

BUDDHA

CHAPTER ONE
SHAKYAMUNI BUDDHA

I
THE LIFE OF THE BUDDHA

1. The Shakya clansmen dwelt along the Rohini River which flows among the southern foothills of the Himalayas. Their king, Shuddhodana Gautama, established his capital at Kapilavastu and there had a great castle built and ruled wisely, winning the acclaim of his people.

The Queen's name was Maya. She was the daughter of the King's uncle who was also the king of a neighboring district of the same Shakya clan.

For twenty years they had no children. But one night Queen Maya had a strange dream, in which she saw a white elephant entering into her womb through the right side of her chest, and she became pregnant. The King and the people looked forward with anticipation to the birth of a royal child. According to their custom the Queen returned to her parents' home for the birth, and on her way, in the beautiful spring sunshine, she took a rest in the Lumbini Garden.

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All about her were Ashoka blossoms. In delight she reached her right arm out to pluck a branch and as she did so a prince was born. All expressed their heart-felt delight with the glory of the Queen and her princely child; Heaven and Earth rejoiced. This memorable day was the eighth day of April.

The joy of the King was extreme and he named the child, Siddhartha, which means “Every wish fulfilled.”

2. In the palace of the King, however, delight was followed quickly by sorrow, for after several days the lovely Queen Maya suddenly died. Her younger sister, Mahaprajapati, became the child’s foster mother and brought him up with loving care.

A hermit, called Asita, who lived in the mountains not far away, noticed a radiance about the castle. Interpreting it as a good omen he came down to the palace and was shown the child. He predicted: “This Prince, if he remains in the palace, when grown up will become a great king and subjugate the whole world. But if he forsakes the court life to embrace a religious life, he will become a Buddha, the Savior of the world.”

At first the King was pleased to hear this prophecy, but later he started to worry about the possibility of his only son leaving the palace to become a homeless recluse.

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At the age of seven the Prince began his lessons in the civil and military arts, but his thoughts more naturally tended to other things. One spring day he went out of the castle with his father. Together they were watching a farmer at his plowing when he noticed a bird descended to the ground and carried off a small worm which had been turned up by the farmer's plough. He sat down in the shade of a tree and thought about it, whispering to himself:

“Alas! Do all living creatures kill each other?”

The Prince, who had lost his mother so soon after his birth, was deeply affected by the tragedy of these little creatures.

This spiritual wound deepened day by day as he grew up; like a little scar on a young tree, the suffering of human life became more and more deeply engrained in his mind.

The King was increasingly worried as he recalled the hermit's prophecy and tried in every possible way to cheer the Prince and to turn his thoughts in other directions. The King arranged the marriage of the Prince at the age of nineteen to the Princess Yashodhara. She was the daughter of Suprabuddha, the Lord of Devadaha Castle and a brother of the late Queen Maya.

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3. For ten years, in the different Pavilions of Spring, Autumn and the Rainy Season, the Prince was immersed in rounds of music, dancing and pleasure, but always his thoughts returned to the problem of suffering as he pensively tried to understand the true meaning of human life.

“The luxuries of the palace, this healthy body, this rejoicing youth! What do they mean to me?” he thought. “Some day we may be sick, we shall become aged; from death there is no escape. Pride of youth, pride of health, pride of existence – all thoughtful people should cast them aside.

“A man struggling for existence will naturally look for something of value. There are two ways of looking – a right way and a wrong way. If he looks in the wrong way he recognizes that sickness, old age and death are unavoidable, but he seeks the opposite.

“If he looks in the right way he recognizes the true nature of sickness, old age and death, and he searches for meaning in that which transcends all human sufferings. In my life of pleasures I seem to be looking in the wrong way.”

4. Thus the spiritual struggle went on in the mind of

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the Prince until his only child, Rahula, was born when he was 29. This seemed to bring things to a climax, for he then decided to leave the palace and look for the solution of his spiritual unrest in the homeless life of a mendicant. He left the castle one night with only his charioteer, Chandaka, and his favorite horse, the snow-white Kanthaka.

His anguish did not end and many devils tempted him saying: "You would do better to return to the castle for the whole world would soon be yours." But he told the devil that he did not want the whole world. So he shaved his head and turned his steps toward the south, carrying a begging bowl in his hand.

