and the *Dhamma* as 'island' and 'refuge' (*D.11.100*). Later the Buddha specified that, after his death, the *Saṅgha* should take both the *Dhamma* and monastic discipline (*Vinaya*) as their 'teacher' (*D.11.154*).

Though unwell for the last three months of his life, the Buddha continued to wander on foot, his journey ending in the small village of Kusinārā (*Skt Kusūnagarī*). When asked what his funeral arrangements should be, he said that this was the concern of the laity, not the *Saṅgha*, but that his body should be treated like that of a *Cakkavartin* emperor. It should be wrapped

in cloth, placed in a coffin and cremated. The relics remaining should then be placed in a *Stupa* (*Pali Thūpa*), or burial mound, at a place where four roads meet. He then said, 'When people place a garland, fragrance or paste there, or make respectful salutations, or bring peace to their hearts, that will contribute to their long-lasting welfare and happiness' (*D.11.142*). After his cremation, the Buddha's relics were placed in eight *Stupas* (*EB.1.1*), with the bowl used to collect the relics and the ashes of the funeral fire in two more. Such *Stupas*, which could alternatively contain relics of *Arhats*, later became the focus of much devotion.

Even on his death-bed, the Buddha continued to teach. A wanderer asked whether other *Samana* leaders had attained true knowledge. Rather than say that their religious systems were wrong and his right, the Buddha simply indicated that the crucial ingredient of any such system was the Noble Eight-factored Path: only then could it lead to full Arahanship. He saw such a Path as absent from other teachings that he knew of.

Not long after this, the Buddha asked his monks if any had final questions that they wanted answering before he died. When they were silent, he sensitively said that, if they were silent simply out of reverence for him, they should have a friend ask their question. They remained silent. Seeing that they all had a good understanding of his teachings, he therefore gave his final words: 'It is the nature of conditioned things to decay, but if you are attentive, you will succeed!' (*D.11.156*). He then made his exit from the world, in the fearless, calm and self-controlled state of meditation. He passed into the first *jhāna*, and then by degrees through the three other *jhānas*, the four 'formless' mystical states, and then the 'cessation of perception and feeling' (see pp. 331-2). He then gradually descended back to the first *jhāna*, moved back up to the fourth *jhāna*, and passed away from there (*D.11.156*). Buddhists see this event not so much as a 'death' as a passing into the Deathless, *Nirvāna*.

THE NATURE AND ROLE OF THE BUDDHA

The *Suttas* contain some very 'human' information on the Buddha, such as getting backache after a long teaching session (*D.11.209*). In the *Mahāparinibbāna Sutta*, we find the eighty-year-old Buddha expressing 'weariness' at the prospect of being asked about the rebirth-destiny of every person who has died in a locality (*D.11.93*); saying he was old and worn out and only knowing comfort when in a deep meditation (*D.11.100*); in his final illness, being extremely thirsty, and insisting on immediately being given water (*D.11.128-9*). However, elsewhere in the same text the Buddha crosses the

¹² *D.11.72-67* (*SB.37-97*). *EB.1.7* is from a parallel Sanskrit text.

¹³ Though several texts of north-west India came to talk of Mahākāśyapa (*Pālī Mahākassapa*) as having been the Buddha's successor (*Ray, 1994: 105-8*).

Ganges by means of his psychic power (D.ii.89); he says that, if he asked, he could have lived on 'for a *kappa*, or the remainder of one' (D.ii.103), with *kappa* (Skt *kalpa*) generally meaning 'eon', but possibly here the maximum human life-span of around 100 years; when he lies down between two *Sāl* trees, where he will die, these burst into unseasonal blossom in homage to him, and divine music is heard in the sky (D.ii.137–8); gods from ten regions of the universe assemble to witness the great event of a Buddha's passing into final *Nirvāna* at death (*parinibbāna*, Skt *parinirvāna*;¹⁴ D.ii.138–9); gods prevent his funeral pyre from igniting until the senior disciple Mahākassapa (Skt Mahākāśyapa) arrives at the site (D.ii.163).

