

## CHAPTER II

### THE BIOGRAPHY OF THE BUDDHA

In this chapter, a brief life sketch of the Buddha is presented. Unfortunately, it had not been the tradition in ancient India to maintain records of the life of a mortal. Consequently, no authentic details about the life of the Buddha are available either from contemporary records or from any other authentic sources. However, later on, as has happened in the case of many other ancient great men, facts, fiction and imagination were fused together to present a highly exaggerated account of the life of the person.

The main sources of biographical information about the Buddha are *Mahāvagga*, *Mahāvastu*, *Nidānakathā*, *Lalitvistara* and *Buddha-Carita*. But these records contain more imaginary fiction than historical facts. Oldenberg, Winternitz, Kern, Thomas Edward and others have sorted out the material and tried to present a credible story of the life of Buddha.

The fact is that no historically authenticated details are available about the life of the Buddha. No effort was made either during the life time of the Buddha or even for centuries, thereafter, to collect such details about his life. Hence, the idea of a biography was foreign to the mind of that age. To take the life of a man as a whole, its development from beginning to end, as a unified subject for literary treatment, this thought,

though it appears to us natural and obvious, had not occurred to anyone yet in that age.<sup>1</sup>

For the purpose of the researcher, it is not his biography which is important, but his teachings, his mission and his order. Without all these, his life would have been of no consequence to anyone. His greatness is in no way diminished for want of details of his life history. It is correct that had such details been available to us, many persons, places and events connected with his early life would have basked in his shining glory.

## **II. 1. The Home and Family**

By the sixth century B. C., the Aryan and Mongolian invaders of India had established themselves along the lower slopes of the Himalayas, and had poured into the Gange's valley.<sup>2</sup> It was along this valley that early Buddhism was to spread, and to understand it aright, we must know something of the mingled civilization which they established. Politically, it was like that of early Greece, and the systems of government varied from autocratic monarchies to self-governing communities. Of the former type, we learn from *Brahmin*, Jain, and Buddhist literature that there were sixteen,<sup>3</sup> and there were many smaller states, some of which were more or less feudatory to their larger neighbors, some independent.

The chief of the larger kingdoms were those with which early Buddhism was most concerned: Kosala, corresponding to the modern Oudh, with its capital either at Sāvatti<sup>4</sup> or at Ayodhyā; Magadha,

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<sup>1</sup> Dr. Hermann Oldenberg, *Buddha: His Life, His Doctrine, His Order*, p. 79.

<sup>2</sup> See Kenneth J. Saunders, *Gotama Buddha: A Biography (Based on the Canonical Books of the Theravādin)*, p. 6.

<sup>3</sup> Vin. II. 146; A. I. 213; cf. Rhys Davids, *Buddhist India*, p. 23.

<sup>4</sup> Now Sahet Mahet on the river Rapi.

corresponding to South Bihar,<sup>1</sup> with its capital at Rājagaha<sup>2</sup> and Vidēha, corresponding to North Bihar, with its capital at Mithilā. These kingdoms were separated from one another by rivers, the Ganges dividing Vidēha from Magadha, and the Sandanīra dividing it from Kosala. The kings of these countries were often related to one another by marriage; thus, we find that Bimbisāra of Magadha had amongst his wives the sister of Agnidatta Pasenādi of Kosala and also “the Lady of Mithilā.”<sup>3</sup>

Amongst the self-governing communities was that of the Licchavi nobles, living in and around Vesālī, who, after Gotama's death, came under the suzerainty of Ajātasattu; but the Śākya, Gotama's own people, were already tributary to the kings of Kosala. Their chief town was Kapilavatthu, and their total territory probably covered some nine hundred square miles, partly on the slopes of the Himalayas, and partly in the rich rice fields which stretched out like a great carpet below, irrigated by abundant streams pouring down from the mountain-side, and bordered on the east by the Rohini, and on the west and south by the Achirāvātī.<sup>4</sup> It is probable that both Licchavis and Śākya, like the modern inhabitants of the Tarai of Nepal, were Mongolians and that Gotama was not of *Aryan* stock.<sup>5</sup>

This rich and fertile land was the early home of Gotama Buddha, a land of great beauty, with the mighty snow rampart of Himalaya towering

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<sup>1</sup> Bihar gets its name from the many *Vihāras* or Buddhist monasteries which it at one time boasted.

<sup>2</sup> Now Rajgir, on whose five hills religious teachers still gather their bands of disciples.

<sup>3</sup> See Kenneth J. Saunders, *Gotama Buddha: A Biography (Based on the Canonical Books of the Theravādin)*, p. 6-7.

<sup>4</sup> The Achirāvātī is now the Rapti; the Rohinī retains its ancient name. These rivers meet near Gorakhpur, 100 miles north of Benares.

<sup>5</sup> See Vincent A. Smith, *The Oxford History of India*, p. 49; Dr. D. B. Spooner maintains that Gotama was of Iranian descent. Perhaps both these views are right, for there was much intermarriage.

above it, and below it the rich green of sandal (*sāl*) trees and young oaks, and the still more wonderful green of rice fields.

His father was King Suddhodana<sup>1</sup> (Pure Rice) who ruled over the land of the Sakyans at Kapilavatthu<sup>2</sup> on the Nepalese frontier.<sup>3</sup> His mother's name was Mahāmāyā<sup>4</sup>, princess of the Koliyas, was Suddhodana's queen.

Suddhodana suggests that they were an agricultural people; but they belonged to the Kshatriya or warrior caste, and the early legends tell of ambitious plans which the Chieftain had for his son. At the least, we may imagine that he desired the boy to succeed him in the leadership of the clan; for the Śākya<sup>5</sup> seem to have been led by a hereditary chief, not like their neighbors, the Licchavis, by a Nāyaka, elected to the post. But from the leadership of a clan to the position of "Universal Monarch," Chakkavatti, is a far cry; and the legend that this was the destiny marked out for the young Gotama may be dismissed as unlikely. Yet it is not impossible; for less than three centuries later Chandragupta and his house, starting from smaller beginnings and with far less of genius than Gotama, achieved this position and during his lifetime the foundations of this mighty empire were laid by the kings of Magadha. However, that may be, Suddhodana was not a king as the legends claim: in some passages in the early Buddhist books he is called Raja, but so are all the

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<sup>1</sup> G. P. Malalasekera, *Dictionary of Pāli Proper Names*, Vol. I, p. 788.

<sup>2</sup> The site of *Kapilavatthu* has been identified with Bhuila (Bhulya) in the Basti district, three miles from the Bengal and N. W. Railway station of Babuan.

<sup>3</sup> Reginald S. Copleston, *Theravāda Buddhism*, Harcharan Singh Sobti (ed.), p. 14.

<sup>4</sup> G. P. Malalasekera, *Op. Cit.*, Vol. II, p. 608.

<sup>5</sup> *Gotama* is the family name, and *Sakya* is the name of the race to which the Buddha belonged. Tradition holds that the sons of King Okkāka of the *Mahāsammata* line, were exiled through the plotting of their step-mother. These princes, in the course of their wanderings, arrived at the foothills of the Himalayas. Here they met the sage *Kapila*, on whose advice, and after whom, they founded the city of Kapilavatthu, the site of *Kapila*.

