

## Life of the Buddha: Enlightenment to Parinibbana – Key Events

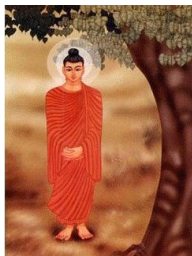


At the age of 35, in the night of Full Moon Day in May in 535 BCE, the Bodhisatta attained the supreme enlightenment. During this night, **first** he developed the ability to recall the events of his previous reincarnations (previous existences of his life) in detail. **Second**, he was able to see how the good and bad deeds that many living entities performed during their lifetimes led to the nature of their subsequent reincarnation into their next life. This is the law of *karma*. **Third**, he understood and overcame all defilements including craving, desire, exhaustion, fear, doubt, and delusions and attained nirvana. He would never again be reincarnated into a future life.

### Seven Weeks After Enlightenment (Sath Sathiya)

#### Week 1 (Under the bodhi tree)

During the first week after Enlightenment, the Buddha sat under the bodhi tree, experiencing the happiness of freedom and peace. Throughout the week, He sat in one posture, experiencing the Bliss of Emancipation (Vimukthi Suva).

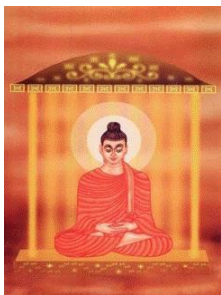


#### Week 2 (Gazing at the bo tree)

In gratitude to the tree that had sheltered Him during His struggle for Buddhahood, the Buddha stood without moving His eyes as He meditated on the bodhi tree (Animisalochana Pooja), thus teaching a great moral lesson to the world. Buddhists who follow this example pay their respects not only to the original bo tree, but also other bo trees.

#### Week 3 (Golden bridge)

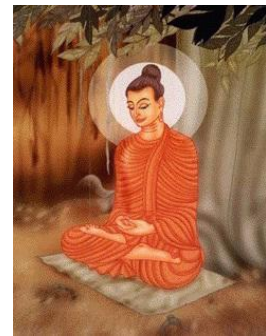
The Buddha saw through His mind's eye that the gods were not sure whether He had attained Enlightenment, as the Buddha had not given up His temporary residence at the bo tree. To clear their doubts, He created, by His psychic powers, a golden bridge in the air, and walked up and down it for a whole week.



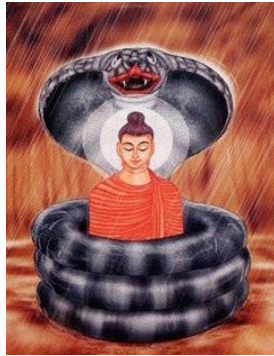
#### Week 4 (In the Jewelled Chamber)

He created a beautiful jewelled chamber and sitting inside it meditated on what was later known as the "Detailed Teaching" (Abhidhamma). His mind and body were so purified that six coloured rays came out of his body — blue, yellow, red, white, orange and a mixture of these five. Today these six colours make up the Buddhist flag.

#### Week 5 (Under banyan tree, arrival of the three girls)



During the fifth week, while meditating under a banyan tree, three most charming girls called Tanha, Rati and Raga came to disturb his meditation. They danced in a most seductive and charming manner and did everything to tempt the Buddha to watch their dance. Yet he continued to meditate unperturbed, and soon they tired and left him alone.



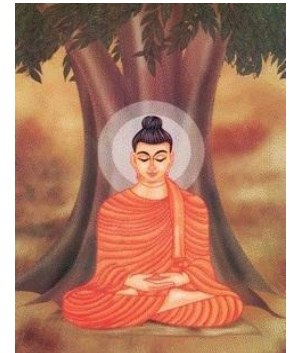
### **Week 6 (The Mucalinda Tree)**

The Buddha then went and meditated at the foot of a mucalinda tree. It began to rain heavily and a huge king cobra came out and coiled his body seven times around the Buddha to keep him warm and placed his hood over the Buddha's head to protect him from the rain. After seven days the rain stopped and the snake changed into a young man who paid his respects to the Buddha. The Buddha then said:

"Happy are they who are contented. Happiness is for those who hear and know the truth. Happy are they who have good will in this world towards all sentient beings. Happy are they who have no attachments and have passed beyond sense-desires. The disappearance of the word "I AM " is indeed the highest happiness."