Thus, while modern Theravādins sometimes say that the Buddha was 'a human being, pure and simple' (Rahula, 1974: 1), such remarks have to be taken in context. They are usually intended to contrast the Buddha with Jesus, seen as the 'Son of God', and to counter the Mahāyāna view of the Buddha's nature, which sees it as far above the human. These remarks may also be due to a modernist, somewhat demythologized view of the Buddha. In the Pali Canon, Gotama was seen as *born* a human, though one with extraordinary abilities due to the perfections built up in his long *Bodhisatta* career. Once he had attained awakening, though, he could no longer be called a 'human', as he had perfected and transcended his humanness. This idea is reflected in a *Sutta* passage where the Buddha is asked whether he is (literally 'will be') a god (*deva*) or a human (A.ii.37–9 (BTTA.105)). In reply, he said that he had gone beyond the deep-rooted unconscious traits that would make him a god or human, and was therefore to be seen as a *Buddha*, one who had grown up in the world but who had now gone beyond it, as a lotus grows from the water but blossoms above it, unsoiled.

The mysterious nature of a Buddha is indicated by the Buddha's chiding of a monk who had too much uncritical faith in him, so as to be always following him round: 'Hush, Yakkali! What is there for you in seeking this vile visible body? Yakkali, whoever sees *Dhamma*, sees me; whoever sees me, sees *Dhamma*' (S.iii.120). This close link between the Buddha and *Dhamma* is reinforced by another *Sutta* passage, which says that a *Tathāgata* can be designated as 'one having *Dhamma* as body' (*Dhamma-kāya*; Harrison, 1992: 50) and who is '*Dhamma-become*' (*Dhamma-bhūta*; D.ii.84). These terms indicate that a Buddha has fully exemplified the *Dhamma*, in the sense of the Path, in his personality or 'body'. Moreover, he

has fully realized *Dhamma* in the supreme sense by his experience of *Nirvāna*, the equivalent of the supreme *Dhamma* (A.i.156 and 158). The *Arhat* is no different in these respects, for he is described as 'become the supreme' (*brahma-bhūta*, S.iii.83), a term which is used as an equivalent to '*Dhamma-become*' in the above passage. Any awakened person is one who is 'deep, immeasurable, hard-to-fathom as is the great ocean' (M.i.487). Having 'become *Dhamma*', their awakened nature can only really be fathomed by one who has 'seen' *Dhamma* with the '*Dhamma-eye*' of stream-entry. While Christians see Jesus as God-become-human, then, Buddhists see the Buddha (and *Arhats*) as human-become-*Dhamma*.

In the early Buddhist texts, the Buddha is himself said to be an *Arhat*, and to be in most respects like other *Arhats*. Any *Arhat*'s experience of *Nirvāna* is the same; however, a perfect Buddha is seen as having more extensive knowledge than other *Arhats*. While not omniscient in the sense of continuously and uninterruptedly knowing everything (M.ii.126–7), it is said that he could remember as far back into his countless previous lives as he wished, and know how any being was reborn, in accordance with their karma (M.i.482). Other *Arhats* had limitations on such powers, or may not even have developed them (S.ii.122–3; M.i.477). A perfect Buddha is seen as one who can come to know anything knowable (A.ii.25); he just needs to turn his mind to it (*Mūlā*.102, 106). What he teaches is just a small portion of his huge knowledge (S.v.438 (BW.360–1)), for he only teaches what is both true and spiritually useful (M.i.395; Harvey, 1995b).

A second key difference between a Buddha and an *Arhat* is that a Buddha is someone who, by his own efforts, rediscovers the Path after it has been lost to human society (S.ii.105–7 (BW.69)). Having discovered it for himself, he skilfully makes it known to others so that they can fully practise it for themselves and so become *Arhats* (S.iii.64–5 (BW.413–14)). He is a rediscoverer and teacher of timeless realities (A.i.286–7). As founder of a monastic *Saṅgha*, and propounder of the rules of conduct binding on its members, a Buddha also fulfils a role akin to that of 'law-giver'.

THE NATURE AND STYLE OF THE BUDDHA'S TEACHING

The Buddha's style of teaching was generally one of skilful adaptation to the mood and concerns of his hearers, responding to the questions and even the non-verbalized thoughts of his audience and raking cues from events (Gombrich, 2009: 161–79). By means of a dialogue with his questioners, he gradually moved them towards sharing something of his own insight into reality. When Brahmins asked him about how to attain union with the god

¹⁴ The term *parinibbāna* is sometimes also used for the attaining of *Nirvāna* in life (the verbal equivalent *parinibbāni* is often used this way), but has more typically, and especially in modern usage, come to refer particularly to an *Arhat*'s or Buddha's attaining final *Nirvāna* at death.