Licchavi and Śākya nobles; and only in the *Theragāthā* commentary is he called Mahārāja. It is agreed amongst scholars that he was one of numerous petty chieftains. That he had a pride of race worthy of a Scottish laird seems clear, and even if he had no higher ambition than that his son should succeed him, we may be sure that he regarded this as no mean destiny. The very name Śākya means "the mighty"!

To illustrate the pride of these border clans we may quote an early legend, probably apocryphal, which describes how, when the King of Kosala asked for a Śākya in marriage, the chiefs gathered in their Mote Hall and decided that they could not lower their dignity by allowing one of their freeborn daughters to marry him; so they sent back the bastard daughter of one of them by a slave woman.<sup>1</sup>

Life at the house of one of these chiefs would be not unlike that at a Scottish castle in the Middle Ages; not only was there the same pride of race, but there was much the same feudal system, and much the same strange wayfaring life; scholar and minstrel, noble and friar, soothsayer and jester, ascetic and juggler, would pass in a fascinating panorama before the son of the house, and a rough hospitality awaited all.

## **II. 2. The Birth of the Buddha**

Prince Siddhattha was born probably about the year 623 B.C.<sup>2</sup> At a pleasancess, between the capital of the Śākyas and that of the Koliyas, a clan from, whom his mother, the Lady Māyā, seems to have sprung. To mark the site of this garden of Lumbini, a pillar was erected by the Emperor Asoka about 244 B. C. with the inscription:

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<sup>1</sup> See Rhys Davids, *Buddhist India*, p. 11. This insult led, we are told, to the sack of Kapilavatthu and the massacre of the Śākyas by Vidudabha towards the end of Gotama's life or soon after his death.

<sup>2</sup> Unlike the Christian Era the Buddha Era is reckoned from the death of the Buddha, which occurred in 543 B.C. (in His 80th year), and not from His birth.

"King Piyadasi (Ashoka), beloved of devas, in the 20 year of the coronation, himself made a royal visit, Buddha Sakyamuni having been born here, a stone railing was built and a stone pillar erected to the Bhagavan ["blessed one"] having been born here. Lumbini village was taxed reduced and entitled to the eight part (only)."<sup>1</sup>

After the birth day of the Buddha, the King Suddhodana invited a very famous sage name Asita who came down from the Himalayas. After looking the physical features of the baby, he predicted that child has only two paths open to him.<sup>2</sup> If he remains a householder, he would become king and unite the world as a universal ruler. If he left home to become a religious mendicant, he would become a Buddha.<sup>3</sup> On the fifth day after the birth of the prince, He was named Siddhattha which means one whose purpose has been achieved.<sup>4</sup> The Queen Mahāmāyā died after seven days after the birth of Prince Siddhattha. Then He was brought up by his mother's sister, Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī<sup>5</sup> who was also married to his father, the second wife of the King Suddhodana.

In the time of the childhood, He lived in a life of material luxury. Prince Siddhattha was received a special education. He became skilled in many branches of knowledge, and in the arts of war easily excelled all others. Nevertheless, from his childhood, the prince was given to serious contemplation. In a plough festival, in striking contrast to the mirth and merriment of the festival, He was all calm and quiet under the rose-apple

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<sup>1</sup> A pillar, erected at this sacred spot by King Asoka, still stands to this day to commemorate the event.

<sup>2</sup> G. P. Malalasekera, *Dictionary of Pāli Proper Names*, Vol. I, p. 208.

<sup>3</sup> Mhvs. P.29; also see Hirakawa Akira, *A History of Indian Buddhism From Śākyamuni to Early Mahāyāna*, p. 21; Yuwaraj Sontakke, *The Buddha, Dhamma and Doctrine*, p. 15-16.

<sup>4</sup> Nārada Thera, *The Buddha and His Teaching*, p. 4.

<sup>5</sup> G. P. Malalasekera, *Op. Cit.*, Vol. II, p. 522.

tree, all the conditions conducive to quiet meditation being there, the pensive child, young in years but old in wisdom.<sup>1</sup>

Some Scholars opine that the Buddha was born in 563 B.C., and attained *Mahāparinibbāna* in 487 B.C.<sup>2</sup> Today, many scholars dispute over the date of the Buddha's birth because nothing about the date was mentioned in original *Pāli* texts. In addition, *Pāli* texts, commentaries, sub-commentaries are silent about the mention of the year, and the days of the *Bodhisatta's* conception and birth.<sup>3</sup>

Thereafter, He had a luxurious upbringing and was of a pure background on both sides. He was the heir to the throne, extremely handsome, inspiring trust, stately and gifted with great beauty of complexion and fine features.

### **II. 3. The Married Life**

Because of feared that the prince would one day give up home for the homeless life of an ascetic, when the prince grew up, the King Suddhodana wished his son should marry, bring up a family and be his worthy successor. According to the custom of the time, at the early age of sixteen, the prince was married to his cousin, the beautiful Princess Yasodharā<sup>4</sup> who was of equal age, the only daughter of King Suppabuddha and Queen Pamitā of the Koliyas.<sup>5</sup> At the age of 29 Prince, Siddhattha became the father of a little boy, who was called Rāhula.<sup>6</sup> For nearly thirteen years after his marriage, he led a luxurious life, blissfully ignorant of the vicissitudes of life outside the palace gates. In *Āṅguttara*

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<sup>1</sup> M. I. 246-247.

<sup>2</sup> D. C. Ahir, *Heritage of Buddhism*, p. 279.

<sup>3</sup> Kolay and Tin Lwin Us, *The Great Chronicle of Buddhas*, p.14.

<sup>4</sup> G. P. Malalasekera, *Dictionary of Pāli Proper Names*, Vol. II, p. 737.

<sup>5</sup> Yuwaraj Sontakke, *The Buddha, Dhamma and Doctrine*, p. 16.

<sup>6</sup> G. P. Malalasekera, *Op. Cit.*

*Nikāya*, the Buddha stated his luxurious life as a prince:

“I was delicately nurtured, exceeding delicately nurtured, delicately nurtured beyond measure. For instance, in my father’s house lotus-pools were made thus: one of blue lotuses, one of red, another of white lotuses, just for my benefit. No sandal-wood powder did I use that was not from Kāsi,<sup>1</sup> of Kāsi cloth was my turban made, of Kāsi cloth was my jacket, my tunic and my cloak. By night and day, a white canopy was held over me, lest cold or heat, dust or chaff or dew, should touch me. Moreover, monks, I had three palaces; one for winter, one for summer, and one for the rainy season. In the four months of the rains, I was waited on by minstrels, women all of them. I came not down from my palace in those months. Again, whereas in other men’s homes broken rice together with sour gruel is given as food to slave-servants, in my father’s home they were given rice, meat and milk rice for their food.”<sup>2</sup>

With the march of time, truth gradually dawned upon him. His contemplative nature and boundless compassion did not permit him to spend his time in the mere enjoyment of the fleeting pleasures of the Royal palace. He knew no personal grief, but he felt a deep pity for suffering humanity. Amidst comfort and prosperity, he realized the universality of sorrow.