The Prince first visited the hermit Bhagava and watched his ascetic practices. He then went to Arada Kalama and Udraka Ramaputra to learn their methods of attaining Enlightenment through meditation; but after practicing them for a time he became convinced that they would not lead him to Enlightenment. Finally he went to the land of Magadha and practiced asceticism in the forest of Uruvilva on the banks of the Nairanjana River, which flows by the Gaya Village.

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5. The methods of his practice were unbelievably rigorous. He spurred himself on with the thought that “no ascetic in the past, none in the present, and none in the future, ever has practiced or ever will practice more earnestly than I do.”

Still the Prince could not realize his goal. After six years in the forest he gave up the practice of asceticism. He went bathing in the river and accepted a bowl of milk from the hand of Sujata, a maiden, who lived in the neighboring village. The five companions who had lived with the Prince during the six years of his ascetic practice were shocked that he should receive milk from the hand of a maiden; they thought him degraded and left him.

Thus the Prince was left alone. He was still weak, but at the risk of losing his life he attempted yet another period of meditation, saying to himself, “Blood may become exhausted, flesh may decay, bones may fall apart, but I will never leave this place until I find the way to Enlightenment.”

It was an intense and incomparable struggle for him. He was desperate and filled with confusing thoughts, dark shadows overhung his spirit, and he was

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beleaguered by all the lures of the devils. Carefully and patiently he examined them one by one and rejected them all. It was a hard struggle indeed, making his blood run thin, his flesh fall away, and his bones crack.

But when the morning star appeared in the eastern sky, the struggle was over and the Prince's mind was as clear and bright as the breaking day. He had, at last, found the path to Enlightenment. It was December eighth, when the Prince became a Buddha at thirty-five years of age.

6. From this time on the Prince was known by different names: some spoke of him as Buddha, the Perfectly Enlightened One, Tathagata; some spoke of him as Shakyamuni, the Sage of the Shakya clan; others called him the World-honored One.

He went first to Mrigadava in Varanasi where the five mendicants who had lived with him during the six years of his ascetic life were staying. At first they shunned him, but after they had talked with him, they believed in him and became his first followers. He then went to the Rajagriha Castle and won over King Bimbisara who had always been his friend. From there he went about the country living on alms and teaching men to accept his way of life.

People responded to him as the thirsty seek water

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and the hungry food. Two great disciples, Sariputra and Maudgalyayana, and their two thousand followers, came to him.

At first the Buddha's father, King Shuddhodana, still inwardly suffering because of his son's decision to leave the palace, remained aloof, but then became his faithful disciple. Mahaprajapati, the Buddha's stepmother, and Princess Yashodhara, his wife, and all the members of the Shakya clan began to follow him. Multitudes of others also became his devoted and faithful followers.

7. For forty-five years the Buddha went about the country preaching and persuading people to follow his way of life. But when he was eighty, at Vaisali and on his way from Rajagriha to Shravasti, he became ill and predicted that after three months he would enter Nirvana. Still he journeyed on until he reached Pava where he fell seriously ill from some food offered by Chunda, a blacksmith. Eventually, in spite of great pain and weakness, he reached the forest that bordered Kusinagara.

Lying between two large sala trees, he continued teaching his disciples until his last moment. Thus he entered into perfect tranquility after he had completed his work as the world's greatest teacher.

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8. Under the guidance of Ananda, the Buddha's favorite disciple, the body was cremated by his friends in Kusinagara.

Seven neighboring rulers as well as King Ajatasatru demanded that the relics be divided among them. The People of Kusinagara at first refused and the dispute even threatened to end in war; but under the advice of a wise man named Drona, the crisis passed and the relics were divided among the eight great countries. The ashes of the funeral pyre and the earthen jar that contained the relics were also given to two other rulers to be likewise honored. Thus ten great towers commemorating the Buddha were built to enshrine his relics and ashes.

II

THE LAST TEACHING OF THE BUDDHA

1. Beneath the sala trees at Kusinagara, in his last words to his disciples, the Buddha said:

“Make of yourself a light. Rely upon yourself: do not depend upon anyone else. Make my teachings your light. Rely upon them: do not depend upon any other teaching.

