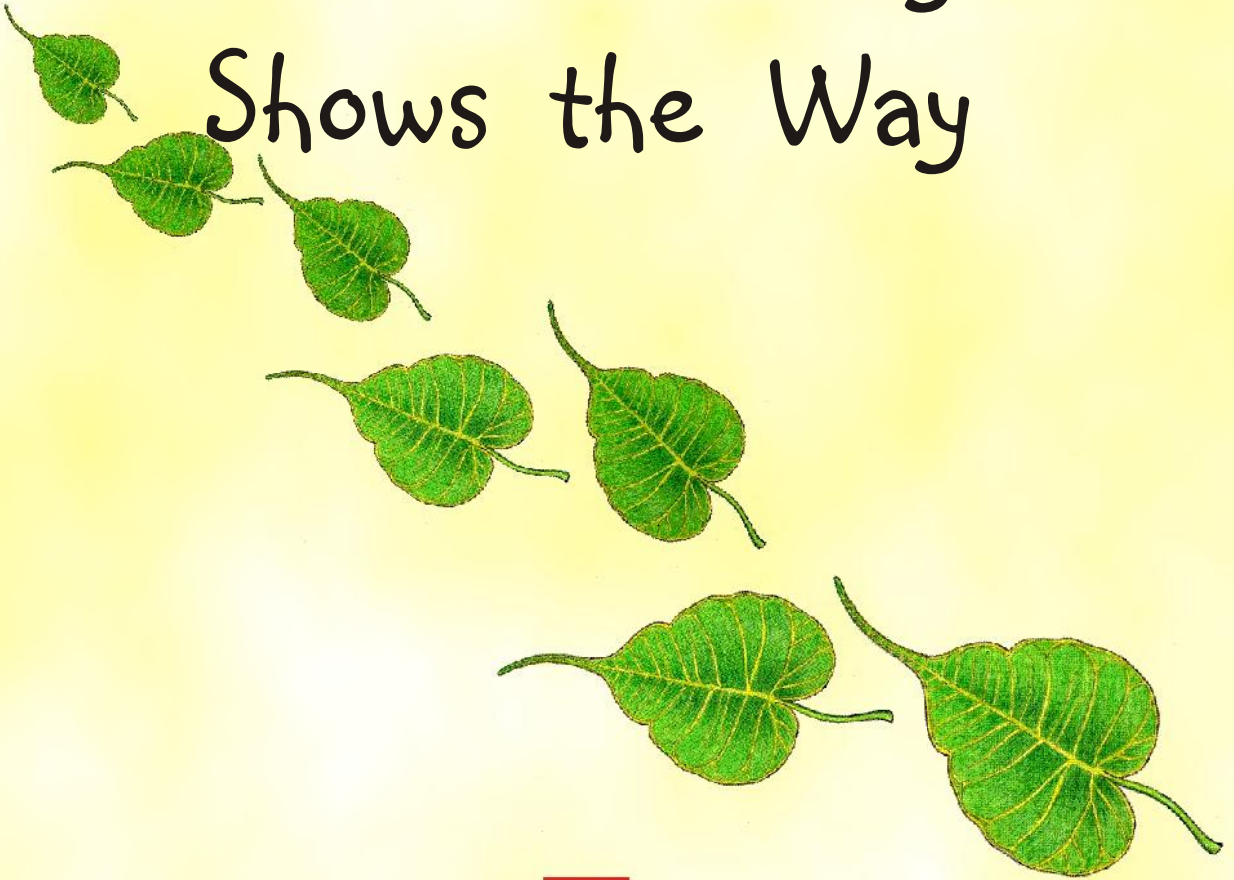


Du Yēn

But  
Buddha Clearly  
Shows the Way



Tiên Lê

But  
Buddha clearly  
Shows the Way



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Buddha clearly  
Shows the Way



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*In Loving Memory of my Mother*

*To my younger generations of  
Phạm, Lê, Nguyễn, and Tiên with love*



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## Preface

I was working on a project on Buddhism when I visited my brother and his family a year ago. During my stay, I often used their family kitchen table as my work station when I searched for articles on Buddhism and in-depth writings by learned scholars. My ten-year-old niece would join me regularly; she would sit quietly by me and gazed at my papers. One day, as she recognized that my collected articles were beyond her comprehension, she shyly asked when I would write an easy-to-read book on Buddhism for her and her brother.

Her interest surprised me strikingly. In her bright childish eyes I could read a fervent desire to learn, an intense craving for knowledge. As I could not resist the call, I quickly shelved my other project and started on this book.

My covert ambition is to also dedicate this book to my adult children, and younger nieces and nephews. To them, Buddhism is probably a vague concept that they momentarily experience with prayers and worships for deceased loved ones, at home or in temples.

So, my audience encompasses a wide range of ages: from first-year middle school students to successful professionals, some have or are starting their own family.

The book began with simple writings in the first chapters, and then progressed to include abundant and complex information in the later chapters, in particular, Chapters Eight and Nine. The following review gives my readers a glimpse of the book:

. Buddhism is commonly regarded as a religion, although some scholars consider Buddhism rather a philosophy. Chapter One addresses those different views.

. Chapter Two narrates the life of Sakyamuni Buddha, founder of Buddhism. Chapter Three explains essential topics in Buddhism or the Buddha's teachings—the Dharma. Chapter Four illustrates the Buddhist monastic

community—the Sangha and its activities. Thus, the three chapters together represent the Triple Gems in Buddhism—the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha. Chapter Five complements them with Buddhist Practice, a guideline for Buddhists' everyday life.

. We may sometimes encounter Buddhist symbols, the meaning of which seems quite unclear to us. Chapter Six provides their distinctive significance, while readers will enjoy inspiring Buddhist stories in Chapter Seven.

. Chapter Eight takes readers on a tour to a few notable Buddhist monuments in the world.

. As my readers are Vietnamese descendants, I cherish the thought that, although they were born and raised abroad, they would love to learn about Buddhism in their parents' homeland. Vietnam, officially named Socialist Republic of Vietnam, is a single-party state with the Communist Party of Vietnam being the only ruling legal political party. Chapter Nine reports the history of Buddhism in Vietnam, from the early centuries until as recently as in August 2010. It also documents the events and facts of religious oppression in Vietnam, witnessed and verified by the international community, and concealed by the country's authority.

\* \* \*

I do not intend to write this book as a school textbook on Buddhism. Neither do I ask my readers to accept my view; rather, I encourage them to form their own opinion based on the fundamental aspects of Buddhism presented in this book.

I am committed to facing an exciting challenge of writing for an audience that is very much diverse in age, aptitude, interest, and lifestyle. If this book sparks my readers' interest in further exploring Buddhism, I would consider my wish fulfilled.



## Notes

1. Buddhism originated from India. The Buddhist scriptures were recorded in Pali, an ancient language of India. Because Sanskrit was considered the primary liturgical<sup>1</sup> language of Hinduism and Buddhism, this book will use the Sanskrit equivalent of Pali Buddhist terms.
2. The founder of Buddhism is revered in this book, and referred to, according to the time periods of his life, as Prince Siddharta, Monk Gautama, Sakyamuni Buddha, the Fully-Awakened One, the Enlightened One, the Blessed One, or simply, the Buddha.
3. Chapter Eight uses numerals for all measurements, expressed in metric system and followed by US customary system in parentheses. For example: 43.6 m (143 ft) means 43.6 meters, equivalent to 143 feet. Periods are used for decimals and commas for quantity in thousand, for example, 54.36 acres and 220,000 square meters.
4. The punctuation standard used in this book is: no space preceding any punctuation mark, including colon (:), semi colon (;), question marks (?) and exclamation mark (!).
5. The Internet Web sites provided in this book serve as citation and sources of further information. They may have changed or become unavailable by the time this book is read.

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<sup>1</sup> Liturgical language is a language cultivated for religious reasons by people who speak another language in their daily life.



## Chapter One: A Religion and a Philosophy

---

## Buddhism as a Religion

### **The God-concept**

Religion is defined as the belief in the existence of one god or multiple gods; it also refers to the activities of worshipping the gods. In some religions, God is believed to possess supernatural powers and control all beings in the universe.

Although Buddhism is known as one of the great religions of mankind, it is not truly a religion on the basis of “belief and worship of a supernatural god”.

The Buddha, founder of Buddhism, never claimed that he was a god, the child of a god or even the messenger of a god. He was a man who perfected himself; he taught that all conscious beings possess Buddhahood, and if we follow his example, we can also perfect ourselves and become a Buddha.

The primitive man created the god-idea to give him comfort when he was in fear of wild animals, disease, and natural disasters like storm, lightning, volcanoes, and flood. Until this day, people pray to their god and ask for help in time of need, or when they are in fear and frustration. The Buddha taught us to restrain our fear, to reduce our desires, and to accept the things we cannot change.

### **Human beings in Buddhism**

Buddhists do not believe in gods but in mankind. Buddhists believe that each human being is precious and important, that all have the ability to develop into a Buddha, a perfected human being.

The Buddha taught us that human beings can outgrow ignorance, and see things as they really are, and that each of us can replace hatred, anger, spite, and jealousy with love, patience, generosity, and kindness.

In teaching us to cultivate the wisdom, which is the knowledge and understanding of all things in our world according to the natural law,<sup>2</sup> the Buddha shifted the emphasis from a *god's power* to *human ability*. Man is capable of perfecting himself and controlling his own destiny without pleading for help from a supernatural power. The Buddha's enlightenment is a solid demonstration and a conclusive proof of man's potential.

## **Worship**

There are different types of worship. When people worship a god, they praise the god, offer gifts, and ask for favors. They believe that the god will hear their praise, receive their gifts, and answer their prayers.

Another way of worship is to show respect to someone or something we admire. For example, when a teacher walks into a room, the students stand up; when we meet an honorable person we bow or shake hands; when the national anthem is played we salute. These gestures of respect and worship express our admiration. This is the type of worship Buddhists practice.

A statue or image of the Buddha with his hands resting in his lap, half-closed eyes, and gentle smile reminds us to develop peace and love within ourselves. When we bow to the Buddha statue or image, we express our gratitude to the Buddha for his teachings and guidance.

## **Blind Faith and Punishments**

Buddhism does not require blind faith from its followers. The Buddha never forces anyone to listen to or obey him. He encourages us to make our own judgments. Unlike in other religions, Buddhists are free to doubt, question, and explore the teachings of the founder. The following teachings of the Buddha symbolize the central principle of Buddhism:

*“Do not believe in anything simply because you have heard it.  
Do not believe in anything simply because it is spoken and rumored by many.*

---

<sup>2</sup> Natural law, or the Law of Nature, is a law whose content is set by nature and that therefore is valid everywhere, for examples, gravity, seasonal changes, causes of winds and rains, renewal of human cells, and physical similarity of twins.



*Do not believe in anything simply because it is found written in your religious books.*

*Do not believe in anything merely on the authority of your teachers and elders.*

*Do not believe in traditions because they have been handed down for many generations.*

*But after observation and analysis, when you find that anything agrees with reason and is contributing to the good and benefit of one and all, then accept it and live up to it.”<sup>3</sup>*

In other religions, the words of the founder are “orders”. The followers of a religion must neither refuse these orders nor doubt the principles in the holy book. Anyone who doubts or does not follow that basis will be “punished” by god. Other religious holy books often told the stories of men who were severely punished by god, because they did not follow his orders.

According to Buddhist books, the Buddha never showed anger, nor punished anyone. In his forty-five years of teaching, the Buddha was always kind, calm, and peaceful, to both good and bad people.

The Buddha’s teachings are not orders. His teachings center upon the Truths. He never claimed to be the author of those Truths; they existed before his time, the Buddha only discovered them and showed us the way to enlightenment.

Buddhists are also free to choose their way of practice. We are not required to go to any temple, attend any worship session, or join any Buddhist group. Although we learn easily when we participate in the Buddhist community, there are many other ways to perfect ourselves and help others through charitable work.

### **Confession in Buddhism**

In our daily practice to purify ourselves, we must first recognize our bad deeds; we express this recognition with Confession.

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<sup>3</sup> Reference: The *Anguttara Nikaya, Kalama Sutra*.

Like the water seeks its own level, bad consequences will seek to equal bad deeds we created in the past. The Buddha cannot remove bad consequences for us or wash away our impurities. The Buddha, as a teacher, gives us guidance, but we are responsible for our deeds. Thus, in Buddhism, a plain confession to our religious leader is not effective unless practical and positive actions follow it. Above all, a firm commitment to prevent repeating immoral behaviors and a strong will to cultivate good deeds must be the result of Confession.

### **Conversion to Buddhism**

Buddhists do not intend to convert others.

Once there was a reputable man named Upali; he was a follower of another religion and tried to convert the Buddha. However, after talking to the Buddha, he was enlightened and decided to become a disciple of the Buddha. The Buddha then said,

*“Make a proper investigation first. Proper investigation is beneficial for a well-known person like you.”*

In Buddhism, understanding is essential and thorough understanding takes time. So Buddhism does not require anyone to impulsively rush to become a follower, nor convert anyone without one taking time to ask questions and make decision. The Buddha was more concerned that people should follow his teachings as a result of a careful investigation of the facts.

Most religions in the world claim to be the only “true faith” and reject other religions as “superstition”. Buddhism does not reject any religion. In the twenty-five centuries of its history, it always existed peacefully with other religions, and no bloodshed conflicts with other religions ever occurred.

Buddhists encourage every person to practice his own religion properly if he can find truth, happiness, and peace.



## Buddhism as a Philosophy

The word “philosophy” derives from the Greek “*philosophia*”, literally “love of wisdom”. It is defined as the search for *knowledge* of the nature and meaning of the universe and human life.

Since Buddhism stresses the importance of wisdom, of gaining knowledge and understanding, it is clearly a philosophy. Furthermore, Buddhism is more than merely a philosophy: it is not only a *love of wisdom*, but also emphasizes the continuous effort to *practice* and *realize* a goal, the goal of enlightenment and liberation.

### Knowledge

In the history of mankind, many great philosophers have acquired knowledge of life and the universe. The most notable are: Heraclitus<sup>4</sup> who confirmed that *change* was central to the universe and that nothing remained still, Pythagoras<sup>5</sup> who believed in transmigration or the *reincarnation* of the soul again and again until it became immortal, and Aristotle<sup>6</sup> who explained thoroughly the relationships between *causes* and *effects*.

The Buddha revealed those Truths before the times of Heraclitus, Pythagoras and Aristotle.<sup>7</sup> In Buddhism, those Truths are respectively the Impermanence of all things, Rebirth, and the workings of *Karma*.

---

<sup>4</sup> Heraclitus (535 BC–475 BC), a Greek philosopher, is famous for his utterance: “*Ever-newer waters flow on those who step into the same rivers.*”

<sup>5</sup> Pythagoras (570 BC–495 BC), a Greek philosopher, mathematician, and scientist, is famous for his theorem in geometry, the Pythagorean theorem. The theorem states that, in a right-angle triangle, the square of the hypotenuse (the side opposite the right angle) is equal to the sum of the squares of the other two sides.

<sup>6</sup> Aristotle (384 BC–322 BC), a Greek philosopher, influenced virtually all Western philosophy that came after his works.

<sup>7</sup> The Buddha spoke of those Truths after he attained enlightenment at the age of thirty-five, circa 589 BC, two decades and five decades before Pythagoras and Heraclitus were born respectively, and two centuries prior to Aristotle’s birth.

## Practice and Realization

The Buddha not only spoke of those Truths, but also took a further step in offering a plan of *practice* to *realize* the goal of liberation from rebirth cycles: he laid out a path, the Noble Eightfold Path<sup>8</sup> that we can follow to perfect ourselves.

While philosophers content themselves with the attained knowledge, the Buddha leads the way to set a goal for all. We should study and practice the philosophical teachings of the Buddha, and ultimately realize our final goal with our own effort and free will.

The final *goal* in Buddhism also includes the welfare of others. The Buddha taught that generosity is the highest virtue that every Buddhist should practice, as he once said, “*Work for the welfare of others.*”

\* \* \*

We may conclude that Buddhism is not a *religion* in the sense related to divine power; it is rather a *faith*, a strong belief in human potential. Neither is Buddhism a plain *philosophy*, for it not only embraces a love of wisdom but also requires practice and realization; we may call it a beautiful *way of life*.

The Buddha had set an example of personal effort and achievement; he taught us:

*“No one saves us but ourselves,  
No one can and no one may.  
We ourselves must walk the path,  
But Buddha clearly shows the way.”*




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<sup>8</sup> The Noble Eightfold Path is discussed in Chapter Three: The Buddha’s Teachings—*Dharma*.



## Chapter Two: Sakyamuni *Buddha*

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## The Birth of the Prince

**A** long time ago, at the foot of the Himalayan Mountains in northern India, there was a small kingdom called Sakya. King Suddhodana Gautama and his queen Maha Maya, rulers of the Sakya kingdom, were well known throughout the land for their noble kindness. The king and queen were often sad that they had no child.

One full-moon night, Queen Maya dreamed of a beautiful white elephant coming down from the sky. It held in its trunk a large lotus blossom. The elephant offered her the flower, and then disappeared into her right side.

King Suddhodana summoned the royal wise men to Kapilavastu, the capital city of the kingdom. They predicted that the queen will give birth to a wonderful prince. Everyone in the kingdom celebrated this joyful occasion.

**A**s the time of her child's birth neared, Queen Maya returned to her native village of Devadaha to have the baby at her parents' home, as that was the custom in India.

When the royal party came to Lumbini Park, the queen and her court ladies stopped to spend the night in the grove of beautiful trees. The flowers in the park were in full bloom, and sweet fragrance filled the air.

Queen Maya walked under a flowering tree. As she reached up to a branch to grab a flower, she felt a spasm of pain. Her court ladies rushed to her side, and so, in the light of a full moon, Queen Maya gave birth to her son.

Everyone was delighted at the birth. The deer and other animals in the park, sensing something special, came and looked in wonder at the baby prince.

**K**ing Suddhodana joyfully greeted Queen Maya and her son, when both returned to the palace. The people of Sakya hung lanterns and wreaths of flowers to celebrate the birth of the prince. King Suddhodana named his son

Siddharta, meaning “accomplisher of aim”. He was also called Gautama, which was his clan name.

At that time a religious old man named Asita came down from the Himalayas to meet the newborn prince. Asita, a tutor to the king, was particularly pleased to hear this happy news. The king carried the child up to Asita to make the child pay him respect.

Instantly, the old man rose from his seat. He recognized in the young child many signs that promised the child’s future greatness; he saluted the baby prince with clasped hands.

The great Asita smiled at first and then was sad. Questioned regarding his mixed feelings, he answered that he smiled because the prince would eventually become a Buddha, an Enlightened One, and he was sad because he would be dead before the Enlightened One would have time to show him the Path of Liberation.

**S**even days after giving birth, Queen Maya died. The king named her sister, Lady Maha Pajapati, his new queen. Queen Pajapati took on the task of raising the little prince.

The king provided his son with the finest upbringing. Siddharta received the best education and mastered all lessons taught to him. In his younger years, he excelled in sports and other contests of skill, on the horse and with the bow. The young prince was not only brilliant and talented, but also possessed a kind heart and great compassion. He loved birds and beasts, plants and flowers, as well as his fellow human beings.

When the young prince was in his twelfth year, the king called a council of wise priests. They predicted that Siddharta would devote himself to a severely self-disciplined life of a hermit, if he ever cast his eyes on old age, sickness, or death.

King Suddhodana wished for his son to be a universal monarch, he surrounded the palace with a triple enclosure and guard; he forbade the use of the words “death” and “grief”.



When the prince was at the age of sixteen, the king selected the most beautiful princess in the land, Yasodhara, as the prince's bride. After Siddharta had proven himself in many tournaments calling for strength and skill, the two were married. The people of Sakya, once again, hung lanterns and flower garlands to celebrate the marriage of Prince Siddharta and Princess Yasodhara.



## The Four Encounters

Siddharta began his life with his beloved Yasodhara in the palace. King Suddhodana secretly commanded that everything must be done to keep Siddharta happy and entertained behind the palace walls. Until one day, his heavenly calling awoke in him. He decided to visit the nearby town.

The king ordered the houses along the road cleaned and decorated, the streets to be swept, and any ugly or sad sight removed. But these precautions were in vain, for while Siddharta was riding his chariot through the town, he came across an old man walking along the road. Puzzled by his first encounter with old age, the prince asked Channa, his charioteer, “Who is this man there with the white hair, feeble hand gripping a staff, eyes lost beneath his brows, limbs bent and hanging loose? Has something happened to alter him, or is that his natural state?”

“That is old age, my Prince,” said the charioteer “the abuser of beauty, the ruin of vigor and memories, the cause of sorrow, and the enemy of the senses. In his childhood, that one too drank milk and learned to creep along the floor, came step by step to vigorous youth, and he has now, step by step, in the same way, gone on to old age.”

The charioteer thus revealed in his simplicity what had been hidden from the king’s son. Siddharta exclaimed, “What! And will this evil come to me too?”

“Yes, Your Highness, without doubt, by the force of time,” said the charioteer.

And thus the prince was agitated when he heard of old age. He further encountered in such manner a sick man and a dead man, leading to great turbulence in his mind.

**F**inally heaven placed in his path a tramp. “Who are you?” the prince asked. To which the other answered, “Terrified by birth and death, searching for liberation, I became a hermit. I am wandering without family and without desire; I accept any fare. I live now for nothing but the eternal bliss.” Convinced that herein lay the way to suppress his mental agitation, Siddharta decided to follow this holy man’s example.

At that time, Yasodhara gave birth to their son. Siddharta called him Rahula, meaning “chain” or “links”, a name that indicated Siddharta’s dissatisfaction with his life of luxury, although the birth of his son stirred up in him much affection.



## The Rejection of Worldly Life

Siddharta made his decision. He pleaded with the king to permit his pursuit for Truth. Hearing the prince's determination, King Suddhodana became very anxious and asked the prince to abandon his quest. Siddharta replied thus:

“Father, if you can fulfill my four desires, I promise not to leave you. They are: I should not die; no disease should ever afflict me; youth should never betray me; and prosperity should always be my companion.”

Recognizing the prince's impossible demands, King Suddhodana was extremely disheartened and resigned to his son's fate.

Siddharta awoke one night. For the last time, he watched his wife and their child sleep. In his heart, he made a vow: “Yasodhara and Rahula, one day I will come back for you... You, too, will be saved.”

He hurried down to the lower floor of the palace, where Channa, his trusted attendant, was awaiting. He then mounted his favorite horse Kanthaka and rode off, accompanied by Channa. Master and servant made their way out of the palatial compound unnoticed. They rode through the night until they reached the Anoma River. Siddharta sat down on a large stone and Channa knelt before him.

With a determined look, the prince swiftly drew his sword. He seized his locks and cut them off. He handed his sword, his hair and his princely clothes to his charioteer and said,

“Channa, please bring these back to my father and tell him this: ‘The prince begs Your Majesty for forgiveness; please be happy and assured that the prince will one day come back to you, when he finds the Way to ease the sufferings of his fellow human beings.’”

Siddharta put on the robe of a monk. He continued southward toward Rajagaha, the capital of Magadha. Wandering in his search for enlightenment, Siddharta came to a pleasant hermitage, where the Brahmans, the priests of Hindu religion, accepted him as a scholar. Prince Siddharta had then become Monk Gautama or the Sage of Sakya.



## The Austerities

**F**or six years, Monk Gautama had joined five ascetics to practice the greatest austerities of self-mortification to gain wisdom and freedom. He would clench his teeth and press his tongue against his palate continually, learning to ignore the pain.

When all failed, he began a way of discipline based on severe starving. It is said that he ate only a single nut and took a sip of water for a whole day. As a result, he gradually withered, his hair fell out, his skin hung loose in folds, the skin of his stomach clinging to his backbone, and his body was in constant pain.

However severe his austerities were, his body still howled for attention and desire. All he had achieved after this assault upon his body was a dangerously weakened physique.

**F**inally, he saw clearly as never before, that body and mind were one and inseparable. He decided he would now cease the torture of the body for the sake of the mind. He understood that physical austerity is one of the two extremes, and that the “Middle Way” between them is the path to liberation.

He thus slowly rose, and went to bathe in the stream. He crossed over to the far bank where he met Sujata, a village girl. Sujata offered him some milk and a bowl of rice pudding. It was the first nutritious food he had accepted in years and it instantly restored his body to good health.

His companions, the five ascetics, were first amazed that Gautama practiced austerities so extremely. But now, as he resolved to abandon all those practices, they were disappointed and appalled at his apparent weakness. They decided to leave him.

**G**autama remained in the forest by himself to pursue his new-found way of self-training. Once a day, he went down to the village to beg for food, usually a small bowl of rice for his only noon time meal. Gautama soon regained his strength, thus he was able to sustain long hours of meditation.

One day, Tika, a village boy, while walking by the forest saw Monk Gautama sitting in meditation under a tree. Tika had just cut a cart full of kusa grass, so he grabbed a bunch of fresh green grass and went to kneel quietly before the monk. When Gautama came out of his meditation and opened his eyes, Tika offered the grass and said to him,

“Venerable, I brought you this nice grass to sit on. It would be more comfortable than the hard ground.”

Gautama thanked the boy, “I am very grateful, child. You have given it to me just at the right time. This evening I will spread this nice grass under this great pipala tree.<sup>9</sup> I will sit on it to meditate, and I promise not to move from this tree until I find the Way.”



---

<sup>9</sup> The pipala tree, also known as pipal tree or Sacred Fig tree, is a species of banyan fig native to Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, south-west China, and Indochina. Its scientific name is *Ficus religiosa*.

## The Enlightenment

**H**earing this solemn vow, the demon Mara, an evil spirit of desire and death, felt threatened. Mara's power over conscious beings was built on their attachment to sensual pleasures and the fear of death. Enlightenment would free Monk Gautama from Mara's control. It would also give an opportunity for others to free themselves by following Gautama.

First, Mara sent his sons and beautiful daughters. They were all demons with supernatural powers. They created an army of hideous creatures. Thunder and lightning tore the sky apart, rain and wind turned into a hurricane, hot rocks flew in with sandstorms. Lions, tigers, crocodiles, snakes, centipedes, spiders, and scorpions swarmed in with the storm. All this was useless, and the motionless monk sat in meditation.

Then, all of a sudden, the sky cleared up, the clouds scattered, and the air filled with fragrance. Mara's three daughters appeared. They came singing and dancing around him, tempting, showing their bare arms while the bewitching music throbbed endlessly... Monk Gautama remained unmoved.

The battle went on. The forces of evil surrounded Monk Gautama in a swirl. Only Gautama sat calm and fearless. Finally, he raised his hand and tapped the ground. The earth responded with a deafening roar that broke up the frightened Mara. A wind whirled and swept all demons and beasts. Mara was defeated and disappeared.

**T**he night forest was still and quiet. Gautama concentrated all his power of mindfulness on the past, present, and future. He knew the exact condition of all beings and the causes of their rebirths. He saw all beings live, suffer, and die. He understood the origin of human pain and the ways of destroying it. The awakening passed through various stages during the night.



At dawn, when the first sunray shone through the pipala's foliage, Gautama had attained perfect enlightenment. Darkness retreated and light conquered, Ignorance shattered and Wisdom arose. Gautama slowly stood up. There among mankind had come the Fully-Awakened One, the Enlightened One, the Blessed One—the Buddha.

He stayed in meditation for seven more weeks under the tree. Through his process of enlightenment he discovered that all conscious beings in this universal life possess Buddhahood. He exclaimed, "How wonderful! All beings can become Buddhas."



## The Teachings

**M**onk Gautama was now Sakyamuni Buddha. He decided to speak of his discovery to those who wanted to listen.

He searched for the five ascetics who had abandoned him. He preached his first sermon to them in the Deer Park at Benares. His lecture included the basics of the Four Noble Truths and the Noble Eightfold Path. There he rejected a life of self-indulgence and its opposite, self-mortification. He proclaimed the Middle Way, or a life of moderation and self-discipline, which all could practice.

Thereafter, the monastic community, or Sangha, grew in size and came to include about sixty monks, the Buddha's cousin—Ananda, and his son—Rahula. Later, his stepmother, Queen Pajapati, and his cousins pleaded with the Buddha to accept women into the Sangha.

The Buddha spent the remaining forty-five years of his life to travel around the plains of the Ganges River, to teach and help all in need of his guidance. He converted his family and many followers. The Buddha accepted people from any walk of life, men and women, from every social class, whoever sought enlightenment.

The monastic movement began to take shape after the Buddha's conversion of King Bimbisara of Magadha, when the king donated a bamboo grove and built a monastery for the Buddha and his followers.

During his life, the Buddha had taught that no one was to succeed him as leader of the Sangha. Instead, his followers would take his teachings and rules as their sole guide.



## The Passage into Final Nirvana

**B**y the time Sakyamuni Buddha reached the age of eighty, he began to feel old. He visited all of the monasteries he had founded and prepared to meet his end.

His illness had progressed. Sakyamuni Buddha knew that death was approaching. Ananda, his faithful attendant, wept to see the Buddha so ill. The Buddha comforted him,

“Do not grieve, Ananda. I am old, feeble and cannot live forever. It is natural for everything that is born to die. I shall pass into Final Nirvana, a state of ultimate peace and happiness. Call all the monks and nuns together.”

The disciples wept and begged their teacher to remain in the world. With tears in his eyes, Ananda asked, “When the Buddha is no longer in the world, who is there to teach us?”

“What more is there to teach, Ananda?” the Buddha asked. “I have taught you all I know. There is nothing that I have kept hidden. My teachings are your teacher now. Follow them and you will be true to me.”

**H**earing that the Buddha was dying, people came from afar to pay their last visit. Even as he lay there in pain, he continued to teach until his last moment.

In a grove near Kusinagara, the Buddha humbly said, “I cannot go further, Ananda, prepare a resting place for me between these two large sala trees.”<sup>10</sup> He lay down on his right side with his head to the north. The two sala trees rained their blossoms all around him.

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<sup>10</sup> Sala tree or sal tree is native to southern Asia; its scientific name is *Shorea robusta*.

At dusk, when the setting sun cast a purple glow over the grove, he spoke his last words,

*“Everything is subject to change, work diligently for your liberation.”*

Then the Buddha entered into Final Nirvana. All his disciples and villagers gathered around him and wept.

According to custom, his body was placed on a pile of wood and burned. Shining, jewel-like remains were found in the ashes, which were divided into eight parts and placed in monuments called stupas.

The Buddha passed away, on his birthday at the age of eighty, in 544 BC. It was on a full-moon night in the month of May, known in the Indian calendar as Vesak.

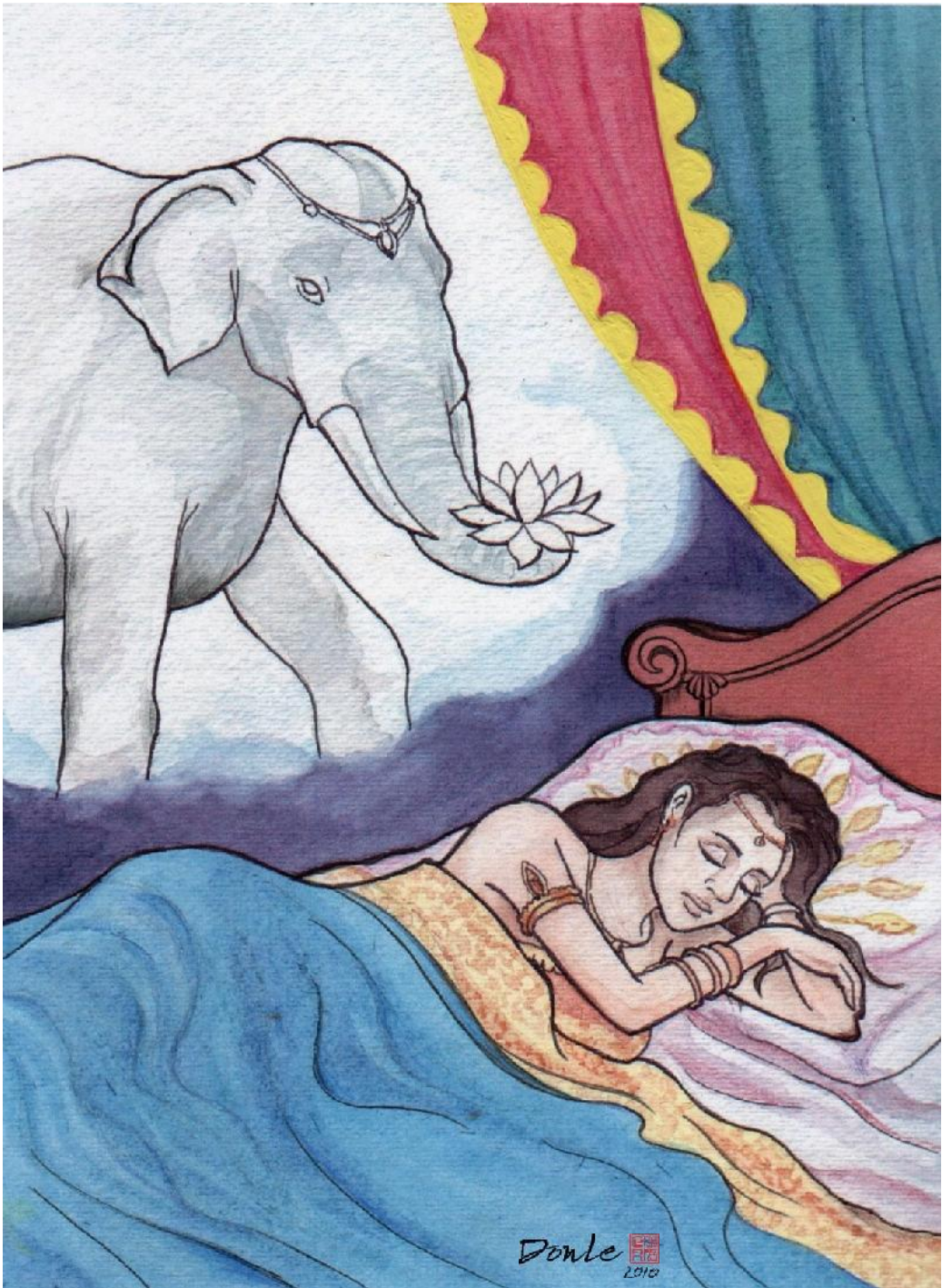
\* \* \*

The Buddha was born a human, he became Buddha by his own efforts and wisdom, unaided and unguided by any supernatural power. In the Buddha, we clearly see, not a celestial character, but a dedicated and lonely soldier of Truth, a vivid human personality. In his own time, the Buddha was highly venerated, but he never arrogated to himself any divinity.

The death of a truly great man marked the beginning of an era of human progress, for he devoted his life, not to his own glory, but to the pursuit of eternal truths and true happiness of mankind.