#### **II. 4. Renunciation of Secular Life**

Although the endeavor of the King Suddhodana to keep away life’s miseries from his son’s eyes, but with the knowledge of prince

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<sup>1</sup> A province in Central India noted for silk. Modern Benares was its capital.

<sup>2</sup> A. I. 145.

Siddhattha, he knew that the woes of the world and felt that a deep pity for suffering humanity. In *Mahāsaccakasutta* of *Majjhima Nikāya* I, the Siddhattha expresses his pity for the world miserble:

“Why do I, being subject to birth, decay, disease, death, sorrow and impurities, thus search after things of like nature. How, if I, who am subject to things of such nature, realize their disadvantages and seek after the unattained, unsurpassed, perfect security which is *nibbāna*! Cramped and confined is household life, a den of dust, but the life of the homeless one is as the open air of heaven! Hard is it for him who bides at home to live out as it should be lived the Holy Life in all its perfection, in all its purity.”<sup>1</sup>

On one occasion, when the prince went out of the palace to the pleasure to see the world outside, he met the strange sights of a decrepit old man, a diseased person, a corpse and a dignified hermit.<sup>2</sup> The first three sights convincingly proved to him, the inexorable nature of life, and the universal ailment of humanity. The fourth signified the means to overcome the ills of life and to attain calm and peace. These four unexpected sights served to increase the urge in him to loathe and renounce the world. In *Majjhima Nikāya*, the Buddha stated that:

“Before my Self-awakening while I was still the *bodhisatta*, not fully awakened, it occurred to me: Narrow is the household life, a path of dust, going forth is in the open, nor is it easy while dwelling in a house to lead the *Brāhma*-faring completely fulfilled, utterly purified, polished like a conch-shell. Suppose now that I,

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<sup>1</sup> M. I. 240.

<sup>2</sup> Bu. XXVI. 65.

having cut off hair and beard, having clothed myself in saffron garments, should go forth from home into homelessness."<sup>1</sup>

Realizing the worthlessness of sensual pleasures, so highly prized by the worldling, and appreciating the value of renunciation in which the wise seek delight, he decided to leave the world in search of Truth and Eternal Peace:

“It was not for the sake of robes that I went forth from the home to the homeless life, not for alms or lodging, not for the sake of becoming such and such (in future lives). Nay, it was with this idea: Here am I, fallen on birth, old age and death, on sorrows, lamentation and woes, on despair and tribulations. I am fallen on ill, foredone with ill. Perhaps so doing some ending of all this mass of ill may be revealed to me. Yet if I, who have forsaken the passions by going forth from home to the homeless life, should pursue passions still worse than before, that were unseemly in me.”<sup>2</sup>

Thus, the prince Siddhattha decided ‘went from home into homelessness’ and became a wandering ascetic, seeking freedom from rebirth at the age of twenty nine.<sup>3</sup> He left his father, his wife and his young son in the silent of the moonlit.<sup>4</sup> He went to the river Anomā,<sup>5</sup> a long way from Kapilavatthu, where he had his hair and beard shaved, and put on a yellow garment like the hermit of the time.<sup>6</sup> The ‘went forth from home into homelessness’ of the Buddha was mentioned in *Majjhima Nikāya*:

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<sup>1</sup> M. I. 240.

<sup>2</sup> A. I. 147.

<sup>3</sup> Hirakawa Akira, *A History of Indian Buddhism from Śākyamuni to Early Mahāyāna*, p. 27; C. H. S. Ward, *Early Buddhism: Doctrine and Discipline*, p. 33.

<sup>4</sup> Klaus K. Klostermaier, *Buddhism: A Short Introduction*, p. 14.

<sup>5</sup> H.W.Schumann, *The Historical Buddha, The Times: Life and Teachings of the Founder of Buddhism*, p. 45; Nagendra Kr Singh & Bihuti Barua (eds.), *Dictionary of Pāli Literature*, Vol. I. p. 58.

<sup>6</sup> Nārada Thera, *The Buddha and His Teaching*, p. 11.

“Then I after a time, being young, my hair coal-black, possessed of radiant youth, in the prime of my life - although my unwilling parents wept and wailed - having cut off my hair and beard, having put on yellow robes, went forth from home into homelessness. I, being gone forth thus, a quester for whatever is good, searching for the incomparable, matchless path to peace.”<sup>1</sup>

## II. 5. Religious Austerities

First he sought two famous sages Āḷāra Kālāma<sup>2</sup> and Uddaka Rāmaputta,<sup>3</sup> hoping that could find the knowledge of which he was in search.<sup>4</sup> He practiced concentration and reached the highest meditative attainments possible thereby, but was not satisfied with anything short of Supreme Enlightenment and he could not discover the reason for human sorrow. He left them and traveled through the kingdom of Magadha, and arrived at the forest named Uruvelā, by the river Nirañjarā at Gayā. There, he spent six years in practicing the most severe rites with his five other companions (*pañcavaggiyā*). They were Koṇḍañña, Bhadhija, Wappa, Mahānāma and Assaji.<sup>5</sup> There, he avoided all contacts with people, neglected his body and went to extremes of self-mortification, intent on finding, in this way, the emancipation of the spirit from the bondage of nature. Sometimes he fasted living without food for several days. He also used the technique of gradually reducing his food intake until he had completely stopped eating. Because of these long periods of fasting, he became emaciated, his skin hung loose, his hair fell out, and his body was

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<sup>1</sup> M. I. 163.

<sup>2</sup> G. P. Malalasekera, *Dictionary of Pāli Proper Names*, Vol. I, p. 296.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 382.

<sup>4</sup> Mhvt. II. 118.

<sup>5</sup> G.P. Malalasekera (ed.), *Encyclopaedia of Buddhism*, Vol. VII, p. 289; Piyadassi Thera, *The Buddha's Ancient Path*, p. 14.

wracked with pain. Through these ascetic practices and by overcoming his pain, he strengthened his resolve and tried to free his mind from all suffering.<sup>1</sup> We can see how he spent his austere life in *Majhima Nikāya* as following:

“Because I ate so little, all my limbs became like the joints of withered creepers; because I ate so little, my buttocks became like a bullock’s hoof; because I ate so little, my protruding backbone became like a string of balls; because I ate so little, my gaunt ribs became like the crazy rafters of a tumble-down shed; because I ate so little, the pupils of my eyes appeared lying low and deep; because I ate so little, my scalp became shrivelled and shrunk as a bitter white gourd cut before it is ripe becomes shrivelled and shrunk by a hot wind.”<sup>2</sup>

He realized that this was not the way to find enlightenment. He began to eat nourishing food; the five companions, who previously had admired his asceticism, ready to become his disciples as soon as he had accomplished his aim, now departed, convinced that Siddhattha had given up the ideal of renunciation.<sup>3</sup> Finally, the prince Siddhattha asserted that:

“It is not easy to reach that happiness by thus subjecting the body to extreme emaciation. Suppose I were to take material nourishment - boiled rice and sour milk?’ So I took material nourishment - boiled rice and sour milk, Now at that time, five monks were attending me and (they thought): ‘When the recluse Gotama wins *Dhamma* he will announce it to us.’ But when I took

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<sup>1</sup> Mhvt. II. 126-28.