Consider your body: Think of its impurity. Knowing that both its pain and its delight are alike causes of suffering, how can you indulge in its desires? Consider your

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‘self’; think of its transiency; how can you fall into delusion about it and cherish pride and selfishness, knowing that they must all end in inevitable suffering? Consider all substances; can you find among them any enduring ‘self’? Are they not all aggregates that sooner or later will break apart and be scattered? Do not be confused by the universality of suffering, but follow my teaching, even after my death, and you will be rid of pain. Do this and you will indeed be my disciples.”

2. “My disciples, the teachings that I have given you are never to be forgotten or abandoned. They are always to be treasured, they are to be thought about, they are to be practiced. If you follow these teachings you will always be happy.

The point of the teachings is to control your own mind. Keep your mind from greed, and you will keep your behavior right, your mind pure and your words faithful. By always thinking about the transiency of your life, you will be able to resist greed and anger, and will be able to avoid all evils.

If you find your mind tempted and so entangled in greed, you must suppress and control the temptation; be the master of your own mind.

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A man's mind may make him a Buddha, or it may make him a beast. Misled by error, one becomes a demon; enlightened, one becomes a Buddha. Therefore, control your mind and do not let it deviate from the right path."

3. "You should respect each other, follow my teachings, and refrain from disputes; you should not, like water and oil, repel each other, but should, like milk and water, mingle together.

Study together, learn together, practice my teachings together. Do not waste your mind and time in idleness and quarreling. Enjoy the blossoms of Enlightenment in their season and harvest the fruit of the right path.

The teachings which I have given you, I gained by following the path myself. You should follow these teachings and conform to their spirit on every occasion.

If you neglect them, it means that you have never really met me. It means that you are far from me, even if you are actually with me; but if you accept and practice my teachings, then you are very near to me, even though you are far away."

4. "My disciples, my end is approaching, our parting is

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near, but do not lament. Life is ever changing; none can escape the dissolution of the body. This I am now to show by my own death, my body falling apart like a dilapidated cart.

Do not vainly lament, but realize that nothing is permanent and learn from it the emptiness of human life. Do not cherish the unworthy desire that the changeable might become unchanging.

The demon of worldly desires is always seeking chances to deceive the mind. If a viper lives in your room and you wish to have a peaceful sleep, you must first chase it out.

You must break the bonds of worldly passions and drive them away as you would a viper. You must positively protect your own mind.”

5. “My disciples, my last moment has come, but do not forget that death is only the end of the physical body. The body was born from parents and was nourished by food; just as inevitable are sickness and death.

But the true Buddha is not a human body: — it is Enlightenment. A human body must die, but the Wisdom of Enlightenment will exist forever in the truth of the Dharma, and in the practice of the Dharma. He who sees

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merely my body does not truly see me. Only he who accepts my teaching truly sees me.

After my death, the Dharma shall be your teacher. Follow the Dharma and you will be true to me.

During the last forty-five years of my life, I have withheld nothing from my teachings. There is no secret teaching, no hidden meaning; everything has been taught openly and clearly. My dear disciples, this is the end. In a moment, I shall be passing into Nirvana. This is my instruction.”

CHAPTER TWO
**THE ETERNAL AND GLORIFIED
BUDDHA**

I
HIS COMPASSION AND VOWS

1. The Spirit of Buddha is that of great loving kindness and compassion. The great loving kindness is the spirit to save all people by any and all means. The great compassion is the spirit that prompts it to be ill with the illness of people, to suffer with their suffering.

“Your suffering is my suffering and your happiness is my happiness,” said Buddha, and, just as a mother always loves her child, He does not forget that spirit even for a single moment, for it is the nature of Buddhahood to be compassionate.

The Buddha’s spirit of compassion is stimulated according to the needs of the people; one’s faith is the reaction to this spirit, and it leads him to Enlightenment, just as a mother realizes her motherhood by loving her child; then the child, reacting to that love, feels safe and at ease.

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Yet people do not understand this spirit of Buddha and go on suffering from the illusions and desires that arise from their ignorance; they suffer from their own deeds accumulated through worldly passions, and wander about among the mountains of delusion with the heavy burden of their evil deeds.

2. Do not think that the compassion of the Buddha is only for the present life; it is a manifestation of the timeless compassion of the eternal Buddha that has been operative since unknown time, when mankind went astray due to ignorance.

The eternal Buddha always appears before people in the most friendly forms and brings to them the wisest methods of relief.