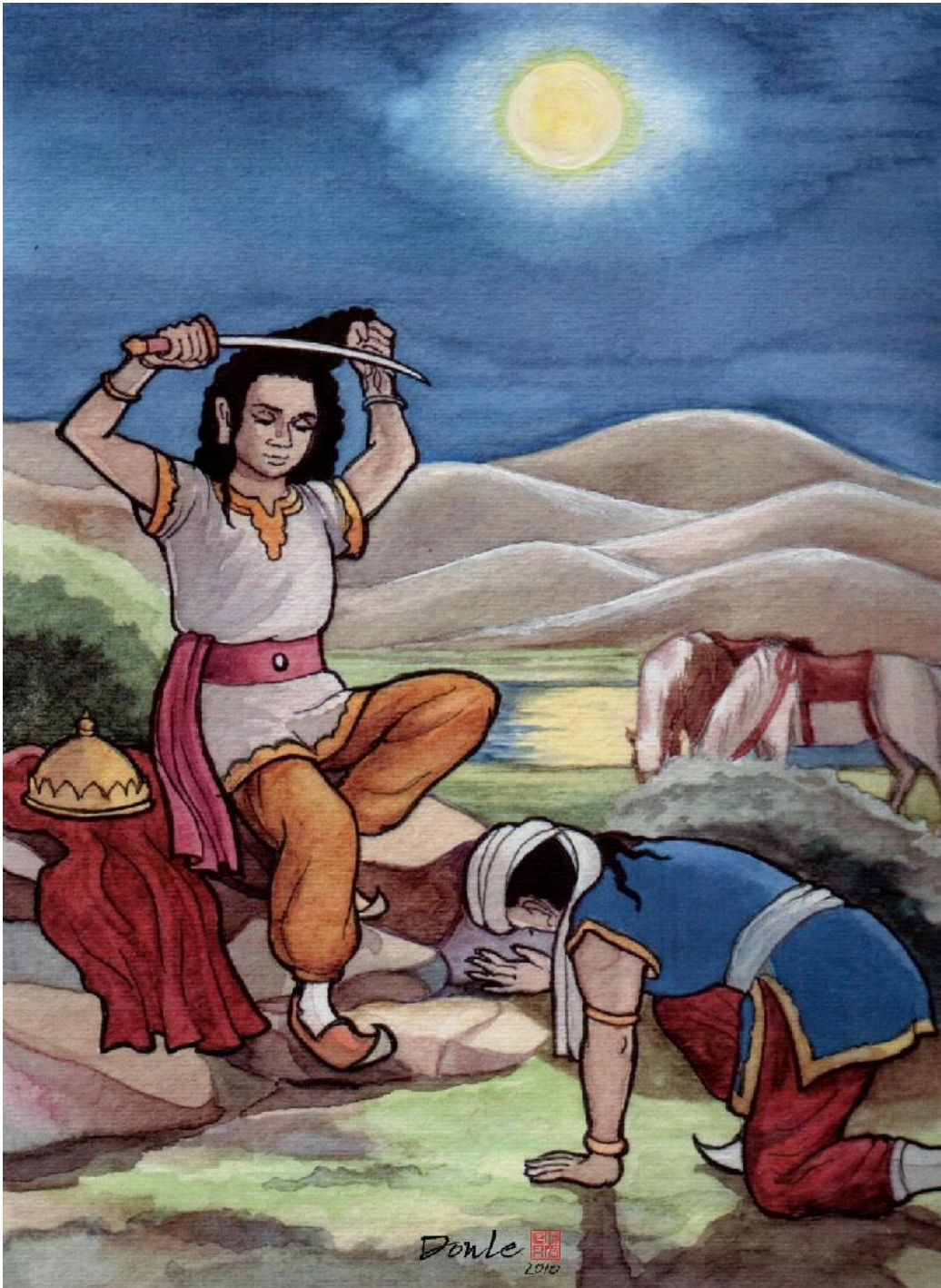




Queen Maya dreamed of a beautiful white elephant coming down from the sky.

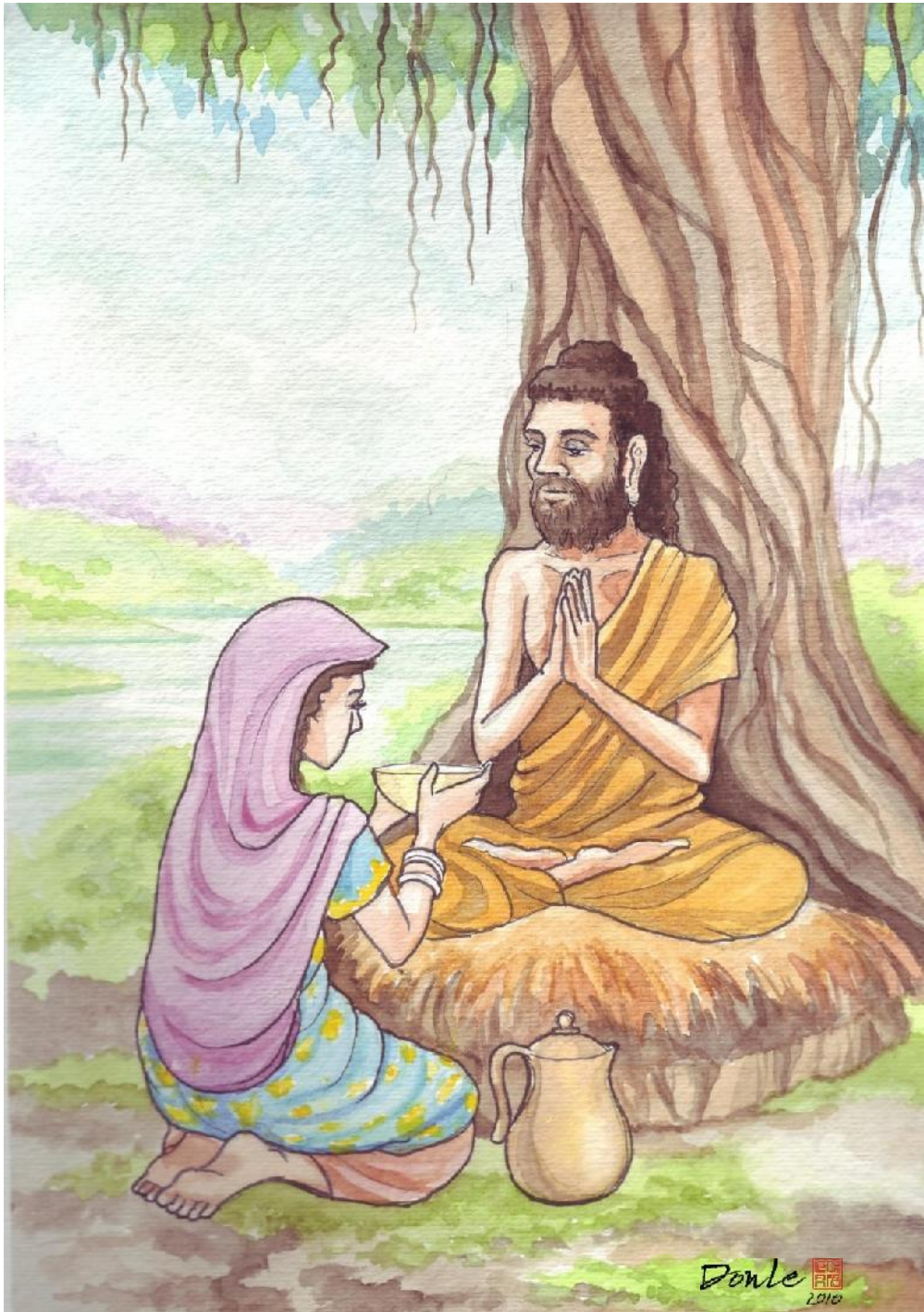


And thus the prince was agitated when he heard of old age. He further encountered in such manner a sick man and a dead man, leading to great turbulence in his mind.

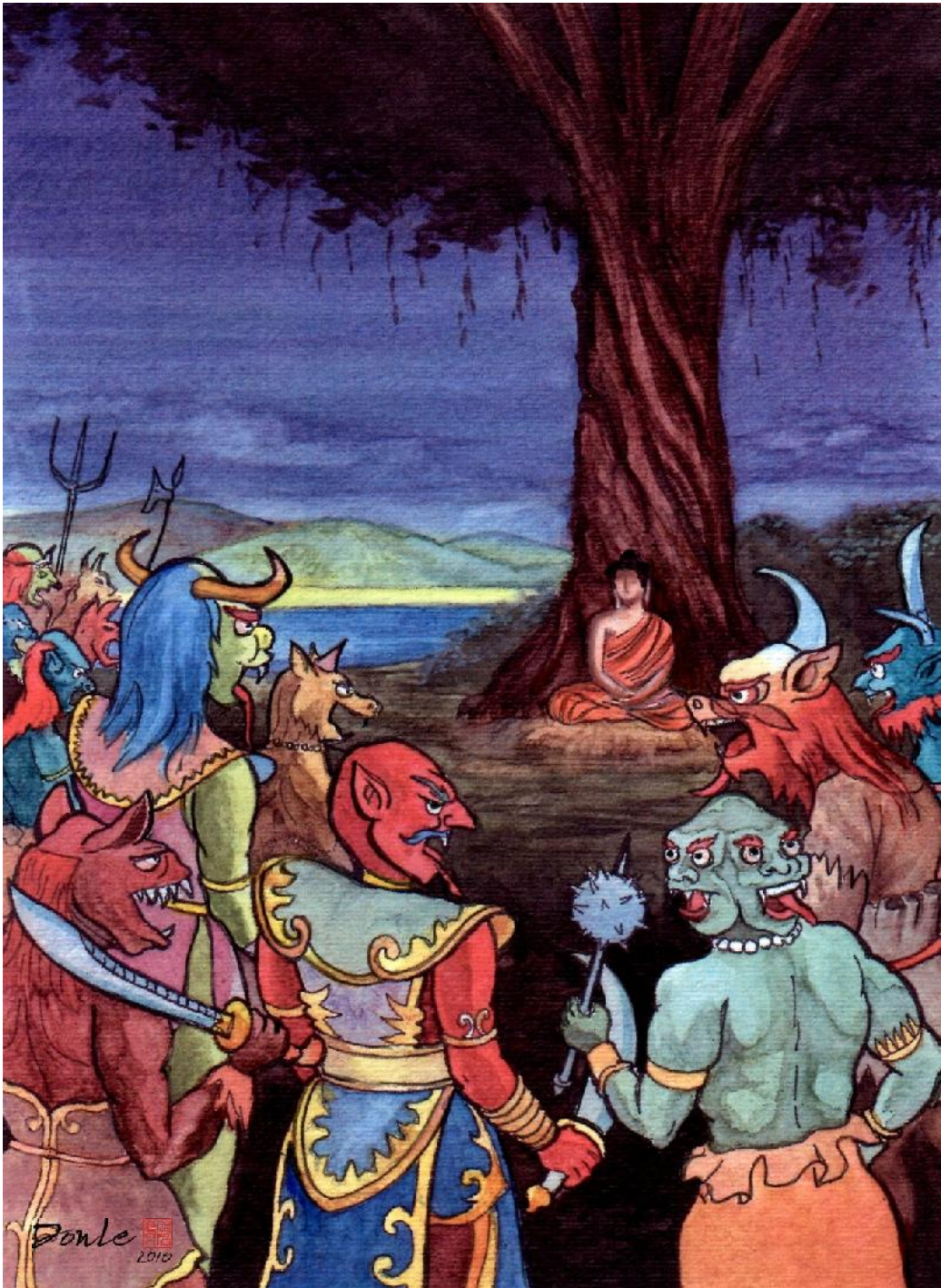


With a determined look, the prince swiftly drew his sword.  
He seized his locks and cut them off.

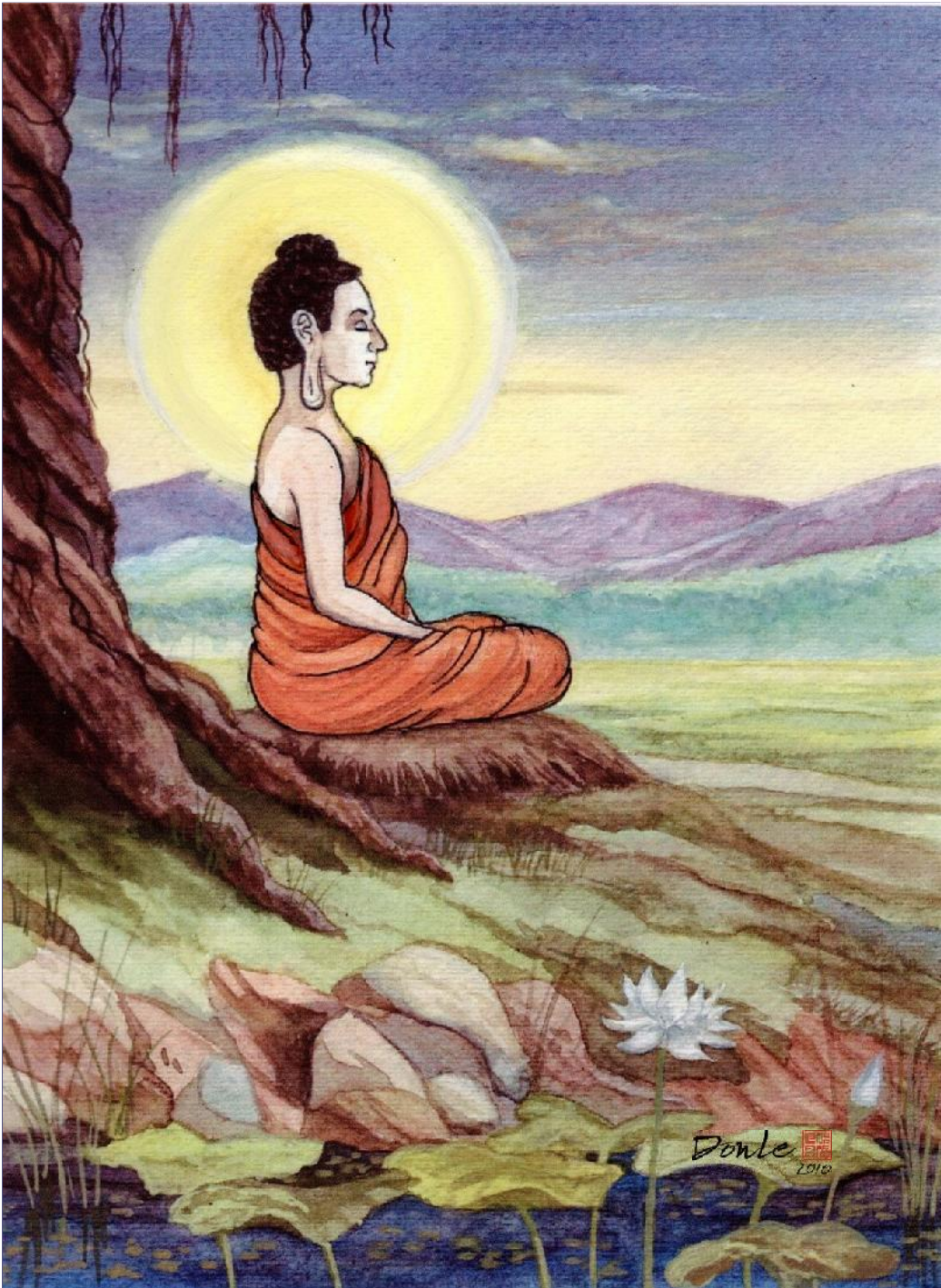




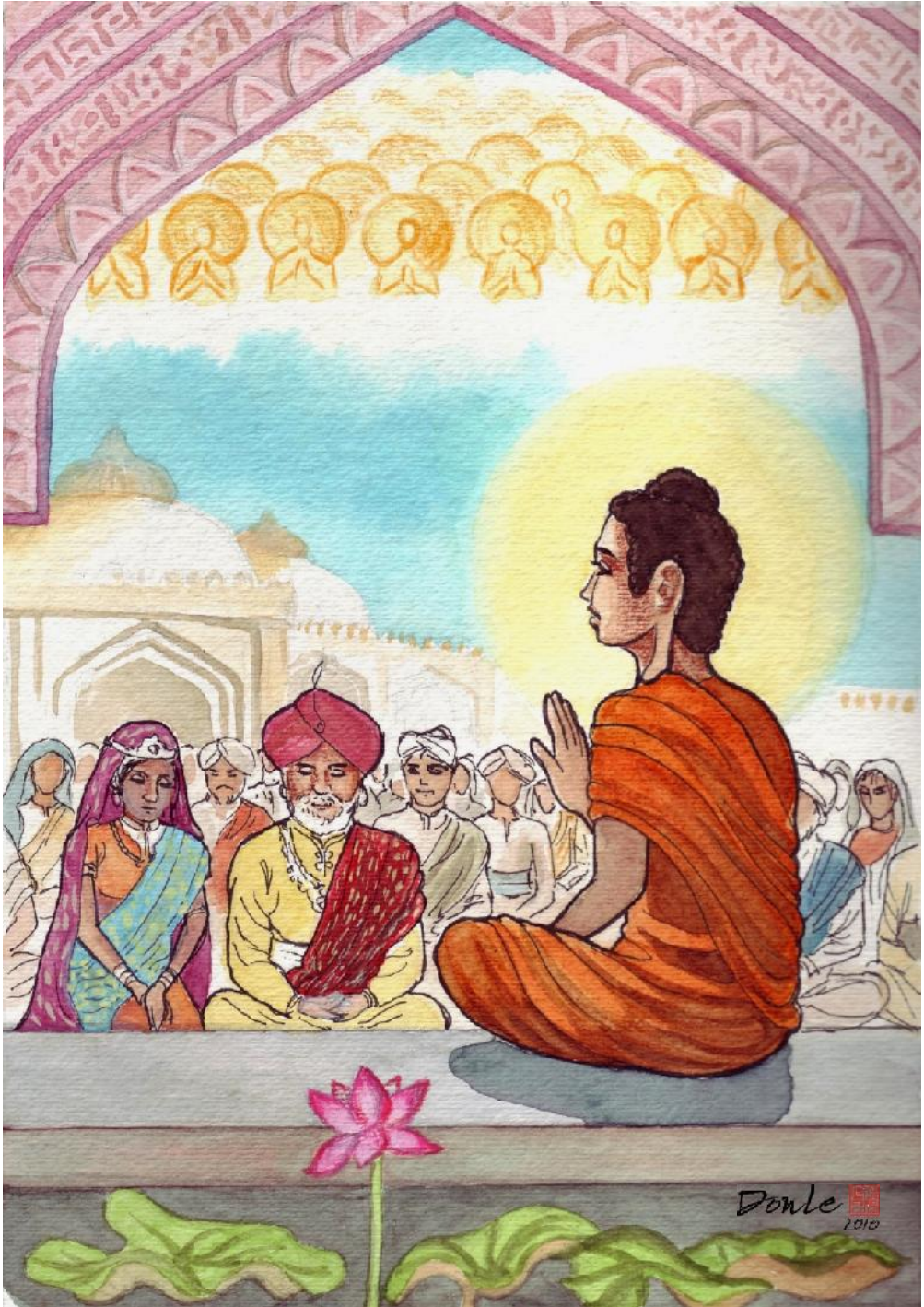
Sujata offered him some milk and a bowl of rice pudding.



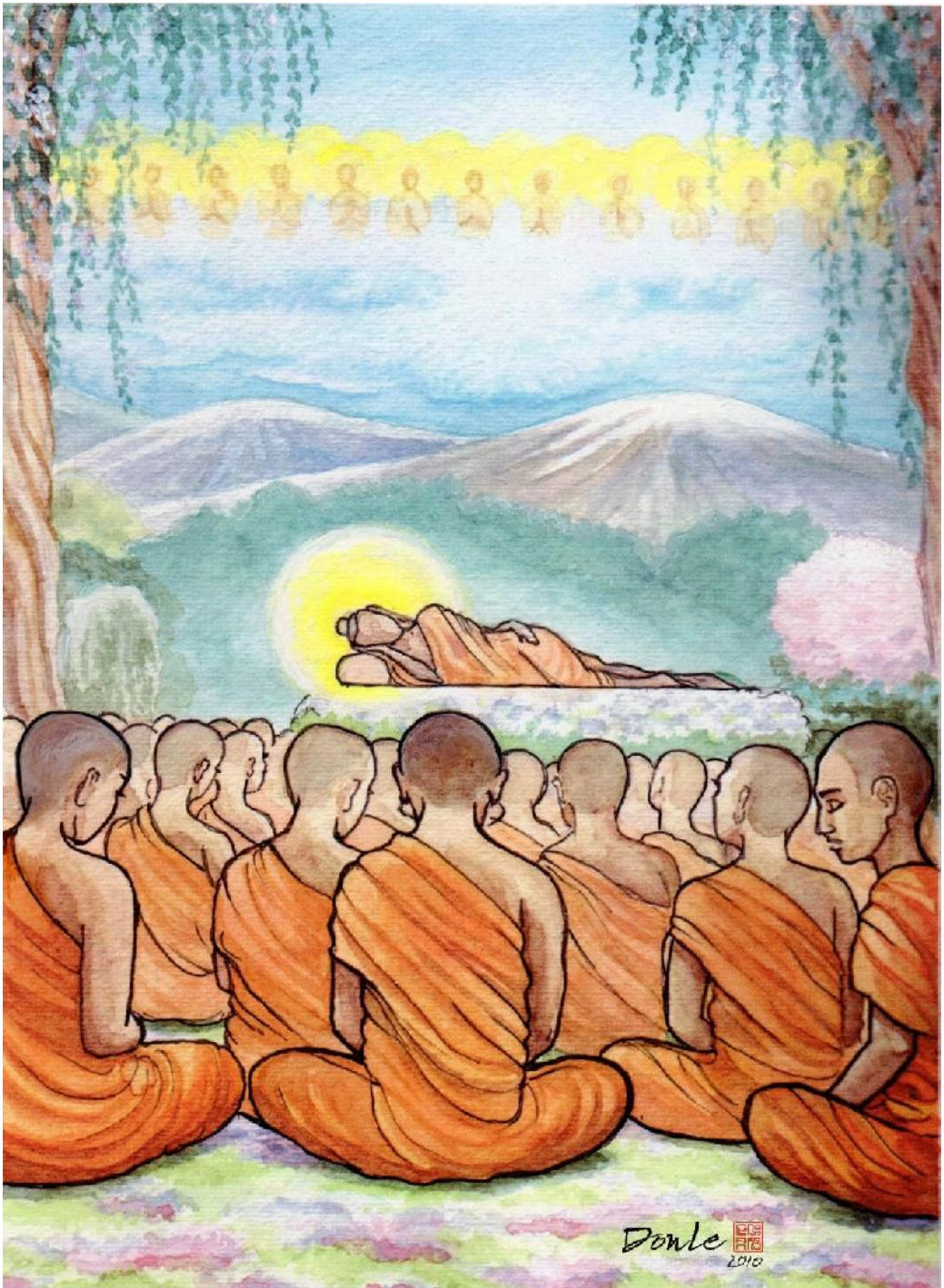
They created an army of hideous creatures... , and the motionless monk sat in meditation.



At dawn, when the first sunray shone through the pipala's foliage, Gautama had attained perfect enlightenment.



The Buddha accepted people from any walk of life, men and women, from every social class, whoever sought enlightenment.



He lay down on his right side with his head to the north.

## Chapter Three: The Buddha's Teachings—*Dharma*

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## The Four Noble Truths

**D**harma is the Buddha's teachings that center upon the Four Noble Truths:

1. The Truth of Suffering
2. The Truth of the Cause of Suffering
3. The Truth of the End of Suffering
4. The Truth of the Path leading to the End of Suffering

In the same way a competent doctor treats his patient, the Buddha effectively treats the sufferers after a thorough examination and accurate diagnosis. Let us look at what a good doctor and the Buddha have in common:

. A good doctor reveals the nature of our illness and its cause; he advises that there is a cure for it, and then prescribes the medicine to help us get well.

. Likewise, the Buddha reveals the presence of our suffering and its cause; he advises that there is a cure for it, and then prescribes the way to end our suffering.

Those Truths are eternal; they did not nor will change with time. They existed before the time of the Buddha; they do now and will continue to prevail forever.

### **The First Noble Truth: Suffering is a fact of life**

The Buddha first recognized that life is suffering. When we carefully observe our surroundings, we will notice that all living beings suffer from pain. The pains may be **physical** or **mental**.

## **Physical suffering**

The universal four forms of Physical suffering are:

Suffering at Birth: The moment of birth gives pain, both to the mother and the child.

Suffering in Old Age: The elderly suffer aches and pains in their joints. Many find it hard to move around without help. As old age advances, they find life more difficult; they cannot see, hear or eat properly.

Suffering in Sickness: The pain of sickness and disease strikes young and old alike, it can be unbearable.

Suffering at Death: The pain of death brings much suffering to the deceased and the surviving relatives.

The suffering of birth, old age, sickness, and death is unavoidable. Some people may now be enjoying happy and carefree lives, but they will experience suffering as time progresses. No one is exempt from those four causes of suffering.

At worst, nobody can share this suffering with the one who suffers. For example, a man may be very concerned that his mother is growing old. Yet he cannot take her place and suffer the pains of aging on her behalf. Likewise, a mother cannot live through the discomfort of illness for her sick child.

Finally, neither mother nor child can help each other when the moment of death comes.

## **Mental suffering**

In addition to physical suffering, there are also various forms of mental suffering:



. People feel sad, lonely or depressed when they lose their loved ones due to separation or death, or when they cannot retain their favorite possessions. Thus, *parting* with what one *loves* is suffering.

. People become irritated or uneasy when they are forced to be together with those they dislike, or to accept things they detest such as noise, dust, hunger, thirst, heat, cold, weariness... So, *enduring* what one *hates* is suffering.

. People also suffer when they are *unable to satisfy* their *desires*. Teenagers, for example, feel frustrated and angry if their parents do not allow them to go to a late-night party, or to spend large sums of money on expensive fashionable clothing. Similarly, adults may be unhappy if they are unable to gain wealth, power, or fame.

### **Other types of suffering**

Disasters, such as earthquakes, floods, famine, or war can cause a lot of suffering to people.

We may not realize that the suffering is happening constantly in our daily life. For example, in the classroom, when we try to study, yet the room is too noisy or our friends disturb us; we may feel unhappy or angry, and thus suffer. Sometimes, suffering has a cause in our mind, for example, when we do not pass an exam, we feel sad or disappointed.

### **The Second Noble Truth: The cause of suffering**

Suffering stems from desire built on greed and attachment to worldly possession. People often strive to acquire property, fame, or wealth, and yearn to keep them forever. Greed is endless, like a bottomless pit that can never be filled.

Children who have had a taste for chocolate will ask for more. They feel upset and become angry when not receiving it. Although they know that eating too much chocolate may cause stomach pain or toothache, they still want more.

Adults habitually have little control on spending and often want to purchase items of latest fashion such as clothing, shoes, electronic devices, or luxurious vacation. They waste time and effort to search for them, and are deceived when the wanted items are sold out. Even if they could buy what they want, soon they will have to cope with large credit card debts, which cause misery and desperation to many nowadays.

The things we crave most often cause us the most suffering if we do not obtain them. The more objects we want, the more suffering we endure. Thus, our limitless desires are the cause of our suffering.

### **The Third Noble Truth: The end of suffering**

While we cannot escape from physical suffering such as aging, sickness, and death, we can alleviate mental suffering. Just as a fire dies when no fuel is added, so suffering will end when the fuel of selfish desire is removed. Our mind will be in perfect peace and joy. Buddhists call Nirvana the everlasting state in which all suffering is ended.

### **The Fourth Noble Truth: The Path leading to the end of suffering**

The way to end suffering is to follow the Noble Eightfold Path. This path consists of eight steps that help us eliminate suffering.



## The Noble Eightfold Path

An exceptional characteristic of the Buddha's Teachings is the Noble Eightfold Path, also called the Middle Way. This path leads to the definite goal of ending suffering by avoiding the two extremes: self-indulgence and self-mortification.

We can compare the Noble Eightfold Path to a road map. Just as a traveler will need a map to lead him to his destination, so we all need the Noble Eightfold Path that shows us how to attain Nirvana, the final goal of human life. The path consists of eight factors:

### **Right Understanding**

Right Understanding means to have a correct understanding of oneself and the world. Although we may have our own view of the world, it may not always be right.

If we understand things as they *really* are, we would be able to live a happier and more meaningful life. For example, when we are affected by disease, we understand that life is suffering and that no one could avoid illness in the course of life. So we patiently seek treatments and follow the doctor's instruction. We would not become angry nor blame anyone.

A person with complete Right Understanding is free from ignorance, removes the roots of evil from his mind, and becomes liberated.

### **Right Thought**

Right Thought means to think in the right way. Those who embrace thoughts of greed, anger, cruelty, and selfish desires will easily encounter difficulty and misery in life.

If we think correctly, we will do the right things. For example, if a student thinks right, he will know that being lazy may make him fail in exam and he would have to repeat the class. So, he would decide to work hard rather than be grumpy about schoolwork.

In a broader sense, Right Thought, also known as Right Intention, means to exert our own will *to rid ourselves of immoral thoughts*. Thus, to develop Right Thought, we should:

- . Be selfless and think of the welfare of others.
- . Maintain love, kindness and generosity in our mind as opposed to hatred and hostility.

### **Right Speech**

Right Speech means to avoid lying, tale telling, gossiping, backbiting, idle talk, and harsh words. Right speech also involves respect for truth and respect for the welfare for others.

We often underestimate the power of speech and tend to have little control over our speech faculty. At some times in our life, someone's words have deeply hurt us; and similarly, words of another have greatly encouraged us. We may not realize the devastating effect of our harsh words on the listener.

There was once a father who wanted to teach his ill-tempered and angry son. He asked the boy to pin a thumb-tack on a cork board anytime the boy said unkind words to others; conversely, anytime he said pleasant and constructive words, he would then remove one.

Soon, the boy was so embarrassed to see the board fully covered with thumb-tacks. He started to be more careful with his speech and only spoke kind and meaningful words. Slowly, one by one, the thumb-tacks were pulled out. Until one day, as he pulled out the last one, he proudly showed the empty board to his father. The father congratulated his son, then added, "Son, I applaud your achievement, all the tacks were removed. However, the board is now full of holes; that was the lasting effect of your speech on the mind of your listeners all along. I would be happier if your board had no hole at all."

Harsh words can wound more deeply than weapons, while gentle words can change the heart of a hardened criminal. The way we speak shows the effect on others. Therefore, we should only speak words that are truthful, meaningful, and with good will.

### **Right Action**

Right Action involves respect for life, respect for property, and respect for personal relationships. It corresponds to the first three of the Five Moral Precepts (detailed in Chapter Five) that every Buddhist must observe.

Respect for life indicates that we should abstain from taking a life or causing any harm for other sentient beings.

Respect for property implies that we should not take what is not given, by stealing, cheating, or force.

Respect for personal relationship means that we should avoid sexual misconducts and adultery, which is important for maintaining the love and trust of those we love, as well as making our society a better place to live in.

### **Right Livelihood**

Right Livelihood means not to live on work that would bring harm to living beings. Buddhists are discouraged from engaging in the following five kinds of livelihood: trading people, trading weapons, slaughtering animals, trading intoxicating drinks, and trading drugs.

Right Livelihood is an extension of Right Speech and Right Action, which refer to the respect for truth, life, property, and personal relationships. Maintaining a life through wrong means is not in accordance with the Buddha's teaching.

The Buddha said, "*Do not earn your living by harming others. Do not seek happiness by making others unhappy.*"

## **Right Effort**

Right Effort means to do our best to become a better person. It implies that we cultivate a *positive attitude* and have enthusiasm in the things we do, whether in our study, our career, or our practice of the Dharma. Examples of Right Effort are to work hard at school and break bad habits such as laziness, bad temper, smoking, and using drugs.

In our daily life, the following practices will help us develop the Right Effort:

- . Suppress any evil thoughts or deeds if they have already taken form.
- . Avoid creating any new evil thoughts or deeds.
- . Sow new good thoughts and deeds.
- . Maintain the good thoughts and deeds that we already have.

## **Right Mindfulness**

Right Mindfulness requires that we should always be aware of what we think, say, and do. We must concentrate on everything we do before we can do it well. For example, if we concentrate in class, we would not miss anything the teacher says.

We can develop Right Mindfulness by being constantly aware of the state of:

- . Our body, in particular, the postures and breathing.
- . Our feelings, whether they are pleasant, unpleasant or neutral.
- . Our mind, whether the mind is greedy or generous, angry or calm.

In our daily life, we should act in full awareness of our thoughts, words, and actions. The mind should always be clear and attentive rather than clouded and distracted.

## **Right Meditation**

Right Meditation, also known as Right Concentration, is a conscious effort to control how the mind works.

Right Meditation is important. No matter how hard we work to be better, if we cannot *control* the way our mind works, then change will be difficult.

For example, a man realizes that he is impatient with his wife, and he may promise himself, “From now on I will not be so impatient.” But an hour later, he may be shouting at his wife simply because impatience has arisen in him without his knowledge. Meditation helps develop and transform mental habit patterns.

The two most common and useful types of meditation are Mindfulness of Breathing and Loving-kindness Meditation.

. Mindfulness of Breathing: As you sit quietly with eyes closed, focus on your breathing by counting the breaths. If you practice consistently, your wandering thoughts will eventually weaken, your concentration will become stronger and you will find moments of deep mental tranquility.

. Loving-kindness Meditation: First, turn your attention to yourself and contemplate positive thoughts like: “May I be well and happy, May I be peaceful and calm, May my mind be free from hatred, May my heart be filled with love.” Next, think of a person you love; then an acquaintance you neither like nor dislike, and finally someone you do not like. Send each of the people you thought of well wishes.

If you practice Loving-kindness Meditation regularly and with the right attitude, you will find very positive changes happening to you: you will be more accepting, forgiving and loving; you will be easily making friends with people you used to be indifferent toward; and as a result, the ill will or resentment toward some people will lessen and finally dissipate.

\* \* \*

The Noble Eightfold Path can help us prevent or cope with difficulties we may encounter in our life. If we follow it, we will be released from suffering and find happiness.

## Karma

***Karma***, in the ancient language of India, means action. In general, *karma* means all good and bad actions. It covers all kinds of *intentional* or *voluntary* manners: thoughts, speeches, and deeds. Involuntary or unconscious actions *do not* constitute *karma*.

Action produces result. Thus, in Buddhism, *karma* also implies the consequences of actions, or a law that connects actions to results; therefore the word “*karma*” indicates both the *action* and the *law*.

### **The Law of *Karma***

Inequalities and various destinies exist among mankind. Some are handsome and others ugly. Some are genius and others idiots. Some die in infancy and others at the age of eighty or a hundred. Some are born sick and infirm, and others healthy and strong. Some are brought up in wealth and others in poverty. Some possess virtuous quality and others criminal tendency.

Buddhists do not believe that this variation exists by blind chance, or that a God or a Supreme Deity created the inequality in the world. Buddhism attributes the unevenness, to some extent, to heredity and environment, and to a greater extent, the workings of the law of *Karma*.

The law of *Karma* operates in its own power without intervention of any external agency or force. Thus, *karma* is always just: it neither loves nor hates, it is neither content nor dissatisfied. According to this law, man will receive rewards or punishments for his actions; and retribution for his bad deeds will come in due course, even if he can escape human laws and justice.

*Karma* does not know anything about us, just as a fire does not know us when it burns us. It is the nature of fire to burn, to give out heat. If we use it properly, it will give us light, cook our food for us, or burn anything we wish to discard. But if we use it incorrectly, it will burn us and our property.



Man is responsible for his own happiness and misery. He creates his own heaven and hell. His past actions command his current fate, and his current actions determine his future destiny.

### **Characteristics of *Karma***

- *Karma* is a natural law:

In explaining inequalities in the world, science also argues against the theory of “Chance”. On the basis of “action produces result”, or a cause occurs first and an effect takes place afterwards, scientists believe that everything works according to the law of *cause* and *effect*, which, in Buddhist terminology, is the law of *Karma*.

Our intentional *thoughts*, *words*, and *actions* are seeds, or *cause*, or *karma*. They were accumulated from *many* life cycles and kept in a storehouse, called *Alaya-vijnana*.<sup>11</sup> When conditions are favorable, the *cause* will produce *effect*, or from the seed a tree will grow and produce fruits. This process is a natural law. No one authored this law, not even the Buddha (he only showed us its existence,) and no one can escape it.

We should notice that “conscious thoughts” is the leading factor in the workings of *Karma*. The mind conditions all our “words” and “actions” at each particular moment. Thus, when the mind is unguarded, an unwholesome thought arises leading to harsh speech and callous action.

For example, when we throw a stone, we create an action. The stone hits a glass window (a cause) and breaks it. The broken window is the effect or result of the action of throwing, but it is not the end. It is now the cause of further trouble. The owner has to spend money to fix the glass, and he is thus unable to save the money. He may be disappointed and angry, and if he is not careful, he may act improperly. The result of action, or *karma*, never ends; so we should be very conscientious of our actions.

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<sup>11</sup> The *Alaya-vijnana*, or A Lại Da Thức in Vietnamese, is the basis of consciousness. All *karmic* seeds, bad or good, enter *Alaya-vijnana*, sprout, and become conscious thoughts.