<sup>2</sup> M. I. 245.

<sup>3</sup> Klaus K. Klostermaier, *Buddhism: A Short Introduction*, p. 15.

material nourishment - boiled rice and sour milk - then these five monks turned on me in disgust, saying: The recluse Gotama lives in abundance, he is wavering in his striving, he has reverted to a life of abundance.”<sup>1</sup>

So he left the five companions and went on alone towards the Bodhi tree, under which he might attain enlightenment.

## II. 6. The Enlightenment

After crossing the river Nirañjarā, the Buddha took his seat under the *Bodhi* tree, the 'Tree of Enlightenment' or 'Tree of Wisdom',<sup>2</sup> on the bank of the river Nirañjarā, at Gayā with the inflexible resolution though only his skin, sinews, and bones remain, and his blood and flesh dry up and wither away, yet will he never stir from that seat until he have attained full enlightenment (*sammāsambodhi*) and he entered into deep contemplation.<sup>3</sup> By gradual stages, he entered upon and dwelt in the first, second, third, and fourth *jhānas*.<sup>4</sup> The first knowledge, he attained in the first watch of the night when his mind was impurities and composed and he recollected past births (*pubbenivāsānussatiñāṇa*). In the middle watch

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<sup>1</sup> M. I. 247.

<sup>2</sup> It appears to be rather strange that no mention of the Bodhi tree is made in the two discourses (nos. 26 and 36 of the *Majjhima Nikāya*) which graphically describe the *Bodhisatta*'s struggle and search for enlightenment. The Account given in the two discourses is as follows: "Then I, monks, seeking for whatever is good, searching for the incomparable, matchless path to peace, walking on tour through Magadha in due course arrived at Uruvela, the camp township. There I saw a delightful stretch of land and a lovely woodland grove, and a clear flowing river (the Nirañjarā) with a delightful ford, and a village for support nearby. It occurred to me, monks: "Indeed, it is a delightful stretch of land ..." "Indeed these docs So I, monks, sat down just there, thinking: "Indeed this does well for striving." (M. I. 210). Perhaps the Buddha felt it was not necessary for him to mention that he sat under a tree at it was well known then that recluses and ascetics sat cross-legged in the open under trees, for their meditation. In the *Dīgha Nikāya*, however, the tree is mentioned. It is an *Assattha*, the sacred fig tree, *ficus religiosa*. Mention of the tree was made by the Buddha Gotama when he referred to the lives of the previous six Buddhas, his predecessors. Addressing the monks, he said: 'I, now, monks, am an Accomplished One (*araham*), a Supremely Enlightened One (*sammā-samm-buddho*). I attained supreme enlightenment under the fig tree (*assatthassa mūle abhisam-buddho*). (D. II. 4).

<sup>3</sup> Piyadassi Thera, *The Buddha's Ancient Path*, p. 15.

<sup>4</sup> H.W.Schumann, *The Historical Buddha, The Times: Life and Teachings of the Founder of Buddhism*, M. O'C. Walshe (tr.), p. 54.

of the night, he attained the second knowledge when he directed his mind to the knowledge of the disappearing and reappearing of beings of varied forms, in good states of experience, and in states of woe, each faring according to his deeds (*cutūpapātañāṇa*). Next, he directed his mind to the knowledge of the eradication of the taints (*āsavakkhayañāṇa*). He understood as it really is:

“This is suffering (*dukkha*), this is the cause of suffering, this is the cessation of suffering, and this is the path leading to the cessation of suffering. These are defilements (*āsavas*), this is the arising of defilements, this is the cessation of defilements, and this is the path leading to the cessation of defilements.”<sup>1</sup> Knowing thus, seeing thus, his mind was liberated from the defilements of sense pleasures (*kāmāsava*), of becoming (*bhavāsava*), and of ignorance (*avijjāsava*). When his mind was thus liberated, there came the knowledge, “liberated” and he understood: “Destroyed is birth, the noble life (*brahmacariya*) has been lived, done is what was to be done, there is no more of this to come”<sup>2</sup> (meaning, there is no more continuity of the mind and body, no more becoming, rebirth). This was the third knowledge attained by him in the last watch of the night. This is known as *tevijjā*, threefold knowledge.<sup>3</sup>

On another full moon of May (*vesak*), he attained Supreme Enlightenment by comprehending in all their fullness the Four Noble Truths and he became the Buddha, the Enlightenment One. At that time, the Buddha was at the age of thirty-five.

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<sup>1</sup> See Vin. I. 1; M. I. 248.

<sup>2</sup> Vin. I. 10.

<sup>3</sup> M. I. 248-50; Cf. Thich Minh Chau, *The Chinese Madhyama Āgama and the Pāli Majjhima Nikāya*, p. 155.

The term 'Buddha' is a generic name, an appellative and is not a proper name. It is given to one who has attained Enlightenment, a man superior to all other beings, human and divine, by his knowledge of the Truth (*Dhamma*).<sup>1</sup> The word is the passive past participle derived from the root '*budh*' (to wake, to wake up, to perceive, to learn, to understand). It is the same in form in both *Pāli* and *Sanskrit*; in Chinese the usual form is '*Fo*', in Japanese '*Butsu*', '*Butsuda*', or '*Hotoku*', in European languages as the Awakened, the Enlightened One, etc. However, the word 'Buddha' was used in Buddhism began with its application to Gotama, known to his contemporaries also as Sakyamuni, the founder of Buddhism more than twenty-six centuries ago in India.<sup>2</sup>

## **II. 7. The First Sermon**

Now, on the full moon day of July, 589 years before Christ, in the evening, at the moment the sun was setting and the full moon simultaneously rising, in the shady Deer Park at Isipatana, the Buddha proclaimed the truth and set in motion the Wheel of the *Dhamma* (*Dhammacakkavattana*). This first discourse is the core of the Buddha's teaching. As the footprint of every creature walking on the earth, they could be included in the elephant's footprint.

The *Dhammacakkavattana Sutta* contains the fundamentals of Buddha's teachings, the so-called Middle Path and the enunciation of the four Truths.<sup>3</sup> Ethically, the middle path connotes the moderate life of a recluse, i.e., the monastic system prescribed in the *Vinaya Piṭaka*. Philosophically, the middle path is explained as the doctrine which keeps

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<sup>1</sup> G. P. Malalasekera, *Dictionary of Pāli Proper Names*, Vol. II, p. 294.

<sup>2</sup> G. P. Malalasekera (ed.), *Encyclopaedia of Buddhism*, Vol. III, p. 357.

<sup>3</sup> S. V. 420-423; Vin. I. 10-14.

clear of the two extreme views about the world, viz., *Śāśavat* (eternalism) and *Uccheda* (annihilationism).