Shakyamuni Buddha, born a Prince among his Shakya kinsmen, left the comforts of his home to live a life of asceticism. Through the practice of silent meditation, he realized Enlightenment. He preached the Dharma (the teaching) among his fellow men and finally manifested it by his earthly death.

The working of Buddhahood is as everlasting as human ignorance is endless; and as the depth of ignorance is bottomless, so Buddha's compassion is boundless.

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When Buddha decided to break from the worldly life, he made four great vows: 1) To save all people; 2) To renounce all worldly desires; 3) To learn all the teachings; and 4) to attain perfect Enlightenment. These vows were manifestations of the love and compassion that are fundamental to the nature of Buddhahood.

3. Buddha first taught himself to avoid the sin of killing any living creature, he wished that all people might know the blessedness of a long life.

Buddha trained himself to avoid the sin of stealing, he wished that all people might have everything they needed.

Buddha trained himself to avoid ever committing adultery, he wished that all people might know the blessedness of a pure spirit and not suffer from insatiable desires.

Buddha, aiming at his ideal, trained himself to remain free from all deception, he wished that all people might know the tranquillity of mind that would follow in speaking the truth.

He trained himself to avoid double-talk; he wished that all people might know the joy of fellowship.

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He trained himself to avoid abusing others, and then he wished that all might have the serene mind that would follow by living in peace with others.

He kept himself free from idle talk, and then wished that all might know the blessedness of sympathetic understanding.

Buddha, aiming at his ideal, trained himself to keep free from greed, and by this virtuous deed he wished that all people might know the peacefulness that would go with this freedom.

He trained himself to avoid anger, and he wished that all people might love one another.

He trained himself to avoid ignorance, and wished that all people might understand and not disregard the law of causation.

Thus Buddha's compassion embraces all people, and his constant consideration is for their happiness. He loves people as parents love their children and wishes the highest blessedness for them, namely, that they will be able to pass beyond this ocean of birth and death.

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II

BUDDHA'S RELIEF AND SALVATION FOR US

1. It is very difficult for the words spoken by Buddha from the far bank of Enlightenment to reach the people still struggling in the world of delusion; therefore Buddha returns to this world Himself and uses His methods of salvation.

“Now I will tell you a parable,” Buddha said. “Once there lived a wealthy man whose house caught on fire. The man was away from home and when he came back, he found that his children were so absorbed in play, had not noticed the fire and were still inside the house. The father screamed, ‘Get out, children! Come out of the house! Hurry!’ But the children did not heed him.

The anxious father shouted again. ‘Children, I have some wonderful toys here; come out of the house and get them!’ Heeding his cry this time, the children ran out of the burning house.”

This world is a burning house. The people, unaware that the house is on fire, are in danger of being burned to death so Buddha in compassion devises ways of saving them.

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2. Buddha said: “I will tell you another parable. Once upon a time the only son of a wealthy man left his home and fell into extreme poverty.

When the father traveled far from home in search of his son, he lost track of him. He did everything he could to find his son, but in vain.

Decades later, his son, now reduced to wretchedness, wandered near where his father was living.

The father quickly recognized his son and sent his servants to bring the wanderer home; who was overcome by the majestic appearance of the mansion. He feared that they were deceiving him and would not go with them. He did not realize it was his own father.

The father again sent his servants to offer him some money to become a servant in their rich master’s household. The son accepted the offer and returned with them to his father’s house and became a servant.

The father gradually advanced him until he was put in charge of all the property and treasures, but still the son did not recognize his own father.

The father was pleased with his son’s faithfulness,

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and as the end of his life drew near, he called together his relatives and friends and told them: 'Friends, this is my only son, the son I sought for many years. From now on, all my property and treasures belong to him.'

The son was surprised at his father's confession and said: 'Not only have I found my father but all this property and treasure is now mine.'"

The wealthy man in this parable represents Buddha, and the wandering son, all people. Buddha's compassion embraces all people with the love of a father for his only son. In that love he conceives the wisest methods to lead, teach and enrich them with the treasure of Enlightenment.

3. Just as rain falls on all vegetation, so Buddha's compassion extends equally to all people. Just as different plants receive particular benefits from the same rain, so people of different natures and circumstances are blessed in different ways.