. *Karma* may be visible in the current life or may spread over several life cycles:

Let's consider the act of bouncing a ball to the wall. As soon as the ball hits the wall, it bounces back. This is an example of effect we can see or that happens in the same life.

Suppose we throw a stone into a pond and watch the effect. A splash and many little rings appear around the spot where the stone strikes the water. The rings grow wider and wider, until they become too wide and too tiny for our eyes to follow. The little stone disturbs the water in the pond, but its work is not yet finished. When the tiny waves reach the edges of the pond, the water moves back, until it pushes the stone that has shifted it.

The effects of our actions come back to us just as the waves do to the stone: they may not be visible to our eyes, and may take longer to come back, for example, in another life cycle.

. Evil deeds will result in unpleasant effects, while virtuous actions will bring pleasant consequences:

The Buddha said, "*According to the seed that's sown, so is the fruit ye reap there from.*"

If we act with evil intention, the new waves of effect would come back to hit and disturb us, just like the waves moved back and pushed the stone in the previous example. Contrarily, our virtuous and helpful actions will produce happiness to us and to others, will return to us in good *karma*, and make us strong to start a better *karma*. A clear and simple illustration of this cause and effect law is that if we sow a mango seed, it will grow into a mango tree and bear sweet mangoes, while a chili seed will grow and produce spicy chilies.

The worse our action is, so is the result we reap, the same way as in the example of bouncing the ball: the stronger the force we use to throw the ball, the stronger the ball would bounce back and hit us.

***Karma can be modified***

. *Karma* is not determined by fate. It is not permanent either. The past influences the present but does not dominate it.

The past and present influence the future; the past is the foundation of the present life, the future is yet to come. Only the present moment exists. Each person is responsible for creating good or bad deeds in the present moment.

. *Karma* is not fatal in the stream of life. One person's action in a later day may modify or counteract his action of a past day. We are not condemned to passively accept the results of our bad *karma*; contrarily, with our free will, we can relieve or even completely remove them.

Let's re-examine the example of the returning waves. When we are kind and promote good deeds, we create positive forces that will eventually neutralize negative forces of the returning waves of trouble; as a result, the waves will weaken until they die down. When developing a right thought, speaking a right word, or performing a right action, we strengthen in ourselves tendencies to goodness, which in turn will reduce and gradually eliminate our bad *karma*.

When we are confronted with difficulties and calamities in life, we know that our evil *karma* is finding its opportunity to produce its due effects, and that we are reaping what we have sowed. Instead of resigning ourselves to our *karma*, we should strive to remove bad weeds and cultivate good seeds. Free will and Right Effort are our best companions on the path that we must walk ourselves, as the Buddha taught: "*We ourselves must walk the path.*"

\* \* \*

In summary, we have learned the following lessons on *karma* that can help us in our daily practice:

- . The law of *Karma* is a natural law; it is accurate, fair, and applied to all.
- . Each of us possesses our individual *karma*, bad and good, accumulated in endless life cycles.
- . Knowing that the law of *Karma* is our great helper if we abide by it, that it blesses us just at the right time, we learn a great lesson of patience. In suffering, we know that we are paying a debt, thus, to prevent suffering in the future, we should not create more bad deeds. In rejoicing, we are thankful for *karma* and work harder to improve ourselves.
- . We can alleviate or destroy our bad *karma*.
- . We shall practice the Four Sublime States that the Buddha taught: Loving-kindness, Compassion, Appreciative-joy and Equanimity<sup>12</sup> to cultivate our good *karma*.
- . When we make unwholesome mistakes, we should be willing and ready to show faithful repentance, which must be accompanied by a vow of preventing recurring harmful thoughts, words, and actions. Honest repentance is an effective way of eliminating the fruits of bad *karma*.




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<sup>12</sup> The Four Sublime States are discussed in Chapter Five: Buddhist Practice.

## Impermanence

**I**mpermanence is the state of not being permanent, of existing only for a short time, of changing continually.

All things in the universe from the small ones such as a grain of sand, a drop of water, and a human body, to the big ones such as mountains, rivers, the earth, the moon, and the sun are governed by the law of Impermanence; therefore, they must come through the following four periods: a period of birth, maturity, decay, and destruction. The Buddha revealed this Truth to us in a very simple way, “*Component things come and go, arise and perish.*”

The three fundamental aspects of Impermanence are: Impermanence of the body, the mind, and the environment.

### **Impermanence of the body**

As a child develops into an adult, his youthful body becomes vigorous; it will weaken as he ages, and finally, will disintegrate at his death. If we examine the changing process closely, our body is different from one minute to another. The cells in our body are constantly changed and renewed, as biological researches showed.

### **Impermanence of the mind**

Our mind and thoughts also change constantly; they are filled with happiness and love a minute earlier, and the next moment sadness, anger, and hatred. For example, as we were cheerfully walking to the classroom, eager to start a busy school day, a classmate launched nasty comments on our art project prompting us to be offended, and we suddenly feel angry and sad. Similarly, in the course of our life, our friends may become enemies, and enemies would reconcile as friends.

Our thoughts change even more rapidly than our body, for instance: as we open a birthday invitation card from a classmate, we swiftly think of what gift we should buy; what outfit and shoes we should wear to the party; whether our best friend was also invited; and if she was, how fun it would be for us to go gift-shopping together. All those thoughts were flashing through our mind within a few seconds, one after another, and not one being exactly identical as the previous one.

### **Impermanence of the environment**

Nothing in our surrounding will last forever. A glorious morning will soon retreat to give way to somber dusk. The sun rises in the east only to set in the west. Flowers and leaves, once are flamboyant and lush, now fade and wilt. A long-awaited school reunion, however emotional and joyful, will soon adjourn as a memory of the past. In the same river, the current of yesterday was not the one we see today, as Heraclitus (535 BC–475 BC), an ancient Greek philosopher, remarked that one cannot step twice into the same river. Confucius (551 BC–479 BC), a great Chinese philosopher, while looking at a stream, exclaimed, “*It is always flowing, day and night.*”

Our possessions are also impermanent. The brand new car we bought a year ago is no longer a new car; a shirt donated to charity today was once our favorite garment; suffering an incurable disease, our beloved pet dog of ten years is no longer with us today.

### **Misconceptions of Impermanence**

Impermanence, or Change, is a natural law; it existed before the time of the Buddha, it is here now, and will always be here. We often accept Impermanence without pondering over what it really means, or only reflect on it when calamities happen to us.

However, Impermanence applies to happy conditions as well. If it were not for Impermanence, if things could not be changed, we would not make any effort to liberate ourselves from poverty, sickness, ignorance, and suffering. We strive to achieve those goals because we *know* that things are *changeable*, and that the law of Impermanence operates anywhere, at any time, and for all things.

Impermanence makes life possible: the renewal of cells in our body is essential to our physical growth and healing of injuries; apple blossoms fade to give way to juicy fruits; and dark clouds taking over the scorching hot summer sky, although ruining our outdoor gathering, would bring much-needed rainfall.

Impermanence may bring us happiness or tragedy, may give us joy or sorrow. If we only look at the negative or suffering side of this natural law, we would be disappointed and pessimistic; conversely, if we only focus on the positive side and hope for the best, we will not be prepared when the worst strikes us. Thus, by showing both sides of the law of Impermanence, the Buddha has led us to a realistic world.

### **Buddhist and the law of Impermanence**

Some people question Buddhism's emphasis on the theory of Impermanence. Does it want to sow in the human mind the seed of negativity?

In their view, if things are changeable, we do not need to achieve anything, because what we attain will change and we cannot keep it. This way of reasoning, at first, appears rather logical, but in reality, it is to the contrary. The following aspects prove that, as we are aware of Impermanence, we become positive, active, loving and wise:

- Knowing that life is impermanent and fragile, we perceive an *urgency* of learning and practicing the Dharma, of improving ourselves and helping others; thus we would do our best to achieve our goals at *every* moment of life.

In most Buddhist monasteries, at the end of a ceremony, monks and nuns often chant a verse of Impermanence:

*This day is already gone,  
Our lives are that much less.  
We're like fish in a shrinking pond;  
What joy is there in this?  
We should be diligent and vigorous,*

*As if we were at stake.  
Only be mindful of Impermanence,  
And be careful not to be lax.*

. Recognizing that we are all equal in being subject to aging, sickness, and death is the basis for compassion. Consequently, we become more generous and willing to practice charity. The proverb “Charity begins at home” stresses the person’s first duty as helping the members of his own family. Thus, we must first learn and succeed at school, and then we must work to support our family. After that, as we are financially comfortable, we are able to give material goods, money, services, or Dharma guidance to others in need.

. People do not suffer much when a flower dies, because they all understand that flowers are impermanent; however, since they do not accept the impermanence of their beloved mother, they suffer deeply when she passes away.

When we recognize that all things are impermanent, we are wise to do our best to make our loved ones happy at every moment. We would not cling to how things are, not attach to our possessions that we could not hold on forever, or resist to the changing. We are well prepared to calmly face all situations, good or bad, in our life.

In summary, knowing that Impermanence allows changes and improvements, a Buddhist will work hard for his own well-being and that of the society; he will make every effort to perform good deeds for the benefit and happiness of others.

\* \* \*

Until his final moment, Sakyamuni Buddha continued to teach and spoke of the impermanence of all things. His last words to his disciples that have resounded for more than twenty-five centuries were: “*Everything is subject to change, work diligently for your liberation.*”





## Wisdom and Compassion

**B**uddhism teaches that to be a truly balanced individual, we must develop both Wisdom and Compassion.

### **Wisdom according to Buddhism**

Wisdom means the way of seeing things correctly; it is a knowledge and vision in accordance with reality. A simple illustration of Wisdom is that: as much as we want to help others, if we do not have wisdom, do not see or know what should be done and what should be avoided, we may cause serious damage to them.

It is not Wisdom if we simply believe what we hear. True Wisdom is to directly see and understand for ourselves. In this perception then, Wisdom is:

- . Keeping an open mind rather than being close-minded.
- . Listening to other points of view rather than being biased.
- . Carefully examining the fact that contradicts our beliefs.
- . Being objective rather than partisan.
- . Taking time to form our opinions and beliefs rather than just accepting the first or most emotional thing offered to us.
- . Being ready to change our beliefs when facts that contradict them are presented to us.

People who follow those guidelines are wise and will eventually acquire true understanding. The path of just believing what we are told is easy. The Buddhist path to Wisdom requires courage, patience, flexibility, and intelligence.

Some people argue that, because the Buddhist path to Wisdom requires many personal qualities as stated above, only a few can practice Buddhism. It is true that not everyone is capable to comprehend Buddhism; however, with just a few correct words or support, many are able to improve their perception. So,

Buddhists should strive to patiently share the insights of Buddhism with others.

### **Compassion according to Buddhism**

Compassion is a feeling of sympathy for people who suffer and a desire to help them. We have Compassion when we see the sufferer in physical or mental pain, we feel his pain as if it was our own, and we do our best to eliminate or lessen his pain. All the best qualities in human beings like sharing, readiness to give comfort, and caring are expressions of Compassion.

In a compassionate person, love and care toward others begin in love and care for him. We can only understand and feel for others when we really do the same for ourselves. The Buddha's life accurately illustrates this logic: he spent six years struggling for his own welfare, after which he was able to effectively help mankind.

Compassion must come with Wisdom, which means showing the sufferers the cause of their misery, and giving them guidance to eliminate suffering at its roots. Let us take an example of a friend who is addicted to gambling. No matter how much money he already lost, he still comes back for more games. He incurs large debts; his family is not provided for. Having great compassion toward him, we lend him money to buy food and clothing for his children; we *must* also convince him that he needs to break his bad habit, a cause of misery for him and his family.

\* \* \*

Compassion without Wisdom is a foolish mercy. Wisdom without Compassion is a cunning intelligence. Compassion is one of the Four Sublime States, which are discussed in Chapter Five: Buddhist Practice.



## Rebirth

**R**ebirth is the direct result of *Karma*; both Rebirth and *Karma* are inter-related and fundamental doctrines in Buddhism. Rebirth is not a mere theory but a fact verifiable by evidence.

### The Origin of Life

There are three main theories on the beginning and extinction of life:

1. Those who believe in a god usually claim that before an individual is created, he does not exist. Then he becomes human being through the will of a god. He lives his life, and according to what he believes or does in his life, he either goes to eternal heaven or hell.
2. Others, humanists and scientists, claim that the individual comes into existence at conception due to natural causes, lives and ceases to exist at death.
3. Buddhism does not accept either of the above explanations.

The first theory, that of creation through god, triggers many ethical problems. If a *good* god really creates each of us, it is difficult to explain why so many people are born with the most dreadful deformities, or why so many babies are still-born. Further, it seems very unfair that a person should suffer eternal pain in hell for just a few decades of immoral living. Likewise, a few decades of virtuous living on Earth appears to be a very small price for eternal bliss in heaven.

The second theory, that of humanists and scientists, although with more scientific evidence to support it, still does not give a satisfactory explanation regarding the development of the mind. How can a trait so amazingly complex as *consciousness* develop from a simple meeting of two cells, the sperm and the egg?

Buddhism offers the most suitable explanation of where beings come from and where they are going. When one dies, the mind, with all the tendencies, abilities, and characteristics developed and conditioned in this life re-establishes itself in a fertilized egg. Thus the individual is reborn, grows, and develops a personality conditioned by the mental characteristics that have been carried over.

In the new environment, the personality will change and be modified by conscious efforts and conditioning factors like education, parental influence, and society; then once again at death, re-establishing itself in a new fertilized egg. This process of dying and being reborn will continue until the conditions that cause it, the *karma*, are removed; at which time, instead of being reborn, the mind attains a state of existence called Nirvana, which is the ultimate goal of Buddhism and the purpose of life.

### **Characteristics of Rebirth**

- Philosophers, scientists, and poets in the West and the East accepted the notion of Rebirth as transmigration or reincarnation. However, Buddhist doctrine of Rebirth is different from the theory of transmigration, because it denies the existence of a transmigrating soul created by god. In Buddhism, it is the past *karma* that conditions the present birth, and the present *karma* combined with the past *karma* will condition the future.

- In the workings of Rebirth, the mind goes from one body to another just like radio waves. The radio waves, which are not made up of words and music but *energy* at different frequencies, are transmitted, travelling through space, attracted to, and picked up by the receiver from where they are broadcast as words and music. Similarly, at death, the mind or *mental energy* travels through space, is attracted to, and picked up by a fertilized egg. As the embryo grows, the mental energy centers itself in the brain from where it later broadcasts itself as the new personality.

Another illustration of the workings of Rebirth is that: just as an electric light is the outward *visible* manifestation of *invisible* electric energy (or current), so we are the outward manifestation of *invisible karmic* energy. When the bulb breaks, the light is extinguished, but the current remains, and the light will be reproduced in a new bulb. In the same way, the *karmic* energy remains

undisturbed by the disintegration of the physical body, and the passing away of the present conscious being will lead to the arising of a new one in another birth.

- People may be reborn in several realms of existence: in heaven, in hell, and as hungry ghosts.

The Buddhist definition of heaven is not a place but a state of existence where one has a subtle body and where the mind experiences mainly pleasure. Some religions regard heaven as a permanent state. In Buddhism however, heaven, like all conditioned states, is impermanent and when one's life span in heaven is terminated, one could well be reborn again as a human.

Hell, likewise, is not a place but a state of existence where one has a subtle body and where the mind experiences constant anxiety, fear, and distress. Being a hungry ghost, again, is a state of existence where the body is subtle and where the mind continually suffers dissatisfaction.

Heavenly beings experience mainly pleasure; hell beings and hungry ghosts mainly pain; and human beings usually a mixture of both.

### **Evidences of Rebirth**

Buddhist belief in Rebirth is the only after-life theory supported by scientific evidences.

Professor Ian Stevenson of the University of Virginia's Department of Psychology, an accredited scientist, spent forty years investigating three thousand childhood cases that suggested the possibility of past lives. He authored several books on the subject of previous life and reincarnation. His classic book *Twenty Cases Suggestive of Reincarnation* recorded the case studies of people who remembered former lives and provided verified facts. The story of a young girl named Swarnlata Mishra, born in 1948 in Pradesh, India, is characteristic of Stevenson's cases: the girl's memories began when she was three years old; she then gave accurate information to enable Stevenson to locate the family of the deceased person she remembered, with more than fifty specific facts that were verified.

In 1936, the government authorities in India thoroughly investigated and reported the case of Shanty Devi, a girl from Deli: she could accurately recount her previous life at Muttra, a place located five hundred miles from Deli. Her previous life ended about a year before her “second birth”. She gave the name of her husband and child, and described her home and life history. The investigating commission brought her to her former relatives, who verified all her statements. Reincarnations are common in India, however, the case astonished everyone by a great number of facts that the girl could remember. Similar cases were additional evidence of the theory of lasting memory after death.

Some people condemn the belief in Rebirth as superstitious. Superstition is defined as a belief not based on reason or fact. As presented above, since evidences suggested that Rebirth occurred and its belief is based on reason and on at least some facts, it cannot be a superstition.

\* \* \*

The Buddhist teachings of Rebirth are logically consistent and answer questions that other religions and science fail to. It is also comforting to know that Buddhism, as a theory of life, gives us opportunities to amend the mistakes we made in this life and time to further develop the skills and abilities we have nurtured in this life. According to the Buddha, if we fail to attain Nirvana in this life, we will be able to try again next time.



## Three Poisons

**I**n Buddhist texts, the poisons generally refer to mental states that temporarily cloud the mind, leading to unwholesome actions or words.

The three poisons, Greed, Anger, and Ignorance are the roots of suffering and the foremost obstacles to the pursuit of liberation and happiness. Although Greed is usually mentioned first in the order of the three poisons, Ignorance is the root that causes Greed and Anger.

### **Ignorance**

There are various terms that describe this state of mind, namely, Delusion, Confusion, Stupidity, Unenlightened condition...

Ignorance is not seeing things as they really are, or failing to understand the Truth about life. What is the Truth about life? It is the impermanence of all things, as discussed in the section Impermanence. Due to Ignorance, we confound illusion with reality; we cling to things that are unreal, impermanent, changeable, and perishable, including our own body.

We tend to search for more ways to indulge our own perishable body, which we ignorantly regard as real and lasting; for example, we want to buy a nicer car, a larger house, more fashionable clothing, and lavish foods. In short, Ignorance leads to Greed.

The opposite of Ignorance is Wisdom. Wisdom is the ability of distinguishing Right from Wrong, of seeing and knowing the difference among things in life. The paths of Right Understanding, Right Thought, and Right Meditation in the Noble Eightfold Path are our guidance to develop Wisdom and therefore, remove Ignorance.

## Greed

### The Origin of Greed

To remove the poison of Greed, we must first understand its origin.

We have a body and organs (eyes, ears, nose, and tongue) that allow us to interact with the world; we call them *internal sense bases*, which, in plain language, are “doors” or “gates” to the world. The objects that we interact with are *external sense objects*; thus, we have the following pairs of internal-external, or organ-object, senses:

- . Eyes and visible forms
- . Ear and sound
- . Nose and smell
- . Tongue and taste
- . Body and touch

Buddhism further identifies the sixth internal sense base as the *mind*, which interacts with the sixth sense objects called the *mind objects*; they are *feeling*, *perception*, and *consciousness*.

When our internal sense bases (eyes, ears, nose, tongue, and body) are in contact with external objects (visible forms, sound, smell, taste, and touch) they will cause sensation or *feeling*; for example, when we see or hear we *feel* that there is a form or a sound. We then *perceive* that the form is beautiful or the sound noisy; and we shape our *conscious opinion*, that is: we like the beautiful form we see, or dislike the noisy sound we hear.

*Craving* arises from the feeling resulting from contact with the sense objects. Craving will then manifest itself in *wanting* or *longing*: our eyes are longing for viewing luxury jewelry or fashionable clothes; our ears for melodious sounds or words of love and praise from others; our nose for pleasant fragrance; our tongue for delicious food; and our body for soothing touches.



*Craving* is a burning desire to amass things, a cause for *suffering* but not a motive for immoral actions. For example, when we crave for a chocolate bar or a slice of homemade pie, it does not constitute an immoral action. On the next level, when craving is excessive, it rises to *Greed*, a selfish desire to get more than we need and to keep for ourselves things like money, possessions, fame, and power.

The objective of Greed is grasping things, clinging to them, and not giving up. Greed leads to untruthful speech, for example, lying to get what one wants; and to *immoral actions* and crimes such as cheating, stealing, robbing, and killing.

### **Removing Craving and Greed**

The Second Noble Truth reveals that Craving leads to suffering; and even getting what we want does not guarantee happiness. It is not long before we feel bored with our possession, lose interest in it, and start to wish for something else.

Some people would argue that if we stop longing altogether, we would never achieve anything. It is true, but when our continual longing for more causes us suffering, then we should stop longing. We should strive for our “needs” and modify our “wants”. Our needs can be fulfilled but our wants are endless. We should work hard for our essential and fundamental needs, and lessen our desires beyond the basics.

In summary, to eliminate suffering, we must restrain our Craving; to prevent bad actions, we must remove Greed. How do we remove Greed? Because Greed, like Craving, results from contact with the sense objects in the world, we must first acknowledge that all sense objects (beautiful forms, melodious sounds, delicious food...) are impermanent, as discussed in the paragraph Ignorance above; and then, we must be willing to detach ourselves from them and not to cling to them.

## Anger

When we do not obtain what we want, hear words that we do not like, think of being wrongly treated by others, or encounter difficulties in life, we tend to get angry.

Anger may cause sudden change in physical or mental conditions such as increased heart rate and blood pressure, or loss of prudence and good judgment. Anger enflames the mind and could lead to harsh words, quarrels, fights, and destruction.

An angry person has no shame, no fear of evil; he accuses others for his own mistakes, destroys his relationships with others, and is not respectful. Relatives, friends, and colleagues avoid him. Filled with uncontrolled anger, he shamelessly commits violent acts, only to deeply suffer their consequences when his Anger subsides.

How do we prevent Anger? Again, we must recognize that the sense objects are impermanent. For example, knowing that criticism or harsh words from others will not last forever, we calmly resolve the conflict with them.

\* \* \*

Due to Ignorance, we regard difficulties in our life as external problems, but in reality, they come from our mind. For example, when we fail in exam, we cling to our pride of being a smart student and blame the scoring being unfair or the test being too difficult.

If we respond to adverse situations with a positive or peaceful mind they would not be problems for us; we might even consider them as challenges or opportunities for our personal growth and development, as in the above example, we will study more to do well in the next exam.

We can compare the three poisons to a large tree: Ignorance is the roots, Greed the trunk, and Anger the foliage. The best way to fell and destroy the tree of suffering and sorrow is to completely kill and remove its roots, or destroy Ignorance by developing Wisdom.

## The Buddhist Canon and Councils

**I**n the time of the Buddha, a majority of the population did not read or write and literacy was a privilege available only to the elite class in the society; thus, the Buddha's disciples were committed to memorizing and transmitting his teachings orally from generation to generation. In the history of Buddhism, many assemblies, known as Councils, were convened to preserve and propagate the Dharma.

The whole Buddhist canon, named *Tripitaka*, was written in Pali, an ancient language of India. The *Tripitaka* consists of three sets of sacred Buddhist books:

- . *Sutra-pitaka*: contains all lectures and teachings that the Buddha and a few of his great disciples delivered on various occasions.
- . *Vinaya-pitaka*: records the precepts, rules, and regulations of the Order of Bhikkhus (monks) and Bhikkhunis (nuns). It also describes in detail specific ceremonies and useful information on Indian customs, ancient arts, and sciences.
- . *Abhidharma-pitaka*: known as detailed commentaries, higher doctrine, and profound teachings as compared to the simpler and conventional teachings of the *Sutra-pitaka*. *Abhidharma-pitaka* is the ultimate philosophy and psychology of Buddhism.

\* \* \*

The first three Councils were important in the development of Buddhism.

### **The First Council**

Three months after the Buddha passed into Final Nirvana, his disciples summoned the First Council, which took place in Rajagaha, capital city of the kingdom of Magadha. Venerables Maha Kasyapa, Upali, and Ananda had contributed greatly to this first holy gathering with about five hundred monks attending. At the Council, the Dharma was divided into various parts; each part was assigned to an elder monk who would pass on to his pupils orally. Thus, the groups recited over and over the Dharma parts, and crosschecked to ensure that no omissions or additions occurred.

Venerable Ananda, the closest disciple and personal attendant of the Buddha, had learned the *Sutras* directly from the Buddha. Venerable Ananda, endowed with a remarkable memory, was able to recite what the Buddha had spoken, including many sets of *Sutras*: the collection of *Long Discourses*, *Middle-length Discourses*, *Gradual Sayings*, and *Smaller Gathas* (or moral narrative hymns).

In ninety days, Venerable Upali recited the whole *Vinaya*, or all the rules and precepts that the Buddha had set forth, eighty times.

For seven months, the Venerables recited, defined, and explained the Scriptures, the Laws, and the Doctrine in great details, which form the foundation of Buddhism.

### **The Second Council**

The Second Council was held at Vaisali circa 386 BC. Seven hundred monks congregated to discuss on possible modification of the minor rules in accordance with political, economic, and social changes. The rules of monastic discipline remained unchanged.

The Second Council was better documented in texts than the first one, and is recognized as a historical event.

## The Third Council

Emperor Asoka<sup>13</sup> (273 BC–232 BC), a Buddhist devotee, organized the Third Council, which occurred circa 250 BC at Pataliputra, a city in ancient India near the Ganges River. The Council lasted nine months, with the participation of sixty thousand monks, to discuss the different opinions of monks in different sects. At closing, the Council approved and accepted the teachings known as Theravada.

The most important success of the Third Council was the dispatch of missionaries to many countries for the propagation of Buddhism. After the Council, Asoka's son and daughter brought the *Tripitaka* to Sri Lanka, which were preserved in its entirety until today. Emperor Asoka also ordered the missionary activities to be extended to other countries in Asia, Africa, and Europe; thus, Buddhism became one of the most important religions of mankind.



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<sup>13</sup> Emperor Asoka, also known as Asoka the Great, born in 304 BC and died in 232 BC, was an Indian emperor of the Maurya dynasty. During Asoka's reign (273 BC–232 BC), his empire stretched from today Pakistan and Afghanistan in the west to today Bangladesh and the Indian state of Assam in the east; in the south, it stretched from today Kerala (a state in southwestern coast of India) to today Andhra Pradesh (a state in southeastern coast of India). After his conquest of Kalinga circa 263 BC, the emperor converted to Buddhism when he witnessed the mass deaths of more than one hundred thousand people to the war. Using his power, he propagated Buddhism to new heights comparable to ancient Rome and Egypt; he also made Buddhism his state religion circa 260 BC, built thousands of Buddhist monuments, and sent Buddhist missionaries around the world. One of the emperor's enduring legacies was the model of relationship between Buddhism and state; this led to a close association of the monarchy and the Buddhist order in the history of Southeast Asian countries, including Vietnam in the early centuries (as discussed in Chapter Nine: Buddhism in Vietnam).

The Asoka *Chakra* (the wheel of Asoka), an illustration of the Dharma wheel with twenty-four spokes, appears at the center of the flag of the Republic of India since 1947. The Lion Capital of Asoka, a sculpture erected in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC by Emperor Asoka to mark the spot where the Buddha first proclaimed his gospel of peace, was adopted as the National Emblem of India.

## The Schools of Buddhism

At the time of the Third Council, only the term *Theravada*, literally “the Teaching of the Elders”, was recognized as the foundation of the Buddhist doctrine and the original teaching of the Buddha. Between the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC and the 1<sup>st</sup> century, the two terms *Mahayana* and *Hinayana* appeared. Some sources misguidedly refer *Hinayana* to *Theravada*. The two terms actually indicate two distinctive entities: *Theravada* Buddhism, which spread to Sri Lanka during the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC; and the *Hinayana* sects, which developed only in India and was independent from the form of Buddhism in Sri Lanka.

Buddhism thus is classified, in terms of philosophy and practice, in two main schools: *Theravada* and *Mahayana*.

**Theravada** is closest to early Buddhism, and for many centuries has been a predominant religion of Sri Lanka and countries of Southeast Asia, like Cambodia, Laos, Thailand, and Myanmar. It is also practiced by small Buddhist groups in China, Malaysia, Indonesia, and Vietnam. *Theravada* is sometimes referred to as Southern Buddhism or Small Vehicle.

**Mahayana**, also known as Northern Buddhism or Great Vehicle, originated in India, then spread to other Asia countries such as China, Japan, Korea, Vietnam, Mongolia, and Tibet, where the name *Vajrayana* indicates Tibetan Buddhism. Major methods of practice in *Mahayana* include: Zen, Pure Land, and Esoteric.

### Similarities between *Theravada* and *Mahayana*

The two schools were originated from the basic teachings of the Buddha, thus they share the same foundation of doctrine:

- . Both accept Sakyamuni Buddha as the Master.

- . The Four Noble Truths and the Noble Eightfold Path are exactly the same in both schools.
- . Both reject the idea of a supreme God who created and governed this world.
- . Both accept Impermanence, Suffering, Morality, Wisdom, and Liberation without any variance.

### **Differences between Theravada and Mahayana**

Theravada and Mahayana began not as separate schools, but because of their different goals and practices, they developed into different schools and spread to different societies and geographic areas.

- . Theravada follower seeks Arhathood, a path to gain his own salvation. In contrast, the Mahayana follower seeks enlightenment not only for himself, but also for others; he chooses the path of Bodhisattva to stay in the cycle of birth and death to save all sentient beings.
- . Theravada Buddhism emphasizes the retreat to a forest, a quiet place, or a monastery. Mahayana Buddhism, while not excluding the above features, opens to monks and nuns, and to lay people living at home with their family. Therefore, Mahayana Buddhism embraces all mankind who could follow and practice in their daily life.
- . Theravada Buddhism develops with the monastic community, monks and nuns, as the center. Mahayana, in contrast, concentrates upon the individual effort.
- . Theravada Buddhists follow religious traditions that prevailed in India twenty-five centuries ago, and stress upon the *Tripitaka*. Mahayana Buddhism spreads the Buddha's essential teachings where appropriate; and the followers practice according to the customs and traditions of the countries where they live, and perform religious services in their mother tongue.

\* \* \*

Some scholars argue that Mahayana Buddhism was *superior* to Theravada Buddhism in the context of reaching out to help others to enlightenment. Others even go as far as condemning Theravada followers to be *selfish* in seeking the path to liberation for oneself alone.

To some extent, we can say that Theravada tradition is not inferior to Mahayana Buddhism, but a basis of Mahayana practice, because a Buddhist must first learn the Dharma, purify his mind, and perfect himself before he could effectively help others, just like a man must learn to swim well before he attempts to jump into the river to rescue the drowning.

As for the “*selfish*” comment, we all know that Theravada is closest to the early Buddhism taught by the Buddha; and we also know that the Buddha relentlessly traveled across the plains of the Ganges River for forty-five years to teach the Dharma, and devoted his life to the pursuit of liberation and happiness of all mankind. There was not a single selfishness in his teachings or his exemplary life.

Finally, when a person continues to cherish the thought of being superior to others or others are selfish, then his mind is not purified, his attachment to *self* and *fame* would not elevate him to the Bodhisattva state. The Buddha never mentioned about the so-called Great Vehicle or Small Vehicle; therefore, the true follower of the Buddha should cultivate the Dharma in the way suitable to him without criticizing other people; and he can practice Buddhism without adhering to any school or sect.

Although different schools of Buddhism held different opinions on the teachings of the Buddha, they never had any violence or bloodshed for more than twenty-five centuries. This is the uniqueness of Buddhist tolerance.







## Chapter Four: The Monastic Community—*Sangha*

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**T**he Buddhist Community consists of two groups of people, the *Sangha* and the Laity.

The word *Sangha* means “friendly community”. It usually refers to the Buddhist monks and nuns living in monasteries. The laity includes Buddhist men and women who are not ordained monks and nuns. They usually live at home with their family.

## **The Sangha**

**B**uddhist monks and nuns have left the family life to practice the Buddha’s teachings. They usually have only a few things as personal belongings, such as robes, an alms bowl, and a razor to shave their heads. They aim to give up the need for material possessions and lead a pure and simple life.

### **Shaven head**

While most people want to have beautiful hair and spend a lot of time and money on hairstyles, Buddhist monks and nuns shave their heads. They are no longer concerned with superficial beauty, but strive to develop their inner beauty. Monks and nuns are easy to be recognized with their shaven heads. They devote their time, instead of on caring for hair, on more important activities like meditating, chanting, or doing charitable work.

### **Alms bowl**

Offering food to monks and nuns is part of Buddhist practice. In Asia, usually early in the morning, monks walk in group toward the villages carrying their alms bowls. They go from house to house until someone offers them food, enough for their daily meal. The laity frequently offers alms food.

Monks and nuns do not choose their food; they learn to be grateful for whatever people give them. This practice helps them not to be greedy. It also gives the laity an opportunity to practice giving. Going out to collect food is less common in some countries, so the laity goes to the monastery to make offerings of food.

# The Sangha



Monks pray in a temple in Bangkok, Thailand.



Candidates for the Buddhist priesthood are ordained in a temple in Uttaradit, Thailand.



Shaven head



Alms bowl

A monk studies Mahayana Sutras from an old woodblock copy of the Tibetan scriptures at Rizong monastery in Ladakh, India.



Vietnamese monks and nuns perform Buddhist rites at a funeral.



A Japanese monk in Kyoto, Japan.



Thai monks on pilgrimage to practice the Dharma and help villagers in Uttaradit, Thailand.



Buddhist monks on alms round in Luang Prabang, Laos...



... and in Mandalay, Myanmar.



Meal time at Kalaywa monastery, Yangong, Myanmar.



Young novice monks at Kalaywa monastery.

## Clothing

Sakyamuni Buddha is said to have worn a humble monastic robe made of pieces of donated cloth. Most paintings and statues of the Buddha depicted his garb of folded cloth draped over the body, revealing the right shoulder.

Consistent with the Theravada tradition, monks in most Southeast Asia countries, for example, Sri Lanka, Cambodia, Laos, Thailand, and Myanmar, wear simple saffron or brown robes, with the right side of the robe pushed under the armpit leaving the right shoulder exposed, emulating the Buddha's attire. Their humble robes symbolize their detachment from worldly possessions in the pursuit of spiritual liberation.

When Buddhism spread to colder northern countries, like Tibet, China, Korea, and Japan, the monastic robes varied according to geography and climate. In Mahayana Buddhist schools, monks usually wear more layers of clothes to keep warm, a cloth collar suspended around their neck, or a bonnet in cold weather.

The color of the robe normally depends on the country and the Buddhist tradition followed in that country. For instance, monks in Sri Lanka, Thailand, Laos, and Vietnam wear mostly saffron or brown robes; monks in Japan wear black or grey robes, and a type of prayer robe called a *kesa* worn over the regular robes during ceremonies. In China and Korea, grey and brown robes are for work, and more elaborate robes for ceremonies. Monks in Tibet wear dark red robes, and a large woolen hat with crescent-shaped peaks in extremely cold conditions.

Wearing a monastic robe is the first of a monk's traditional requirements. When entering a village, monks must wear all three parts of their robe:

- . An undergarment from the waist to the knee
- . An upper robe around the torso and shoulders
- . An outer robe used as an over garment

The laity traditionally donates material for new robes during the Sangha Day ceremony, which occurs across Southeast Asia in October, after the rainy season. This is one of the few monastic ceremonies involving the laity, an occasion for their charitable giving practice.

The Buddhist monastic robe is so practical that it also has other uses, for example: as a blanket, a seat spread, a groundsheet<sup>14</sup>, a head cover, a windbreaker... It is easy to clean and repair; it is possibly the oldest style of dress still in fashion after twenty-five centuries.

### **A day in the monastery**

In the daily life of work and religious practice, monks and nuns conduct themselves properly and with discipline.

Monks and nuns start their day early. Long before the sun rises, they attend morning ceremonies and recite parts of the Buddha's teachings. Later on, they conduct a period of meditation and study.