The first part of the *Sutta* opens with the statement that one should avoid the two "extremes", one being the life of a worldly man, performing rituals and ceremonies but at the same time remaining immersed in pleasures, and the other the life of a recluse dedicated to self-mortifications. He should choose a middle path, which will open up the eyes of knowledge and lead him ultimately to enlightenment, i.e., *nibbāna*. By the first "extreme" evidently he had in mind the rich *Brahmanas* and *Kṣatriyas*, who indulged in luxuries and sought happiness and heavenly existence through sacrifices performed by professional priests (*ṛtviks*) in a grand manner by killing hundreds of birds and animals. By the second "extreme", he meant the non-*brabmanical* ascetics who took to extreme rigorous practices like residing in a forest, living on a very scanty food, or starving, or undergoing many other hardships to control their body and mind. A moderate form of asceticism was approved by the Buddha but it was not made compulsory for all of his disciples. Rejecting the two "extreme" paths, he recommended that his disciples should have just enough food, clothing and a shelter to maintain their physical strength, which is necessary to perform the duties prescribed by him. He wanted that his disciples should remain unconcerned about their food and clothing and be satisfied with whatever they got by begging without expressing their intention to have any particular food or thing needed by them.

The second part of the *Sutta* contains the four truths propounded by the Buddha. The fundamental aim and object of his teachings is how to arrest the dynamic flow of the constituents of a living being.

The ways and means for doing it are summed up in his enunciation of the four truths.

### **The Four Noble Truths**

The traditional exposition of the Four Noble Truths are as follows:

#### **(1)The First Noble Truth**

The First Noble Truth is *dukkha* (suffering). Birth is suffering, so are disease, old age, death, grief and lamentation due to the death of friends and relatives. It means also physical and mental pain, meeting uncongenial persons, separation from dear ones, disappointment due to failure to obtain the desired objects.<sup>1</sup>

The exposition given above, as is found in the *Mahāvagga*,<sup>2</sup> is meant for the people in general. *Dukkha*, in fact, does not bear the ordinary meaning, viz., the woes of the world. It means really any form of so-called existence in this world whether as an animal, as a human being, as a god, or even as a *Brahma*. The implied sense is that whatever a being possesses in this world, be it long life, health, wealth, property, sons or daughters, kingship of men or gods, even higher supernatural powers, is subject ultimately to decay. In other words, the combination of five aggregates (*khandhas*) ends in suffering, and it is always accompanied with pain on account of constant change and ultimate decay.

Nothing in this world is ever existing and so one should eschew everything which is impermanent (*anicca*) and seek for the eternal Truth, which is ever existing (*nicca*). By "*dukkha*", therefore, is meant

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<sup>1</sup> D. II. 306; M. III. 249f; Vbh.99.

<sup>2</sup> Vin. I. 10.

"existence in this world with concomitant pain and pleasures" which are without any real substance (*anattā*) and are impermanent (*aniccā*).

## **(2) The Second Noble Truth**

The Second Noble Truth is *dukkha-samudaya* (origin of suffering). It is due to thirst (*taṇhā*) for worldly objects, thirst for re-existence as desired by the eternalists (*sassatavādins*), and desire for self-annihilation as sought by the annihilationists (*ucchedavādins*).<sup>1</sup> Either of such thirst or desire is associated with a wrong view, which causes rebirth.

The thirst is caused by the notion of 'I-ness', which leads to self-centeredness, i.e., a being wants to be the centre of all that is attractive in this phenomenal world but when it fails to achieve it, it suffers pain.

The second truth is enlarged by the addition of the twelve-linked formula known as the Law of Causation (*Paṭiccasamuppāda*), which traces the sources of suffering to ignorance (*avijjā*) of the three verities, viz., absence of a permanent soul (*anattā*), the root-cause of the notion of I-ness; momentary impermanence of all phenomenal objects (*anicca, khaṇika*); and all worldly objects being impermanent are undesirables (*dukkha*).

## **(3) The Third Noble Truth**

The Third Noble Truth is *dukkha-nirodha* (the absolute ending of suffering by the removal of ignorance of the above-mentioned three verities). It stops the flow of worldly existences. It is the cessation of *dukkha-samudaya*, complete detachment from desires, relinquishment of all worldly objects and of desires for their possession. It is tranquil, beyond death signless and free from all characteristics. It is not

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<sup>1</sup> D. II. 305.

nonexistent like the horns of a hare because it can be realised if the right means be adopted. It is, however, not a fruition of the right means. It is not like the eternally existing atoms (*aṇu-paramāṇu*) of the *Vaiśeṣikas*, because atoms, however minute and subtle, are also caused, whereas *Nirodha* is unborn (*ajātaṃ*), unoriginated (*abhūtaṃ*), uncreated (*akataṃ*) and unconstituted (*asaṃkhataṃ*).<sup>1</sup> It is called *sa-upādisesa-nirodha* when an *Arahanta* removes all his impurities and realises the truth but still retains his body, the last remains of his past *upadhi*. When he lays down his mortal frame, he is said to have *anupādisesa-nirodha*, and after this he never takes rebirth.

The Buddha rejected both eternalism and annihilationism, hence the conception of *nirodha* or *nibbāna* should be kept clear of these two views. He referred to it only by negatives though there are a few positive descriptions of same, e.g., it is existing, tranquil, happy and excellent. He said that as *nibbāna* was transcendental, it was not possible to give any positive description of it by words of human creation, i.e., conventional. He would, therefore, leave it as indescribable and realisable only by the wise, the perfect within one's own self.<sup>2</sup>

#### **(4) The Fourth Noble Truth**

The Fourth Noble Truth is *Aṭṭhaṅgika-magga* (the Path of eightfold practices). It states broadly the course of practices to be taken up by one seeking emancipation. It is divided into three sections: (1) moral precepts (*sīla*), i.e., observance of all the disciplinary rules embodied in the *Vinaya Piṭaka*, (2) mind-control (*citta*) through various methods including

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<sup>1</sup> Iti. 37; Ud. 80.

<sup>2</sup> *Paccattaṃ veditabbo viññūhi*.

meditations, and (3) acquisition of knowledge (*paññā*) by comprehending the nature and constitution of a being.

In the *Pāli* texts, the Four Noble Truths have been commented upon in various ways, of which the following appear to be a fair generalisation: *pavatti* (origin), *nivatti* (cessation), and *tad ubhayahetu* (causes of the above mentioned two); *ālaya* (desires), *ālayāramatā* (attachment to desires), *ālayasamugghāta* (uprooting of desires), and *ālayasamugghātupāya* (means of uprooting desires);<sup>1</sup> *akusalaṃ* (evil), *akusalamūlaṃ* (source of evils), *kusalaṃ* (good), *kusalamūlaṃ* (source of goodness);<sup>2</sup> *idaṃ* (this = *dukkha*), *hīnaṃ* (low = *dukkhasamudaya*), *pañītam* (excellent = *dukkhanirodha*), *imassa saññāgatassa nissaranaṃ* (getting rid of the misconceptions = *dukkhanirodhagāminī-paṭipadā*).<sup>3</sup> These various modes of expressions show that the early Buddhists did not mean that the Four Noble Truths should be confined only to the four terms: *dukkha*, *samudaya*, *nirodha* and *magga*.

