

INDIA'S SUPRAMUNDANE HERO

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Having mentally entertained the intention of becoming Buddha (Enlightened One) for seven countless millions of aeons of years and having verbally expressed the desire for nine countless millions of aeons of years, in innumerable cycles of births, this great hero was born, at the city of Amarawati, as Sumedha in the Brahmin clan. He had completely mastered the three Vedas. All the wealth he had derived through seven wealthy generations of ancestors, he distributed amongst the poor, the needy and even journeying mendicants, in order to achieve the objective of attaining Buddhahood. Having done this, he donned the garb of a hermit and departed to the Himalayan hills. There, by practising austerity he gained the five-fold knowledge and the eight-fold excellent supernatural powers. As a result he became a mighty hermit possessing great divine powers. Now at this time, people were busy constructing a road to receive Deepankara Buddha with a retinue of a lakh of saintly followers (Arahats). Sumedha sought and obtained a portion and set himself to construct this road with his own efforts. But before he could complete it the Buddha arrived with the retinue of Arahats. The hermit, thereupon, spread the tiger skin mantle and laid himself flat on the unconstructed muddy portion for the Buddha and the Arahats to pass over him and thus prepared to sacrifice himself. This act was conducive to obtaining from Deepankara Buddha the following definite assurance. "After the lapse of four countless millions aeons of years this hermit will attain enlightenment as Gautama Buddha". This was the first assurance he received in all the births which he had so far, and was known as Deepankara assurance. Thereafter, he received twenty four assurances from all the Buddhas, the last being from Kasyapa Buddha. This magnificent hero, in his birth as King Vessantara made the earth tremble seven times by gifting wealth including the donations of queen consort and his children. They were gifts involving the five-fold sacrifices.

Finally he was born in Tusita heaven. Then the Gods and the Brahma deities of the ten thousand worlds congregated in Tusita heaven and requested that hero to become the Buddha. He then entered the womb of King Suddhodana's chief queen Mahamaya on the full moon day of the period July and August. Then at the end of ten lunar months he was born at Shorea Robusta (Sal tree) garden of Lumbini on the full moon day of May in the Kaliyuga era 2478.

This garden lies midway between the cities of Kimbulwat and Devdaha. At birth itself he looked in the north direction and walked seven steps on lotus

flowers which sprang up from the earth to receive him and recited fearlessly the following stanza (gatha)

Aggohamasmi lokassa,
Jettho hamasmi lokassa
Settho hamasmi lokassa
Ayamanti Majati natthidani punabbhavo.

This infant was brought back to Kimbulwat city. Here, his father constructed for him three palaces named Ramya, Suramya and Subha to spend the three seasons of the year. In these palaces he enjoyed divine pleasures with the chief princess known as Yasodhara who had forty thousand beautiful damsels as retinue. On the full moon day of July - August period of the Kaliyuga era 2507 the Prince, who was now twenty nine years old, accompanied by his Minister Channa rode away from Kimbulwat on the horse Kanthaka and took the most difficult step of departing to lead the life of a hermit. Having ridden thirty yojanas (four hundred and eighty miles) he arrived at the river Anoma and crossed it. As a hermit he went through a life of penance for six years. At the end of this period he received milk rice from the merchant princess Sujatha and this he partook having divided it into thirty nine morsels. Thereafter, He accepted eight handfuls of sacrificed grass from Sotthiya Brahmin and laid it at the holy fig tree, which was on the bank of the river Neranjara. Then he sat down thereon. He dispelled the external destructive forces of death. In the first watch of the night he developed the concentration arising from the contemplation of the exhaling and inhaling process and entered into the fourth stage of meditation. Then dawned the stage of perceiving the previous existences. In the middle watch he developed the divine vision which included the knowledge of the causes of birth and death and in the last watch he developed the vision which destroys all fetters and thus attained Buddhahood.