4. Parents love all their children, but their love is expressed with special tenderness toward a sick child.

Buddha's compassion is equal toward all people, but it is expressed with special care toward those who, because of their ignorance, have heavier burdens of evil

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and suffering to bear.

The sun rises in the eastern sky and clears away the darkness of the world without prejudice or favoritism toward any particular region. So Buddha's compassion encompasses all people, encouraging them to do right and guides them against evil. Thus, He clears away the darkness of ignorance and leads people to Enlightenment.

Buddha is a father in His compassion and a mother in His loving-kindness. In their ignorance and bondage to worldly desire, people often act with excessive zeal. Buddha is also zealous, but out of compassion for all people. They are helpless without Buddha's compassion and must receive His methods of salvation as His children.

III THE ETERNAL BUDDHA

1. Common people believe that Buddha was born a prince and learned the way to Enlightenment as a mendicant; actually, Buddha has always existed in the world which is without beginning or end.

As the Eternal Buddha, He has known all people and applied all methods of relief.

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There is no falsity in the Eternal Dharma which Buddha taught, for He knows all things in the world as they are, and He teaches them to all people.

Indeed, it is very difficult to understand the world as it is, for, although it seems true, it is not, and, although it seems false, it is not. Ignorant people can not know the truth concerning the world.

Buddha alone truly and fully knows the world as it is and He never says that it is true or false, or good or evil. He simply portrays the world as it is.

What Buddha does teach is this: “That all people should cultivate roots of virtue according to their natures, their deeds, and their beliefs.” This teaching transcends all affirmation and negation of this world.

2. Buddha teaches not only through words, but also through His life. Although His life is endless, in order to awaken greedy people, He uses the expedient of death.

“While a certain physician was away from home, his children accidentally took some poison. When the physician returned, he noticed their sickness and prepared an

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antidote. Some of the children who were not seriously poisoned accepted the medicine and were cured, but others were so seriously affected that they refused to take the medicine.

The physician, prompted by his paternal love for his children, decided on an extreme method to press the cure upon them. He said to the children: "I must go off on a long journey. I am old and may pass away any day. If I am with you I can care for you, but if I should pass away, you will become worse and worse. If you hear of my death, I implore you to take the antidote and be cured of this subtle poisoning." Then he went on the long journey. After a time, he sent a messenger to his children to inform them of his death.

The children, receiving the message, were deeply affected by the thought of their father's death and by the realization that they would no longer have the benefit of his benevolent care. Recalling his parting request, in a feeling of sorrow and helplessness, they took the medicine and recovered.

People must not condemn the deception of this father-physician. Buddha is like that father. He, too, employs the fiction of birth and death to save people who are entangled in the bondage of desires.

CHAPTER THREE

**THE FORM OF BUDDHA AND
HIS VIRTUES**

I

THREE ASPECTS OF BUDDHA'S BODY

1. Do not seek to know Buddha by His form or attributes; for neither the form nor the attributes are the real Buddha. The true Buddha is Enlightenment itself. The true way to know Buddha is to realize Enlightenment.

If someone sees some excellent features of Buddha and then thinks he knows Buddha, his is the mistake of an ignorant eye, for the true Buddha can not be embodied in a form or seen by human eyes. Neither can one know Buddha by a faultless description of his attributes. It is not possible to describe His attributes in human words.

Though we speak of His form, the Eternal Buddha has no set form, but can manifest Himself in any form. Though we describe His attributes, yet the Eternal Buddha has no set attributes, but can manifest Himself in any and all excellent attributes.

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So, if one sees distinctly the form of Buddha, or perceives His attributes clearly, and yet does not become attached to His form or to His attributes, he has the capacity to see and know Buddha.

2. Buddha's body is Enlightenment itself. Being formless and without substance, it always has been and always will be. It is not a physical body that must be nourished by food. It is an eternal body whose substance is Wisdom. Buddha, therefore, has neither fear nor disease; He is eternally changeless.

Therefore, Buddha will never disappear as long as Enlightenment exists. Enlightenment appears as the light of Wisdom that awakens people into a newness of life and causes them to be born into the world of Buddha.

Those who realize this become the children of Buddha; they keep His Dharma, honor His teachings and pass them on to posterity. Nothing can be more miraculous than the power of Buddha.