Besides, the generalisations mentioned above, it is shown in the *Mahātaṇhāsāṅkhasutta*<sup>4</sup> that in place of *dukkha*, any term can be used, e.g, food (*āhāra*), old age and death (*jarāmaraṇa*), desire (*taṇhā*), name and form (*nāma-rūpa*) and ignorance (*avijjā*). The four truths indicate the fourfold methods of examination of an object, viz., take an object, ascertain its origin, determine how it decays, and enquire the means of its decay.<sup>5</sup> Just as the science of medicine has four sections, viz., disease, its

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<sup>1</sup> Vism. 497.

<sup>2</sup> M. I. 46.

<sup>3</sup> M. I. 38.

<sup>4</sup> *Āhāra, āhārasamudaya, āhāranirodha, āhāranirodha-gāminīpaṭipadā*. (M. I. 260).

<sup>5</sup> Prof. Theodore Stcherbatsky in his "*The Conception of Buddhist Nirvāṇa (along with Sanskrit Text of Madhayamaka-Kārikā)*", p. 55 remarks: "These four topics the four noble truths as the term has been inadequately translated and represented as fundamental principle of Buddhism contain in reality no doctrine at all."

cause, its cure, and the medicines for its cure,<sup>1</sup> so also the science of spiritual culture has four sections, viz., examination of the nature of the things of the world, the cause of their origin, their ultimate decay, and the means that bring about the decay. In the *Abhidharmakośa*, the Four Truths are put under two heads: cause and effect, or world (*saṃsāra*) and cessation (*nibbāna*). *Dukkha* and *samudaya* are placed under *saṃsāra*, and *nirodha* and *maggā* under *nibbāna*.<sup>2</sup>

The effects of insight into the four truths: *dukkha*, *samudaya*, *nirodha*, and *maggā* leads to the removal of the following beliefs respectively:

(1) Belief in a self (*sakkā yadiṭṭhi*); it shakes the mental tranquility of those who cling to the view that the constituted things are everlasting (*dhuva*), happy (*sukha*) and good (*subha*).

(2) Belief that there is no after-life (*uccheda-diṭṭhi*) and that the world is a creation of the God or issued out of *Prakṛti* or Time (*Kāla*)

(3) Belief in the eternality of self (*sassatadiṭṭhi*) and in the existence in *Arūpaloka* as the highest.

(4) Belief in non-action (*akiriya-diṭṭhi*). It also leads to the rejection of the path of ease and pleasure and the path of rigorous asceticism and self-mortifications.

After explaining in detail the *ariyasaccas*, Buddhaghosa reminds us of the non-existence of any individual (*anattā*) by quoting the following stanza: "*Dukkham eva hi na koci dukkhito, kāraṇaṃ na kiriyā va vijjati, atthi nibbuti, na nibbuto pumā, maggaṃ atthi, gamako na vijjatī*"

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<sup>1</sup> See Nalinaksha Dutt, *Early Monastic Buddhism*, p. 140.

<sup>2</sup> Yamakami Sogen, *Systems of Buddhist Thoughts*, p. 60f.

*ti*". (There is grief but none suffering from grief, there is no doer though there is action, there is quietude but none being quieted, there is the path but none going along the path).<sup>1</sup>

It should be observed that the four truths, as explained above, are really not the truths for common men. It is for this reason, they are always called *Ariyasacca*, indicating by the qualifying word "*ariya*" that these are truths only for those who have advanced spiritually and are in possession of one of the fruits of sanctification, viz., *Sotāpatti*, *Sakadāgāmi*, *Anāgāmi* and *Arahanta*. All monks are not necessarily "*ariyas*"; many of them are "*puthujjanas*" i.e. common men with impurities. Only those who have at least reached the *Sotāpatti* stage is called an "*ariya*". Unless an individual is an "*ariya*" he cannot realise that the possession of wealth and property, sons and daughters is suffering.

## **II. 8. The Last Days of the Buddha**

The *Mahāparinibbāna Sutta*<sup>2</sup> recorded very detailed account of all the events that occurred during the last days of the Buddha's life when He was the age of eighty.

When the rainy season came, the Buddha went together with a great company of monks from Vesāli to Beluva to spend the rainy season.<sup>3</sup>

When the Buddha had thus entered upon the three months retreat, there fell upon him a dire sickness, and sharp pain came upon him, even unto death but the Buddha mindful and self-possessed, bore them without complaint. He thought that it would not be right for him to pass away without addressing the disciples, without taking leave of the *saṅgha*. So,

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<sup>1</sup> Vism. 513.

<sup>2</sup> The *Sutta* No. 16, D. II.

<sup>3</sup> D. II. 98.

He took strong efforts to bend the sickness down again and to keep his hold on life till the allotted time was to come. His sickness gradually abated, and when quite recovered he called the Venerable Ānanda and addressing him said that He have preached the truth without making any distinction between exoteric and esoteric doctrine. He was grown old, and full of years, his journey was drawing to its close, He had reached his sum of days, He was turning eighty years of age; and just as a worn-out cart, can be kept going only with the help of thongs, so the body of the Buddha can only be kept going by bandaging it up. It was only when the Buddha, by ceasing to attend to any outward thing, becomes plunged by the cessation of any separate sensation in that concentration of heart which was concerned with no material object. It was only then that the body of the Buddha is at ease.<sup>1</sup>

## **II. 8. 1. The Last Meal**

The *Dīgha Nikāya* records that before the Buddha passed away he ate a meal given to him by a blacksmith named Cunda. This meal consisted of a preparation called *sūkaramaddava* which has been variously translated by scholars. Franke has translated it as "soft (tender) boar's flesh."<sup>2</sup> Arthur Waley gives four interpretations of *sūkara-maddava*: a pig's soft food (food eaten by a pig), pig's delight (a favourite food of a pig), the soft parts of a pig, or pig-pounded (food trampled by pigs).<sup>3</sup> There are many compound words in *Pāli* of which *sūkara* (pig) forms a part, e.g., the compound word *sūkara-sāli* is used in *Pāli* literature for a kind of

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<sup>1</sup> D. II. 100.

<sup>2</sup> See T. W. Rhys Davids and William Stede, *Pāli English Dictionary*, p. 721., and Fleet also agrees with this matter, see *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* (JRAS), pp. 656, 881.