### **Week 7 (Under the Rajayatana Tree)**

During the seventh week, the Buddha meditated under the rajayatana tree. On the fiftieth morning, after seven weeks of fasting, two merchants came into his presence. They were called Tapussa and Bhalluka. They offered the Buddha rice cakes and honey to break his fast and the Buddha told them some of what he had found in his enlightenment.



These two merchants, by taking refuge in the Buddha and his Dharma (translated as "teachings of the Buddha"), became the first lay followers. There was no Sangha (order of monks and nuns) then. They asked the Buddha for something sacred to keep with them. The Buddha wiped his head with his right hand and pulled out some hair to give to them. These hair relics, called Kesa Dathu, were later reputed to be enshrined by the merchants on their return home to what is now known as Burma, in the Shwedagon Pagoda in Rangoon.

## **First Sermon**

Buddha finds his former five disciples in Benares. In his first sermon he teaches them what will become the gist of Buddhism. Upon hearing it, one of the disciples instantly attains the status of an arhat (one with enlightened wisdom). This event marks the beginning of the Buddhist teaching and his disciples become the first five members of the sangha.

## Visiting the Home City (Kimbulwath Pura)

During a short period of time after enlightenment, Buddha establishes a great reputation and thousands of people started to follow his dhamma. During this time he received invitation from his father, King Suddhodana, and visited his home town. In this visit, Prince Rahula became a monk.

## Discourse of Dhamma (Teaching)

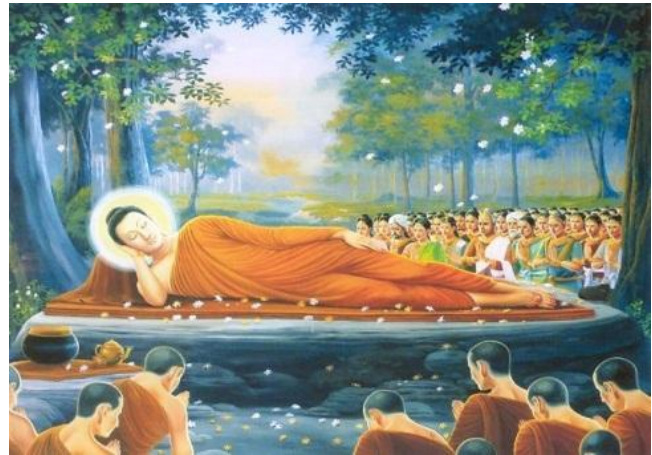
In the 45 years following his enlightenment, Buddha travels around Northern India to teach the tenets (principles) of Buddhism. He was extremely successful and attracted first thousands, then ten thousands, and later hundred thousands of people from all walks of life, who voluntarily decide to follow his teachings, the dhamma. He also helped many poor, suffering and misled people to understand the nature of life and dhamma. Examples include Sopaka, Mattakundali, Angulimala, Patachara, Kisa Gotami,

Buddha's success did not only attract admirers, but also provoked envy and ill will. Several attempts were made on his life, but all of them failed. Although he was being criticised and defamed, this did not affect the popularity of his teaching.

## Parinibbana (Passing Away)

Having achieved the goal of spreading the teaching to the greatest number of people, Lord Buddha passed away at the age of eighty years.

He received his last meal from a lay person named Cunda. After this meal, The Buddha fell very ill but he instructed his attendant Ānanda to convince Cunda that the meal eaten at his place had nothing to do with his passing away and that his meal would be a source of the greatest merit as it provided the last meal for a Buddha.



The Buddha asked his disciples to arrange a place to rest in the forest near Kusinagara, Nepal. Reclining on a bed he speaks his last words: "All compounded things are ephemeral (lasting for a very short time); work diligently on your salvation." With these words on his lips, he passes into the Supreme State of Nibbana.