3. Buddha has a three-fold body. There is an aspect of Essence or Dharma-kaya; there is an aspect of Potentiality or Sambhoga-kaya; and there is an aspect of Manifestation or Nirmana-kaya.

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Dharma-kaya is the substance of the Dharma; that is, it is the substance of Truth itself. In the aspect of Essence, Buddha has no shape or color, and since Buddha has no shape or color, He comes from nowhere and there is nowhere for Him to go. Like the blue sky, He arches over everything, and since He is all things, He lacks nothing.

He does not exist because people think He exists; neither does He disappear because people forget Him. He is under no particular compulsion to appear when people are happy and comfortable, neither is it necessary for Him to disappear when people are inattentive and idle. Buddha transcends every conceivable direction of human thought.

Buddha's body in this aspect fills every corner of the universe; it reaches everywhere, it exists forever, regardless of whether people believe in Him or doubt His existence.

4. Sambhoga-kaya signifies that the nature of Buddha, the merging of both Compassion and Wisdom, which is imageless spirit, manifests itself through the symbols of birth and death, through the symbols of vow-making, training and revealing His sacred name, in order to lead all people to salvation.

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Compassion is the Essence of this body and in its spirit Buddha uses all devices to emancipate all those who are ready for emancipation. Like a fire that, once kindled, never dies until the fuel is exhausted, so the Compassion of Buddha will never falter until all worldly passions are exhausted. Just as the wind blows away the dust, so the Compassion of Buddha in this body blows away the dust of human suffering.

Nirmana-kaya signifies that, in order to complete the relief of Buddha of Potentiality, Buddha appeared in the world in bodily form and showed the people, according to their natures and capacities, the aspects of the birth, renunciation of this world and attainment of Enlightenment. In order to lead the people, Buddha in this body uses every means such as illness and death.

The form of Buddha is originally one Dharma-kaya, but as the nature of people varies, Buddha's form appears differently. Although the form of Buddha varies according to the different desires, deeds and abilities of people, Buddha is concerned only with the truth of the Dharma.

Though Buddha has a three-fold body, His spirit and purpose are one – to save all people.

In all circumstances Buddha is manifest in His purity, yet this manifestation is not Buddha because

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Buddha is not a form. Buddhahood fills everything; it makes Enlightenment its body and, as Enlightenment, it appears before all those capable of realizing the Truth.

II

THE APPEARANCE OF BUDDHA

1. It is seldom that a Buddha appears in this world. Now a Buddha does appear, attains Enlightenment, introduces the Dharma, severs the net of suspicion, removes the lure of desire at its root, plugs the fountain of evil. Completely unhindered He walks at will over the world. There is nothing greater than to revere the Buddha.

Buddha appears in the world of suffering because He can not desert suffering people. His only purpose is to spread the Dharma and to bless all people with its Truth.

It is very difficult to introduce the Dharma into a world filled with injustice and false standards, a world that is vainly struggling with insatiable desires and discomforts. Buddha faces these difficulties because of His great love and compassion.

2. Buddha is a good friend to all people. If Buddha

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finds a man suffering from the heavy burden of worldly passions, He feels compassion and shares the burden with him. If He meets a man suffering from delusion, He will clear away the delusion by the pure light of His wisdom.

Like a calf which enjoys its life with its mother, those who have heard the Buddha's teachings are afterward unwilling to leave Him because His teachings bring them happiness.

3. When the moon sets, people say that the moon has disappeared; and when the moon rises, they say that the moon has appeared. In fact, the moon neither goes nor comes, but shines continually in the sky. Buddha is exactly like the moon: He neither appears nor disappears; He only seems to do so out of love for the people that He may teach them.

People call one phase of the moon a full moon, they call another phase a crescent moon; in reality, the moon is always perfectly round, neither waxing nor waning. Buddha is precisely like the moon. In the eyes of human, Buddha may seem to change in appearance, but, in truth, Buddha does not change.

The moon appears everywhere, over a crowded city, a sleepy village, a mountain, a river. It is seen in the

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depths of a pond, in a jug of water, in a drop of dew hanging on a leaf. If a man walks hundreds of miles the moon goes with him. To men the moon seems to change, but the moon does not change. Buddha is like the moon in following the people of this world in all their changing circumstances, manifesting various appearances; but in His Essence He does not change.

