

Dashavatar – Buddha

(Part 2)



As you remember, in the silence of a night, accompanied by the charioteer, Prince Siddhartha left the palace and the city of Kapilavasthu to understand why all creatures suffer, and find a path to escape from those sufferings. They stopped at a river some distance from the city. There, Siddhartha put on the robes of a monk. He told the charioteer to take the horse back to the palace. Aged 29, Siddhartha began the homeless life of a monk.

From Kapilavasthu, he walked south to the city of Rajagaha, the capital of the Magadha country. On the way, he came across a flock of sheep. Shepherds were driving the herd to Rajagaha to be sacrificed in a fire ceremony. One little lamb was injured. Out of compassion Siddhartha picked up the lamb and followed the shepherds. In the city, a fire was burning on the altar, and King of Rajagaha, Bimbisara and a group of priests were chanting hymns. When the leader of the fire-worshippers lifted his sword to kill the first sheep, Siddhartha quickly stopped him, turned to the worshippers and told them: "Life is extremely precious. All living creatures want to live, just like people."

Then Siddhartha left Rajagaha to go to the mountains where many hermits and sages lived. He met the sage Alara Kalama and stayed with him and studied diligently. Soon, he knew as much as his teacher. But although he had learned how to make his mind very calm, he still did not know the way to freedom from all suffering. So he thanked Alara Kalama and left to find another teacher.

Siddhartha then studied with a sage named Uddaka Ramaputta. He learned how to make his mind very still and empty of all thoughts and emotions. But he still did not understand the mystery of life and death, and did not find the complete freedom from suffering that he sought. Again, Siddhartha thanked his teacher and left. But, this time, he decided to find the ultimate truth by his own wisdom and effort.

In those days, there were many wandering monks who had left their families to become ascetics. They believed that the more they suffered in this life, the more pleasure they would receive in the future. So some ate extremely little food, some stood on one foot for a long time, and others slept on boards covered with sharp nails. Siddhartha also tried to become an ascetic. He thought that if he practiced hard enough, he would become enlightened and overcome suffering. He met five other men who became his companions. Like Siddhartha, they also practiced asceticism.

Siddhartha practiced various forms of asceticism for six years. He reduced his eating more and more until he ate nothing at all. He became extremely thin, but still he did not want to give up such practice. One day, while meditating alone, he fainted, exhausted by the ascetic practices. A shepherd walked by. He saw Siddhartha and realized that without any food Siddhartha would die very soon. So he quickly fed him some warm goat's milk. Soon Siddhartha regained

consciousness and began to feel better. He realized that without the boy's help, he would have died before attaining enlightenment.

From then on, Siddhartha began eating normally. And soon his health was completely restored. It was clear to him then that asceticism was not the way to enlightenment. His five companions thought that he is a fallen man now from the path and therefore they deserted him, and in that Buddhagaya, Siddhartha remained solitary.

One morning, a girl named Sujata offered Siddhartha some delicious milk-rice porridge and said to him: "May you be successful in obtaining your wishes!" On the same day, Siddhartha accepted an offering of straw from a straw-peddler, made a seat from it and sat down to meditate under a large Bodhi tree, facing east. He made a promise to himself: "I will not give up until I achieve my goal, until I find a way of freedom from suffering, for myself and all people."

As he meditated, many distracting images appeared in his mind. But finally his mind became very calm, like a pond of still water. One night beneath that tree while seated Siddhartha realized the cause of suffering in the world and also the way to end the suffering in the world. He saw that human beings are treading two paths. One is that of sensual pleasures and other is that of self-denial. He saw that these two paths are wrongs, and they will not end suffering in this world. He realized that good deeds lead the way, from suffering to peace. Then he saw that the origin of suffering is being greedy. Due to this vision, Siddhartha became enlightened and was therefore called the "enlightened one." After that he became famous as the Buddha and that tree where he meditated became famous as a Bodhi tree all over the world. He went on to become a great world teacher, as Asita had prophesied. From his teachings, Buddhism was born. Buddha realized that he should not keep the radiant truths he discovered a secret, and that he should share them with everyone.

First he thought of his old teachers, Alara Kalama and Uddaka Ramaputta. But they had both died. Then he remembered his five companions who had abandoned him. He found the five companions at Sarnath, near Varanasi and to them he preached his first sermon. In this sermon he shared the knowledge he had gained through meditation.

Buddha himself went across the length and breadth of India and taught his Dharma to all without distinction. The principles of Buddhism were beneficial and very bright and it led to the huge spread of Buddha Dharma all over the world. In the South, it spread to Sri Lanka and many islands in the Pacific Ocean. In the east, it went to Burma, Assam, Thailand, China, and Japan. In the North, it went to Tibet, Nepal, and other places. Buddha Dharma also went to Afghanistan. No religion spread to this extent. There is another specialty of the Buddha Dharma. Not every religion spread due to its values and ideas. Islam grew on the basis of wars. Christianity grew on

the basis of law. Buddha never forced people to follow his teachings. People forced themselves to follow his teachings.

He taught the Dharma for about 40 years. At the end, when he was propagating his Dharma, he arrived at Pava. In that village lived an ironsmith known as Chuda. Chuda invited Buddha for a lunch, and Buddha could not digest the food and fell sick. In that sickness, the Buddha went to Kusinara village and left this world. Buddha was born in 563 BC as a prince, and died in 483 BC as a founder of the religion Buddhism.

Questions:

- Why did Buddha leave home?
- What teachers did he study with?
- Did he get what he wanted from studying?
- Did he complain against his teachers when he left them?
- What is asceticism? Did it work for Buddha?
- Where did he get enlightenment?
- Did Buddha force others to follow him?
- How long did he teach?
- Do you think he would have been happier staying a prince?

Lingashtakam

Brahma Murari surarchita Lingam; Nirmala bhasita sobhita Lingam
Janmaja dukha vinasaka Lingam; Tat pranamami Sadasiva Lingam (1)

Devamuni pravararchita Lingam; Kamadahana karunakara Lingam
Ravana darpa vinasaka Lingam; Tat pranamami Sadasiva Lingam (2)

Sarva sugandhi sulepita Lingam; Buddhi vivardhana karana Lingam
Siddha surasura vandita Lingam; Tat pranamami Sadasiva Lingam (3)

Kanaka maha mani bhushita Lingam; Paniphati veshtitha shobhita Lingam
Dakshasu yajna vinashana Lingam; Tat pranamami Sadasiva Lingam (4)

Kumkuma chandana lepita Lingam; Pankaja hara sushobhita Lingam
Sanchita papa vinashana Lingam; Tat pranamami Sadasiva Lingam (5)

**Devaganarchita sevita Lingam; Bhavair bhaktibhi revacha Lingam
Dinakarakoti prabhakara Lingam; Tat pranamami Sadasiva Lingam (6)**

**Ashtadalo pariveshtia Lingam; Sarva samudbhava karana Lingam
Ashtadaridra vinashana Lingam; Tatpranamami Sadashiva Lingam (7)**

**Suraguru suravara pujita Lingam; Suravana pushpa sadarchita Lingam
Paratparam paramatmaka Lingam; Tatpranamami Sadashiva Lingam (8)**

**Lingashtakamidam punyam; Yat Pathet Shivasannidhau
Shivalokamavapnoti; Shivena saha modate (9)**

Jumble Words – All words are from this lesson

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Coloring exercise:

