

*"Now I understand why Buddha's message
is still so important today."* Rani, 11



SIDDHARTHA GAUTAMA THE LIFE OF THE BUDDHA

**Can the path to the ultimate truth about human life be found
by leaving behind wealth, comfort, family and security?**

Born as the heir to an Indian kingdom, Prince Siddhartha knows only happiness, luxury and love. Fearing the prophecy that the child will one day abandon his princely life, Siddhartha's father builds him three palaces to provide everything he could ever desire. But the power of destiny cannot be held back by physical walls.



Leaving palace, wife and son behind, Siddhartha embarks on a new life that will ultimately lead him to the one thing that he is in search of – the solution to all human suffering. Now an enlightened Buddha, Siddhartha Gautama wanders the country, spreading the knowledge that he has discovered.

This is the story of the life and teachings of the Buddha, the all-knowing, whose influence still reverberates in every corner of the world.

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R.N. Pillai

based on original sources



Retold by R.N. Pillai
Illustrated by Aniruddha Mukherjee



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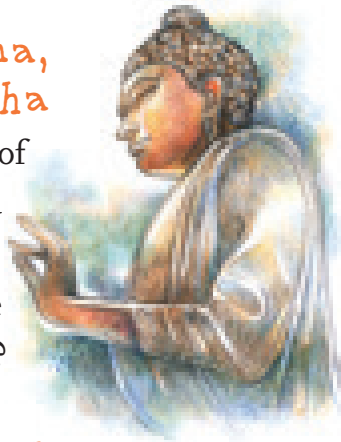
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THE CHARACTERS

Siddhartha Gautama, Lord Buddha

Siddhartha, the heir to the throne of Kapilavastu, is disenchanted and aimless. Leaving his palace, wife and child behind, what will he discover about life and death?



Suddhodana and Mahamaya

Siddhartha's parents always knew that their son was destined for greatness, but how will Mahamaya's dream and Suddhodana's expectations turn out?



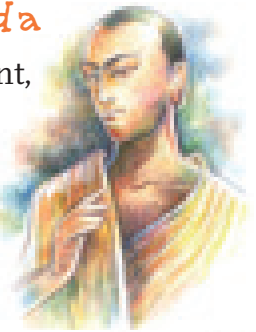
Yashodhara and Rahula

Siddhartha's wife and baby son are left as Yashodhara's husband sets off for the wilderness to explore the greatest truths of life. Will they ever see him again?



Ananda

The Buddha's cousin and constant attendant, Ananda loves the Buddha as no one else does. He remembers Buddha's every word. What use will he make of his gift?



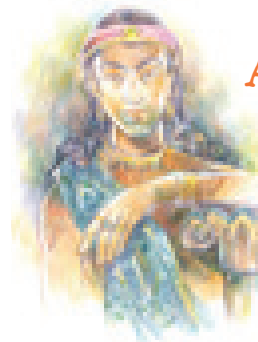
Mahamoggallana and Sariputta

Buddha's chief disciples are second only to him in wisdom, but what they have to learn from their master's teachings will follow quite different paths.



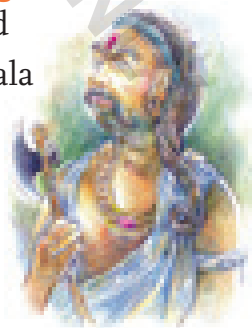
Anathapindika

This rich merchant gives everything away for the sake of the Buddha and his teachings. Will he ever become rich again?



Devadatta and Angulimala

Seduced by selfishness and violence, Devadatta and Angulimala find it hard to understand the Buddha's message. What will they learn?





SIDDHARTHA GAUTAMA

Two thousand six hundred years ago a wise and compassionate king, Suddhodana, ruled over the kingdom of Sakya on the Himalayan slopes of northern India. Suddhodana's chief queen was the virtuous and charitable Mahamaya.

One full moon night, as Queen Mahamaya lay asleep, she had a beautiful dream. She felt she was being carried away by *devas*, residents of heaven, to a sacred lake in the Himalayas. There she was bathed and dressed in heavenly clothes. A white elephant carrying a silver lotus flower in its trunk walked around her three times before entering her womb.

When the king heard about the dream he invited sixty-four brahmin astrologers to interpret it. 'Your Majesty,' they told him, 'you shall beget a son who will forsake the kingdom for the sake of ultimate wisdom. He will bring deliverance to all mankind.'

When her time came, according to custom, Queen Mahamaya set out to deliver the child in her parental home. King Suddhodana made arrangements for her royal procession to the house of the Koliyas, her own clan. As they reached a beautiful spot called the Lumbini Garden, the queen went into labour and asked the palanquin bearers to set her down. The curtains were drawn around her on all sides, and as she stood under a *sala* tree holding one of its branches, she was painlessly delivered of a baby boy. The baby's body glowed in divine splendour. He stood up and took seven steps forwards. At each step, a lotus flower sprang up to support his feet.

'I am the chief of all worlds,' announced the baby. 'I have no equal. I am supreme. This is my final incarnation.' It was full moon day in the late spring month of Vaisakha, which in the Christian calendar was May of the year 566 BCE.

There was great rejoicing in the royal household at the birth of a son to the king.



News spread throughout the kingdom that a divine child had been born to King Suddhodana and Queen Mahamaya. Asita, a venerable sage, came to the palace to see the blessed child. He took up the child in his arms and started to weep.

A worried Suddhodana asked Asita, 'Is anything wrong with the baby?'

'No, on the contrary,' replied Asita. 'Your baby will be an all-enlightened Buddha who will preach the ultimate truth to humankind. Sadly I won't have the good fortune to hear him as I shall have passed away by then. I am sorry for myself. That is why I weep.'

Others, whose leaders and followers came from castes other than the brahmin, believed that it was essential to leave society altogether in order to seek ultimate truth. They often lived in the forest as a spiritual community or *sangha*, and believed that people should not be judged according to their caste. These groups and their leaders rejected the idea of one supreme god or creator, believing instead in the interconnectedness and cyclical nature of the universe. This was the route that Buddha and his followers took and developed into Buddhism.

Major places and festivals

There are four major places of pilgrimage in Buddhism:

- Lumbini, near Kapilavastu, where Siddhartha was born;
- Bodh Gaya, where he attained enlightenment;
- Sarnath, where he preached his first sermon;
- Kusinagar, where he passed away.



Other important places associated with the Buddha include:

- Jetavana near Sravasti, where the Buddha spent twenty-five years towards the end of his life.
- Sanchi, near Bhopal in Madhya Pradesh, where the Buddha's relics as well as those of Sariputta and Mahamoggallana are enshrined.