Having thus gained enlightenment the incomparable Buddha who was the embodiment of compassion and wisdom spent seven weeks, and this teacher of the three worlds arrived at Isipatana of Benaris, the abode of the five ascetic group on the full moon day of July August period.

He preached the wheel of doctrine (Dhamma chakka) to the assembled ascetics, Gods and Brahma deities. As a result, from men, the hermit Kondanna, from Brahma deities, one hundred and eighty million, and from gods a countless number entered the paths leading to emancipation. Their shouts of joy penetrated to the Akanita Brahma World. The Buddhist doctrine thus promulgated to the world brought incalculable benefits to all the beings.

The innumerable services rendered for forty-five years by that all-compassionate Buddha who was the fountain head of all wisdom baffles all descriptions. At times he went on foot to Indian towns and villages. At other periods he journeyed through the air by using supernatural powers. Many were the congregations that he addressed. However, the following twenty four are regarded as the most important.

Dhammacakkha and Nalaka Sutras preached at the city of Benaris in the first year after the year after enlightenment; in the same year the Gangawarohana congregation took place at the bank of Ganges: In the second year Buddhawamsa and Cariyapitaka preached at Kimbulwat. In the third year Mahamangala Sutra and Parabhawa Sutra preached at Savath; In the fifth year these seven Sutras namely, Mahasamaya, Sammaparibbajaniya, Culaviyuha, Mahaviyuha, Tuwataka, Purabheda, and Kalaha viroda preached at Kimbulwat; In the seventh year Yamakamaha patihariya at the city of Savatthi, Abhidhamma in Tawtisa heaven and Devorohana preached at the city of Sankassa; In the eleventh year Parayana Sutra preached at the Magadha field. In the thirteenth year Sakkapannga and Cularahulovada Sutra preached at Savath. In the sixteenth year the Alavaka Sutra preached at the city of Alav. After the twentieth year Samaeltpariyaya Sutra preached at Savath. Brahmanimantaniya Sutra preached at Brahma heaven and Maratajjaniya Sutra preached at Sunsumara hill. At each of these preachings innumerable gods, Brahma deities and others attained emancipation. Apart from these there were the assemblies of Erakapatta the Naga King, Sumana the garland maker, Jambuka the ascetic, Uggasena, Dhanapala, Patika's son, Garahadinna, Mattakundali, Sarabhaparibrajaka and others. In each of these assemblies, eighty four thousand beings gained emancipation.

It is disclosed in Buddhist books that during this period of forty five years, the Lord Gautama Buddha, the lion of the Sakya clan, helped twenty-four lots of countless numbers of beings to gain emancipation. The innumerable services rendered to men, gods and Brahma deities are beyond all estimation and cannot therefore be described. How can one describe the lord's omniscient knowledge and the immeasurable virtues which arose as a result of overcoming the four deluges such as sensual desires and reaching final sanctification. The four fold comprehension such as realisation of meaning, knowledge of the doctrine, realisation of origins and perception arose from this state. The lord possessed the fourteen-fold Buddha Knowledge consisting of the six unique knowledges mainly desire cognition, dual miracle performance cognition, the great compassionate meditation cognition, omniscient cognition, cognition of perceiving hidden objects, the others being cognition of sorrow, cognition of the origin of sorrow, cognition of cessation of sorrow, cognition of the path of cessation of sorrow, cognition of meaning, cognition of the doctrine, cognition

of derivation, supreme brightness of conception, knowledge of senses, desire cognition, dual miracle performing cognition, knowledge of the great compassionate meditation and omniscient cognition. Besides these there are eighteen special attributes possessed by the Buddha only. There is also a four-fold all-embracing knowledge.

In the midst of the sixty two heretical sects, the lord, who, from his own efforts, discovered the four noble truths, preached without ever facing defeat in debates. The whole world accepts as the greatest supramundane hero that lion of the Sakya race. Therefore, I worship that benevolent all-knowing and fully sanctified Buddha.

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