Members of the Sangha have many responsibilities to fulfill. During the day, they teach the Dharma. They also write Buddhist books, make Buddha images, tend to the temple and gardens, prepare for the ceremonies, give advice to the laity, help with community projects, and care for the elderly and the sick.

In the evening, monks and nuns participate in chanting and meditation sessions. They choose not to take evening meal, but use the time instead for studying.

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<sup>14</sup> Also called "ground cloth", is a large piece of material placed on the ground inside a tent.

## The Laity

The first step of becoming a member of the laity is taking refuge in the Triple Gems or Three Treasures (the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha), also known as the Threefold Refuge, and then, through a solemn ceremony, pledging to willingly observe the Five Precepts<sup>15</sup> in everyday life.

There are many ways members of the laity can practice Buddhism. They may go to the temple to pay homage to the Buddha, to attend ceremonies and chanting sessions, and learn the Dharma, or they may choose to practice at home.

Buddhists often reserve a space in their home for the altar.<sup>16</sup> It is usually a shelf high on a wall or a tall cabinet. A Buddha image is displayed at the highest place on the altar, above the images of the family's deceased loved ones. To express their gratitude to the Buddha for his guidance, Buddhists would also place various offerings on the altar such as incense, flowers, fruits, and water.

A daily ritual for the lay Buddhist may mean standing or sitting before the altar, chanting many passages from the *sutras*, and reciting the name of the Buddha. The lay Buddhist may also observe the First Precept<sup>17</sup> by eating vegetarian meals during certain days of the lunar calendar month, in particular the first and the fifteenth day, which correspond to the New and Full moon.

The laity plays an important role in Buddhism, as its members care for and support the Sangha. They build the temples and monasteries; make offerings of food, clothing, bedding, and medicine to the Sangha. In return, the Sangha preserves, propagates the Dharma, and teaches the laity. Thus, the Sangha and the laity benefit from one another, and together, they keep the Dharma alive.

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<sup>15</sup> The Threefold Refuge and the Five Precepts are discussed in Chapter Five: Buddhist Practice.

<sup>16</sup> The Buddhist altar is described in more detail in Chapter Six: Buddhist Symbols.

<sup>17</sup> The First Precept, Avoid Killing, is explained in Chapter Five: Buddhist Practice.



Whether a Buddhist is a member of the Sangha or the laity, he should do his best to show compassion to all beings and live an honest life.



## Chapter Five: Buddhist Practice

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## The Threefold Refuge

**A** Buddhist is he who understands the Buddha's teachings, is convinced that the teachings are the right path, and actively follows that path.

Let us take an example of a traveler. He wants to visit an unknown distant city. He will need a guide to lead him toward his destination. He will need a path to follow. He may also wish to have travelling companions. A Buddhist working toward happiness and enlightenment is like this traveler. The Buddha is his *guide*, the Dharma his *path*, and the Sangha his *travelling companions*.

A Buddhist can show his commitment of leading a righteous life by going through the formal ceremony of Taking Refuge in the Three Treasures, or the Threefold Refuge. The Three Treasures refer to the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha.

### **Taking Refuge in the Buddha**

The Buddha attained perfect enlightenment. Buddhists regard the Buddha as the best guide to help them achieve the same goal. Taking refuge in the Buddha is recognizing that everyone can become enlightened and perfected as the Buddha.

### **Taking Refuge in the Dharma**

A path may have signposts to show directions, bridges for crossing rivers, and steps for climbing mountains. Likewise, the Dharma lays out the rules of good conduct to help Buddhists avoid immoral actions, and shows the ways to conquer difficulties and ignorance.

### **Taking Refuge in the Sangha**

The Sangha, like travelling companions, gives good advice and helps the laity in learning and practicing the Dharma. Taking Refuge in the Sangha is joining good travelling companions who want to walk the Noble Eightfold Path.



## The Five Moral Precepts

When students enroll in a new school, they have to follow the rules of that school. Similarly, when people become Buddhists, they willingly follow the Five Precepts, which are the rules for Buddhists. The Five Precepts are:

1. Avoid Killing
2. Avoid Stealing
3. Avoid Misusing Sex
4. Avoid Lying
5. Avoid Using Intoxicants

### **The First Precept: Avoid Killing**

The Buddha said, “*Life is dear to all.*” All beings fear death and value life. We should therefore respect life and wish all to be always happy and free. We should not kill any creature, especially if it is for money or sport.

Killing consists of three aspects: directly kill, persuade others to kill, and take pleasure in the killing. We should refrain from: committing the act of killing; convincing others to kill; and enjoying and celebrating the destruction of life.

### **The Second Precept: Avoid Stealing**

We have the right to own things and give them away as we wish. However, we should not, by stealing or cheating, take things that are not given to us or do not belong to us.

Stealing means taking something away from someone without permission and without intending to return it or pay for it. To condone their act of stealing, some people would argue that the owner of the stolen thing has a lot more of it than he needs or could use, therefore, stealing from him is fair and acceptable. In English folklore, Robin Hood who stole from the wealthy and

distributed to the poor was regarded as a hero.<sup>18</sup> Although his intention (helping the poor) is good, it does not justify his immoral act of stealing.

In our everyday life, we should recognize that: copying homework from our classmate; taking supplies from work without our employer's consent; and pirating computer software or music are all acts of stealing.

In a broader sense, the precept Avoid Stealing also implies *being responsible*. Responsible means that we should always take good care of the things we use, whether they belong to us or to the public. For example, filling our plate with only as much food as we can finish at an all-you-can-eat buffet; taking care of the library books that we have checked out; and refraining from littering at parks and playgrounds are all acts of being responsible.

### **The Third Precept: Avoid Misusing Sex**

Avoiding the misuse of sex is respect for people and personal relationships. Much unhappiness arises from the misuse of sex and from living in irresponsible ways. As a result, many families are broken and many children are victims of sexual abuse.

For our happiness and others', sexual desires should be controlled and sex should only be used in a caring and loving manner. When observing this precept, husbands and wives should be faithful toward each other.

### **The Fourth Precept: Avoid Lying**

We should respect each other and not tell lies or gossip. Avoiding backbiting, slander, harsh speech, and idle talk will result in fewer quarrels and misunderstandings. In observing the fourth precept, we should always speak the truth and only the truth.

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<sup>18</sup> Robin Hood is a heroic outlaw in English folklore. A highly skilled archer and swordsman, he is known for "*robbing from the rich and giving to the poor*" with the help of his "Merry Men", a group of fellow outlaws.

**The Fifth Precept: Avoid Using Intoxicants**

The fifth precept is based on self-respect. It guards against losing control of our mind, body, and speech.

Many things can become addictive. They include alcohol, drugs, smoking, and damaging literature and media such as books and movies that promote violent or pornographic activities. Using any of those will bring harm to us and our family. By observing this precept, we will keep our mind clear and our body healthy.



## The Four Sublime States

A good student must first follow the rules at school. He must also learn and study to do well in exams. Similarly, a Buddhist must first observe the Five Precepts. To perfect himself, he must also cultivate the four virtues and remove their corresponding vices.

The four virtues, called the Four Sublime States, are dormant qualities in every human being. They are:

### 1. Loving-kindness

The first quality is the sincere wish for the welfare and genuine happiness of all living beings without exception.

Loving-kindness embraces human and animal, the good and bad, the pleasant and unpleasant, the rich and poor, man and woman, and people from different races, religions, politics, nations...

Loving-kindness should be practiced first toward ourselves; we should supply our mind with positive thoughts of peace and happiness. When our mind is free from thoughts of hatred, we should radiate Loving-kindness toward our family and friends, wishing them happy and free from suffering, disease, worry, and anger; and finally, toward those who are neutral or opposed to us.

The corresponding vices are anger and hatred. They are destructive and can lead to brutal criminal acts or forceful revenges.

By developing Loving-kindness, we eliminate anger and hatred, as the Buddha said:

*“Hatreds do not cease through hatreds, through love alone they cease.”*



## 2. Compassion

The virtue of Compassion is the yearning to remove the misery or relieve the suffering of others. The opposite of Compassion is cruelty that leads to many horrific acts and atrocities in the world.

An example of Compassion is that while most people avoid those suffering from contagious diseases, such as tuberculosis and leprosy, compassionate medical physicians devotedly tend to them.

It is Compassion that compels one to serve others with unselfish motives. A truly compassionate person seeks opportunities to serve others expecting nothing in return, not even gratitude.

We should extend Compassion without limit toward all suffering and helpless beings, including the unborn and animals.

The ignorant, the vicious, and the evil deserve Compassion as much as those who suffer physically, because they are also mentally and spiritually sick. All sentient beings possess virtues. Those qualities may be dormant in the evils; perhaps one appropriate word at the right moment may change their attitude. One of the *Dharmapada* stories<sup>19</sup> narrates that the Buddha had great compassion toward Angulimala,<sup>20</sup> a murderer. After the Buddha spoke to him, Angulimala completely abandoned his gruesome habit and became the Buddha's disciple.

Compassion does not manifest itself in simply shedding tears, but in striving to remove the misery of others. Further, as discussed in the section Wisdom and Compassion in Chapter Three, Compassion must accompany Wisdom, which involves showing others the root of their sufferings and guidance to eliminate them.

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<sup>19</sup> *Dharmapada* is a collection of inspirational verses that the Buddha uttered during his years of teaching. There are four hundred and twenty-three verses in the *Dharmapada*, and attributed to each verse is a story that conveys a lesson of moral value.

<sup>20</sup> “Angulimala”, or “garland of fingers”, is the nickname of Ahimsaka, who murdered nine hundred and ninety-nine people, cut off his victims' index fingers, and strung them into a necklace. His thousandth victim would have been his mother, had the Buddha not spoken to him. (Reference: *Dhammapada Stories*, Compiled and Edited by Gambhiro Bhikkhu, Electronic Version)

### 3. Appreciative Joy

Appreciative Joy is a happy acceptance of others' prosperity and success. Its opposite is jealousy.

People rejoice easily over the failure of others, but they cannot bear to hear others' success. Because of jealousy, they condemn, insult, and even create every possible obstacle to ruin their adversaries, the good and the virtuous.

The practice of Appreciative Joy is more difficult than that of Loving-kindness and Compassion. We should make an effort to eliminate any dislike of prosperous and successful people, and to celebrate their achievements.

### 4. Equanimity:

Equanimity or Self-control is the most difficult virtue to practice. As we live in a world of divergent opinions, we are often praised, blamed, insulted, criticized, and attacked by others. We also experience personal situations such as loss and gain, pain and happiness, fame and defamation.

People tend to be joyful at a gain, delighted when they are famous and praised; but when facing a loss of money or loved ones, when enduring severe pain due to sickness, they become so depressed that some even take their own life.

Equanimity's direct enemy is attachment. A person who practices Equanimity is neither attracted to desirable objects nor disgusted with undesirable objects. He does not rejoice over praise; he calmly endures insult. He does not make a distinction between bad and good people, thus his attitude toward the villain and the virtuous is the same.

Equanimity is necessary especially for lay people who have to live amid fluctuating circumstances in today's rapidly changing world. We should accept all things with calmness, and maintain a balanced mind in bad as in good times.

The following passage shows the essentials of Equanimity:

*“Just as the Earth whatever is thrown,  
Upon her, whether sweet or foul,  
Indifferent is to all alike,  
Not hatred shows, nor amity.  
So likewise he in good or ill,  
Must even balanced ever be.”*



## Charitable Giving

**B**uddhists give to the poor and the sick and make offerings to monks and nuns to practice giving.

People incorrectly think that they can only practice giving if they are wealthy. Charitable giving does not limit to money or material goods. Buddhists should also offer sympathy and encouragement to those who are in sorrow or discouraged. Working as volunteer at the school's social event, collecting donation for flood victims, and pledging to race in a charity fundraising event are examples of charitable giving. Helping people by telling them about the Dharma is the highest form of giving.

Charitable giving should be unconditional and extended to everyone equally, including family, relatives, friends, and opponents. When giving to charity, we should not think that we are the giver and others are the receiver, of what is given and how much is given, and of repayments or rewards from others. Thus, in our mind, no arrogance and pride would arise.





## Chapter Six: Buddhist Symbols

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The most admired and revered objects in a temple are the images of the Buddha. Other important objects with a distinctive significance in Buddhism are: the Lotus Flower, the Dharma Wheel, the Buddhist Flag, the Bodhi Tree, the Buddhist Altar, and a mala, or a string of beads.

### **Lotus Flower**

The lotus has its roots in the mud, grows up through the deep water, and rises to the surface. It blooms into perfect beauty and purity in the sunlight. The lotus flower represents purity, for not being contaminated by the mud in which it grows. Those who follow the Buddha's teachings, like the lotus, remain pure in a world of impure temptation.

The lotus flower also represents the Lotus Sect, an important branch of Mahayana Buddhism. This branch adopts the Lotus Sutra as its basis. The Lotus Sutra is the most popular and influential scriptures of Mahayana Buddhism, especially in China, Japan, and Vietnam. Followers of the Lotus Sect pursue liberation by strictly observing the precepts and reciting the name of Amitabha Buddha.

### **Dharma Wheel**

In Buddhism, the Dharma Wheel is regarded as the essence of all symbols. Its origin came from ancient India where wheeled carts were used to overrun enemies in battlefields, a figurative symbol of the Dharma wheel crushing all illusions and ignorance. Buddhism adopted this symbol as the destruction of suffering and the achievement of wholesome virtues.

Once we start driving the car, the wheels of the car will keep rolling until it reaches the destination. Ever since the Buddha first started teaching the Dharma, the Truth has continually resounded all over the world. Thus, the Dharma Wheel is also a symbol of the perpetual expansion of the Buddha's teachings until all conscious beings are freed from their suffering.

The Dharma Wheel has eight spokes symbolizing the Noble Eightfold Path. The three swirling segments in the center represent the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha.

The wheel can also be divided into three parts, each representing an aspect of Buddhist practice: the hub—discipline, the spokes—wisdom, and the rim—concentration.

### **Buddhist Flag**

In 1885, a committee was appointed in Ceylon (today Sri Lanka) to design the Buddhist flag. Colonel Henry Steel Olcott,<sup>21</sup> an American military officer, journalist, and lawyer, assisted in the design. The flag was adopted as a symbol of faith and peace, and is now used throughout the world to represent Buddhism.

According to Buddhist records, six rays of light emitted from the Buddha's body after his enlightenment. Thus, the Buddhist flag carries six stripes: the first five stripes are in blue, yellow, red, white, and orange; and the sixth stripe is a patchwork of all five colors.

The colors on the flag also symbolize that all different races in the world can live in harmony under the shield of the Buddha's wisdom.

### **Bodhi Tree**

The Bodhi tree is a pipala tree, a kind of fig tree in India.

After failing in all austerity practices for six years, Monk Gautama finally came to rest in a forest beside the Naranjara River, not far from today Bodh Gaya, India. Sitting under a pipala tree, Monk Gautama ardently practiced meditation, and finally reached enlightenment. The tree became known as the Bodhi Tree. *Bodhi* means enlightenment in ancient language of India. A descendant of the original tree is still growing at Bodh Gaya, India. Bodhi trees are commonly found in Buddhist centers all around the world.

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<sup>21</sup> Colonel Henry Steel Olcott (1832–1907), born in New Jersey, USA, was the co-founder and first President of the Theosophical Society (founded in 1874 in New York City, USA). He left New York in 1878 to move the Society's headquarter to India. In 1880, Olcott took the Five Precepts in Ceylon and became one of the first Americans converted to Buddhism.



## Buddhist Altars and Images

In remembrance, people often want to visualize the objects they love and respect, for example, a photograph is kept as a reminder of a deceased loved one, and the national flag is a symbol in honor of people who died for their country. The photograph and national flag form the focal point of one's feelings of love, respect, and loyalty.

Likewise, the altar found in Buddhist homes or temples is a focal point of Buddhist observances.

An image of the Buddha is usually displayed at the center of the altar. The image may be a simple painting, or an elaborated statue made of a variety of materials such as marble, gold, wood or clay. On the left of the Buddha's image is a singing bowl, set on a support ring made of quilted fabric; on the right is a wooden tocsin,<sup>22</sup> usually carved in the shape of a curled-up fish.

A senior monk would lead the ceremony of worship where monks and members of the laity recite a passage from a *sutra* (discourse), a *mantra* (secret holy verse), and several *gathas* (moral hymns).<sup>23</sup> He would tap the tocsin in steady strokes to produce hollow but sturdy sounds. The tocsin keeps the rhythm during chanting. At the end of a passage or the beginning of the recitation of another Buddha's name, he would strike the rim of the singing bowl with a fabric-wrapped soft mallet to produce multiple harmonic overtones at the same time. It is believed that the warm and melodious sound of the singing bowl would resonate through many levels of the realm of hell, where sentient beings suffering the most severe punishments for their past evil deeds could hear the names of the Buddhas recited.

Also on the altar, there may be some volumes of Buddhist scriptures symbolizing the Dharma, and pictures or photographs of Buddhist monks and masters to represent the Sangha. Other symbolic objects on the altar include: the incense with the perfume reminding us of the influence of virtue, the lamp representing the light of knowledge and wisdom, and the flowers, which soon fade and die, as an evidence of the impermanence of all things.

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<sup>22</sup> A wooden tocsin, also called chanting wooden fish, is "mõ" in Vietnamese.

<sup>23</sup> *Sutra* is "kinh" in Vietnamese; *mantra*, "chú"; and *gatha*, "kê".

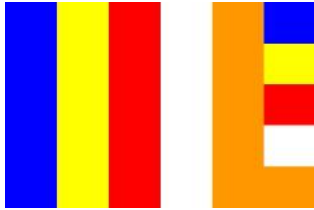
# Buddhist Symbols



The lotus blooms into perfect beauty and purity.



The Dharma Wheel



The Buddhist flag



The Bodhi tree in Foster Botanical Gardens in Hawaii, USA, is genetically identical with the one at the Mahabodhi Temple, India.



Monks pray under the Bodhi tree at Mahabodhi Temple in Bodh Gaya, India.

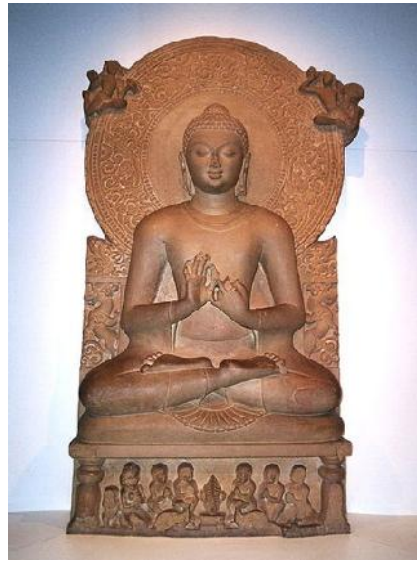


The Bodhi leaf





A pencil drawing of Sakyamuni Buddha.



A statue of Sakyamuni Buddha in Sarnath Museum, India.



A Buddhist altar at Thiên Mụ Temple, Vietnam.  
The singing bowl is placed on the left of the Buddha's image, and the tocsin on the right.



A singing bowl



A mala of 108 beads



A short mala



A wooden tocsin

When Buddhists stand before an altar, the objects they see on it remind them of the qualities found in the Buddha and the Sangha, and inspire them to develop those qualities in themselves by learning the Dharma.

## **Mala**

A mala is a string of beads used to count repetitions in the recitation of mantras or the name of the Buddha. A Buddhist mala usually has one hundred and eight beads. A shorter mala may have fewer beads, but a mala always contains an additional larger bead at the top of the string with a thread tied to it, called the “guru bead”.

During a prayer, we repeat our chosen mantra, either out loud or silently, and count one bead at a time until we get to the guru bead, pause for a moment and reflect on our guru and the intention of our mala practice, then turn the mala around and repeat the process counting back the other way, but never cross over the guru bead. This practice is an exceptional training of mindfulness.

## **Buddhist Festivals**

Buddhists celebrate many festivals throughout the year. The following three are essential to all Buddhists.

### **. Buddha Day—*Vaisakha* or *Vesak***

For the Buddhist community, the most important event of the year is the celebration of the birth of Sakyamuni Buddha. It falls on the full-moon day in May. This occasion is observed by millions of Buddhists all over the world. It is called *Vesak* in Sri Lanka and Malaysia, *Visakha Puja* in Thailand, and Phật Đản in Vietnam.

On this day, Buddhists in some countries like China and Korea would take part in the ceremonial bathing of the Buddha. They pour ladles of flower-scented water over a statue of the baby Buddha, a symbol of purifying their thoughts and actions.

The temples are elegantly decorated with flowers and banners. The altars are full of offerings. Vegetarian meals are provided for all. Captive animals, such as birds and turtles, are set free from their cages. This is a very joyous day for everyone.

• Dharma Day—*Asalha Puja*

The Dharma Day occurs in July, on the full-moon day of the eighth lunar month. This day commemorates the very first time the Buddha taught Dharma to the five monks in the Deer Park at Benares in India.

• Sangha Day—*Kathina*

The Sangha Day takes place in October. In the Theravada or Southern tradition, monks go on a three-month retreat during the rainy season. After the retreat, the laity offers robes and gifts to them. This day symbolizes the close relationship between the Sangha and the laity.

On the three special occasions, Buddhists also celebrate the events by taking the Threefold Refuge, accepting observance of the Five Precepts, offering flowers and incense to the Buddha, chanting *sutras*, meditating, offering alms to the monks and nuns, and listening to Dharma talks.

## **Buddhism in the World**

The Buddha is the founder of Buddhism. He lived and taught in northern India more than twenty-five centuries ago. He showed people how to live wisely and happily, and his teachings soon propagated all over India.

The Buddha passed away in 544 BC, but his teachings spread rapidly from India throughout Asia and beyond. People in the West heard of the Buddha and his teachings as early as in the 13<sup>th</sup> century when Marco Polo (1254–1324), the Italian traveler who explored Asia, wrote accounts on Buddhism in his book *Travels of Marco Polo*.

Since the 18<sup>th</sup> century, Buddhist texts were brought to Europe and translated into English, French, and German. At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Allan Bennett (1872–1923), an Englishman, went to Burma to be ordained Buddhist

monk as Bhikkhu Ananda Metteyya. He returned to Britain in 1908, established the first Buddhist Mission in the United Kingdom, and taught the Dharma.

Subsequently, Buddhist monks and nuns from Sri Lanka, Thailand, Japan, China, and other Buddhist countries in Asia came to the West to teach the Dharma, particularly over the last seventy years. Many of those teachers kept to their original customs, while others adapted to some extent to meet the demands of living in a western society.

In recent years, Buddhism attracts substantial growth of interest in Europe and America. Many new Buddhist centers were established, and the membership of existing societies has remarkably increased with members including renowned professionals and scholars.





## Chapter Seven: Buddhist Stories

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## The Missing Ring

(Right Speech and Loving-kindness)

**A** tender-hearted Monk lived in the forest outside Mathila village. He was wise, gentle, and well respected by the villagers. He spent most of his time meditating under a tree. Once a day, he would go to the village begging for food, just enough for his only daily meal.

One day, the Monk came to a rich man's house. The Lady, the rich man's wife, was in the garden at that time. She was picking some flowers and arranging them in a pot. Her ring was caught between the branches and leaves. So she took off her ring, laid it down by the edge of the flower bed, intending to clean it later.

Just then the Monk appeared at the gate. The Lady promptly stood up, asked the Monk to wait for her while she went inside and ordered her servants to prepare food for him.

At that moment, a pet goose was wandering in the garden searching for food on the ground. It happened that the goose was close to the rock where the Lady left her ring. The sunray shone on the precious stones in the ring, and caught the goose's eyes; it grabbed the ring and swallowed it at once.

The Monk had witnessed the scene all along; at that time the Lady returned with some rice cakes and water for him. He thanked her and departed.

**B**efore the Monk reached the edge of the forest, he heard footsteps rushing behind him. They were the Lady's servants; they arrested him and took him back to the rich man's home.

There, the rich man questioned the Monk, "Oh, Monk! Did you take my wife's precious ring?"

“No, my generous man, I did not,” he firmly declared.

“Who then stole the jewelry?” the rich man asked.

The Monk bowed his head in silence.

“Tell me, Monk, who the thief was, I will surely reward you with fifty gold coins,” the rich man insisted.

Still, the Monk was silent.

The rich man thought, “It must be him who stole the ring, he is so ashamed now that he could not speak!”

The rich man decided to report the incident to the village’s head, who imprisoned the Monk without delay. Rumor spread very quickly. The whole village heard that the Monk was indeed a thief, and the villagers called him names.

Later that evening, the rich man received visitors from afar. He ordered his servants to prepare a big feast for his guests. When the servants killed the goose and cleaned the bird, they found the Lady’s ring inside the bird’s stomach. Everyone was stunned. The rich man and his Lady immediately rushed to the correction house. They pleaded for the release of the Monk.

**A**s soon as they were back to his house, the rich man apologized to the Monk.

“Oh, holy Monk! Why did you not tell us that the bird had swallowed the ring? Why did you accept the agony without a word to defend yourself?” the rich man asked.

“My wise man,” the Monk gently replied, “If I told you that the goose had taken the ring, you would have had the bird killed at once to recover the jewelry. In doing so, I would have preserved my good name; however, my fame is not worth a precious life of a being. Since the bird is now dead, I am telling the truth, and my speech now does not harm anyone.”

We should have Loving-kindness toward all beings, including animals.

Not telling the truth does not mean we should tell a lie. Silence is sometimes more valuable than speech.

Right Speech means respect for the truth and respect for the well-being of others.



## King Banyan Deer

(Compassion)

Once upon a time, a beautiful fawn was born in the forest near Benares, in northern India.

The fawn possessed unusual fine features: his eyes were bright as jewels, his mouth was red as the forest berries, his hoofs were black and hard as lacquer-work, and his little horns glistened like silver. And his color was shiny golden as a perfect summer's dawn. As he grew up, he led a herd of five hundred deer, thus he was named King Banyan Deer.

Not far away, another beautiful buck deer was born, just as splendidly golden in color. A separate herd of five hundred deer followed him, and they called him Branch Deer.

The King of Benares was fond of eating venison and devoted to deer hunting. He regularly hunted and killed deer. Each time he hunted, he went to different villages and ordered the people to serve his hunting party.

The royal hunt frequently disturbed the people's lives: fields were destroyed, farmers harvested inferior crops, and merchants earned scanty income. Finally, the villagers gathered together and resolved to build a large deer park for the King of Benares. There he could hunt without commanding the services of the people.

First, they enclosed an immense part of the forest, and then they grew plants and grasses for the deer to eat, and dug water ponds where the deer could drink. When the park was ready, they opened the gate, traveled to the nearby forests, and surrounded the entire herds of Banyan and Branch deer. With sticks and noise makers, they drove them all into the deer park trap, and locked the gate behind them.

The people then went to the king and said, “Oh, King! we could not attend your hunts anymore. Now we have built a pleasant deer park where you can hunt as you like. You can enjoy both the hunting and the eating of deer.”

The king hurried to the new deer park; he was thrilled to see the vast herds. While gazing at them, his eyes fell on the two splendid golden deer, with large fully grown antlers. Admiring their unusual beauty, the king decided to spare their lives. He granted immunity to these two alone. He ordered that no one could harm or kill them.

Once a day the king would ride through the deer park with bow and arrow uplifted, chased, and killed a deer for his dinner table. Sometimes, when he was too busy, his courtiers would do this.

Whenever the deer saw the bow and arrows, they shuddered with fear of death. They fled wildly, some fell and severely wounded, many suffering great pain.

One day, King Banyan Deer called Branch Deer, and the two herds joined for a meeting. King Banyan Deer spoke to them.

“While in the end, there is no escape from death, we could at least prevent injuries and wounds each day, we could save the living ones from needless suffering. Since the king only wishes to hunt and kill one deer per day, let us draw lots every day, one day from my herd, one day from Branch Deer’s herd. The one whose turn is will go and stand by the gate. That one deer must submit itself to be shot at. The victim’s lot will fall upon one deer at a time.”

Branch Deer agreed.

The next day, when the king and his hunting party arrived, they found one trembling deer standing at the park’s gate. Its legs and body were shaking but it held its head high.

“What is this?” said the king. “Ah, I see. These are noble deer indeed! They have chosen that one deer alone shall die rather than that they should all suffer from our hunt.”

A tender sympathy crept over the king's heart. "We will accept their terms," he announced. "From now on, shoot only the one deer that stands at the gate." He drew his bow, and then rode back in silence to the palace.

**O**ne day, the turn fell by chance upon a pregnant doe in Branch Deer's herd. Caring for the others as well as the unborn one, she hurried to Branch Deer and begged, "My Lord, I am pregnant. If I go now, both I and my unborn child will die. Please spare me until I deliver my fawn. Then my fawn and I will fill two turns rather than just one. So, we would save a turn now and thereby a single life for one long day."

Branch Deer replied, "No, no, I must comply with the rules, I cannot pass your turn on to another. Now, leave me, go on your way."

Desperate, the poor mother doe rushed to King Banyan Deer, explained her difficulty, and begged for his aid.

"Go in peace," King Banyan Deer gently replied, "You are right, the terms require that only one needs to die. I will change the rules in midstream and put your turn upon another."

King Banyan Deer rose to his feet. He walked calmly, with great dignity, through his browsing herd, and straight to the park gate.

A silence fell in the deer park. And some who tell this story even say that silence also fell in other worlds not seen from here.

**T**hat day, the courtier came in the king's stead to kill the willing victim at the gate. But as he was drawing his bow, he saw it was one of the deer the king had ordered spared. Reluctant to shoot the golden deer, he sent an urgent message to the king.

Shocked at the news, the king hastened to the park. There at the gate, King Banyan Deer stood calmly, his head held high. Deer king and human king stared at one another. Finally, the king of man exclaimed, "Oh, king of deer! Have I not spared you from my hunt? Why do you come here like the others?"

“Oh, king of men!” King Banyan Deer replied, “What ruler can be at peace when his people suffer. This time an unlucky pregnant doe is the one to die. She pleaded with me to spare her, for the sake of others as well as her unborn baby. I could not help but feel her suffering. I could not help but weep, imagining that the little one would never see the dawn, would never taste the dew. And yet, I could not force the pain of death on another, relieved to think it was not his turn today. The lot shall be upon only one deer per day; so, mighty king, I shall be that one. I offer my life for the welfare of the doe and her unborn fawn. This is my duty as king. Be assured there is no other reason.”

Powerful as he was, the King of Benares fell on his knees. Remorse overflowed his softened heart. Tears rolled down his cheeks.

“Oh Lord, the golden king of deer! Even among men, I have not seen one so full of great compassion as you. Such kindness to share in the suffering of others, to give your life for others! Such tender love for all your fellow deer! Go and live in peace.”

The King of Benares further pledged, “I demand that you, the doe and her baby will never be killed by anyone in my kingdom.”

Not satisfied, the golden deer asked, “Though we are safe, what of the rest of the other deer in the park, our friends and kin? Are they safe too?”

“Then I grant safety to all the deer in the park, my Lord.”

“And what of the deer outside the park, will they be spared?” asked Banyan.

“Yes my Lord, I spare all the deer in my entire kingdom.”

Yet the golden deer did not move. He further inquired, “What will the other four-footed animals do? Their life is constantly surrounded by dangers of hunting.”

“My Lord, I pledge that all the quadrupeds are safe in my land.”

“And what will the birds do? They are the defenseless ones of the air; they too want to live free of danger.”

“Yes, the birds too will be safe from death at the hands of men.”

“And what of the fishes, who dwell in the water? The silent ones in your realm, if I do not speak for them now, who will?”

“Even the fishes will be free to live, my Lord.”

The Great Being, King Banyan Deer, thus pleaded for the lives of all creatures, and the King of Benares indeed granted immunity from hunting and killing to all animals in his land.

Afterward, the King of Benares ordered the park gate wide opened and both the deer herds released. King Banyan Deer further instructed the deer not to eat people’s crops. And so forbidding them, he sent a message to the men: “From now on, men do not need to build the fence to guard their crop. Let the men tie bunches of leaves around the edge of their fields as boundary marks.”

\* \* \*

Hence, in India, tying the leaves around the fields became a custom until today.

The Jataka scriptures, a collection of the Buddha’s birth stories, narrate this story of King Banyan Deer as one of Sakyamuni Buddha’s previous lives.



Compassion is the most precious virtue. A compassionate person cannot rest satisfied until he relieves the sufferings of others.

Compassion should be extended without limit toward all suffering and helpless beings, including all animals, all born and unborn.



## Kisa Gautami

(Impermanence and Suffering)

**K**isa Gautami, a young woman from a rich family, was married to a wealthy merchant. Their life was filled with only happiness, fame, and luxury. They were more content with the birth of their son.

But when Kisa's son was only a month old, he suddenly fell ill and died.

Kisa was devastated; she carried the body of her child in her arms and went from house to house, asking for a medicine to revive her dead child. Of course, no one was able to help her.

Finally, she met a follower of the Buddha. The man advised her to go consult the Buddha.

When she carried the dead child to the Buddha and confided her misery, the Buddha listened with patience and compassion.

“There is only one way to solve your problem.” the Buddha explained gently, “Go and get me five mustard seeds from any family in which there has never been a death.”

Kisa was overwhelmed with the encouraging idea that she could get her son back. She started out to look for such a household over villages and towns. Mustard seeds she found, but not a place where death had never visited. Every family she met has experienced the death of one person or another.

At last, she understood what the Buddha had wanted her to find out for herself: that death comes to all, no one can escape it. When she accepted the fact that death is inevitable, she no longer grieved and found peace in her mind.

It is natural for everything that is born to die. No being can escape this law.

We must recognize that suffering is a fact of life, as stated in the First Noble Truth.



## The Sour Fruit of Greed

(Greed, Stealing, and Loving-kindness)

The residents of Benares were fond of setting up bird houses in their yard. A wealthy man in the city also kept a charming bird house near his house, by the kitchen's window.

A gentle and careful pigeon lived in that birdhouse. Pete, the pigeon, was so gentle that he did not care to eat worm or insect. And he was careful to keep a distance from the cook in the kitchen. He knew that the cook sometimes chased and caught birds.

Pete always left the bird house early in the morning. He worked patiently all day to find his ratio of food, which was usually a few grass seeds or rice grains. Every night when he returned to sleep in his bird house, he was quite content with his calm and harmless life.

Craving, a crow who lived in a forest nearby, was quite different in character. He was neither gentle nor careful. He often became excited and acted with greed.

One day, Craving flew over the rich man's kitchen and smelled the delicious food being cooked. He was so fascinated by the delightful scent. He decided that he must have the rich man's food at any cost. So, he began spying on the yard and the kitchen.

That evening, Pete returned to his little home for the night. Seeing this, the hungry crow thought, "Ah, wonderful!" and he made his plans.

The next morning, when Pete was leaving his house, Craving followed him and pleaded, "Dear friend, I admire your calm way of life, I'd like to go with you to help you find food and learn from you."

“My friend crow,” said Pete, “you would be bored following me. Besides, we do not eat the same food, how could you help me find my food?”

“How about we each go our way in the morning,” Craving insisted, “then you let me share the bird house with you at night. We can help each other.”

“That sounds wonderful,” agreed Pete, “Now, go on and work hard finding your food.”

So, for several days, the two friends separated in the daylight, and came back at night to share the cozy little bird house near the rich man’s kitchen.

**O**ne day, a delivery truck brought a load of fresh fish to the rich man. The cook hung them on hooks in the kitchen.

Craving was thrilled by the sight of so much food. His desire became uncontrolled greed. He began plotting a way to get it all for himself. Pretending to be sick, he spent the entire night groaning and moaning.

The next morning, Pete was ready to leave. Craving rolled over and over, as if he was in terrible pain, “Go without me today, I’ve been sick to my stomach all night long.”

“I guess that you want to get the fish in the kitchen.” Pete said, “It is not right to steal from others. You must work hard to find your own food. It is very dangerous for you to get close to the kitchen.”

“I am too sick, please go without me,” putting his head down, Craving moaned.