<sup>3</sup> Ivan Morris, *Madly Singing in the Mountains: An Appreciation and Anthology of Arthur Waley*, p. 342.

wild rice.<sup>1</sup> K.E. Neumann as quoted by Waley "has shown that in Narahari's Rājanighaṇṭu, among the names of medical plants, there occurs a whole series of compound words having 'pig' as their first element; thus *sūkara-kanda*, 'pig-bulb,' *sūkara-padika*, 'pig' s foot,' *sūkareṣṭa*, 'sought-out by pigs.' On the analogy of the last, Neumann takes *sūkara-maddava* to mean 'pig's delight,' and assumes that it is the name of some kind of truffles ... Plant names tend to be local and dialectical. It is quite likely that if such an expression as *sūkara-maddava* meant "truffles" in Magadha, it might, in more western and southern centers where *Pāli* Buddhism came into existence, have been entirely unknown and consequently misunderstood."<sup>2</sup> T.W. Rhys Davids, in fact, translated it as "quantity of truffles."<sup>3</sup> The word in *Pāli* used for pork is *sūkaramaṃsa*.<sup>4</sup> Edward Thomas correctly points out that "The word ... is not the obvious *sūkaramaṃsa*, 'pig flesh,' which we would expect if this were meant."<sup>5</sup> C.A.F. Rhys Davids points out that, "A food-compound of pig-flesh (*sūkaramaṃsa*) does occur once in the scriptures, in a *Sutta* of a curiously unworthy kind, where a householder, in inviting Gotama to dine, goes through quite a menu in a restrained detail! Maddava is nowhere else associated with meat, and T. W. Rhys Davids' opinion appears to be logical that we have here a dish... of a root, such as truffles, much sought by swine, and which may have been called 'pig's joy.' Such a root we actually have - this the critics did not know - in our "pignut,"... the little nut-shaped bulbous roots of which, called also 'earthnuts,' are liked by

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<sup>1</sup> J. VI. 531.

<sup>2</sup> See K.T.S. Sarao, *Origin and Nature of Ancient Indian Buddhism*, p. 84.

<sup>3</sup> D. II. 137.

<sup>4</sup> *Sampanna-kolaṅ sūkaramaṃsa* (pork with jujube), (A. III. 49).

<sup>5</sup> Edward Thomas, *The Life of the Buddha*, p. 149.

both pigs and children."<sup>1</sup> There is another reason as to why *sūkaramaddava* cannot mean "pork." Cunda had invited the Buddha to his house. He could not have offered pork to the Buddha as it would have meant violation of the *Tikoṭīparisuddha*. Regarding the meal requirements of the Buddha, the would-be-donors of meals to the Buddha often consulted Ānanda.

For example, this is amply clarified by a conversation between Ānanda and a *Brāhmaṇa* in the *Vinaya Piṭaka*:

"If I were to prepare, my dear Ānanda, rice-milk and honey-lumps (for the monks), would the reverend Gotama accept it from me?"

"Well, my good *Brāhmaṇa*, I will ask the Blessed One." And the venerable Ānanda told this thing to the Blessed One.

"Well, Ānanda, let him prepare (those dishes)."

"Well, my good *Brāhmaṇa*, you may prepare (those dishes)."<sup>2</sup>

Thus, the theory that the Buddha's last meal was a variety of meat is without any foundation.

Equally unfounded theories, presumably derived from this first one, is that the Buddha died of eating poison mushrooms, from food poisoning or even that he was poisoned. Again, the facts contradict such fanciful speculations. All we can say is that *sūkaramaddava* was some kind of preparation, the ingredients of which have long ago been forgotten.

In the months before his passing, the Buddha had suffered 'a severe illness causing him sharp pains as if he were to die' and which he

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<sup>1</sup> C.A.F. Rhys Davids, *A Manual of Buddhism*, p. 260.

<sup>2</sup> Mv. VI. 24, 24. 4.

‘endured mindfully, fully aware and without complaint’.<sup>1</sup> He was 80 years old, unusually long-lived for the time, and Ānanda described him at this stage as having ‘slack and wrinkled limbs and being stooped’.<sup>2</sup> He himself said that his body could ‘only be kept going by being patched up’.<sup>3</sup> After his last meal, he had a severe bout of ‘diarrhoea with blood’ (*lohitaṅṅhandikā*), a continuation of the sickness he had been suffering from for some time, and later the next day he passed away. Obviously, the Buddha died of the typical complications brought on by exhaustion, sickness and old age, not because of what he had eaten the day before.

From the Buddhist perspective, the only significance of the Buddha’s last meal is that it demonstrated once again his infinite capacity for compassion. When he realized that the end of his life was near, he immediately thought that Cunda might be blamed for causing his death. To prevent this from happening, he instructed Ānanda to return to Cunda’s village and tell him that to serve a Buddha his last meal was a most auspicious and blessed act. Thus, even being sick, exhausted and nearing death the Buddha’s only thought was for the welfare of others.

## **II. 8. 2. The Last Disciple**

Hearing the news of the Buddha's approaching death at Kusinārā,<sup>4</sup> there was a wanderer named Subhadda who wanted to meet the Buddha in order to clear up certain doubts that troubled his mind, he hurried to the Sāla Grove to speak to the Buddha. At that time, the Buddha was sick so the venerable Ānanda did not wish anyone disturbed Him. Although Subhadda made several appeals, the venerable Ānanda refused. The

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<sup>1</sup> D. II. 99.

<sup>2</sup> S. V. 217.

<sup>3</sup> D. II. 100.

<sup>4</sup> A town in India, the capital of the Mallas. It was at Kusinārā that the Buddha died.

Buddha overheard the conversation and knew at once that Subhadda was making his investigations with a genuine desire for knowledge; and knowing that Subhadda was capable of quickly grasping the answers, he desired that Subhadda be allowed to see him. Subhadda's uncertainty was whether the leaders of the other schools of thought such as Pūraṇa Kassapa, Nigaṇṭha Nātaputta, and others had attained a true understanding.<sup>1</sup> The Buddha then spoke:

“In whatsoever doctrine and discipline, Subhadda, the *Aryan* eightfold path is not found, neither in it is there found a man of true saintliness of the first, or of the second, or of the third, or of the fourth degree. And in whatsoever doctrine and discipline, Subhadda, the *Aryan* eightfold path is found, in it is found the man of true saintliness of the first, and the second, and the third, and the fourth degree.<sup>2</sup> Now in this doctrine and discipline, Subhadda, is found the *Aryan* eightfold path, and in it too, are found, Subhadda, the men of true saintliness of all the four degrees. Void are the systems of other teachers, void of true saints. And in this one, Subhadda, may the brethren, live the Life that's Right, so that the world be not bereft of *Arahants*.

But twenty-nine was I when I renounced  
The world, Subhadda, seeking after Good.  
For fifty years and one year more, Subhadda,  
Since I went out, a pilgrim have I been  
Through the wide realm of System and of Law

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<sup>1</sup> D. II. 150.

<sup>2</sup> On these degrees in the religious life, see M. I. 63; A. II. 238.

Outside of that no victory can be won!