Brahmā after death, he said this could be attained by meditative development of deep lovingkindness and compassion, rather than by bloody Vedic sacrifices (*D.1.235–52*). He often gave old terms new meanings, for example talking of the *Arhat* as the 'true Brahmin' (*Dhp.383–423*), and using the term *ariya*, equivalent to the Sanskrit term for the 'noble' Aryan people, in the sense of spiritually noble or ennobled.

The Buddha treated questions in a careful, analytic way. Some he answered directly, others he answered after first analysing them so as to clarify the nature of the question. Some he answered with a counter-question, to reveal concealed motives and presuppositions; others again he 'set aside' as question-begging and fraught with misconceptions (*A.11.46*). He did not mind if others disagreed with him, but censured misinterpretations of what he taught. He showed even-mindedness when gaining disciples. A general, Siha (Skt *Siṃha*), who was a great supporter of Jain monks, once decided to become a lay disciple, but the Buddha advised him that such a prominent person as himself should carefully consider before changing his religious allegiances (*Vin.1.236 (BTTA.2)*). When he still wished to do so, and wanted to support *Buddhist* monks, the Buddha advised him that he should still support Jain monks, too.

The Buddha emphasized that one should not mistake belief for knowledge,¹⁵ and the importance of self-reliance and the experiential testing-out of all teachings, including his own (*M.1.317–20 (BW.93–6)*). Only occasionally, for example before his first sermon, did he use his authority, but this was not to force people to agree with him, but to get them to listen so that they could then gain understanding. He also advised his disciples not to react emotionally when they heard people speaking in blame or praise of him, but to assess calmly the degree to which what was said was true or false (*D.1.3*). He was well aware of the many conflicting doctrines of his day, a time of intellectual ferment. Rejecting teachings based on authoritative tradition, or mere rational speculation, he emphasized the examination and analysis of actual experience. When he spoke to the confused Kālāma people,¹⁶ after many teachers had visited them praising their own teachings and disparaging those of others, he said:

you should not go along with something because of what you have been told, because of authority, because of tradition, because of accordance with a transmitted text, on the grounds of reason, on the grounds of logic, because of analytic thought, because of abstract theoretic pondering, because of the appearance of the speaker,

or because some ascetic is your teacher. When you know for yourselves that particular qualities are unwholesome, blameworthy, censured by the wise, and lead to harm and suffering when taken on and pursued, then you should give them up. (*A.1.189 (SB.252)*)

Accordingly, they should see that greed, hatred and delusion (lack of mental clarity), which lead to behaviour that harms others, are to be avoided, and non-greed (generosity and renunciation), non-hatred (lovingkindness and compassion) and non-delusion (clarity of mind and wisdom) are to be engaged in. By implication, teachings which discourage the former and encourage the latter are worth following.

The Buddha emphasized that his teachings had a practical purpose, and should not be blindly clung to. He likened the *Dhamma* to a raft made by a man seeking to cross from the dangerous higher shore of a river, representing the conditioned world, to the peaceful further shore, representing *Nirvāna* (*M.1.134–5 (BTTA.77; SB.160–1)*). He then rhetorically asked whether such a man, on reaching the other shore, should lift up the raft and carry it around with him there. He therefore said, '*Dhamma* is for crossing over, not for retaining'. That is, a follower should not grasp at Buddhist ideas and practices, but use them for their intended purpose, and should know that a person who has accomplished their goal does not carry them as an identity to defend. Many ordinary Buddhists, though, do have a strong attachment to Buddhism.

While the Buddha was critical of blind faith, he did not deny a role for soundly based faith or 'trustful confidence' (*saddhā*, Skt *śraddhā*); for to rest on his teachings, a person has to have at least some initial trust in them. The early texts envisage a process of listening, which arouses *saddhā*, leading to practice, and thus to partial confirmation of the teachings, and thus to deeper *saddhā* and deeper practice until the heart of the teachings is directly experienced (*M.11.171–6*). A person then becomes an *Arhat*, one whose confidence is rooted in insight. Even in Theravāda Buddhism, which often has a rather rational, unemotional image, a very deep faith in the Buddha, *Dhamma* and *Sangha* is common. Ideally, this is based on the fact that some part of the Buddha's path has been found to be uplifting, thus inspiring confidence in the rest. Many people, though, simply have a calm and joyful faith (*pasāda*, Skt *prasaḍa*) inspired by the example of those who are well established on the Path.

¹⁵ *M.11.168–77 (BW.96–103; Harvey 2009b: 179–81)*.

¹⁶ *Kālāma Sutta, A.1.188–93 (BW.88–9; SB.251–6; Harvey 2009b: 176–8)*.