“Very well,” Pete warned before flying away, “Remember, do not risk your safety for the sake of greed.”

**M**eanwhile, the cook boiled the fish in a big stew pot. He kept the lid slightly off for the steam to escape.

Watching from the bird house, Craving saw the cook later go outside to rest under a shady tree.

“This is my precious chance!” thought the crow. Craving flew right into the kitchen through the open door and sat on the edge of the stew pot. He stuck his head inside, looked for a biggest fish and reached for it.

But in so doing, he knocked the lid off! The clattering sound made the cook promptly rise from his resting place.

Craving hung on the edge of the stew pot with a big fish in his beak. His eyes were blurred by the burning steam. He could see the cook walk to the kitchen door.

Terrified, he flapped his wings, but the steam was so hot and dense. He had to let go the fish and flapped his wings harder, and harder.

Suddenly, Craving heard bird noise outside. He saw Pete and many of Pete’s friend pigeons flying around the shady tree. They chirped, and cooed, and flapped their wings fast.

The cook turned around and looked at them.

Grabbing his slim chance, Craving used his very last bits of strength to fly out the door, over the cook, and high up to the bird house.

He barely escaped with bruises and burns all over his weary body.

“**W**hew! Pete, thanks for your help, you saved my life!”

“Hey, glad to come back just on time. Now, lie down and rest, buddy!”

“From now on, I won’t be so greedy, I won’t steal, and I will work hard for my food.”

Greed makes us deaf to sound advice; it leads to other bad behaviors, such as stealing, cheating, and lying.

Stealing is taking someone's possession that is not given without intending to return it or pay for it. It is a dishonest act and should be avoided.

Like Pete in the story, we should have Loving-kindness toward all beings, and always look after the welfare of all: the good, the bad, and the greedy.



## The Monkey Trap

(The Cause of Suffering and the Second Noble Truth)

**I**n the old days, monkeys were caught in a very special way.

The trapper first took a coconut; he then made a hole in its side just big enough for a hand to go through when it is not clenched into a fist. He then placed some peanuts in the coconut and put it in a spot where monkeys usually visited. Before leaving the coconut behind, he scattered some peanuts around it.

Soon a curious monkey came along. He first ate the peanuts on the ground. Then, he found the coconut and saw that there were plenty of peanuts inside it.

He put his hand into the hole to grab the peanuts, but thereafter, he could not withdraw his hand, which was now a fist full of peanuts. No matter how hard he struggled and pulled, he could not get free. He became frightened and cried out loud.

All the monkey had to do to set him free was to let go of the peanuts, but he would rather cling to his treats. Thus the monkey was easily caught by the trapper.

Similar to the monkey, we want to be free from suffering, but we are not willing to set free our desires, which so often get us into trouble. The Second Truth identifies the cause of suffering: it is attachment to things.





## Karma Stories

*Author's note: The incidents in the following short stories actually occurred in Vietnam in the 1980s; my brother, Don, is familiar with the events and the characters in the stories.*

\* \* \*

Ông Ba was a wealthy man who lived in the city of Vĩnh Long, South Vietnam. He loved to feast on turtle meat. He usually had live turtle cooked in a large stew pot, covered with a lid with a large hole in it. The turtle, dying of burns in boiling water, poked its head through the hole in the lid and gasped for air. Ông Ba then poured seasoning sauce into the turtle's mouth. The turtle thus died of suffocation and burns.

Soon, his business failed, and ông Ba became poor, until one day, he had to sell all his properties, including his house. He rented a small space in the attic of an old house.

One night, a fire broke out in the main level of the house. Everyone escaped except ông Ba. Drunk and overslept, he did not hear the alarm until it was too late, and the fire spread to the stairway. He was contained in the attic. Struggling to fight the smoke, the heat, and the flame, he punched a hole in the roof, poked his head out to gasp for every bit of air, until he went down with the enflamed crumpling structure. He suffocated and burned to death.

\* \* \*

**D**on emigrated from Vietnam in 1983. On the eve of his departure, his classmates visited a friend who was being hospitalized due to severe burns. Because Don was busy with the final preparation for the trip, he could not join them at the hospital. The following day, as his friends accompanied him to the airport to say farewell, they recounted the visit: the victim suffered such severe burns on his entire body that he became totally crippled.

Don recalled that his friend, the victim, used to be a cruel and violent young boy. In his youth, he often took pleasure in killing ants. He would search for ant mounds around the house, and once he found one, he would pour gasoline on it and set fire. He rejoiced, laughed, and cheered when ants fled the mound in droves, only to die in the fire, their body were charred and curled up.

\* \* \*

The above stories symbolize the horrific act of killing and taking pleasure in killing. The individuals who committed those acts suffered in the same way as their victims did. In the second story, some medical professionals explain that burns sometimes associate with deformity of the limbs. The striking coincidences are that (1) while not all burns lead to disability, the burn victim in the story was crippled as a result, (2) the burned and crippled victim, in his youth, had many times set fire to ant mounds killing hundreds of them each time, and (3) the past actions and present results occurred in this *very same life*, just only a few years apart.

The animals in the above stories died a gruesome death; the individuals committing those acts suffered horrible results, death in the first story and infirmity in the second. The vivid images of the past actions and present results evoke a chilling reminder of the law of *Karma*.





## Chapter Eight: Buddhist Monuments

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## Stupa

A *stupa*, literally “heap”, is a mound-like monument where the sacred remains of the Buddha or noble monks are kept. Buddhists regard the stupa as a symbol to recall the exemplary life of the Buddha and the noble monks, and often use the stupa as a place of worship.

In some Asian countries, such monuments are referred to as: *candi* (Indonesia and Malaysia), *chedi* (Thailand), *chorten* (Tibet and Bhutan), *ta* (China), *tap* (Korea), *tháp* (Vietnam)... After “stupa”, “chorten” is the most commonly encountered English term.

The stupa was originally only a simple mound of mud or clay to cover the relics of the Buddha. After the Buddha passed into Final Nirvana, his remains were cremated and the ashes divided and buried under eight stupas. Some later stupas, such as the ones at Sarnath and Sanchi in India, were the embellishments of the earlier mounds.

In the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC, after his conversion to Buddhism, Emperor Asoka (273 BC–232 BC) had the original eight stupas opened and the relics of the Buddha distributed among the several thousand stupas he had built. Nevertheless, the stupas at the eight places associated with the life of the Buddha continued to be of particular importance. Thus, the meaning of a stupa changed from a funeral monument to an object of worship; as a result, its appearance also changed. Following are some prominent stupas around the world.

### 1. The **Dhamekh Stupa** of India

Dhamekh Stupa is a massive stupa located at Sarnath, in the state of Uttar Pradesh, India. The Dhamekh Stupa was built circa 500, and is said to mark the spot of the Deer Park where Sakyamuni Buddha gave the first sermon to his five disciples after attaining enlightenment. The stupa was enlarged on six occasions but the upper part is still unfinished.

In its current shape, the stupa is a solid cylinder of bricks and stones reaching a height of 43.6 m (143 ft) and having a diameter of 28 m (92 ft). The wall is covered with elegantly carved figures of humans, birds, and inscriptions in one of the oldest Indian scripts.

### 2. The **Great Stupa at Sanchi** of India

Sanchi is a small village in the state of Madhya Pradesh, India. It is the location of several Buddhist monuments dating from the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC to the 12<sup>th</sup> century and is one of the most important Buddhist pilgrimage sites. In the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC, Emperor Asoka ordered the construction of the Great Stupa at Sanchi. It was a simple hemispherical brick structure built over the relics of the Buddha, crowned by a parasol-like structure to honor and shelter the relics. The gateways and the balustrade were built after 70 BC.

The monument has been listed among the UNESCO World Heritage Sites since 1989.

### 3. The **Borobudur** of Indonesia

Borobudur, also called Barabudur, is a Mahayana Buddhist monument dated back to the 8<sup>th</sup> century in Central Java, Indonesia.

Borobudur was built on a bedrock hill at 265 m (869 ft) above sea level and 15 m (49 ft) above the floor of a dried-out lake. The half cross-section of Borobudur reveals that the monument consists of three main parts: the foot, the body, and the head, with height ratio of 4:6:9 respectively for the parts.

Built on a square foundation of approximately 118 m (387 ft) on each side are six square platforms at the base and three circular platforms at the upper parts. Each of the circular platforms supports a row of perforated stupas arranged in concentric circles: 32 stupas on the first platform, 24 on the second, and 16 on the third, for a total of 72 perforated stupas. A main dome, located at the center of the top platform, is surrounded by 72 Buddha statues, each seated inside a perforated stupa. The top of the main dome marks the monument's highest point of 35 m (115ft) above ground level.

The monument is decorated with 504 Buddha statues and 2,672 panels of bas reliefs (raised sculpture artworks), with a total relief surface of 2,500 sq m (26, 909 sq ft). The artworks on the panels depicted the workings of the law of *Karma*, complete illustration of cause and effect, blameworthy and praiseworthy activities, and mainly, the life of Sakyamuni Buddha from birth to enlightenment.

Approximately 55,000 cu m (72,000 cu yd) of stones was taken from neighboring rivers to build the monument. The stone was cut to size, transported to the site and laid without mortar. Knobs, indentations and dovetails were used to form joints between stones. To prevent flooding, 100 stone gargoyles, carved in the shape of giants or mythical creatures, are provided at the building's corners.

Although Borobudur was built as a gigantic stupa, it is also classified as a temple. The terminology "temple" designates a house of deity and has inner spaces for worship. However, due to its complexity of architecture and meticulous design, Borobudur is recognized as one of the Buddhist temples triad, with the two other temples being the temples of Mendut and Pawon (see section Temple). Congregational worship in Borobudur is performed by means of pilgrimage. Pilgrims were guided by the system of staircases and corridors ascending the top platform.

The monument has been listed among the UNESCO World Heritage Sites and acknowledged as the largest Buddhist monument in the world.

# Stupa



The Dhamekh Stupa at Sarnath, India.



Details on the Dhamekh Stupa walls.



The Great Stupa at Sanchi, India.



Carved decoration on the gateway to the Great Stupa at Sanchi.



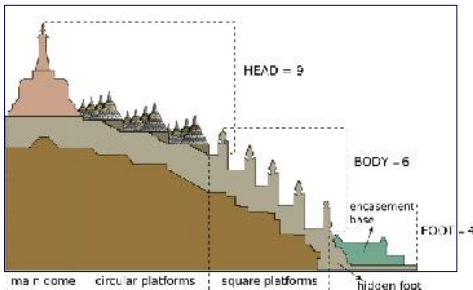
Borobudur's main stupa



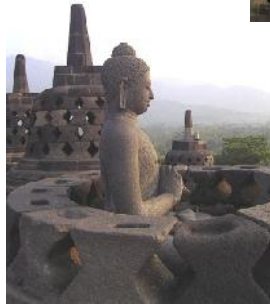
Borobudur in Central Java, Indonesia.



Buddhist monks pray on the top platform.



Borobudur half cross-section



A Buddha statue inside a perforated stupa.



A carved gargoyle for water drainage.





Kuthodaw stupa in Mandalay, Myanmar.



Stone inscriptions  
in gold letters  
and borders.



Rows of  
stone tombs  
at Kuthodaw.



Shwedagon stupa in Yangon, Myanmar.  
View at night.



A forest of  
stupas at  
Shwedagon.



Shwedagon  
close-up view.



Pha That Luang stupa  
in Vientiane, Laos.

#### 4. The **Kuthodaw Pagoda** of Myanmar

The term “pagoda” sometimes is exchangeable for “stupa”. The Kuthodaw Pagoda, literally “Royal Merit,” is a Buddhist stupa located in Mandalay, Myanmar. It was built at the foot of Mandalay Hill, during the reign of King Mindon (1853–1878). It stands 57 m (188 ft) high, and is modeled after the Shwezigon Pagoda at Nyaung U near Bagan. The stupa is the home of the renowned World’s Largest Book.

King Mindon wanted to leave a great work of merit for posterity by having the *Tripitaka* set in stone. Construction of the main stupa started in 1860 and was completed in 1862, while the stone inscriptions were not open to the public until 1868.

The marble for the inscription was excavated from Sagyin Hill, 32 miles north of Mandalay, and transported by river to the city. Work began in a large shed near Mandalay Palace. Senior monks and lay officials consulted the manuscripts of the *Tripitaka* and meticulously edited the text. Scribes thoroughly copied the text in Burmese script on the marble, 80 to 100 lines of inscription on each side of the stone. Stonemasons carefully chiseled out the inscriptions, and then filled in with gold ink. It took a scribe three days to copy both the obverse and reverse sides, and a stonemason could finish approximately 16 lines of inscription a day. Each stone slab was placed in a small above-ground tomb with a decorated rooftop.

On the grounds of the Kuthodaw, there were 729 stone-inscription tombs. One tomb was added to house the stone that recorded the history of the project, making it 730 tombs in total with 1,460 pages of stone inscription. The tombs were arranged in neat rows around the stupa within three enclosures: 42 tombs in the first enclosure, 168 in the middle, and 519 in the third.

The stupa main entrance is from the south through massive teak doors elaborately carved with floral designs, scrolls, and deity. Mature star-flower trees grow between the rows of stone-inscription tombs, and emit a jasmine-like fragrance to the entire complex.

## 5. The **Shwedagon Pagoda** of Myanmar

The Shwedagon Pagoda, also known as the Golden Pagoda, is a 98 m (320 ft) high gilded stupa located on Singuttara Hill, in Yangon, Myanmar. It is the most sacred Buddhist stupa in Myanmar with relics of the past four Buddhas enshrined within, namely the staff of Krakucchanda, the water filter of Kanakamuni, a piece of the robe of Kasyapa, and eight hairs of Sakyamuni Buddha.<sup>24</sup>

According to legend, the Shwedagon Pagoda is 2,500 years old. Buddhist records show that it was built before Sakyamuni Buddha passed into Final Nirvana in 544 BC; however, archaeologists believe the stupa was actually built sometime between the 6<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> centuries.

The stupa fell into disrepair until the 1300s, when King Binnya U had it rebuilt to a height of 18 m (60 ft). It was rebuilt several times and reached its current height of 98 m (320 ft) in the 15<sup>th</sup> century. The pagoda survived many earthquakes, wars, and invasions. By the beginning of the 16<sup>th</sup> century the pagoda had become the most famous place of pilgrimage in Myanmar.

Four entrances lead up to a set of steps to the stupa. The base of the stupa is built of bricks covered with gold plates. Above the base are terraces and the bell-shaped part of the stupa, which is topped with the turban-shaped dome, the inverted alms bowl, the inverted and upright lotus petals, the banana bud, and finally, the crown. The crown is encrusted with 5,448 diamonds and 2,317 rubies. The top of the crown is adorned with a 76-carat (15.2 g or .536 oz) diamond bud.

The gold seen on the stupa is made of genuine gold plates, covering the brick structure. Myanmar people all over the country, as well as monarchs in its history, have donated gold to the pagoda to maintain it.

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<sup>24</sup> Krakucchanda Buddha is Phật Câu Luru Tôn in Vietnamese, Kanakamuni Buddha Phật Câu Na Hàm Mâu Ni, Kasyapa Buddha Phật Ca Diếp, and Sakyamuni Buddha Phật Thích Ca Mâu Ni.

## 6. The **Pha That Luang** of Laos

Pha That Luang is a gold-covered large Buddhist stupa on the eastern outskirts of Vientiane, Laos. It is regarded as both a national symbol and the most important monument in Laos.

Pha That Luang, according to the Laos people, was originally built in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century. It is believed that Emperor Asoka sent Buddhist missionaries who brought a holy relic of the Buddha to the stupa.

It was rebuilt in the 13<sup>th</sup> century as a Khmer temple which fell into ruin. In the mid-16<sup>th</sup> century, King Setthathirat relocated his capital from Luang Prabang to Vientiane and ordered the construction of Pha That Luang in 1566. It was rebuilt about 2.48 mi (4 km) from the center of Vientiane at the end of That Luang Road and named Pha That Luang.

The Thai invasion in 1828 left Pha That Luang heavily damaged and abandoned. In 1900, the French restored the stupa to its original design, which was based on the detailed drawings from 1867 by the French architect and explorer Louis Delaporte. However the first attempt to restore it was unsuccessful and it had to be redesigned and reconstructed in the 1930s.

The architecture of the building includes many references to Laos's culture. The stupa today is a square structure surrounded by 30 small stupas; it stands 45 m (147.6 ft) high, and consists of three levels. The first level is 68 m (223 ft) on each side, the second level 47 m (157 ft), and the third level 29 m (98 ft). The Pha That Luang is enclosed with walls that are 85 m (279 ft) long on each side and contain a large number of Laos and Khmer sculptures.



## Pagoda

A *pagoda* is an English term for a tiered tower with multiple eaves common in China, Japan, Korea, Vietnam, and other parts of Asia. Most pagodas were built to house a religious shrine, usually Buddhist, and were often located near temples.

The term “pagoda” may refer to other religious structures in some countries. In Vietnamese, “chùa” or “pagoda” is a more generic term referring to a place of religious activities, rites, or worship, which is equivalent to the term “temple”. The modern pagoda is an evolution of the ancient Indian stupa, a mound-like structure where sacred relics could be kept safe and venerated.

Pagodas attract lightning strikes due to their height. Many pagodas have a decorated finial at the top of the structure. The finial is designed in some cases as to have symbolic Buddhist meaning, for example a lotus bud. The finial also functions as a lightning rod, thus, helps to attract lightning and protect the pagoda from lightning damage. In early centuries, pagodas were constructed out of wood, but steadily progressed to sturdier materials of stones or bricks. Pagodas traditionally consist of an odd number of levels. The followings are notable and historical pagodas in the word.

## 1. The **Yunyan Pagoda** of China

The Yunyan Pagoda, also called Huqiu Tower, or Tiger Hill Pagoda, is a Chinese pagoda situated in Suzhou City, Jiangsu Province, China. It has several other names, including the Leaning Tower of China and the Yunyan Temple Tower.

The tower was built in the later period of the Five Dynasties (907–960). The tower rises to a height of 47 m (154 ft). It is a seven-story octagonal building built with blue bricks. The tower's foundation was originally set on half rock and half soil. In more than a thousand years the tower has gradually slanted due to forces of nature, thus the name Leaning Tower of China anticipated the name of the famous Italian structure, the Leaning Tower of Pisa, which was built in 1173. At the present, the top and bottom of the tower vary by 2.32 m (7.61 ft). The entire structure weighs around 7,000,000 kg (7,700 US tons), supported by internal brick columns.

In 1957, efforts were made to stabilize the tower and prevent further leaning. Concrete was pumped into the soil forming a stronger foundation. During the reinforcement process, a stone casket containing Buddhist scriptures was found. The container had an inscription noting the completion date of the tower as in 961. The uppermost stories of the tower were built as an addition during the reign of Emperor Chongzhen (1628–1644).

Although it is a seven-story building, there are no built-in staircases. People climbed to upper stories using movable ladders.

## 2. The **Iron Pagoda** of China

The Iron Pagoda of Youguo Temple in Kaifeng City, Henan Province, China, is a Buddhist Chinese pagoda built in 1049 during the Song Dynasty (960–1279) of China. Iron Pagoda is so-named because its color resembles that of iron. Its brick structure was built on the location of a previous wooden pagoda that had been burned down by lightning fire in 1044. The pagoda is regarded as one of the masterpieces of the Song dynasty's architecture.

The octagonal-base tower stands at a current height of 56.88 m (186.56 ft). It consists of a total of 13 stories, an inner spiral stone staircase, and outside

openings to allow light and air flow. The architectural style features densely positioned interlocking wooden brackets in the eaves and multiple stories. The exterior features more than fifty different varieties of glazed brick and 1,600 richly-detailed carvings, including those of sitting Buddha, standing monks, singers and dancers, flowers, lions, dragons, other legendary beasts, and many fine engravings.

The foundation rests in the silt of the Yellow River. In 1847 the Yellow River overflowed its banks and the Youguo Temple collapsed, but the Iron Pagoda survived. Historically, the pagoda has experienced 38 earthquakes, 6 floods and many other disasters, but it remains intact after almost one thousand years.

### 3. The Sakyamuni Pagoda of China

The Sakyamuni Pagoda of Fogong Temple in Shanxi Province, China, is a wooden Chinese pagoda built in 1056. The pagoda, which has survived several large earthquakes throughout the centuries, reached a level of such fame within China that it was given the generic nickname of the *Muta*, literally “Timber Pagoda”; it is the oldest existent fully-wooden pagoda still standing in China.

The pagoda stands on a tall stone platform, and reaches a total height of 67.31 m (220 ft). The pagoda features fifty-four different kinds of “dougongs” (or interlocking wooden bracket arms) in its construction. Between two main stories of the pagoda is an intermediate floor where the bracket arms are located on the exterior. From the exterior, the pagoda seems to have only five stories and two sets of rooftop eaves for the first story, yet the pagoda’s interior reveals that it has nine stories in total. The four hidden stories can be identified from the exterior by the pagoda’s terrace balconies. In addition to interior columns, a ring of exterior columns support the lowest outstretching eaves roof on the base floor.

A statue of Sakyamuni Buddha in sitting position is at the center of the first floor of the pagoda, with a richly-decorated carved ceiling above its head; thus, the pagoda is named as Sakyamuni Pagoda. The windows on the eight

# Pagoda



Yunyan Pagoda in Suzhou, China.



Iron Pagoda in Kaifeng, China.



Sakyamuni Pagoda in Shanxi, China.



An example of dougong, a structural support of interlocking wooden brackets.



Detail of the dougong supports of the Sakyamuni Pagoda.



Buddha statues inside the pagoda, with the Sakyamuni Buddha statue at the center.



Gojunoto or Five-Story Pagoda behind the Horyu-ji in Nara, Japan.

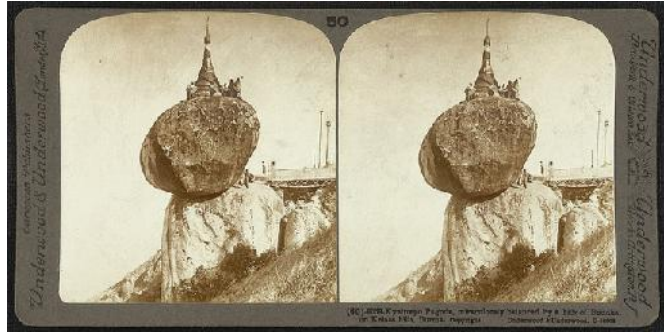
Gojunoto on the grounds of Horyu-ji.







Kyaiktiyo Pagoda  
in Mon State, Myanmar.



Stereoscopic view of the Kyaiktiyo Pagoda, photo  
taken in 1900.



View of the Kyaiktiyo Pagoda at sunset.



Night view of the Golden Rock  
and the Kyaiktiyo Pagoda.



Chùa Một Cột or One Pillar Pagoda  
in Hanoi, Vietnam.



A small altar devoted to Bodhisattva  
Avalokitesvara inside One Pillar Pagoda.

sides of the pagoda provide views of the countryside, including Mount Heng. On a clear day, the pagoda can be seen from a distance of 30 km (18.6 mi).

#### 4. The **Gojunoto Pagoda** of Japan

The Gojunoto, known as the Five-Story Pagoda, is a pagoda of the Horyu-ji<sup>25</sup> [temple] in Ikaruga, Nara Prefecture, Japan. It is the oldest wooden buildings existing in the world, underscoring Horyu-ji as one of the most celebrated temples in Japan.

The five-story pagoda stands on a square foundation at 32.45 m (106 ft) in height. A study of the annual growth rings in trees (dendrochronological analysis) found that the wood used in the center pillar of the pagoda is estimated to have been felled in 594. The pillar is set three meters below the surface of the massive stone foundation, stretching into the ground. It is believed that a fragment of the Buddha's bone is enshrined at the base of the pillar. Although the external view shows the pagoda being a five-story structure, it does not function as such to allow one to climb up inside.

#### 5. The **Kyaiktiyo Pagoda** of Myanmar

The Kyaiktiyo Pagoda, also known as the Golden Rock, is a well-known Buddhist pilgrimage site in Mon State, Myanmar. It is a small pagoda of 7.3 m (24 ft) high, built on top of a granite boulder covered with gold leaves pasted on by devotees.

The rock seems to defy gravity, as it perpetually appears to be on the verge of rolling down the hill. The rock and the pagoda are at the top of Mount Kyaiktiyo. It is the third most important Buddhist pilgrimage site in Myanmar after the Shwedagon Pagoda and the Mahamuni Pagoda.

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<sup>25</sup> In Japan, a Buddhist temple is called *In*, *Ji*, or *Tera* (pronounced Dera when used as suffix). An *In* usually denotes a small temple, often managed by a *Ji*, a larger one. For example, in Kamakura, the Meigetsu-in was originally part of the Kencho-ji, and in Kyoto, the Byodo-in was originally managed by the Enraku-ji.

The legend associated with the pagoda recites that the Buddha, on one of his many visits, gave a strand of his hair to a hermit. The hermit in turn gave the strand to a king, with a wish that the hair be enshrined in a boulder shaped like the hermit's head. The king, who inherited supernatural powers from his parents, found a boulder at the bottom of the sea, relocated it to Kyaiktiyo, and built a pagoda where the strand of hair was enshrined. According to legend, this strand of hair prevents the rock from tumbling down the hill. Thus, the Golden Rock itself is insecurely perched on a strand of the Buddha's hair.

Kyaiktiyo Pagoda or Golden Rock has become a popular pilgrimage and tourist attraction. At the peak of the pilgrimage season, during November to March, an atmosphere of devotion is witnessed at Kyaiktiyo pagoda. As the golden rock gleams in different unique shades from dawn to dusk, pilgrims' chants reverberate in the precincts of the shrine. Lighting of candles, meditation, and offering to the Buddha continue throughout the night. Men walk over a bridge across a gulf to affix square golden leaves on the face of the Golden Rock, in deep veneration.

Pilgrims visit the pagoda from all regions of Myanmar, as well as foreign tourists. Disabled persons who are faithful Buddhist devotees visit the pagoda, walking up the track on crutches. Old people, unable to climb, are carried on stretchers by porters to the pagoda to pay homage to the Buddha. On the full-moon day in March, a special occasion for pilgrims to visit the shrine, the platform of the pagoda is lighted with ninety thousand candles as reverential offering to the Buddha.

## 6. The **Chùa Một Cột** of Vietnam

The Chùa Một Cột, or One Pillar Pagoda, is a historic Buddhist temple in Hanoi, Vietnam. It is regarded, along with Chùa Hương (the Hương Temple), as one of the two most symbolic icons in Vietnamese culture.

Emperor Lý Thái Tông had the pagoda built in 1049. According to the court records, the emperor was childless. One night he dreamed that he met Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara,<sup>26</sup> who, while sitting on a lotus flower, handed

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<sup>26</sup> Quan Thế Âm Bồ Tát in Vietnamese.

him a baby boy. Lý Thái Tông then met a peasant girl and married her; later she bore him a son. In gratitude, the emperor had the pagoda constructed on top of one single stone pillar of 1.25 m (4 ft) in diameter, set in the middle of a lotus pond, an image similar to the lotus flower he saw in his dream.

During the Lý dynasty, the temple was the site of an annual royal ceremony on the occasion of Vesak. Emperor Lý Nhân Tông renovated the temple in 1105 and had a bell cast. However, the bell, which was regarded as one of the four major capital works of Vietnam at the time, was much too large and heavy, and could not be installed in 1109. Since it could not be tolled while left on the ground, the bell was moved to the countryside and deposited in an adjacent farmland. This land was widely inhabited by turtles, so the bell was known as Quy Điền Chung, which means the Bell of the Turtle Farmland.

At the start of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, the Ming dynasty of China invaded and occupied Vietnam. In 1426, General Lê Lợi, future Emperor Lê Thái Tổ who founded the Later Lê dynasty, attacked and dispersed the Chinese forces. While the Ming were in retreat and low on weapons, their commanding general ordered that the bell be melted and the copper used for manufacturing weaponry. In 1954, the French Union forces destroyed the pagoda before withdrawing from Vietnam after the First Indochina War. The pagoda was rebuilt afterwards.



## Temple

The word *temple*, derived from the Latin word *templum*, describes a structure reserved for religious or spiritual activities, such as prayers or similar rites. The word “temple”, dated back to the 6<sup>th</sup> century BC, has specific meanings associated with the religion of the ancient Rome. It now has become quite widely used to indicate a house of worship for any religion and is even used for time periods prior to the Romans.

The Vietnamese terminology “chùa” is often translated into English as “pagoda”, which causes confusion: “pagoda” in English refers to a tiered tower that houses a shrine or a religious object, for example, a bell or a statue. This section will use “temple” as a translation of “chùa”, for example, Thiên Mụ Temple, Xá Lợi Temple, the two prominent temples in Huế and Saigon, Vietnam.

Also included in this section are some monuments in the world referred to as “monastery”. Monastery denotes a complex of buildings that houses a room reserved for religious functions, and the domestic quarters and workplaces for monastic members.

There are numerous Buddhist temples in the world, diverse in size, architectural style, history, and culture. This section presents only a few notable temples in the alphabetical order of their country’s name.

## 1. The **Taktsang Dzong** of Bhutan

Taktsang Dzong, also known as Taktsang Monastery or The Tiger's Nest, is a prominent Tibetan Buddhist monastery located on the cliff side of the upper Paro Valley, in Bhutan. It was built in 1692, around the cave where the Indian Guru Padmasambhava is said to have meditated for three months in the 8<sup>th</sup> century. Padmasambhava is credited with introducing Mahayana Buddhism to Bhutan, and is regarded as the "protector saint of Bhutan".

The monastery is located 10 km (6.2 mi) to the north of Paro and hangs on a precipitous cliff at 3,120 m (10,240 ft) above sea level, or about 900 m (3,000 ft) above Paro Valley. The rock slopes are very steep, almost vertical, and the monastery is built into the rock face. Though it looks dreadful, the monastery complex has access from several directions, such as the north-west path through the forest, the path from the south used by devotees, and the access from the north over the rocky plateau. A mule track leading to the monastery passes through pine forest that is colorfully adorned with moss and prayer flags. On many days, clouds blanket the monastery and evoke a creepy feeling of remoteness.

The monastery buildings consist of four main temples and residential shelters, ideally designed by adapting to the granite ledges; the caves; and the rocky terrain. All the buildings are interconnected through wooden bridges, and steps and stairways carved in rocks. Each building has a balcony that provides lovely views of the scenic Paro Valley down below.

## 2. The **Angkor Wat** of Cambodia

Angkor Wat is a temple complex at Angkor, Cambodia, built for King Suryavarman II in the early 12<sup>th</sup> century as his state temple and capital city. As the only monument remaining at the site, the temple is a significant religious center since its foundation, first Hindu, and then Buddhist. The temple became a national symbol of Cambodia appearing on its flag since 1863, and recently the country's main tourist attraction.

Angkor Wat is the prime example of the classical style of Khmer architecture called the Angkor Wat style. By the 12<sup>th</sup> century, Khmer architects became skilled in using sandstone rather than brick as the main building material.

Typical decorative elements are extensive bas-reliefs of devatas (or guardian spirits), garlands and narrative scenes on walls, columns, lintels, and pediments; and carved figures on towers and roofs.

## Structures

The **outer wall** is a rectangular of 1,024 m by 802 m (3,358 ft x 2,630 ft) and 4.5 m (14.8 ft) high; it is surrounded by a 30 m (98 ft) apron of open ground and a moat of 190 m (623 ft) wide. Access to the temple is by an earth bank to the east and a sandstone causeway to the west. The outer wall encloses a vast area of 820,000 sq m (203 acres). The area was originally occupied, besides the temple, by the city and the royal palace, which nothing remains today, except the outlines of some of the streets and most of the area is now covered by overgrown trees and forest.

The **temple** is a massive structure that stands on a terrace raised higher than the city. It is made of three rectangular galleries rising to a central tower, each level higher than the previous one.

The *outer gallery* measures 187 m by 215 m (613 ft x 705 ft), with pavilions at the corners, and opens to the outside of the temple. A cruciform cloister, called *Preah Poan* or the Hall of Thousand Buddhas, connects the outer gallery to the second gallery on the west side, and marks out four small courtyards (in the foreground, photo of a model of Angkor Wat on opposite page).

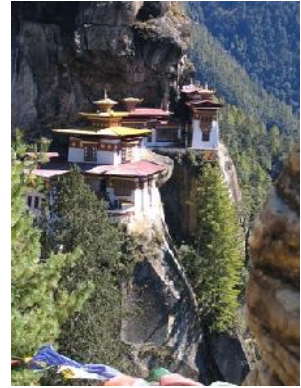
The *second gallery* is 100 m by 115 m (328 ft x 377 ft). Another cruciform terrace connects the second and inner galleries.

The *inner gallery*, called the *Bakan*, is a 60 m (196 ft) square with galleries connecting the central shrine and subsidiary shrines located below the corner towers. Three sets of steps on each side of the inner gallery lead up to the corner towers. The very steep stairways are said to represent the difficulty of ascending the kingdom of the gods.

# Temple



Taktsang Monastery in Bhutan.



Steep rock slopes, almost vertical.



Angkor Wat in Angkor, Cambodia.



A model of Angkor Wat showing the outer, second and inner galleries.



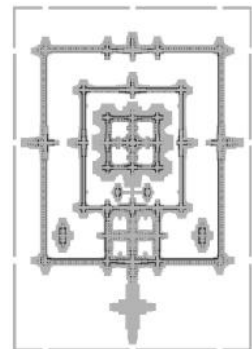
Angkor Wat appears on the flag of Cambodia since 1863.



Inside a gallery.



Devatas are characteristic of the Angkor Wat style.



Detailed plan of Angkor Wat.





Typical Angkor Wat style: extensive decoration of (clockwise from top left corner) bas-reliefs on columns, pediments, lintels; and carved figures on towers and roofs.



Steep stairways lead up to the corner towers.



Angkor Wat covered by overgrown trees and forest.



Prevention of further collapse at Angkor Wat.



The tower above the central shrine is raised above the surrounding four towers, to a height of 65 m (213 ft) above the ground (in the background, photo of a model of Angkor Wat).

The central shrine originally occupied by a statue of Vishnu, the god of Hindu, and open on each side; it was walled in, when the temple was converted to Theravada Buddhism, with new walls featuring standing Buddhas.

### **Construction Techniques**

The stones were laid without mortar; very tight joints were sometimes hard to find. The blocks were held together by mortise and tenon joints in some cases, while in others dovetails and gravity were used. The blocks were presumably put in place by a combination of elephants, coir ropes, cranes, and bamboo scaffolding.

The monument was made out of enormous amounts of sandstone, approximately five million tons. This sandstone had to be transported from Mount Kulen, a quarry approximately 40 km (25 mi) to the north-east. One modern engineer estimated that it would take 300 years to complete Angkor Wat today. Yet the monument was started soon after King Suryavarman ascended the throne and was finished shortly after his death, no more than 40 years.

A stonemason and sculptor recreated a stone sculpture of about 1.2 m (4 ft), he found that it took about 60 days to carve; others conducted experiments to quarry sandstone: it took 12 quarrymen 22 days to quarry about 400 tons of stone. The labor force to quarry, transport, carve, and install this much sandstone of Angkor Wat must have run into the thousands, including many highly skilled artisans. The skill required to carve those sculptures was developed hundreds of years earlier, as demonstrated by some artifacts that were dated back to the 7<sup>th</sup> century.

Since the 1990s, Angkor Wat has seen continued conservation efforts. The temple is part of the Angkor World Heritage Site, established in 1992, which has encouraged the Cambodian government to protect the site and provided some funding. Massive increase in tourism also generated addition funds with ticket revenues.

### 3. The Putuo Zongcheng Temple of China

Putuo Zongcheng Temple of Chengde, Hebei Province, China is a Buddhist temple complex built between 1767 and 1771 during the reign of Emperor Qianlong of the Qing dynasty. The temple was modeled after the Potala Palace of Tibet, the old sanctuary of the Dalai Lama built a century earlier. Thus the Putuo Zongcheng represents a fusion of Chinese and Tibetan architectural styles.