Yea, not of the first, nor of the third, nor of the fourth degree. Void are the systems of other teachers void of true saints. But in this one, Subhadda, may the brethren, live the perfect life, that the world be not bereft of *Arahants*.”<sup>1</sup>

Hearing the words of the Blessed One, Subhadda gained confidence, and took refuge in the Buddha, the *Dhamma*, and the *Saṅgha*. Furthermore, he desired to be admitted into the Order, and the Buddha requested the Venerable Ānanda to receive him. Subhadda, thus, became the last convert and the last disciple of the Blessed One, and before long by his strenuous effort he attained the final stage of *arahantship*.<sup>2</sup>

### **II. 8. 3. The Last Words**

After the conversion of Subhadda, the Buddha spoke again to Venerable Ānanda:

"It may be, Ānanda, that some of you will say, 'without the Buddha, the Sublime Teacher, there is no teacher for us'. No, Ānanda, you should not think in this way. Whatever doctrine and discipline taught and made known by me will be your teacher when I am gone."<sup>3</sup>

Then the Buddha, addressing the other monks said:

"If any amongst you has any doubts as to the Buddha, the teaching, or the order of monks, asks me now so that afterwards you may

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<sup>1</sup> D. II. 151.

<sup>2</sup> D. II. 148-53.

<sup>3</sup> D. II. 154.

have no cause to regret that you did not ask me while I was still with you."<sup>1</sup>

But at these words, none of the monks said anything. None had any questions, and all of them were silent. For the second and third time, the Buddha addressed the monks in this way. And for the second and third time, all the monks were silent.

The Buddha said, "Perhaps it may be out of respect for the teacher, that you do not question me. Let a friend, O disciples, tell it to another friend."<sup>2</sup> Still the disciples remained silent.

Then Venerable Ānanda spoke to the Buddha, "It is wonderful. It is marvellous, Lord! I do believe that in all this great company of monks there is not a single one who has doubts or questions about the Buddha, the teaching or the order of monks, or the path and the method of training and conduct."<sup>3</sup>

"With you, Ānanda," said the Buddha, "this may be a matter of faith and belief. But, Ānanda, I know that not one single monk gathered here has any doubt or question about these things. Of all the 500 monks here, Ānanda, he who is the most backward is a *sotapanna*, not subject to fall back to a lower state of existence, but is certain and destined for enlightenment."<sup>4</sup>

Then the Buddha addressed all the monks once more, and these were the very last words he spoke:

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<sup>1</sup> D. II. 154-155.

<sup>2</sup> D. II. 155.

<sup>3</sup> D. II. 155.

<sup>4</sup> D. II. 155.

"Behold, O monks, this is my last advice to you. All component things in the world are changeable. They are not lasting. Work hard to gain your own salvation."<sup>1</sup>

## II. 9. The Buddha's *Nibbāna*

After addressing all the monks with the last words, the Buddha spoke venerable Ānanda:

"It may be, Ānanda, that in some of you the thought may arise, 'The word of the Master is ended. We have no teacher any more.' 'I have preached the truth without making any distinction between exoteric and esoteric doctrine; for in respect of the truths, Ānanda, the *Tathāgata* has no such thing as the closed fist of a teacher, who keeps some things back."<sup>2</sup>

"But it is not thus, Ānanda, that you should regard it. The Truths, and the Rules of the *saṅgha* which I have set forth and laid down for you all, let them, after I am gone, be the Teacher to you. It may be, monks, that there may be doubts or misgiving in the minds of some monks as to the Buddha, or the *Dhamma*, or the *Saṅgha*, or the path (*magga*) or method (*paṭipadā*). Inquire, monks, freely. Do not have to reproach yourselves afterwards with the thought: 'Our teacher was face to face with us, and we could not bring ourselves to inquire of the Buddha when we were face to face with him.'<sup>3</sup>

Then the Buddha entered into nine successive stages of meditative absorption (*jhāna*) which are of increasing sublimity: first the four fine-material absorptions (*rūpa-jhāna*), then the four immaterial absorptions

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<sup>1</sup> D. II. 156.

<sup>2</sup> D. II. 100.

<sup>3</sup> D. II. 154.

(*arūpa-jhāna*), and finally the state where perceptions and sensations entirely cease (*sañña-vedayita-nirodha*). Then he returned through all these stages to the first fine-material absorption and rose again to the fourth one. Immediately after having re-entered this stage (which has been described as having “purity of mindfulness due to equanimity”), the Buddha passed away (*parinibbāyi*). He realized *nibbāna* that is free from any substratum of further becoming (*parinibbāna*).<sup>1</sup>

When the Buddha died, the monks who were not yet free from the passions, some stretched out their arms and wept, and some fell headling on the ground, rolling to and fro in anguish at the thought that too soon has the Buddha passed away, too soon has the *Dhamma* gone out in the world. And the monks who were free from the passions (*Arahants*) bore their grief collected and composed at the thought that impermanent are all component things and should be dissolved.<sup>2</sup> Then the venerable Anuruddha exhorted the monks that:

“Enough, my brethren! Weep not, neither lament! Has not the Exalted One formerly declared this to us, that it is in the very nature of all things near and dear unto us, that we must divide ourselves from them, leave them, sever ourselves from them? How then, brethren, can this be possible - that whereas anything whatever born, brought into being, and organized, contains within itself the inherent necessity of dissolution - how then can this be possible that such a being should not be dissolved? No such condition can exist! Even the spirits, brethren, will reproach us.”<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> D. II. 156.

<sup>2</sup> D. II. 157-8.

<sup>3</sup> D. II. 158.

After one week the death, the Buddha's body was burn and His relics were divided into eight parts:

(1) The king of Magadha, Ajātasattu, the son of the queen of the Videhi clan, made a stūpa in Rājagaha, and in their honour held a festival.

(2) The Lichavis of Vesāli made a stūpa in Vesāli, and in their honour held a festival.

(3) The Sakyas of Kapilavatthu made a stūpa in Kapilavatthu, and in their honour held a festival.

(4) The Bulis of Allakappa made a stūpa in Allakappa, and in their honour held a festival.

(5) The Koliyas of Rāmagā made a stūpa in Rāmagā, and in their honour held a festival.

(6) The Veṭhadīpaka *brahmin* made a stūpa in Veṭhadīpa, and in their honour held a festival.

(7) The the Mallas of Pāvā made a stūpa in Pāvā, and in their honour held a festival.

(8) The Mallas of Kusinārā made a stūpa in Kusinārā, and in their honour held a festival.

(9) The *brahmin* Doṇa made a stūpa over the vessel (in which the relics had been collected) and in its honour held a festival.

(10) The Moriyas of Pipphalivana made a stūpa over the embers at Pipphalivana, and in their honour held a festival.

So it came about that there were eight stūpas for the relics, a ninth for the vessel, and a tenth for the embers.<sup>1</sup>

Though twenty-five centuries have gone since the passing away of the Buddha, his message of love and wisdom still exists in its purity, decisively influencing the destinies of humanity.

The Buddha's dispensation is founded upon three guiding ideals or objects of veneration: the Buddha, the *Dhamma* and the *Saṅgha*. The Buddha is the teacher, the *Dhamma* is the teaching and the *saṅgha* is the community of those who have realized the teaching and embody it in their holy lives.

The holy life requires purified conduct but household life stimulates many desires that run contrary to pure conduct. The homeless life is a life of meditation calling for constant mindfulness, clear awareness and contemplation. All this needs time, a calm environment, freedom from external pressures and responsibility. So the Buddha founded the *saṅgha* in order to provide such objective conditions. These matters will be discussed carefully in the next chapter.

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<sup>1</sup> D. II. 167.