The temple complex covers a surface area of around 220,000 sq m (54.36 acres), making it one of the largest in China. Many of its halls and pavilions are adorned with copper and gold tiled roofs, adding to the splendor of the site.

The Putuo Zongcheng Temple was originally dedicated to Emperor Qianlong to commemorate his birthday, and provided Hebei Province with a temple of equal size and splendor as the Tibetan Potala Palace. In addition to its functions of hosting Buddhist ceremonies and festivals, the Putuo Zongcheng temple was a location of meetings for the emperor and different ethnic messengers from within his empire.

### 4. The Shaolin Monastery of China

Shaolin Monastery is a Buddhist temple at Song Shan (Mount Song) near Zhengzhou City, Henan Province, China. Founded in the 5<sup>th</sup> century, the monastery is long famous for its association with Chinese martial arts, particularly with Shaolin Kung Fu. The Shaolin monastery is the Mahayana Buddhist temple perhaps best known to the Western world.

In 477, Emperor Xiaowen of the Northern Wei dynasty had the Shaolin Monastery built on the western peak of Mount Song. The monastery was destroyed and rebuilt many times.



Putuo Zongcheng Temple in Hebei, China.



Main entrance to the temple complex.



Golden roof top of Wanfaguiyi Hall,  
Putuo Zongcheng Temple.



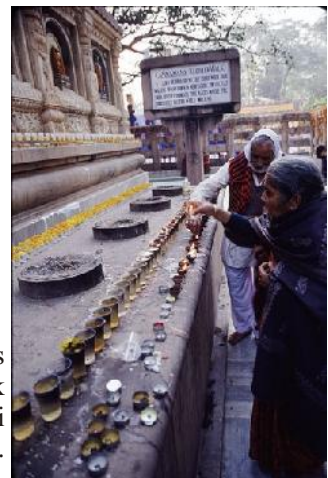
Shaolin Monastery in Henan, China.



The pagoda forest at Shaolin Monastery.



Mahabodhi Temple  
in Bodhi Gaya, India.



Pilgrims light candles  
at the cloister walk  
of the Mahabodhi  
Temple.



Mendut Temple in Central Java, Indonesia.



The three statues of Buddhist divinities at Mendut Temple.



Pawon Temple in Central Java, Indonesia.



Location of the Buddhist temples triad: Borobudur-Pawon-Mendut in one straight line.



Byodo-in in Kyoto, Japan.



Phoenix Hall at Byodo-in.

The obverse of the Japanese 10-yen coin shows image of the Phoenix Hall.



The head of the Amitabha Buddha statue is visible through the Phoenix Hall's façade.

Launched in 1966, the Cultural Revolution<sup>27</sup> targeted religious orders including the Shaolin Monastery. The Red Guards attacked the monastery, fettered the five resident monks, and forced them to wear placards declaring the crimes charged against them. The monks were jailed after being beaten publicly and parading through the street as people threw rubbish at them. The government removed Buddhist materials from within the monastery walls, leaving it barren for years.

### 5. The **Mahabodhi Temple** of India

Mahabodhi Temple, literally “Great Awakening Temple,” is a Buddhist temple in Bodh Gaya, India, the location where Monk Gautama attained enlightenment. Next to the temple, to its western side, is the holy Bodhi tree.

In circa 250 BC, about 300 years after the Buddha attained enlightenment, Emperor Asoka visited Bodh Gaya with the intention of establishing a monastery and shrine. As part of the temple, he built the diamond throne, called the *Vajrasana*, attempting to mark the exact spot of the Buddha’s enlightenment. Asoka is considered the founder of the Mahabodhi Temple. The present temple dates to the 5<sup>th</sup>–6<sup>th</sup> century. It is one of the earliest Buddhist temples built entirely in brick that is still standing in India. In 2002, Mahabodhi Temple is recognized as a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

### 6. The **Mendut and Pawon Temples** of Indonesia

Mendut Temple is a Buddhist temple located in Mendut Village, Central Java, Indonesia, about 3 km (1.9 mi) east from Borobudur (see section Stupa). Mendut, Pawon, and Borobudur are located in one straight line. The temple is 26.4 m (86 ft) tall and stands on an elevated square base. The temple is

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<sup>27</sup> Mao Zedong, the chairman of the Communist Party of China, launched the Cultural Revolution on May 16, 1966. The Cultural Revolution was a violent mass movement that resulted in social, political, and economic turmoil in the People’s Republic of China. It ended officially with Mao’s death in 1976. Thirty-six million people were cruelly treated, and as many as three million people died in the violence of the Cultural Revolution.

extensively adorned with bas-reliefs of Buddhist divinities and guardian spirits.

The temple has two chambers, a small one in the front, and a large main chamber in the center, which houses three large carved stone statues. The three statues are the Buddhist main divinities that denote the spiritual purpose of the founding of this temple: Dhyani Vairocana Buddha in the center, Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara on the left, and Bodhisattva Vajrasana on the right representing the liberation from, respectively, the bodily *karma*, the *karma* of speech, and the *karma* of thought.

Pawon Temple is a Buddhist temple in Central Java, Indonesia, located between Borobudur (1.75 km (1 mi) to the north-east), and Mendut (1.15 km (.7 mi) to the south-west). Pawon and Mendut were built in the 8<sup>th</sup> century and are slightly older than Borobudur.

The three temples were located on a straight line, suggesting that there was a symbolic implication that binds these temples. Most probably, this temple served to purify the mind prior to ascending Borobudur.

Today, during the full moon in May or June, Buddhists in Indonesia observe the Vesak annual ritual by walking from Mendut, passing through Pawon, and ending at Borobudur.

## 7. The **Byodo-in** of Japan

Byodo-in is a Buddhist temple in the city of Uji, Kyoto Prefecture, Japan. It is a temple of the Jodo Shu (Pure Land Buddhism) and Tendai sects.

The temple was originally built in 998 as a rural villa of Fujiwara no Michinaga, one of the most powerful members of the Fujiwara clan. The villa was converted into a Buddhist temple in 1052. The most famous building in the complex is the Phoenix Hall or the Amida Hall, constructed in 1053. It is the only remaining original building, surrounded by a scenic pond; other buildings within the compound were burned down during the civil war in 1336.

The Phoenix Hall, set at the edge of a large man-made pond, consists of a central hall, flanked by two L-shaped wing corridors on each side and a tail corridor, thus its name is considered to derive both from the building's layout similar to a phoenix with outstretched wings and a tail, and a pair of phoenixes adorning the roof. The hall's walls were decorated with bas-reliefs of celestial hosts, believed to accompany Amitabha Buddha when he descended from the Western Paradise to gather devotee souls at the moment of death, and transport them back to the Paradise.

Inside the Phoenix Hall, a single statue of Amitabha Buddha sits on a high platform. The statue was made of pieces of Japanese cypress, carved out like shells, joined from the inside, then covered with gold leaf on the exterior. The statue, in sitting position, measures about 3m (9.8 ft) high from its knees to its face.

Japan commemorates the Phoenix Hall's longevity and cultural significance by displaying its image on the 10-yen coin and the 10,000-yen note. The Phoenix Hall, the great statue of Amitabha Buddha inside it, and several other items at Byodo-in are national treasures. In December 1994, UNESCO listed the building as a World Heritage Site within the Historic Monuments of Ancient Kyoto.

## 8. The **Kinkaku-ji** of Japan

Kinkaku-ji, literally "Temple of the Golden Pavilion," formally called Rokuon-ji, is a Zen Buddhist temple in Kyoto, Japan. Kinkaku-ji was built in 1397 to serve as a retirement villa for shogun Ashikaga Yoshimitsu. His son, shogun Ashikaga Yoshimochi, later converted the building into a Zen temple.

In 1950, the pavilion was burned down by a monk, who then attempted suicide on the hill behind the building. He survived, was subsequently taken into custody and sentenced to seven years in prison; he was released because of mental illness in 1955 and died of other illnesses shortly after in 1956.

The present structure dates from 1955. In 1984, the coating of Japanese lacquer was found a little decayed; a new coating and gilding with gold-leaf, much thicker than the original coatings (5/10,000 mm instead of 1/10,000 mm), was completed in 1987. Finally, the roof was restored in 2003.



The Golden Pavilion, or Kinkaku-ji, is a three-story building with the top two stories covered with pure gold leaf. The Golden Pavilion is set in a magnificent Japanese garden, and the pond in front of it is called Kyoko-chi, or Mirror Pond.

## 9. The **Sinheungsa** of South Korea

Sinheungsa<sup>28</sup> is a head temple of the Jogye Order of Korean Buddhism. It is located in the Seoraksan National Park, in Sokcho, South Korea. Historical accounts vary as to whether this ancient Zen temple was first constructed in 653 or in 637. It burned to the ground in 699, was rebuilt in 710, burned again in 1645, and was rebuilt in 1648 at its present location.

On the grounds of Sinheungsa, there is a famous bronze Buddha statue, called The Great Unification Buddha, or the Tongil Daebul. The statue is 14.6 m (48 ft) high, weighs 108 tons, and sits atop a 4.3 m (14 ft) high lotus pedestal, making a total height of 18.9 m (62 ft).

The lotus pedestal consists of 16 delicately engraved panels. The forehead of Tongil Daebul is adorned with eight stones of amber, 8 cm (3 in) in diameter each, encircling a single jade of 10 cm (4 in) in diameter. Tongil Daebul sits with legs crossed and half-closed eyes in meditation. A flowing robe with gentle folds drapes over the Buddha's robust torso revealing the right shoulder. The statue is hollow and contains within three pieces of the Buddha's robe, the remains collected after his cremation donated by the Myanmar government, and the *Tripitaka*.

The statue, with its name of The Great Unification Buddha, represents the determined wish of the Korean people for the reunification of their divided country.

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<sup>28</sup> In Korea, most Buddhist temples have names ending in *sa*, which means "temple".



Kinkaku-ji in Kyoto, Japan.



Kinkaku-ji in snow.



Inside of Kinkaku-ji.



The third floor of Kinkaku-ji covered with pure gold leaf.



Sinheungsa in Sokcho, South Korea.



The statue of Tongil Daebul Buddha at Sinheungsa.



Bojero pavilion, built in 1770 on the grounds of Sinheungsa.





Haeinsa in Gyeongsang, South Korea.



Copy of the *Tripitaka Koreana* woodblock.



The Pond of Reflection at Haeinsa.

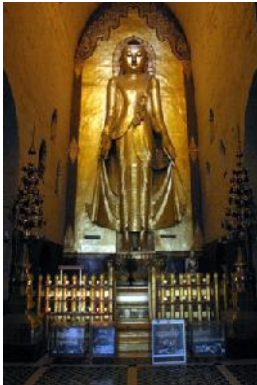
Janggyeong Panjeon, the storehouse of 81,258 wooden printing blocks at Haeinsa.



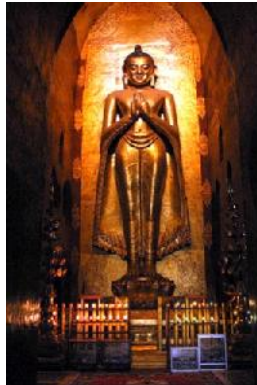
Ananda Temple in Bagan, Myanmar.

An *hti*, a decorated rooftop at Ananda Temple.

Standing Buddha statues at Ananda Temple.



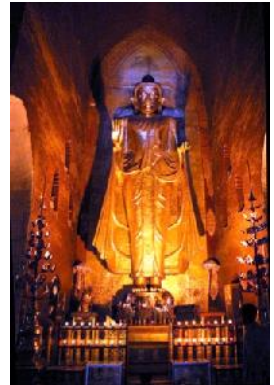
North facing, Krakucchanda Buddha.



East facing, Kanakamuni Buddha.



South facing, Kasyapa Buddha.



West facing, Sakyamuni Buddha.

## 10. The **Haeinsa** of South Korea

Haeinsa, or Temple of Reflection on a Smooth Sea, is a head temple of the Jogye Order of Korean Buddhism in the Gaya Mountains, South Gyeongsang Province, South Korea. Haeinsa is most notable for being the home of the *Tripitaka Koreana*, the whole of the Buddhist scriptures carved onto 81,258 wooden printing blocks, which it has housed since 1398.

Haeinsa is one of the Three Jewel Temples of South Korea, and represents the Dharma, with the other two temples being the Tondosa, also in South Gyeongsang Province, representing the Buddha, and the Songgwangsa in South Jeolla Province, the Sangha.

The temple was first built in 802. The temple complex was renovated many times in its history; Haeinsa was burned down in a fire in 1817, and the main hall was rebuilt in 1818.

The storage halls, known as the Janggyeong Panjeon complex, the oldest part of the temple, are the depository of 81,258 wooden printing blocks from the *Tripitaka Koreana* scriptures. The complex survived seven serious fires and one near-bombing during the Korean War.

Several ingenious preservation techniques are utilized to protect the wooden printing blocks, including by means of nature. The storage complex was built at the highest point of the temple and is 655 m (2,148 ft) above sea level. Janggyeong Panjeon faces south-west to avoid south-east damp winds from the valley below, and is blocked from the cold north wind by mountain peaks. The windows were installed in every hall to maximize ventilation and regulate temperature. The clay floors were filled with charcoal, calcium oxide, salt, lime, and sand, which reduce humidity by absorbing excess moisture during the rainy months, and regulate moisture during the dry winter months. The roof was also made of clay; and the brackets and wood rafters prevent sudden changes in temperature. No part of the complex is exposed to the sun. Apparently, animals, insects, and birds avoid the complex, but the reason for this is unknown.

In 1970, a modern storage complex was built utilizing modern preservation techniques, but when test woodblocks were found to have mildewed, the intended move was canceled and the woodblocks remained at Haeinsa.

The Haeinsa and the Depositories for the *Tripitaka Koreana* woodblocks were added to the UNESCO World Heritage List in 1995.

### 11. The **Ananda Temple** of Myanmar

Ananda Temple, located in Bagan, Myanmar, is a Buddhist temple built in 1105 during the reign of King Kyanzittha (1084–1113) of the Pagan dynasty. The impressive temple, a fusion of Mon and Indian architectural styles, was also titled the Westminster Abbey of Burma.

The name “Ananda” of the temple derived from the name of Venerable Ananda, the Buddha’s first cousin, a personal attendant, and one of his principal disciples.

The temple layout is in a cruciform with several terraces leading to a small pagoda, covered at the top by an umbrella known as an *hti*, which is a rooftop decorated with an ornament, found in most of pagodas in Myanmar.

The structure is 51 m (167 ft) high, formed by four terraces, with a total length from end to end of 88 m (290 ft). The temple was built with bricks and plaster. It is extensively decorated with sculpture in stones, paintings, and plaques of glazed terra-cotta tiles, a unique feature of Ananda Temple.

The core part of the temple, at the center of the terraces, is in the shape of a cube, which houses four gigantic standing Buddha statues, each facing the cardinal direction of north, east, south, and west. Each statue stands 9.5 m (31 ft) high on a 2.4 m (8 ft) high throne in solid teak wood, is fully covered with gold leaf and in different *mudra*<sup>29</sup> positions. Each statue represents a Buddha of the present *kalpa*;<sup>30</sup> the north facing statue represents Krakucchanda Buddha, the first Buddha; the east facing, Kanakamuni Buddha, the second Buddha; the south facing, Kasyapa Buddha, the third Buddha; and the west facing, Sakyamuni Buddha, the fourth Buddha.

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<sup>29</sup> *Mudra* is a ritual gesture of the hands or body in Hinduism and Buddhism symbolizing different aspects of Buddhist doctrines, teachings, and protection.

<sup>30</sup> *Kalpa*, or “kiệp” in Vietnamese, is a Sanskrit word meaning eon, a long period of time in Hindu and Buddhist cosmology based on a notion that the world comes into being, develops, degenerates, and is destroyed. It is equivalent to 4.32 billion years.

The base, walls, sides, and terraces are decorated with thousands of embossed plaques, which are made of glazed terra-cotta tiles and illustrate the scenes in the *Jataka* tales (stories of the previous lives of the Buddha).

## 12. The Wat Phra Kaew of Thailand

The Wat Phra Kaew, or the Temple of the Emerald Buddha, is located in the historic center of Bangkok, Thailand. It is regarded as the most sacred Buddhist temple in Thailand.

The main building houses the statue of Emerald Buddha, a dark green statue in a standing form, about 66 cm (26 in) tall, carved from a single jade stone. According to the statue's historical records, it was found in Cambodia in the 15<sup>th</sup> century, it was then moved to Laos in the 16<sup>th</sup> century where it remained for 215 years and finally to Thailand in the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

Considering the long history and the prophecy that the Emerald Buddha would “bring prosperity and ascendancy to each country in which it resides,” the Emerald Buddha deified in the Wat Phra Kaew is deeply revered and venerated in Thailand as the protector of the country. No one other than the Thai King is allowed to touch the statue. The king changes the cloak around the statue three times a year, corresponding to the summer, winter, and rainy seasons, an important ritual performed to steer good fortune to the country during each season.

Wat Phra Kaew complex covers a total area of over 94.5 hectares (234 acres) within the precincts of the Grand Palace. It includes over 100 buildings with 200 years of royal history and architectural enhancement. The Temple of the Emerald Buddha is very elegantly decorated. The roof is embellished with polished orange and green tiles, the pillars are inlaid in mosaic and the pediments are made of rich marble. The statue of the Emerald Buddha is placed on an elevated altar surrounded by large gilded ornaments.

The complex decoration features elegant doors and windows, copper plates on the floor, wall paintings displaying various stages of the Buddha's life, entrances guarded by mythical half-man half-bird creatures, giant demons...

Other monuments in the complex are:

- . The Grand Palace, adjoining the temple and is the former residence of the Thai King.
- . Three pagodas, one of which is the Phra Si Ratana stupa enshrining the ashes of the Buddha.
- . The Phra Mondop, or the Library, in which a large bookcase houses the 84,000 chapters of the *Tripitaka*.
- . The model of Angkor Wat, which symbolizes the sharing of cultural and religious roots of the two countries Cambodia and Thailand.

### 13. The **Huong Temple** of Vietnam

Huong Temple, or Chùa Hương in Vietnamese, commonly known as Perfume Temple, is a vast complex of Buddhist temples and shrines built into the limestone Hương Tích Mountains. The Hương Temple complex lies in Hương Sơn Commune, Mỹ Đức District, in Hanoi, Vietnam.

Many monuments in the complex are spread out among the limestone hills and tropical forests in the area of Hương Tích Mountains. Pilgrims to the complex may follow various routes, including from the Đáy River or Yên River.

Approaching from the Đáy River, one will first come across Đền Trình (Registration Shrine). Beyond Đền Trình are: Thiên Trù Temple, also known as Chùa Ngoài (Outer Temple); Giải Oan Temple (Clarify Injustice Temple); Giải Oan stream; and Long Tuyền pond.

The center of the Chùa Hương complex is Hương Tích Cave, which houses Chùa Trong (Inner Temple). The entrance of the cave appears as a shape of an open dragon's mouth with a quotation in Chinese characters carved on the wall; the corresponding Vietnamese quotation is “Nam Thiên Đệ Nhất Động,” which translates into English as “The First Ranking Cave of the South.” The carving is dated back to 1770 and the words are attributed to Lord Trịnh Sâm, the ruler in North Vietnam at that time.



Wat Phra Kaew complex in Bangkok, Thailand.



Emerald Buddha statue enshrined in Wat Phra Kaew.



Entrance to the library Phra Mondop.



On Yên River, pilgrims travel by boat to Hương Temple complex in Hanoi, Vietnam.



Hương Tích Cave within Hương Temple complex.



Thiên Trù Temple

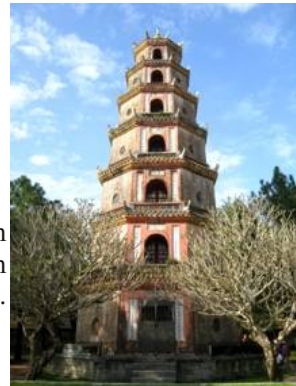


The gate at Thiên Trù Temple.





Thiên Mụ Temple in Huế, Vietnam.



Phước Duyên Tower at Thiên Mụ Temple.



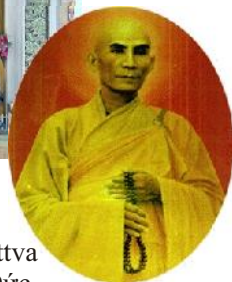
On display at Thiên Mụ Temple is the Austin automobile in which Venerable Thích Quảng Đức was driven to his self-immolation in 1963.



Xá Lợi Temple in Saigon, South Vietnam.



The altar in the main hall at Xá Lợi Temple.



Portrait of Bodhisattva Thích Quảng Đức.



The bell tower at Xá Lợi Temple.



Venerable Thích Quảng Đức self-immolated on June 11, 1963 in Saigon, South Vietnam.

Other sites included in the Chùa Hương complex are Thiên Sơn Pagoda, Thuyết Kinh Grotto, Phật Tích Temple, and Vông Temple. Legend says that Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara went south and stayed at Hương Tích Cave to help saving human souls. A stone at Phật Tích Temple is said to be her preserved footprint.

The first temple was probably a small structure on the current site of Thiên Trù Temple, which existed during the reign of Emperor Lê Thánh Tông in the 1400s, while Chùa Trong was constructed in the late 1600s. Over the years some of the structures were damaged and replaced, for example, the original statues of the Buddha and Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara were cast from bronze in 1767 and replaced with the current statues in 1793, the bell tower at Thiên Trù Temple was rebuilt in 1986 and the gate completed in 1994.

Much Vietnamese literature made Chùa Hương its inspirational focus, including the renowned poem *Phong Cảnh Hương Sơn* (Delights of Hương Sơn), written by poet Chu Mạnh Trinh (1862–1905). One particular legend about Chùa Hương was preserved in a poem entitled *Chùa Hương* by poet Nguyễn Nhược Pháp (1914–1938); the poem recites the story of a maiden who accompanied her parents on pilgrimage to Chùa Hương and found love while there.

#### 14. The Thiên Mụ Temple of Vietnam

Thiên Mụ Temple, a historic temple in the city of Huế, Vietnam, was constructed by Lord Nguyễn Hoàng in 1601. The temple is often the subject of folk rhymes about Huế, and regarded as an unofficial symbol of the Nguyễn imperial capital.

In 1710, Lord Nguyễn Phúc Chu funded the casting of a giant bell, which weighs 3,285 kg (3.62 US tons) and was regarded as one of the most prized cultural relics of its time in Vietnam. The bell is said to be audible 10 km (6.2 mi) away, and subject of many poems and songs.

Emperor Thiệu Trị of the Nguyễn dynasty ordered the construction of the Phước Duyên Tower in 1844. The tower, an octagonal brick structure, stands 21 m (68 ft) high with seven stories, each dedicated to a particular Buddha.

The complex Thiên Mụ is laid out in a linear pattern, with the Phước Duyên Tower closest to the Hương River (commonly known as Perfume River) and the three halls, Đại Hùng, Địa Tạng and Quan Âm behind it. Other notable items housed in the temple include a stele on the back of a large marble turtle dated back to 1715, and the blue Austin automobile, in which Venerable Thích Quảng Đức was driven in Saigon in 1963, to the place of his self-immolating in protest against the policies of the Ngô Đình Diệm regime.

During the summer of 1963, Thiên Mụ Temple, like many other temples in South Vietnam, became a hotbed of anti-government protest. South Vietnam's Buddhist majority had long been discontent with the rule of President Ngô Đình Diệm, who showed strong favoritism toward Catholics and discrimination against Buddhists. The anger exploded into mass protest in Huế when nine Buddhists died at the hand of Diệm's army and police on Vesak. Consequently, Thiên Mụ Temple was a major organizing facility for the Buddhist movement and was often the location of hunger strikes, barricades, and protests.

### 15. The **Xá Lợi Temple** of Vietnam

Xá Lợi Temple was built in 1956 in Saigon, South Vietnam. It was also the headquarters of Buddhist Congregation in South Vietnam. The name Xá Lợi is the Vietnamese translation of *sariraka*, a Sanskrit term used for Buddhist relics.

The temple is separated from the street by a gated fence and occupies an area of 2,500 sq m (26,900 sq ft), which includes a number of buildings, especially the main hall and the bell tower.

The main hall is located on the upper level. Men ascend by the stairs on the left hand side, women by those on the right. The hall is rectangular in shape and supported by pillars. An enormous statue of Sakyamuni Buddha dominated the altar in the main hall. The statue depicts the Buddha seated in meditation on a lotus blossom, draped in a robe with gentle folds revealing the right shoulder. The statue is in its current state since 1969, when it was gilded with a gold coating.

The bell tower of Xá Lợi Temple was open in 1961. The seven-story tower stands 32 m (104 ft) high. The top story houses a bell that weighs two tons and was cast in the model of the bell of Thiên Mụ Temple in Huế.

### **The Raids of Xá Lợi Temple**

The temple is most well known abroad for the Xá Lợi Temple Raids, in which the Army of the Republic of Vietnam Special Forces loyal to Ngô Đình Nhu, the brother of the Catholic President Ngô Đình Diệm, raided and vandalized the temple on August 21, 1963.

#### ***. The background***

In South Vietnam, the Buddhist majority was estimated to eighty percent of the population in 1963. President Ngô Đình Diệm, a member of the Catholic minority, adopted pro-Catholic policies and was biased toward Catholics in public service, allocation of land, military promotions, business favors, and tax concessions.

In May 1963, the government invoked a rarely-enforced 1958 law, known as Decree Number 10, to prohibit the display of religious flags. The application of the law disallowed the flying of the Buddhist flag on Vesak, and caused resentment among Buddhists on the eve of the most important religious festival of the year, as a week earlier Catholics were encouraged to display Vatican flags at a government-sponsored celebration for Diệm's brother, Archbishop Ngô Đình Thục, the most senior Catholic cleric in the country. On May 8, in Huế, Buddhists gathered to protest against the ban on the Buddhist flag. The police and army threw grenades at the crowd and opened fire, killing nine people.

Diệm's denial of governmental responsibility for the incident led to discontent among the Buddhist majority, and spurred a protest movement against the Diệm regime throughout May and June. The objective of the protests was to have Decree Number 10 repealed and demand Diệm to implement religious equality.

### **. *The build-up***

Buddhist temples in major cities became assembly points for protesters and Buddhist monks from rural areas.

On June 11, Venerable Thích Quảng Đức self immolated in downtown Saigon to denounce the Diệm government's policy toward Buddhists, and demand religious equality in Vietnam.

The body of Venerable Thích Quảng Đức was cremated during the funeral, but his heart remained intact and did not burn. It was considered to be holy and placed in a glass trophy at Xá Lợi Temple. The intact heart relic is regarded as a symbol of Compassion; and Venerable Thích Quảng Đức has subsequently been revered by Vietnamese Buddhists as a Bodhisattva (Bồ Tát) and accordingly is often referred to in Vietnamese as Bồ Tát Thích Quảng Đức.

The news outlets showed the images of Venerable Thích Quảng Đức's self-immolation across the world, embarrassing Diệm's government and bringing negative global attention. A few days later, under mounting pressure from the United States, Diệm signed the Joint Communiqué with senior Buddhist leaders, making various concessions to the Buddhists, who in turn agreed to stop the civil turmoil and return to normal life.

However, neither the Ngô family nor the Buddhists were happy with the agreement. Both sides accused the other of failing to uphold their obligations; the government accused the Buddhists of continuing to insult them in demonstrations, while the Buddhists accused Diệm of stalling and not acting on his commitments to religious reform, and continuing to detain arrested Buddhist dissidents. The demonstrations and tension continued throughout July and August, with more self-immolations.

### **. *The raids***

Xá Lợi Temple was the hub of Buddhist activism in the capital of South Vietnam. Many monastic groups from outside Saigon and prominent Buddhist leaders congregated at Xá Lợi since the dispute began. The temple was used

as a venue for press conferences, media interviews, publication of pamphlets, and organizing mass demonstrations.

The raids were a series of synchronized attacks on various Buddhist temples of South Vietnam shortly after midnight on August 21, 1963. The Xá Lợi Temple, the largest in Saigon, South Vietnam capital, was the most invaded and vandalized.

At the time, Ngô Đình Nhu was hostile to the Buddhists. Nhu was the younger brother and main confidant of President Diệm; he was also regarded as the real power behind the Ngô family's rule. On the night of the raids, Nhu's men were armed with pistols, shotguns, sub-machine guns, grenades and tear gas. The red-beret Special Forces were joined by truckloads of steel-helmeted combat police in army camouflage uniforms.

Two of Nhu's senior aides were seen outside Xá Lợi directing the operation, while Nhu and his wife, Madame Ngô Đình Nhu, watched the action from a nearby tank. Monks and nuns who barricaded themselves behind wooden shields were attacked with rifle handles and bayonets. The bell in Xá Lợi tower was struck continuously to alert the population of the raids, but its sound was largely masked by that of machine gun fire, exploding grenades, shattering glass, and human screaming. The military troops shouted as they attacked, while the defenseless occupants shrieked in fear.

The Secret Police forces tried to seize Venerable Thích Quảng Đức's relics, but two monks escaped with the urn, jumping over the back fence and finding safety at the U.S. Operations Mission in adjacent building. Nhu's men, however, managed to confiscate the charred heart of Venerable Thích Quảng Đức.

### *. The toll*

Other Buddhist temples in major cities were simultaneously attacked on August 21, 1963. At Từ Đàm Temple in Huế, government forces fired rifles, demolished a statue of Sakyamuni Buddha, looted, and overran the temple; they set off an explosion leveling much of the temple, many Buddhists were shot or battered to death.

The most determined resistance to the Diệm regime occurred outside the Diệu Đế Temple, also in Huế. As military troops spreading barbed wires barricade across the bridge leading to the temple, the crowd tore it down with their bare hands, fought the heavily armed troops with rocks, sticks, and bare fists. After a five-hour battle, the military won control and drove the armored cars through the angry crowd at sunrise. The defense of the bridge and Diệu Đế Temple left 30 dead and 200 wounded.

Across the country, more than 1,400 Buddhists were arrested; the total number of dead and missing was never confirmed.



## Chapter Nine: Buddhism in Vietnam

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## Chapter Nine: Buddhism in Vietnam

In her four-thousand-year history, Vietnam was often renamed through dynastic changes. For simplicity purposes, Chapter Nine will use the current name “Vietnam”, known to the world since 1945.

The following chart summarizes the dynasties and notable events in the history of Vietnam. The dynasties referred to in Chapter Nine are highlighted in bold type.

Year	Country Name	Dynasty	Notable Event
2879 BC	Văn Lang	Hồng Bàng (2879 BC–257 BC)	
257 BC	Âu Lạc	Thục (257 BC–207 BC)	
207 BC	Nam Việt	Triệu (207 BC–111 BC)	
111 BC	Giao Chỉ	First Chinese governance (111 BC–40)	Trung sisters’ revolt in 40
40	(same)	Trung Vương (40–43)	
43	(same)	Second Chinese governance (43–544)	Lý Bôn’s revolt in 541
544	Vạn Xuân	Early Lý (544–602)	
602	Giao Châu	Third Chinese governance (602–938)	Ngô Quyền’s revolt in 938
939	Đại Việt	Ngô (939–965)	
968	Đại Cồ Việt	<b>Đinh</b> <b>(968–980)</b>	
980	(same)	<b>Early Lê</b> <b>(980–1009)</b>	

## Chapter Nine: Buddhism in Vietnam

<b>Year</b>	<b>Country Name</b>	<b>Dynasty</b>	<b>Notable Event</b>
1010	(same)	<b>Lý (1010–1225)</b>	
1225	Đại Việt	<b>Trần (1225–1400)</b>	Defeat of the Mongol's invasions in 1284 and 1288
1400	Đại Ngu	Hồ (1400–1407)	
1407	Đại Việt	Later Trần (1407–1413)	
1413	An Nam	China's Ming dynasty's governance (1413–1427)	Lê Lợi's revolt in 1418
1428	Đại Việt	<b>Later Lê (1428–1788)</b>	
1788	An Nam	<b>Nguyễn Tây Sơn (1788–1802)</b>	Defeat of the Manchu's invasion in 1789
1802	Việt Nam	<b>Nguyễn (1802–1944)</b>	Vietnam became part of French Indochina colony.
1945	(same)	<b>Vietnam Democratic Republic</b>	The Communist Party of Vietnam seized control of the country.
1954	(same)	In the North: <b>Vietnam Democratic Republic</b> In the South: <b>Republic of Vietnam</b>	The Geneva Accords divided the country into two parts, North and South.
1975	(same)	<b>Socialist Republic of Vietnam (1975–present)</b>	North Vietnam forces invaded South Vietnam.

## The Dawn

**E**mperor Asoka organized the Third Council in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC, thereafter he sent missionaries to other countries of the world. One of those Buddhist delegates went to Burma (today Myanmar) and then Indochina, including Vietnam.

Tonkin, or Bắc Kỳ in Vietnamese, is the northernmost part of Vietnam, on the Red River delta, adjacent to the south of China's Yunnan and Guangxi provinces. Since Tonkin was on the direct sea route between India and China for pilgrims and merchants, it became a center for the propagation of Buddhism from India, and the translation of Buddhist sacred scriptures from Sanskrit into Chinese, the official scripts in Vietnam at that time.

In the 2<sup>nd</sup> century (168–189), Buddhism in Vietnam became more popular and developed with the contribution of the religious pilgrims from India and the refugees of persecution from China. Buddhism in Vietnam followed the Mahayana tradition since the beginning.

By the 7<sup>th</sup> century, Buddhism flourished with pilgrims and prominent members of the Sangha congregated from all parts of Asia. The Sui dynasty of China, who occupied and reigned over Vietnam at that time, promoted Buddhism and granted financial aid to build Buddhist monuments in the country. The successor dynasty of China, the Tang, continued to favor Buddhism in Vietnam through her independence in the 10<sup>th</sup> century.



## Buddhism in the Early Centuries

. In 939, the independence of Vietnam from the thousand-year reign of China brought a temporary setback for Buddhism. But when the Đinh dynasty was founded, Emperor Đinh Tiên Hoàng (968–980) aided and granted titles to Buddhist monks. This policy was upheld and reinforced through the Early Lê dynasty (980–1009), the Lý dynasty (1010–1225), and the Trần dynasty (1225–1400).

During those periods in the history of Vietnam, Buddhism helped in establishing the kingship, shaping and protecting the country. The smooth relationships between the royal court and the Sangha was expressed in the royal court building new temples, restoring numerous Buddhist monuments, naming members of the Sangha official representatives on diplomatic occasions, and seeking advices from the Sangha on political, social, economic, and military matters. The most notable relationships between the royal court and the Sangha were demonstrated during the Lý and Trần dynasties:

- Emperor Lý Thái Tổ (1010–1028), who was raised in Cổ Pháp Temple, ascended the throne owing to the support of the abbot, Venerable Vạn Hạnh. During his reign, the emperor sent court officials to China to bring back a copy of the *Tripitaka*.
- Emperor Trần Nhân Tông (1279–1293) ascended the throne at age 24. He fulfilled the duty of a king in bringing prosperity to his people, fighting and winning the two forceful invasions from the undefeatable Mongol,<sup>31</sup> and protecting the independence of Vietnam. In 1293, at age 38, he renounced the throne and was ordained Trúc Lâm Thiền Sư, or Founder of the Bamboo Grove, a Zen school. For the remaining thirteen years of his life, he tirelessly taught the Dharma and helped consolidating the Sangha.

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<sup>31</sup> Kublai Khan (Hốt Tất Liệt) of Mongol founded the Yuan dynasty (Nhà Nguyên) (1271–1368), defeated the last Song dynasty's resistance in 1279 marking the end of the Song dynasty (Nhà Tống). The Yuan ruled most of today China territory. Twice during Kublai's reign, in 1284 and 1288, the Yuan invaded Đại Việt (Việt Nam) and was defeated twice.

. The Chinese, under the Ming dynasty, invaded Vietnam again in 1414, bringing many Confucian scholars and literatures to the country. Hostile to Buddhism, they destroyed many Buddhist temples and confiscated Buddhist sacred books. When Vietnam finally regained independence in 1427, Emperor Lê Thái Tổ, founder of the Later Lê dynasty (1428–1788), and his successors continued the policy of favoring Confucianism, persecuting Buddhism and seeking to remove its influences on the society.

Toward the end of the Later Lê dynasty, the country suffered a civil war between the Trịnh Lords, who ruled from the imperial court in the North and the Nguyễn Lords, who ruled in the South. Both groups claimed loyalty to their people by identifying themselves with Buddhism, thus Buddhism in Vietnam began to recover. The Trịnh rulers restored many Buddhist temples and built new ones. Even with those supports, Buddhism remained weak.

. The civil war prolonged and caused severe damages to the country. Heavy taxes, corrupted officials, and people oppressions lead to the revolt from the three brothers of Tây Sơn. Nguyễn Huệ, the most talented of the three, defeated both Trịnh and Nguyễn rulers. At that time, the last king of the Later Lê dynasty traveled to China and petitioned the Manchu<sup>32</sup> emperor Qianlong (Vua Càn Long) for military aid to fight the Tây Sơn brothers. The Manchu army marched south, crossed the border, and seized Thăng Long, the capital city of Vietnam. Nguyễn Huệ addressed his army, took the title of Emperor under the reign name of Quang Trung, and commanded his army to conquer the Manchu in 1789.

Emperor Quang Trung assumed control of a united Vietnam and founded the Nguyễn Tây Sơn dynasty (1788–1802). He crafted a master plan to reform, improve, and revive the country in many fronts: politic, social, economic, military, education, and religion, in particular Buddhism. Thus, Buddhism began to prosper with new temples built in large cities and towns, more qualified and knowledgeable monks in the Sangha, and a strengthened laity community.

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<sup>32</sup> The Manchu dynasty (Nhà Mãn Thanh), also known as the Qing dynasty, reigned over China from 1644 to 1912.

Regrettably, Emperor Quang Trung passed away abruptly four years later; the crown prince ascended the throne at age 10 and was unable to restrain corruptions in the imperial court. Rebellions expanded throughout the country. In the South, Lord Nguyễn Ánh regrouped and fought back; the Nguyễn Tây Sơn dynasty ruled for another 10 years, then came to a close. The revival of Buddhism was hindered for another three decades.

. Nguyễn Ánh took control of the country, founded the Nguyễn dynasty (1802–1944), and ruled as Emperor Gia Long. The emperor was hostile to Buddhism. As part of a policy to control Buddhism, Gia Long banned Buddhist rituals and the building of new temples, engaged all his court officials in criticizing Buddhism and attacking the Buddhist doctrine. The emperor also ordered his courtiers to put monks under close watch and restrict their role to temple guardian. Due to those government pressures and controls, the spirit of Buddhism was lost and confounded with mystic rites, magic and sorcery practices.

However, Gia Long's policies could not stop Buddhism from growing. Buddhism existed in the country as a traditional religion that shaped the society of Vietnam for centuries. Buddhism continued to silently influence the spiritual life of many, including the emperor's royal family who were devoted to Buddhism. In addition, Vietnamese society was founded on a decentralized-authority concept, expressed by the Vietnamese proverb "Phép Vua thua lệ làng," meaning "The king's rules are inferior to the village's customs"; Gia Long's aggressive regulations toward Buddhism were only observed in limited areas of the country and alienated the Vietnamese people further from the royal court.

The emperor's successors, Emperors Minh Mạng (1820–1840) and Thiệu Trị (1840–1847) changed the monarchy's attitude toward Buddhism. A large number of temples and pagodas were restored; sacred scriptures were collected and printed, such as the Hoa Nghiêm, Pháp Hoa, Dược Sư sutras; and training courses in Dharma and Buddhist rituals were organized for monks and nuns. Buddhism thus emerged from the decadence under the Gia Long reign and regained its recognition.

## **Theravada Buddhism in Vietnam**

In the 15<sup>th</sup> century, the southern part of today Vietnam from Quảng Nam Province was occupied by two kingdoms, the Champa and Khmer (today Cambodia); both followed the Theravada and Mahayana Buddhism traditions.

As part of the Southern Forward Campaign (Nam Tiến), the Vietnamese conquered the Champa, took possession of their land in 1692 and that of the southern part of the Khmer kingdom in 1698, resulting in the current borders of Vietnam.

In the newly acquired land, Theravada tradition at that time was active only in a few communities of the Khmer minority groups, mostly in Sóc Trăng and Trà Vinh provinces. Vietnamese Buddhists who followed Mahayana tradition did not take notice of the Theravada, and only considered it as “Khmer Buddhist”.

In the 1920s to 1930s, interest in Theravada meditation and practice was growing. Among the pioneers who brought Theravada Buddhism to Vietnam was Lê Văn Giảng, a veterinary doctor who worked for the French government in Phnom Penh, Cambodia. Dr. Giảng later was ordained and became Venerable Hộ Tông, one of a few Vietnamese Theravada Buddhist monks at that time. Theravada Buddhist gradually developed to become a part of Vietnamese Buddhist community and the first Vietnamese Theravada Buddhist temple, Bửu Quang, was established in 1938 in the vicinity of Saigon. Venerable Hộ Tông translated many Buddhist writings from the Pali canon and began teaching the Dharma in his native Vietnamese language.

In 1957, the Vietnamese Theravada Buddhist Sangha Congregation (VTBSC, or Giáo Hội Tăng Già Nguyên Thủy Việt Nam) was formally established and the Sangha elected Venerable Hộ Tông as its first president.

Thus Theravada Buddhism did not come from India or China, but from Cambodia, first to the southern part, and then progressively spread to the central and northern parts of Vietnam.

In 1963, Theravada Buddhists, as all Buddhists in Vietnam, suffered persecution from the Diệm regime; they joined the Vietnamese Buddhist movement in the quest for religious freedom.<sup>33</sup> The VTBSC later became a member of the Unified Buddhist Church of Vietnam (UBCV, or Giáo Hội Phật Giáo Việt Nam Thống Nhất) when it was founded in 1964.



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<sup>33</sup> See The Raids of Xá Lợi in section Temple, Chapter Eight.



## Buddhism in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century

### Background

The first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century saw Vietnam in constant turmoil with many players in the politic arena:

- The French occupied the southern parts of Vietnam since 1862 and progressively took over the Tonkin, the northern parts. The Nguyễn dynasty turned into a puppet ruler, while the French governed the country and enforced a mass campaign of colonization on the entire region. Vietnam became part of the French Indochina until World War II.
- The Japanese arrived in 1940 in Hải Phòng, in northern Vietnam, and seized control of Indochina. The World War II allies defeated the Japanese in 1945, and the Japanese withdrew from Indochina.
- The Communist Party of Vietnam, established in February 1930, grabbed the opportunity in between the Japanese's withdrawal and the French's return, seized power and took control of the government on August 19, 1945. By means of violent massacres and murders, they silenced all dissidents and purged all opponent parties.

Following the Geneva Accords of July 20, 1954, which divided Vietnam into North and South territories, the Communist Party of Vietnam installed a communist regime in the North. They launched a land reform campaign to eliminate the landowners (whom they called “feudal landlords” or “địa chủ” in Vietnamese.) About fifty thousand people, mostly landowners, were ruthlessly slaughtered through the campaign. Millions of northern refugees left their native land, escaped the communists, and resettled in the South.

In 1968, during Tết Mậu Thân, known as the Tet Offensive, the North Vietnam communist forces lead simultaneous attacks to major cities in South Vietnam; they were defeated and withdrew. Mass graves were discovered

later in South Vietnam cities, where civilians were found brutally tortured, bound, killed, and buried, some apparently buried alive.

In 1975, once again the North Vietnam forces invaded the South, submitting the Republic of Vietnam to the Communist Party of Vietnam. Hundreds of thousands South Vietnamese refugees escaped the communists and were evacuated on the day of the fall of Saigon, on April 30, 1975.

Until the late 1980s, Vietnamese continued to flee the country. Those who endured dangerous journey through rugged mountains and dense forests were killed before ever reaching the border. Others risked their life to board the crude boats not intended for navigating ocean waters; in addition to battle against the force of nature on the open seas, the boat people had to confront pirates' horrific attacks and crimes such as rape, abduction, torture, and slaughter. Freedom was too costly for so many.

## **The 20<sup>th</sup> Century**

Buddhism gradually revived during the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, then suffered regression and oppression following the division of the country in 1954 with the communist regime first installed in the North, and then in the remaining southern part of the country in 1975.

### **1. From 1900s to 1954: Revival period.**

. 1920s–1930s: As part of a revival movement launched by Buddhist monks and followers, the Cochin-China Buddhist Studies Association was formed in Saigon (in 1931), the Annam Buddhist Association in Hué (in 1932), and the Tonkin Buddhist Association in Hanoi (in 1934). The associations intended to translate and publish Buddhist scriptures and writings, but World War II halted their works in 1939.

. 1951: A National Buddhist Congress met and voted to merge the three regional associations (in the North, South and Central regions), regulate the Buddhist rituals, develop adult Buddhist education, organize the Buddhist youth groups, and join the World Buddhist Organization.

## 2. From 1954 to 1975: Dividing period.

The Geneva Accords divided the country into two parts, separated by the 17<sup>th</sup> parallel, with the communist Vietnam Democratic Republic in the North and non-communist Republic of Vietnam in the South. Buddhist persecutions occurred in both parts of the country.

- . 1958: In the North, the Vietnam United Buddhist Association was formed in Hanoi, North Vietnam. Since all religious organizations must have the permission from the government to exist and operate, this body was allowed to carry out only state-sanctioned activities.

- . 1963: In the South, President Ngô Đình Diệm of the Republic of Vietnam pursued a pro-Catholic policy, leading to objections and protests among the Buddhist community. Buddhist monks and lay people were persecuted and murdered, temples were raided and demolished.<sup>34</sup> Diệm was deposed and later killed.

- . 1964: After the Diệm regime was overthrown, Buddhist groups in South Vietnam rallied to form the Unified Buddhist Church of Vietnam<sup>35</sup> (UBCV, or Giáo Hội Phật Giáo Việt Nam Thống Nhất) and issued the Charter of 1964, which unified all Mahayana and Theravada Buddhist churches and all Buddhist associations of south and central Vietnam.

In the decade following its founding, until 1975, the UBCV achieved its goals of not only reviving Buddhism, but also improving and strengthening Vietnamese society, such as establishing Buddhist university, elementary and secondary schools across the south and central Vietnam, building orphanages and health centers, and organizing Buddhist Youth Movement Commission.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> See The Raids of Xá Lợi in section Temple, Chapter Eight.

<sup>35</sup> Not to be confounded with the Unified Buddhist Church that was founded by Monk Thích Nhất Hạnh in France in 1969 during the Vietnam War.

<sup>36</sup> For examples, Vạn Hạnh University, Bodhi Elementary Schools and High Schools (Tiểu học và Trung Học Bồ Đề), Quách Thị Trang orphanage, and Gia Đình Phật Tử Việt Nam (Buddhist Youth Movement Commission). In 1975, the Communist Party of Vietnam confiscated those establishments and converted them into government-controlled agencies.

. 1975: North Vietnam waged a most brutal and vicious war in Vietnam history, from 1954 to 1975, with the support of the two most powerful communist states, the Soviet Union and China. The North Vietnam armed forces infiltrated to the South via Hồ Chí Minh Trail,<sup>37</sup> they smuggled troops and weapons supplied by the two communist giants. They also used cruel and bloody tactics, such as beheading village chiefs; capturing and murdering civilians and government officials; and planting explosives in civilian areas to create a permanent state of terror and confusion across the South. North Vietnam finally conquered the South in 1975, forcing an imported Marxist-Leninist doctrine, Communism, upon its own people. The government is a collective dictatorship under the gripping control of the Communist Party of Vietnam.

### 3. From 1975 to 2000: Continuous Religious Oppression period.

. A reign of terror quickly followed the victory of North Vietnam to revenge on the defeated South Vietnam government and armed forces: an estimated one million people were imprisoned—some for as long as 17 years—without charges or trials, thousands were tortured, and 165,000 died in the so-called re-education camps across the country.<sup>38</sup>

The new communist government immediately pursued an aggressive policy to restrain the growth and independent practice of all religions in the country. Buddhism existed in Vietnam as one of the most influential religions for centuries, and its followers represented a majority of the population; evidently Buddhism became the government's prime target for religious repression. The government confiscated the UBCV's properties and institutions, controlled the church's activities, and responded to church members' protests with arrests and imprisonments.

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<sup>37</sup> Hồ Chí Minh Trail was a complex network of truck routes, paths for foot and bicycle traffic, and river transportation systems. The Trail ran from the Vietnam Democratic Republic (North Vietnam) to the Republic of Vietnam (South Vietnam) through the neighboring kingdoms of Laos and Cambodia; it provided support, in the form of manpower and materials, to the National Front for the Liberation of South Vietnam (Mặt Trận Giải Phóng Miền Nam or Việt Cộng) and the People's Army of Vietnam (or North Vietnamese Army) during the Vietnam War (1959–1975).

<sup>38</sup> *Camp Z30-D: The Survivors*, Dart Center for Journalism and Trauma, April 29, 2001. <http://dartcenter.org/dartaward/2002/hm3/01.html>. The Dart Center is a project of the Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism.

- 1977: Venerable Thích Huyền Quang of the UBCV demanded religious freedom and the return of the church's properties, which led to the arrest and detention of both leaders Venerables Thích Huyền Quang and Thích Quảng Độ.
- 1981: The government-controlled Vietnam Buddhist Church (VBC) was established; this agency claimed to be the only official organization authorized to represent Buddhist groups at home and abroad. The government then incorporated the UBCV into the VBC and declared the UBCV, an oldest and original Buddhist Church, illegal. Venerables Thích Huyền Quang and Thích Quảng Độ opposed and refused the incorporation; they were arrested and exiled to separate locations under constant surveillance for the next ten years.

The VBC set up one Buddhist Academy in Hanoi in 1981, and another in Ho Chi Minh City in 1984 to train new generation of monks and nuns. These academies functioned as a state-controlled agency of the government.

- 1982–1992: The Vietnamese government continued to imprison hundreds of thousands<sup>39</sup> of dissidents without legal process, and severely restricted the operation of religious communities throughout the country. Venerable Thích Huyền Quang gained international recognition and was nominated for the 1982 Nobel Peace Prize.
- 1992: Venerable Thích Huyền Quang became the Supreme Patriarch, head of the UBCV. He issued the *Buddhist Proposal for Democracy and Human Rights* recommending religious freedom, free election in a multi-party system, and abolition of Article 4 of the constitution, which protected the political monopoly of the Communist Party of Vietnam. Security Police later confiscated all his official papers and the seal of the UBCV; he was transferred to another location where he was kept in isolation and cut off from other UBCV leaders.

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<sup>39</sup> References: *Camp Z30-D: The Survivors*, Columbia University; Human Rights Watch [www.hrw.org](http://www.hrw.org); and *Vietnam after 1975*, US Library of Congress, [www.country-data.com](http://www.country-data.com).

- 1995: Human Rights Watch of Asia issued a report documenting all confrontations with the government of Vietnam during 1992–1993 when Buddhist leaders and lay people were arrested, detained, and mistreated for peacefully expressing their religious and political views. The organization called for the release of those detained.
- 1998–2000: Venerable Thích Huyền Quang, who lived under house arrest since 1982, continued to fight for human rights and religious freedom in Vietnam. In 1998, Nobel Peace Prize laureates, including His Holiness the Dalai Lama, publicly called for his release.

Meanwhile, Venerable Thích Quảng Độ, UBCV Deputy Leader, was periodically interrogated and imprisoned for his unwavering call for democracy in Vietnam. The Venerable was respected internationally and was nominated for the 2000 Nobel Peace Prize by twenty-nine members of the U.S. House of Representatives and twenty-two Members of Parliament of Australia.



## Buddhism in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

The UBCV continued its struggles for religious freedom and democracy in Vietnam through the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The international community began to take notice of the oppression and human rights violation and supported the UBCV. Venerables Thích Huyền Quang and Thích Quảng Độ, while under house arrest, received visits from worldwide dignitaries including ambassadors, members of congress and parliament, and diplomatic delegations. Most notable events in the 2000s were:

### **2003:**

The European Commission called for the release of Buddhist leaders Thích Huyền Quang and Thích Quảng Độ and called on European diplomatic envoys to visit the detained Buddhist dissidents in Vietnam.

Thirty-seven prominent Members of the U.S. Congress urged Vietnam to release Buddhist dissidents Thích Huyền Quang and Thích Quảng Độ.

Prague Catholic Bishop Vaclav Maly called for the immediate release of Venerables Thích Huyền Quang, Thích Quảng Độ and Father Nguyễn Văn Lý.

### **2004:**

The United States designated Vietnam as a Country of Particular Concern (CPC) for grave violations of religious freedom.

At the Fifth ASEM<sup>40</sup> Summit in Hanoi, 109 Members of the European Parliament called for the immediate release of Buddhist dissidents Thích Huyền Quang and Thích Quảng Độ.

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<sup>40</sup> The Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM), officially established in 1996, is an interregional forum which consists of the European Commission, the members of the European Union (EU), the members of the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN), and the ASEAN Plus Three nations (China, Japan, and South Korea).

**2005:**

The United Nations pronounced Thích Huyền Quang and Thích Quảng Độ victims of arbitrary detention and called for their immediate release.

In a Resolution on the Human Rights Situation in Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam, European Parliament called for multi-party reforms in Vietnam, condemned recent repression against the UBCV, and called for the release of Thích Huyền Quang and Thích Quảng Độ.

**2006:**

Venerable Thích Quảng Độ received the Thorolf Rafto Memorial Prize<sup>41</sup> for his personal courage and perseverance through three decades of peaceful opposition against the communist regime in Vietnam, and as a symbol for the growing democracy movement. The Vietnamese government refused to let Venerable Thích Quảng Độ travel to Norway to receive the award.

In February 2007, Mr. Arne L. Lynngård, Chairman of the Rafto Foundation, requested a permission to visit Vietnam to personally deliver the award to Venerable Thích Quảng Độ; the Vietnamese government refused, stating that Mr. Lynngård was not welcome in Vietnam. Later, on March 15, 2007, Ms. Therese Jebsen of the Rafto Foundation came to visit the Venerable, who was held under house arrest at Thanh Minh Zen Monastery in Saigon. Ms. Jebsen was arrested and taken away.

**2007:**

At the 36th Congress of the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) in Lisbon, Portugal from April 22 to 24, 2007, members of 141

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<sup>41</sup> The Rafto Foundation, a non-governmental organization, aims to promote the three fundamental human rights of intellectual, political, and economic freedom. The Rafto Foundation has since 1987 awarded, annually, the Thorolf Rafto Memorial Prize for Human Rights to advocates of human rights and democracy. The prize commemorates Thorolf Rafto, professor of economic history at the Norwegian School of Economics and Business Administration in Bergen, Norway. Professor Rafto devoted his life to promoting democracy and respect for human rights, especially in Eastern Europe. The Rafto Foundation's official website is [www.rafto.no](http://www.rafto.no).

Venerable Thích Quảng Độ received international recognition; his awards also include: the Hellman-Hammet Award administered by Human Rights Watch in 2001; the Homo Homini Award by the Czech's People in Need Foundation in 2003; and the Democracy Courage Tribute by the World Movement for Democracy in 2006.



leagues from Africa, Asia, America, and Europe adopted two resolutions condemning violations of human rights in Vietnam.

European Parliament condemned crack-down on dissidents and called on Europe to reassess its policy of cooperation with Vietnam.

At the United Nations General Assembly in New York on October 1, 2007, Global Civil Society Democracy Movement denounced Vietnam's candidacy to the Security Council before the UN Democracy Caucus.

Fifty-four members of the Italian Parliament nominated Venerable Thích Quảng Độ for the 2007 Nobel Peace Prize.

**2008:**

International personalities called on Hanoi to cease religious repression and release Thích Huyền Quang, Thích Quảng Độ on UN Day of the Vesak in Hanoi.

The Supreme Patriarch of the UBCV Thích Huyền Quang passed away in July 2008 while under house arrest for 26 years. Venerable Thích Quảng Độ was named Head of the UBCV and continued to lead UBCV in the fight for religious freedom and democracy for Vietnam.

European Parliament called for concrete mechanisms on human rights and democracy in new EU-Vietnam Agreement.

Venerable Thích Quảng Độ was nominated for 2008 Nobel Peace Prize by Members of Parliament and academics from Europe, Asia, and the United States.

**2009:**

United Nations' Working Group on Arbitrary Detention condemned unlawful imprisonment of government critics in Vietnam.

European Parliament condemned religious persecution and human rights violations in Vietnam and Laos.

**2010:**

At the meeting in Yerevan, Armenia, 164 International Human Rights Leagues condemned crack-down on human rights defenders in Vietnam.

The Oslo Freedom Forum<sup>42</sup> presented a rare filmed interview with Venerable Thích Quảng Độ for Vietnam Human Rights Day<sup>43</sup> on U.S. Capitol Hill, Washington, DC.

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**D**espite protests from the international community, the Vietnamese government persistently ignored calls, reports, and recommendations. Having failed to control and nationalize the religion in the country, the Communist Party of Vietnam changed their strategy and tried new tactics:

1. In 2005, the government-controlled Vietnam News Agency promoted the return to the country of Monk Thích Nhất Hạnh, exiled since 1975 and well known by westerners as the Zen Master Thích Nhất Hạnh. With an entourage of hundreds of his worldwide followers from thirty-five countries, his visit was said to be a sizable pilgrimage to Vietnam. Its agenda included organized processions in large cities, elaborated receptions, lectures, and Zen teaching sessions. His three-month pilgrimage only served to deceive the international community by painting glorious images of religious freedom in Vietnam, while in reality, dissidents continued to be harassed, detained, and imprisoned without fair trial.

During his staged tours in Vietnam, Thích Nhất Hạnh praised Vietnam's open-door policy on religious beliefs, suggested the merging of UBCV to the government-controlled Vietnam Buddhist Church (VBC), and declared that taking the Threefold Refuge would lead to patriotism and love of the [Communist] Party [of Vietnam].<sup>44</sup> Monk Nhất Hạnh carried on with his

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<sup>42</sup> The Oslo Freedom Forum is a conference on human rights founded by the Human Rights Foundation.

<sup>43</sup> The congressional ceremony was held on May 11, 2010 on Capitol Hill, Washington, DC to commemorate the anniversary of the U.S. House-Senate Joint Resolution SJ 168 designating May 11<sup>th</sup> as Vietnam Human Rights Day.

<sup>44</sup> He said in Vietnamese: “Sau khi đã quy y rồi thì mình sẽ yêu nước hay hơn, yêu đảng hay hơn nữa” after giving the lecture on *Tương Lai Đạo Phật ở Âu, Úc, và Mỹ Châu* (The Future of Buddhism in Europe, Australia, and America) in Saigon on April 2, 2005. His official webpage entitled *Winter 2005 Tour Vietnam with Zen Master Thich Nhat Hanh* is accessible

popular tours to Vietnam through recent years, generating many worldwide headlines but no story about the human rights abuses in Vietnam.

2. In 2006, not long after Monk Nhất Hạnh's visit to Vietnam, Hanoi and Washington reached an agreement of reform in Vietnam, in exchange for the United States removing Vietnam from the watch list of Country of Particular Concern (CPC) and normalizing trade relations with Vietnam. This move from the United States cleared the path for Vietnam to join the World Trade Organization, a long standing economic goal for the Vietnamese government. However, once Vietnam reached that goal in 2007, the government intensified the abuses of human and religious rights in the country.

3. As part of its covert plan to distract the people of Vietnam from their fight for democracy and religious freedom, Hanoi created a Zen Buddhism movement and established many Zen Centers in Vietnam and abroad. Those centers served to counterbalance the influence of many religious groups opposing the government.

The Communist Party of Vietnam is also implementing the policy of “*divide and conquer*” that includes:

- Tactics to attract young Vietnamese living abroad and steer them from supporting the struggle for democracy inside the country.
- Infiltration of dissident groups abroad.
- Directives to their secret agents to “*oppose, repress, isolate and divide*” the UBCV leaders and members, thus undermining the UBCV from within.<sup>45</sup>

Mr. Võ Văn Ái, overseas spokesman for the UBCV, testified before the Committee on International Relations of the U.S. House of Representatives on June 20, 2005. He reported Hanoi's explicit orders directing Vietnam's

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as of this writing at <http://www.high-spirits.com/wintertour2005/index.html>. On this webpage, there is a link <http://vnt.tiephien.org/ChuyenDiVietNam2005/PhapThoai.htm> to the audio records of this lecture and conversation. However, this link is now unavailable. If the readers could find the link, the above referenced quotation could be heard in Part 3 starting at minute 48.

<sup>45</sup> Extracts from a secret document issued by the Communist Party of Vietnam entitled *On Religions and the Struggle against Activities Exploiting Religions*.

security forces to wipe out the Ân Quang Buddhist Church once and for all.<sup>46</sup> (The “Ân Quang Buddhist Church” is Hanoi’s term indicating the UBCV.) To achieve this goal, Hanoi has set up many government fronts to weaken overseas Buddhist groups and democracy activists; it also sent hundreds of “state-sponsored” monks (“*su quốc doanh*” in Vietnamese term) to Australia and United States, with Australia being the “test case”.

The main front attacking the UBCV in Australia was formed on January 1, 2009 in Sydney, Australia, under the name of Trans-continental Unified Buddhist Church of Vietnam. The goal of those fronts is not to overtly promote communism, but to discourage Buddhists from getting involved in the movement for religious freedom and human rights.<sup>47</sup>

One secret directive from Hanoi to the Vietnamese authorities at every level is as specific as “*to take preemptive action to prevent Western countries from making human rights investigations*”<sup>48</sup> in Vietnam. The directive also states, “*We urge the Politburo*<sup>49</sup> *to coordinate activities between the Vietnamese Communist Party’s departments of propaganda and mobilization, interior affairs, foreign affairs, religious affairs, and overseas Vietnamese to work together on this policy.*”<sup>50</sup>

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The only way to eliminate religious oppression, tyranny, and human rights abuses is to establish a genuine democracy in Vietnam. Reform, renovation, and reconciliation with the Communists will *never* work and will only lead to further deception. It is an evil nature of the Communists to deceive the world and the people they rule.




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<sup>46</sup> As reported by the Epoch Times, January 25, 2010.

<sup>47</sup> As reported by the Epoch Times, January 25, 2010.

<sup>48</sup> The Epoch Times, January 25, 2010.

<sup>49</sup> Politburo is the executive committee for a number of communist political parties. The Politburo of the Central Committee Communist Party of Vietnam includes the top leadership of the Communist Party of Vietnam.

<sup>50</sup> The Epoch Times, January 25, 2010.



## Afterthought

Never before in history has Buddhism in Vietnam faced such a challenge of struggling for its existence. Never before has any ruling regime campaigned to destroy Buddhism with vicious plan of training monks and nuns as secret agents for the government.

The fight for democracy and religious freedom in Vietnam started gaining ground at home and abroad. However, in the late 1990s, decades-long exiled Vietnamese began to return to the country as tourists, and throughout the 2000s as investors or for business opportunity inside the country. This has increasingly generated adverse impacts on international supports; the fight for democracy and human rights in Vietnam once seen as progressing has since reversed its course.

It is human nature that one easily concedes one's principles in exchange for profit and fame. Those who invested in business were certainly willing to submit to the ruling authority for profit privileges. Monk Thích Nhất Hạnh's organized tours to Vietnam surely elevated his fame to glory. President George W. Bush failed to keep his promise to stand with the oppressed<sup>51</sup> and to light an untamed fire of freedom to reach the darkest corners of our world.<sup>52</sup> For economic advantages, the Bush Administration chose to stand with the oppressors and removed a Communist State from the list of Country of Particular Concerns when the darkest corners of the world continued to exist in Vietnam.

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<sup>51</sup> President George W. Bush said in his Second Inaugural Address, January 20, 2005, "All who live in tyranny and hopelessness can know: the United States will not ignore your oppression, or excuse your oppressors. When you stand for your liberty, we will stand with you."

<sup>52</sup> President George W. Bush said in his Second Inaugural Address, January 20, 2005, "By our efforts, we have lit a fire as well—a fire in the minds of men. It warms those who feel its power, it burns those who fight its progress, and one day this untamed fire of freedom will reach the darkest corners of our world."

As recently as on April 30, 2010, Venerable Thích Không Tánh, UBCV Commissioner for Humanitarian and Social Affairs, was arrested by Security Police in Thủ Thiêm, Saigon. The Venerable's location and safety is unknown as of this writing.

As recently as on May 11, 2010, the Oslo Freedom Forum presented its filmed interview with Venerable Thích Quảng Độ, who has been a prisoner of conscience of the Vietnamese government for more than 28 years. At the congressional ceremony on Capitol Hill, Washington, DC, Mr. Thor Halvorssen, founder of the Human Rights Foundation and the Oslo Freedom Forum, spoke:

*“Freedom of speech is banned in Vietnam; civil society groups are forced to operate within the confines of government structures; trade unions are not free; and anyone who calls for human rights or democracy risks immediate arrest, usually for ‘infringing on security’. Hundreds of political and religious dissidents are in prison, where there is evidence of torture.”*

And as recently as on Vesak day of May 28, 2010, Security Police surrounded and blocked all access to the UBCV's head offices and temples in Đà Nẵng, Thừa Thiên, and other towns. Buddhists and members of the Buddhist Youth Movement Commission were harassed, threatened, and banned from attending Vesak prayers.

In 1999, the United Nations General Assembly recognized Vesak as a sacred festival for Buddhists around the world; since then, the UN Day of Vesak has been internationally observed. By banning the Vesak celebrations, the Vietnamese government reversed the United Nations' decision, defied, and deceived an international body, of which Vietnam is a member state.

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In the forty-five years following his enlightenment, Sakyamuni Buddha worked tirelessly to liberate mankind from suffering and deliver society from oppression and injustice. His teaching of the *Ten Duties of the King*,<sup>53</sup> which the term “King” should be replaced today by the term “Government”,

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<sup>53</sup> Venerable Dr. Walpola Rahula, *What The Buddha Taught* (Grove Press, 1974).

## Afterthought

emphasizes that “Non-violence” and “Non-opposition to the will of the people” are among the ten essential qualities of the government. Buddhism does not aim to politically dominate the world, but to liberate the oppressed and the suffered through peaceful practices.

Never in our history have there been so many Vietnamese Buddhists and members of the Sangha living abroad. While the UBCV leaders are still imprisoned in our homeland and hindered from accomplishing their mission, Buddhists overseas hold an important role today in being the voice of the repressed in Vietnam, rallying international supports, and mostly being watchful of the vicious plan of “divide and conquer” conceived by the Communist Party of Vietnam.

Venerable Thích Quảng Độ, from his monastery and under effective house arrest, sent a message to Vietnamese Buddhists around the world in celebration of the 2554 Vesak, on May 28, 2010. He wrote:

*“Enlightenment is hard to attain in a body that is sickly or diseased. In the same way, Compassion cannot flourish in a country ruled by tyranny or dictatorship. The body must be strong and healthy to reach the shores of deliverance; a country must be free and democratic to enable Buddhism to truly benefit one and all...”*

*...We must follow Emperor Asoka’s footsteps and build a pathway which transgresses violence, which allows Compassion to blossom and Wisdom to prevail. The very Path that Lord Buddha walked upon just 2554 years ago.”*







## Epilogue

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## The First Seven Steps of Prince Siddharta

As a child, I often listened to the story of the birth of Sakyamuni Buddha. I could imagine the baby prince who, right after his birth, walked seven steps, and a lotus flower opened up under each of his steps. I deeply admired Prince Siddharta and respected him as a supernatural figure with divine power.

As he took his seventh step, with a finger pointing to the sky and another finger to the ground, the prince uttered a gatha, which could be summarized as follows:

*“In all of Heaven and Earth,  
I am the only one worthy of honor.  
I will liberate mankind from  
Birth, Old age, Sickness, and Death.”*

The verse was beyond comprehension for a child like me; I did not understand it at all, but resolved to memorize it nonetheless.

Growing up, I visited Buddhist temples on a few occasions. In the temples I recognized pictures and statues that illustrated the birth of the Buddha. All of them depicted a child standing on one lotus flower and pointing his fingers to the sky and the ground. The scene did not strike me as odd, because I *knew* the story by heart and *had seen* similar images before. As I studied Buddhism further, I learned that Monk Gautama had reached enlightenment and become Buddha by his own worldly effort, unaided by any divine power; and that the Buddha had taught: *“All sentient beings possess Buddhahood, all beings can become Buddhas.”*

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The teaching puzzled me greatly. I came to realize that two thousand five hundred years ago, the Buddha had been a human, like me; and like me, he had also suffered from injuries, sickness and endured old age.

Later, I learned that the pronoun “*I*” in the gatha, which the baby prince had said at birth, did not indicate Prince Siddharta but implied the very profound doctrine of “*Self*” in Buddhism. Furthermore, the terms “*Birth, Old age, Sickness, and Death*” in the verse referred to the concepts of *samsara* and *suffering*.

What confused me most were the contents of the gatha. How could the baby prince, at birth, speak of such a profound doctrine of “*The Self*”, a doctrine he only discovered later at the age of thirty-five? And how could the prince, who was raised behind the imperial palace walls and shielded from human suffering for twenty-nine years, know and speak of the suffering of birth, old age, sickness, and death as soon as he had been born?

Suddenly, the picture of a child walking seven steps at birth rushed through my mind. It seemed foreign and mystical to me because it did not harmonize with the image of an aging monk on his deathbed, lying peacefully on his right side between two sala trees with his head to the north.

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I am sharing my childhood memories with my readers to describe the confusion that I experienced when I began to learn Buddhism at an early age. Because I wish to spare my young readers the same confusion, I am telling the story of the birth of Prince Siddharta as any ordinary birth. I cannot verify the story of a walking and talking baby at birth in any source other than as stated in the *sutras*, and since I find that story irrational, I choose to leave it out of this book.

Some people recommended that I include the tale of a walking baby at birth, and call it a legend. Why so? It is my opinion that writing about a legend is *pointless*, because Buddhism centers upon the Truth. After attaining enlightenment, the Buddha delivered his first sermon on the Four Noble Truths. Those Truths serve as the foundation for his teachings. Adding an unnecessary legend to a book on the Truth would represent an *inconsistency* that may instill in young readers doubt and mistrust of Buddhism.

Don, the author of the paintings of the Buddha's life in this book, has researched extensively on the characters and objects in India twenty-five centuries ago. The paintings look real, because the artist strives to replicate every detail as true as it was. Since the story of a walking baby at birth cannot be verified to be true, he chooses not to paint the scene of Prince Siddharta's birth.

In most religions, the story of the founder's life is often told with legends. The Buddha must have known that his life story would be no exception so he taught us to always use our wisdom to observe and analyze. We should only accept things that are right and logical, and not blindly believe in things because they have been *spoken by many, written in religious books, or handed down for many generations.*<sup>54</sup>

As stated in the Preface of this book, I do not ask my readers to accept my view, which includes the omission of the legend of a walking baby at birth. I do not reject the legend; neither do I wish to discredit books that narrate it.

Existing books about Buddhism are numerous. They all teach that the Buddha was a human being, like all of us; and if we follow the Path that the Buddha showed us, we will be enlightened and become Buddha. Some scholars go to great lengths to demonstrate, confirm and praise that Buddhism is compatible with science.

However, I have not encountered any book or paper that deals with the scientific merit of a walking and talking baby at birth. I am deeply grateful to anyone who could inform me of any such writing.

Most Buddhist literature tells the legend of "the First Seven Steps of Prince Siddharta". Interestingly, some sources even claim that the baby prince was born from his mother's right side or from her armpit. I am certain that the Blessed One is kindly watching over our *samsara*, smiling and gently telling us: "That's not really how it happened!"

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<sup>54</sup> Reference: The *Anguttara Nikaya*, *Kalama Sutra*.

## Epilogue

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The story of Sakyamuni Buddha's life is one of the most inspiring and beautiful stories of mankind, because it praises man's personal effort and celebrates his achievement above all things in the universe. The story is beautiful in itself, and does not need to be embellished with any legend.





## From my heart

I spent my first thirteen years of formal classroom education—from kindergarten through high school—in Vietnam, with Vietnamese as the learning language. English was my foreign language of choice during high school, a subject that was offered four hours a week over the period of four academic years. At the time I immigrated to Canada and then relocated to my home country of the United States of America, my English was worth a mention of “working English” in my resume.

So, why did I decide to write this book in English, when I could have used Vietnamese with much more ease and greater confidence?

As much as I love my native language, I realize that English will better connect me to the younger generations, and allow me to effectively share my knowledge with them. To improve my English, I set out to read editorials, columns, essays, and books. I studied punctuation and grammar manuals, as well as effective writing handbooks. I learned to look up words in the dictionary frequently. Embarking on this project—writing the book in English—propelled me into an unprecedented challenge, since never during high school nor through the college years in France had I been required to write any paper in English. Only an unprecedented determination helped me rise to the challenge of finishing the book as I had planned.

Many relatives and family members helped me along the way.

To Mai, my kind relative—many thanks for undertaking the edit of this book. Both you and I prefer the traditional style of reading hardcopies, so, we exchange the first draft and subsequent revisions by snail mail (I owe our messenger, the mail carrier, a little thank you note, indeed!) I am grateful to you for your comments and corrections, and mostly, the prompt responses that you manage to squeeze in despite your hectic work schedules.



Thank you, Wolfgang, for editing the soft copy and delivering it quickly through electronic mail. Your drawing of the bodhi leaf is an excellent artwork that embellishes the front cover. The leaf depicts amazing details, yet, its simplicity reveals the distinctive beauty of a noble symbol in Buddhism.

To my uncle, Cậu Mười Lớn—I appreciate that you thoroughly read the copy of the final draft, gave your feedback, and suggested valuable insights on Buddhism.

To my sister Thanh—thank you for your pencil drawing of the portrait of the Buddha; you dedicated the drawing to me twenty-three years ago, and I am pleased to display this timeless work in the insert in Chapter Six.

To my youngest brother Dũng (Don)—you are the gifted artist in our family. Your masterpieces always reflect such an extensive research on the painted characters and objects in their times that they look so real and come to life. Your oil painting of a Vietnamese village market adorns our dining room since 1986; its digital copy also appears on the cover of our uncle's book.<sup>55</sup> We treasure your folk painting of the Vietnamese traditional wedding procession, and showcase it in our home and on the cover of my book.<sup>56</sup> And while many paintings of the story of Sakyamuni Buddha show the Buddha's life in the traditions of the artist's native country, yours portray the people, their countenance, attires, and lifestyle exactly as in the Buddha's native India twenty-five centuries ago.

Thank you, Don, for your unique watercolor paintings that illustrate Chapter Two; with exceptional artistry, you truly convey your profound admiration for the Life of the Buddha through those paintings.

Finally, to my husband Tín—many thanks for helping me with the layout and the technicalities of the graphic software; it would have taken me a lot of time to maneuver the clicks, drags, cuts, and pastes if I had to learn and do it all by myself.

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<sup>55</sup> *Làng cũ Người xưa*, Tiền Vĩnh Lạc, 2009

<sup>56</sup> *Tiếng Nước Tôi*, Du Yên, 2009

## From my heart

Mark Twain<sup>57</sup> once said: “*Twenty years from now you will be more disappointed by the things you didn't do than by the ones you did do.*” I am content with this book; I know I did do one thing that will spare me from being disappointed twenty years from now.



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<sup>57</sup> Mark Twain is a pen name of Samuel Langhorne Clemens, born November 30, 1835, and died April 21, 1910; he was an American author and humorist.



## References Table

Sanskrit	Pali	English	Vietnamese
Abhidharma-pitaka	Abhidamma-pitaka	Commentaries, profound teachings	Luận Tạng
Alaya-vijnana		Storehouse of consciousness	A Lại Da Thức
Amitayus	Amita	Amitabha Buddha, Buddha of Infinite Light and Infinite Life	Phật A Di Đà, Vô Lượng Quang, Vô Lượng Thọ Phật
Anapana	Anapanasatti	Mindfulness of Breathing	Phép thiền định đếm hơi thở.
Anitya	Anicca	Impermanence	Vô thường
Anupama		A title of the Buddha, defined as “Unequaled rank”	Một danh hiệu của Đức Phật, “Vô Đẳng Đẳng”
Arhat	Arahant	Saint of Theravada Buddhism	A La Hán
Aryasatya	Ariyasacca	Four Noble Truths	Tứ Diệu Đế
Astangika-marga	Ashtangika-magga	The Noble Eightfold Path, the Middle Way	Bát Chánh Đạo
Bhagava		The Blessed One (one of the Buddha’s honorific titles)	Thế Tôn
Bhavana	Bhavana	Meditation, Mindfulness	Thiền
Bodhi	Bodhi	Bodhi	Bồ Đề

<b>Sanskrit</b>	<b>Pali</b>	<b>English</b>	<b>Vietnamese</b>
Bodhisattva	Bodhisatta	Enlightened being of Mahayana Buddhism	Bồ Tát
Brahmavihara	Brahmavihara	The Four Sublime States	Tứ Vô Lượng Tâm (Tỳ, Bi, Hỷ, Xả)
Dana	Dana	Alms, Charity , Act of Giving	Hạnh Bồ Thí
Dharma	Dhamma	The Buddha's Teachings	Pháp
Duhkha	Dukkha	Suffering, the first of the Four Noble Truths	Khổ não
Dharmapada	Dhammapada	Collection of the Buddha's verses of teachings	Kinh Pháp Cú
Gatha		Moral hymn	Kệ
Gautama	Gotama	The Buddha's family name	Cồ Đàm
Jataka		Narratives of birth stories of the Buddha's previous lives	Các truyện Tiền Thân Đức Phật
Kanakamuni	Konagamana	The Second Buddha of the present kalpa	Phật Câu Na Hàm Mâu Ni
Karma	Kamma	Actions or causes bringing future retribution	Nghiệp
Karuna	Karuna	Compassion, one of the Four Sublime States	Tâm Bi

## References Table

<b>Sanskrit</b>	<b>Pali</b>	<b>English</b>	<b>Vietnamese</b>
Kasyapa	Kassapa	The Third Buddha of the present kalpa	Phật Ca Diếp
Krakucchanda	Kakusandha	The First Buddha of the present kalpa	Phật Câu Lưu Tôn
Mantra	Manta	Secret holy saying	Chú
Maitri	Metta	Loving-kindness, one of the Four Sublime States	Tâm Từ
Mudita	Mudita	Appreciative Joy, one of the Four Sublime States	Tâm Hỷ
Nirvana	Nibbana	Extinction of birth and death	Niết Bàn
Pali	Pali	Language of the Theravada Buddhist canon	Chữ Ba Li
Prajna	Panna	Wisdom	Trí Tuệ
Sakya	Sakka	Sakya	Thích Ca
Sakyamuni	Sakkamuni	The Fourth Buddha of the present kalpa	Phật Thích Ca Mâu Ni
Samadhi	Samadhi	Meditation	Thiền
Samsara	Samsara	Cycle of existence, of births and deaths	Cõi Ta Bà
Sangha	Sangha	Order of Monks, Community of Buddhist monks	Tăng Già

<b>Sanskrit</b>	<b>Pali</b>	<b>English</b>	<b>Vietnamese</b>
Siddharta	Siddhatta	Siddhatta	Sĩ Đạt Ta, Tất Đạt Đa
Sila	Sila	Morality, moral conducts	Tịnh Giới, Trì Giới
Sramana	Samana	Ascetic, Buddhist monk	Sa Môn
Sutra-pitaka	Sutta-pitaka	Buddha's discourses or Buddhist scriptures	Kinh Tạng
Tathagata	Tathagata	The Enlightened One (one of the Buddha's honorific titles)	Như Lai
Tripitaka	Tipitaka	Buddhist canon or three sets of sacred books (see Sutra-pitaka, Vinaya-pitaka, and Abhidharma-pitaka)	Tam Tạng Kinh Điển
Upeksha	Upekkha or Upeksha	Equanimity, one of the Four Sublime States	Tâm Xả
Vinaya-pitaka	Vinaya-pitaka	Collection of rules and precepts	Luật Tạng

*Author's note: The following is a Vietnamese version of the Epilogue–The First Seven Steps of Prince Siddharta. I dedicate this writing to my elders. I am deeply indebted to them for teaching me to love the Vietnamese language and Buddhism.*

## Bảy bước đi đầu tiên của Thái tử Sĩ Đạt Ta

**K**hi tôi còn thơ, tôi thường được nghe kể chuyện Đức Phật Thích Ca Mâu Ni giảng sinh. Tôi tưởng tượng ra cảnh Thái tử Sĩ Đạt Ta vừa chào đời đã bước đi bảy bước, một hoa sen nở nâng mỗi bước chân của ngài. Tôi cảm phục thái tử vô cùng và tôn kính ngài như một bậc siêu phàm có nhiều phép lạ.

Khi bước xong bảy bước, ngài chỉ một ngón tay lên trời, một ngón tay xuống đất, và đọc bài kệ:<sup>58</sup>

*“Thiên thượng thiên hạ,  
Duy Ngã vi tôn.  
Yếu độ chúng sinh,  
Sinh lão bệnh tử.”*<sup>59</sup>

Tạm diễn nghĩa là:

*“Trên trời, dưới đất,  
Chỉ có Ta là cao quý.  
Cứu giúp tất cả loài người,  
Thoát vòng sinh lão bệnh tử.”*

Lúc đó tôi không hiểu bài kệ, nhưng tôi cũng cố gắng học thuộc lòng.

Lớn lên một chút, tôi có dịp đến lễ chùa ở Việt Nam; tôi thấy các bức tranh ghi lại sự tích Đức Phật Thích Ca Mâu Ni giảng sinh đều vẽ bảy hoa sen nở

<sup>58</sup> Bài kệ Thái tử Sĩ Đạt Ta đọc lúc giảng sinh–theo như truyền thuyết– thay đổi khá nhiều, tùy nguồn gốc trích dẫn, tùy cách diễn nghĩa, và tùy lối giải thích.

<sup>59</sup> Theo Kinh *Trường A Hàm I*. Theo Kinh *Thái Tử Thụy Ứng Bản Khởi* thì hai câu sau là: “*Tam giới giai khổ, Hà giả hà lạc*”. Theo Kinh *Quá Khứ Hiện Tại Nhân Quả* thì bài kệ lại khác, toàn bài như sau: “*Ngã ư nhất thiết, Nhân thiên chi trung, Tối tôn tối thắng. Vô lượng sanh tử, Ư kim tận hỷ.*”



dưới bước chân một đứa trẻ trạc độ một hay hai tuổi. Tôi không thắc mắc gì cả, vì tôi đã *biết rành* câu chuyện và *quen thấy* các hình ảnh đó. Khi đọc thêm sách về đạo Phật, tôi mới rõ là Sa môn Cồ Đàm không dùng phép màu nhiệm hay sức lực siêu phàm để đắc quả thành Phật, mà ngài đã chiến thắng mọi trở ngại bằng sự cố gắng của một người trần thế. Tôi lại được học lời Đức Phật dạy: “*Tất cả chúng sinh đều có Phật tánh. Ta là Phật đã thành, chúng sinh là Phật sẽ thành.*”

Lời dạy này gây hoang mang cho tôi không ít. Và tôi nhận ra rằng hai ngàn năm trăm trước, Đức Phật cũng là người như tôi, ngài cũng chịu đau đớn khi bị thương tích, khi mắc bệnh, hoặc lúc tuổi về chiều.

Sau đó, tôi hiểu thêm rằng trong bài kệ thái tử đọc lúc giáng sinh, đại danh từ “*Ta*” không ám chỉ Thái tử Sĩ Đạt Ta mà có nghĩa là “*Ngã*”, một triết lý cao siêu trong đạo Phật; và hai câu cuối trong bài kệ tóm tắt thuyết “*sinh tử*” và “*luân hồi*” rất thâm sâu.

Vì hiểu nội dung bài kệ nên tôi lại càng thắc mắc. Tôi tự hỏi: làm sao thái tử, lúc vừa mới sinh ra đời, có thể đọc bài kệ về một triết lý cao siêu, “*Ngã*”, mà ngài sẽ tìm ra khi ngài đắc đạo thành Phật ba mươi lăm năm sau đó? Và làm sao thái tử, trưởng thành bên trong hoàng thành và không được nhìn thấy cảnh khổ của thế gian suốt hai mươi chín năm, lại có thể đọc bài kệ về thuyết “*sinh, lão, bệnh, tử*” và “*luân hồi*” lúc ngài vừa chào đời?

Thốt nhiên, hình ảnh đứa trẻ sơ sinh bước trên bầy hoa sen hiện ra trong tôi, quá xa vời và huyền ảo, không một chút hài hòa với hình ảnh của một vị sa môn già sắp nhập diệt, bình thân nằm nghiêng bên phải giữa hai cây sa la, đầu hướng về phương bắc.

\* \* \*

Tôi gọi lại các kỷ niệm thời thơ ấu để tả tâm trạng hoang mang của một đứa trẻ khi bắt đầu học Phật. Tôi không muốn các độc giả trẻ của tôi phải hoang mang, thắc mắc như tôi khi xưa. Cho nên tôi kể rằng Thái tử Sĩ Đạt Ta sinh ra cõi đời này cũng giản dị và bình thường như các trẻ sơ sinh khác. Tôi không tìm thấy bằng chứng thực tế về việc trẻ sơ sinh bước đi bảy bước và đọc bài kệ, ngoại trừ do các kinh sách chép lại; và tôi nghiệm thấy rằng chi tiết đó không hợp lý nên tôi không kể.

Có vị đề nghị với tôi là nên viết vào sách câu chuyện thái tử đi bảy bước, và ghi chú thêm rằng đó là truyền thuyết. Để làm chi? Giáo lý đạo Phật dựa trên căn bản *sự thật*: sau khi Đức Thích Ca Mâu Ni đấng đạo thành Phật, bài pháp ngài giảng đầu tiên là bài nói về *Tứ Diệu Đế* (nghĩa là Bốn Sự Thật), và *Tứ Diệu Đế* chính là nền tảng của đạo. Tôi nghĩ rằng: đưa một truyền thuyết vào đạo Phật không những là *không cần thiết*, mà còn gây ấn tượng *mâu thuẫn* cho độc giả. Sự mâu thuẫn có thể làm phát sinh mối nghi ngờ, và làm giảm đi niềm tin tưởng vào đạo Phật của các bạn trẻ.

Họa sĩ Dững bỏ rất nhiều thì giờ sưu tầm các chi tiết cho chín bức tranh phụ bản màu về cuộc đời Đức Phật. Dững nghiên cứu từ các vật dụng, cho đến gương mặt, dáng điệu, và cách ăn mặc của các nhân vật, đúng như trong thời Đức Phật ở Ấn Độ cách đây hai mươi lăm thế kỷ. Các bức tranh rất thật, vì Dững cố gắng vẽ lại sự thật. Còn như “trẻ sơ sinh đi bảy bước với bảy hoa sen nở” không chắc là có thật, nên chẳng thà Dững không vẽ bức tranh Thái tử Sĩ Đạt Ta giáng sinh.

Tôn giáo nào cũng ghi lại cuộc đời của vị giáo chủ với ít nhiều truyền thuyết. Đức Thế Tôn có lẽ đã biết trước rằng cuộc đời của ngài cũng sẽ được kể lại theo lệ thường đó, cho nên ngài dạy chúng ta phải luôn luôn dùng trí tuệ quan sát và phân tích trước khi tin bất cứ một điều gì. Chúng ta chỉ chấp nhận sau khi suy nghiệm thấy điều đó đúng với lẽ phải; chúng ta không nên tin một cách mù quáng, cho dù điều đó *được nhiều người nói, được ghi trong kinh sách, hay được truyền lại qua bao thế hệ*.<sup>60</sup>

Như đã trình bày ở phần Preface đầu cuốn sách này, tôi không yêu cầu độc giả phải chấp nhận quan điểm của tôi, kể cả việc tôi không ghi truyền thuyết vào sách. Tôi không bác bỏ truyền thuyết “Thái tử đi bảy bước lúc ngài giáng sinh”, cũng không chỉ trích để làm giảm uy tín các sách chép câu chuyện này.

Hiện nay, số lượng sách luận về đạo Phật rất nhiều, sách nào cũng dạy: Phật cũng là người như chúng ta, chúng ta cố gắng tu rồi sẽ thành Phật; và một số học giả đã chứng minh, xác nhận và khen ngợi rằng đạo Phật rất phù hợp với khoa học. Tuy nhiên, tôi chưa tìm được cuốn sách nào chứng minh giá trị khoa học của việc trẻ sơ sinh nói và bước đi bảy bước. Các vị cao minh nào biết có sách bàn về chuyện này, xin vui lòng mách cho tôi.

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<sup>60</sup> Theo *Tăng Chi Bộ Kinh*, *Kinh Kalama* (The *Anguttara Nikaya*, *Kalama Sutra*).

Một số lớn các tài liệu về đạo Phật đều kể lại chuyện “Bảy bước đi đầu tiên của Thái tử Sĩ Đạt Ta”. Thú vị hơn nữa, có vài tài liệu ghi thái tử giáng sinh từ bên hông phải hay trong nách Hoàng hậu Ma Da. Tôi đoán chắc rằng: với ánh mắt từ bi, Đức Thế Tôn đang nhìn xuống cõi ta bà này, ngài mỉm cười, và nhẹ nhàng bảo chúng ta: “Không phải vậy đâu!”

\* \* \*

Câu chuyện về cuộc đời của Đức Phật Thích Ca Mâu Ni là một trong những câu chuyện gương mẫu và đẹp nhất của nhân loại, bởi vì nó đề cao sự cố gắng và ca ngợi sự thành công của con người trên tất cả vạn vật trong vũ trụ. Câu chuyện tự nó đã đẹp và không cần bất cứ một truyền thuyết nào tô điểm cho nó.



## Attribution

I wish to attribute the paintings, drawings, and photographs presented in the color insert pages to many authors whose talent in art and photography is exceptional.

. My sister Thanh conveyed her reverence for the Buddha in her pencil drawing of Sakyamuni Buddha.

. My youngest brother Don painted the Life of the Buddha with very unique brush strokes in watercolors.

. My relative Wolfgang portrayed the beauty of a Buddhist symbol in his colored pencil drawing of the bodhi leaf.

. My relatives Thoa, Mai and Wolfgang visited Vietnam and Myanmar in 2004; they brought back a rich collection of hundreds of photos, among which are the photos of:

- Buddhist monks on alms round in Mandalay
- Meal time at Kalaywa monastery
- Young novice monks at Kalaywa monastery
- Kuthodaw stupa in Mandalay, rows of stone tombs at Kuthodaw
- A forest of stupas at Shwedagon, and Shwedagon close-up view
- An *hti*, a decorated rooftop at Ananda Temple

. My daughter Châu journeyed to Vietnam and Cambodia in 2006; she took excellent snapshots of Angkor Wat that include:

- Inside a gallery, all bas-reliefs of devatas, on column, pediments, lintels and carved figures on towers and roof
- Stairways lead up to the corner towers
- Overgrown trees and forest covering Angkor Wat and prevention of further collapse at Angkor Wat

. My daughter Tâm traveled to our homeland in 2009, and recorded distinguishing aspects of Buddhism in Vietnam with the photos of:

- A Buddhist altar at Thiên Mụ Temple
- Chùa Một Cột (One Pillar Pagoda) in Hanoi, and a small altar inside the pagoda

- Phước Duyên Tower at Thiên Mụ Temple
- The relic of the blue Austin automobile on display at Thiên Mụ Temple, and the descriptive board

. I obtained the following photographs from <http://en.wikipedia.org>, with permission granted to use them under the attribution condition:

A monk studied Mahayana Sutras:

Description: Geshe Konchog Wangdu reading Mahayana Sutras from an old woodblock copy of the Tibetan Kanjur  
Source: Own work  
Date: June 2003  
Author: Ben

Alms bowl:

Description: alms bowl  
Source: Own work by user Dhj  
Date: June 17, 2005  
Author: Dhj

Thai monks on pilgrimage:

Description: Thai monks on pilgrimage to practice the Dharma and help villagers in Khung Taphao subdistrict, Uttaradit Province, Thailand.  
Date: 1998  
Source: Captured by uploader  
Author: Tevaprapas Makklay

Lotus flower:

Description: flower of *Nelumbo nucifera* at Botanic Garden, Adelaide South Australia.  
Date: February 3, 2007  
Source: Own work  
Author: Peripitus

Flying Buddhist flag:

Description: Buddhist flag in Ghost Festival, Guangji Temple  
Source: Taken in Guangji Temple, Beijing, China  
Date: August 19, 2005  
Author: user:snowyowls

## Attribution

## Bodhi tree:

Description: Bodhi tree from Foster Botanical Gardens. Genetically identical to the Bodhi tree at Sri Mahabodhi temple

Source: First uploaded on English Wikipedia, February 19, 2005 by en:User:Avriette

## Bodhi Leaf:

Description: Image of Ficus religiosa, leaves and trunk of “Bo tree” growing at Schofield Barracks in central Oahu, Hawaiian Islands

Date: 7 September 2003

Source: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Image:Bo\\_Tree.jpg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Image:Bo_Tree.jpg)

Author: Eric Guinther

## A statue of Sakyamuni Buddha:

Description: Buddha in Sarnath Museum, India

Date: 2007

Author: Tevaprapas

## The Dhamekh stupa at Sarnath, India:

Description: Dhamekh stupa at Sarnath, India

Date: 1999

Source: Shiva

Author: Gérald Anfossi

## The Great Stupa at Sanchi, India:

Description: The main Sanchi Stupa from the Eastern gate, in Madhya Pradesh, which contains the relics of Gautama Buddha.

Source: [http://www.flickr.com/photos/chromatic\\_aberration/3311834772/](http://www.flickr.com/photos/chromatic_aberration/3311834772/)

Date: February 22, 2009

Author: [http://www.flickr.com/photos/chromatic\\_aberration/](http://www.flickr.com/photos/chromatic_aberration/)

## Carved decoration on the gateway to the Great Stupa at Sanchi:

Description: Carved decoration of a gateway to the Great Stupa of Sanchi Madhya Pradesh, India

Source: Own work

Date: September 2003

Author: User:Doron

**Borobudur in Central Java, Indonesia:**

Description: Borobudur temple view from north-east plateau, Central Java, Indonesia

Date: June 12, 2008

Source: Own work

Author: Gunkarta Gunawan Kartapranata

**Borobudur's main stupa:**

Description: The main Stupa crowning the Borobudur Buddhist monument in Java, Indonesia

Date: September 27, 2007

Source: Transferred from en.wikipedia; transferred to Commons by

User:Podzemnik using CommonsHelper

Author: Original uploader was Gunkarta at en.wikipedia.

**Buddhist monks praying on the top platform:**

Description: Buddhist monks praying at Borobudur, Central Java, Indonesia

Source: Originally posted to Flickr as pray

Date: January 26, 2004

Author: Frank Wouters from Antwerpen, Belgium

**Borobudur half cross-section:**

Description: Half cross-section of en: Borobudur. The number in head, body and foot are ratios

Source: Own work, traced from Soekmono (1976), *Chandi Borobudur, A Monument of Mankind*, UNESCO

Author: en:User:Indon

**A Buddha statue inside a perforated stupa:**

Description: The perfect Buddha at the Borobudur

Date: 2004

Author: Jan-Pieter Nap

**A carved gargoyle for water drainage:**

Description: A decorative gargoyle (*makaras*) at Borobudur as a spout for drainage

Date: January 2, 2006

Source: Borobudur,

Author: Bicrom Das

## Attribution

## Stone inscriptions in gold letters and borders:

Description: One of the today inscriptions or *kyuaksa* at the Kuthodaw Pagoda, Mandalay, Myanmar

Date: February 23, 2007

Author: Wagaung

## Rows of stone tombs at Kuthodaw:

Description: Some of the 729 stupas that house a stone inscription each of the entire *en:Tipitaka* or *en:Theravada en:Buddhist canon* and known as the *en:world's largest book at the Kuthodaw (Royal Merit) pagoda at the foot of en:Mandalay Hill*.

Date: 2004-08-07 (first version); 2006-12-07 (last version)

Source: Originally from *en.wikipedia*; description page is/was here.

Author: Original uploader was Foriskak at *en.wikipedia* Later versions were uploaded by Wagaung at *en.wikipedia*.

## Shwedagon stupa in Yangon, Myanmar. View at night:

Description: Shwedagon Pagoda at night

Date: May 15, 2010

Source: I (Sky89 (talk)) created this work entirely by myself

Author: Sky89 (talk)

## Pha That Luang stupa in Vientiane, Laos:

Description: Pha That Luang, Vientiane, Laos

Source: Vientiane

Date: July 15, 2007

Author: Aaron Smith from London, United Kingdom

## Yunyan Pagoda in Suzhou, China:

Description: Image of the Yanyansi pagoda

Source: Own work

Date: December 3, 2005

Author: Sjschen

## Iron Pagoda in Kaifeng, China:

Description: The Iron Pagoda of Kaifeng, China, built in 1049 AD during the Song Dynasty.

Date: April 24, 2007

Source: Transferred from *en.wikipedia*; transfer was stated to be made by

User:Bothnia.

Author: Original uploader was PericlesofAthens at *en.wikipedia*.



Sakyamuni Pagoda in Shanxi, China:

Description: The Fogong Temple Wooden Pagoda of Ying county, Shanxi Province, China

Date: October 2007

Source: Own work

Author: Gisling

An example of dougong:

Description: Pillars of Sagami Temple at Hyogo Prefecture in Japan

Source: 663highland

Date: January 27, 2007

Author: 663highland (Edited by Laitche)

Detail of the dougong supports of the Sakyamuni Pagoda:

Description: Wooden Pagoda, South of Datong, Shanxi Province, China

Dates from 11th century, it was built without nails

Date: October 29, 2005

Source: Own work

Author: Felix Andrews (Floybix)

Buddha statues inside the pagoda:

Description: The statuary inside the wooden tower of Ying county

Date: July 14, 2007

Source: Own work

Author: Peellden

Gojunoto on the grounds of Horyu-ji:

Description: Gojunoto (Five-Story Pagoda) at Horyu-ji in Ikaruga, Nara Prefecture, Japan

Date: October 21, 2006

Source: 663highland on ja.wikipedia

Author: 663highland on ja.wikipedia

Kyaiktiyo Pagoda in Mon State, Myanmar:

Description: Golden Rock near Kyaikto, Myanmar

Source: Photo taken by Ralf-André Lettau

Date: November 30, 2005

Author: Ralf-André Lettau

## Attribution

## Taktsang Monastery in Bhutan:

Description: Taktsang Monastery, Bhutan

Source: Own work

Date: September 10, 2006

Author: Douglas J. McLaughlin (Photograph edited by Vassil)

## Steep rock slopes, almost vertical:

Description: en:Taktsang, one of the most famous monasteries in en:Bhutan

Date: December 21, 2005

Source: en:Image:IMG 0042.jpg

Author: en>User:PierreL

## Angkor Wat in Angkor, Cambodia:

Description: Angkor Wat temple, by Andrew Lih

Date: January 29, 2004

Source: Originally from en.wikipedia

Author: Original uploader was Fuzheado at en.wikipedia

## A model of Angkor Wat:

Description: Model by Dy Proeung, in Siem Reap, Cambodia, of Angkor Wat central structure

Source: Photo by Heron

Date: December 21, 2004

Author: User Heron on en.wikipedia

## Detailed plan of Angkor Wat:

Description: Español: Croquis de la planta de Angkor Wat

Date: December 2009

Source: Own work

Author: 3coma14

## Putuo Zongcheng Temple in Hebei, China:

Description: Birds eye view of Putuo Zongcheng Temple at Chengde China, a UNESCO world heritage site

Date: October 2007

Source: Own work

Author: Gisling

Main entrance to the temple complex:

Description: Main entrance of Putuo Zongcheng Temple, completed by 1771 during the reign of the Qianlong Emperor

Date: October 2007

Source: Own work

Author: Gisling

Golden rooftop of Wanfaguiyi Hall:

Description: Golden rooftop of Wanfaguiyi Hall, Putuo Zongcheng temple

Date: October 2007

Source: Own work

Author: Gisling

Shaolin Temple in Henan, China:

Description: Shaolin Temple gate. (Feb. 2002)

Date: February 2002

Source: Photo by author

Author: Yaoleilei

The pagoda forest at Shaolin Temple:

Description: Photo of the Pagoda Forest, located about 300 meters west of the Shaolin temple in Henan Province, China

Date: June 2001

Author: Wintran

Mahabodhi Temple in Bodh Gaya India:

Description: The Mahabodhi temple in Bodhgaya, India

Date: February 27, 2007

Source: Own work

Author: Bpilgrim

Pilgrims lighting candles at the cloister walk:

Description: Picture was taken in 2002 at the Cloister Walk (“Cankamana”) of the Mahabodhi temple, Bodhgaya, Bihar, India

Date: 2002

Source: Own work

Author: Joseph Morris, <http://xenotropic.net>, [joe@xenotropic.net](mailto:joe@xenotropic.net)

## Attribution

## Mendut Temple in Central Java, Indonesia:

Description: Mendut Temple, near Borobudur, Magelang, Central Java, Indonesia

Date: October 2008

Source: Own work

Author: Gunkarta, Gunawan Kartapranata

## The three statues of Buddhist divinities at Mendut Temple:

Description: The three statues inside the ninth century Mendut Buddhist temple, Magelang, Central Java, Indonesia

Date: October 2008

Source: Own work

Author: Gunkarta Gunawan Kartapranata

## Pawon Temple in Central Java, Indonesia:

Description: Pawon temple situated between Mendut and Borobudur temple, Central Java, Indonesia

Date: October 2008

Source: Own work

Author: Gunkarta (Gunawan Kartapranata)

## Location of the Buddhist temples triad:

Description: Location map of Borobudur, Pawon and Mendut temples in Central Java, Indonesia

Date: 2007

Source: self-made, drawn from Moens (1951)

Author: Indon

## Byodo-in in Kyoto, Japan:

Description: Byodo-in in Uji, Kyoto prefecture, Japan,

Date: May 21, 2006

Source: 663highland

Author: 663highland

## Phoenix Hall at Byodo-in:

Description: Phoenix Hall at Byodo-in, Uji Kyoto Japan, 1059

Date: 2009

Source: Own work

Author: Wiiii

## Inside of Kinkaku-ji:

Description: Inside of Kinkaku-ji, Kyoto, Kyoto Prefecture, Japan  
Date: April 16, 2008  
Source: Own work  
Author: Bernard Gagnon

## The third floor of Kinkaku-ji covered with pure gold leaf:

Description: Detail of Kinkaku-ji in Kyoto/Japan  
Date: July 28, 2005  
Source: Own work  
Author: Markus Leupold-Löwenthal

## Sinheungsa in Sokcho, South Korea:

Description: Sinheungsa in Seoraksan National Park  
Date: June 30, 2008 (original upload date)  
Source: Transferred from en.wikipedia; transferred to Commons by  
User:Isageum using CommonsHelper. Own work  
Author: Steve46814 (talk) Original uploader was Steve46814 at en.wikipedia

## Statue of Tongil Daebul Buddha at Sinheungsa:

Description: Giant Buddha statue in Seoraksan (Mt.Seorak), Gangwon-do, South Korea  
Date: June 4, 2005  
Source: <http://flickr.com/photos/nagy/17489639/>  
Author: Nagyman

## Bojero Pavilion, on the grounds of Sinheungsa:

Description: Bojero (pavilion) built in 1770 on the grounds of Sinheungsa in Seoraksan National Park  
Date: June 30, 2008 (original upload date), October 10, 2007 (original text)  
Source: Transferred from en.wikipedia; transferred to Commons by  
User:Isageum using CommonsHelper. Own work.  
Author: Steve46814 (talk) Original uploader was Steve46814 at en.wikipedia.

## Statue of Tongil Daebul Buddha (close-up view of the head):

Description: Bronze Buddha at Sinheungsa  
Date: October 10, 2007  
Source: Own work  
Author: Steve46814

## Attribution

Haeinsa in Gyeongsang, South Korea:

Description: Haeinsa, Temple of Reflection on a Smooth Sea, is one of the foremost Jogye Buddhist temples in South Korea.

Date: June 16, 2008

Source: <http://flickr.com/photos/malpuella/2584671168/>

Author: Lauren Heckler (the Flickr ID is malpuella) at Flicker

Copy of the Tripitaka Koreana woodblock:

Description: Copy of a Tripitaka Koreana woodblock used to allow visitors to make an inked print of the woodblock on the Haeinsa complex grounds.

Date: May 9, 2006

Source: Own work

Author: Steve46814

Ananda Temple in Bagan, Myanmar, the entrance gate:

Description: Gate tower of Ananda Temple, Bagan, Myanmar

Date: November 21, 2005

Source: Photo taken by Ralf-André Lettau . Own work

Author: Ralf-André Lettau

North, East, South and West facing Buddha statue photos, Ananda Temple:

Description: Ananda temple in Bagan, Myanmar

Date: February 11, 2006

Source: Own work

Author: Gerd Eichmann

Wat Phra Kaew complex in Bangkok, Thailand:

Description: Grand Palace with Temple of the Emerald Buddha, (Wat Phra Kaew) in Bangkok, Thailand

Date: January 10, 2006

Source: Own work

Author: D.Alyoshin

Emerald Buddha statue enshrined in Wat Phra Kaew:

Description: Emerald Buddha, Grand Palace, Bangkok, Thailand

Date: June 2004

Source: Own work

Author: Michael Janich

## Entrance to the library Phra Mondop:

Description: Grand Palace. The entrance to the library Phra Mondop

Date: November 24, 2002

Source: Own work, Flickr.com - image description page

Author: Paul Brockmeyer from Chicago, USA

## On Yên River, pilgrims travel by boat to Hương Temple complex in Hanoi:

Description: Perfume Pagoda, Hanoi, Vietnam. Pilgrimage on Yen River

Date: February 16, 2006

Source: Own work

Author: Tango7174

## Hương Tích Cave within Hương Temple complex:

Description: Perfume Pagoda, Hanoi, Vietnam. Huong Tich Cave

Date: February 16, 2006

Source: Own work

Author: Tango7174

## Thiên Trù Temple:

Description: Thiên Trù Pagoda

Date: September 6, 2005

Source: Perfume Pagoda 042

Author: Jack French from San Francisco, USA

. The descriptions of Buddhist monuments presented in Chapter Eight, and the facts about Buddhism in Vietnam reported in Chapter Nine have been adapted from the following internet websites:

<http://countrystudies.us/vietnam>, The Country Studies Series by Federal Research Division of the US Library of Congress

<http://dartcenter.org>, Dart Center for Journalism and Trauma

<http://www.theepochtimes.com/n2/content/view/28633/>, The Epoch Times, January 25, 2010, as reported by Scott Johnson.

<http://www.fidh.org>, Fédération Internationale des ligues des Droits de l'Homme

<http://en.wikipedia.org>, The Free Encyclopedia, license terms defined in

<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/>

<http://www.humanrightsfoundation.org/media/052010.html>, Human Rights Foundation, Media and Press Releases

<http://www.hrw.org>, Human Rights Watch

<http://www.queme.net>, Quê Mẹ, Action for Democracy in Viet Nam

<http://www.rafto.no>, The Rafto Foundation





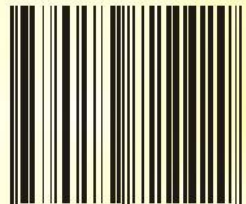


“Be like a lotus that is not contaminated by  
the mud from which it springs up.”



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"Be like a lotus that is not contaminated by the mud from which it springs up."



Du Yên

But Buddha Clearly Shows the Way

Du Yên

# But Buddha Clearly Shows the Way





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the mud from which it springs up.”*



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