4. The fact that Buddha appears and disappears can be explained by causality: namely, when the cause and conditions are propitious, Buddha appears; when causes and conditions are not propitious, Buddha seems to disappear from the world.

Whether Buddha appears or disappears, Buddhahood always remains the same. Knowing this principle, one must keep to the path of Enlightenment and attain Perfect Wisdom, undisturbed by the apparent changes in the image of Buddha, in the condition of the world, or in the fluctuations of human thought.

It has been explained that Buddha is not a physical body but is Enlightenment. A body may be thought of as a receptacle; then, if this receptacle is filled with Enlightenment, it may be called Buddha. Therefore, if anyone is attached to the physical body of Buddha and laments His disappearance, he will be unable to see the true Buddha.

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In reality, the true nature of all things transcends the discrimination of appearance and disappearance, of coming and going, of good and evil. All things are substanceless and perfectly homogeneous.

Such discriminations are caused by an erroneous judgment by those who see these phenomena. The true form of Buddha neither appears nor disappears.

III BUDDHA'S VIRTUE

1. Buddha receives the respect of the world because of five virtues: superior conduct; superior point of view; perfect wisdom; superior preaching ability; and the power to lead people to the practice of His teaching.

In addition, eight other virtues enable Buddha to bestow blessings and happiness upon the people: the ability to bring immediate benefits in the world through the practice of His teaching, the ability to judge correctly between good and bad, right and wrong, the ability to lead people to Enlightenment by teaching the right way, the ability to lead all people by an equal way, the ability to avoid pride and boasting, the ability to do what He has spoken, the ability to say what He has done, and, thus doing, to fulfill the vows of His compassionate heart.

Through meditation, Buddha preserves a calm and

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peaceful spirit, radiant with mercy, compassion, happiness and even equanimity. He deals equitably with all people, cleansing their minds of defilement and bestowing happiness in a perfect singleness of spirit.

2. Buddha is both father and mother to the people of the world. For sixteen months after a child is born the father and mother have to speak to him in babyish words; then gradually they teach him to speak as an adult. Like earthly parents, Buddha first takes care of the people and then leaves them to care for themselves. He first brings things to pass according to their desires and then He brings them to a peaceful and safe shelter.

What Buddha preaches in His language, people receive and assimilate in their own language as if it were intended exclusively for them.

Buddha's state of mind surpasses human thought; it can not be made clear by words; it can only be hinted at in parables.

The Ganges River is stirred up by the tramping of horses and elephants and disturbed by the movements of fish and turtles; but the river flows on, pure and undisturbed by such trifles. Buddha is like the great river. The

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fish and turtles of other teachings swim about in its depths and push against its current, but in vain. Buddha's Dharma flows on, pure and undisturbed.

3. Buddha's Wisdom, being perfect, keeps away from extremes of prejudice and preserves a moderation that is beyond all words to describe. Being all-wise He knows the thoughts and feelings of all men and realizes everything in this world in a moment.

As the stars of heaven are reflected in the calm sea, so people's thoughts, feelings and circumstances are reflected in the depths of Buddha's Wisdom. This is why Buddha is called the Perfectly Enlightened One, the Omniscience.

Buddha's Wisdom refreshes the arid minds of people, enlightens them and teaches them the significance of this world, its causes and its effects, appearances and disappearings. Indeed, without the aid of Buddha's Wisdom, what aspect of the world is at all comprehensible for people?

4. Buddha does not always appear as a Buddha. Sometimes He appears as an incarnation of evil, sometimes as a woman, a god, a king, or a statesman; sometimes He appears in a brothel or in a gambling house.

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In an epidemic He appears as a healing physician and in war He preaches forbearance and mercy for the suffering people; for those who believe that things are everlasting, He preaches transiency and uncertainty; for those who are proud and egoistic, He preaches humility and self-sacrifice; for those who are entangled in the web of worldly pleasures, He reveals the misery of the world.

The work of Buddha is to manifest in all affairs and on all occasions the pure essence of Dharma-kaya (the absolute nature of Buddha); so Buddha's mercy and compassion flow out from this Dharma-kaya in endless life and boundless light, bringing salvation to all.

5. The world is like a burning house that is forever being destroyed and rebuilt. People, being confused by the darkness of their ignorance, lose their minds in anger, displeasure, jealousy, prejudice and worldly passion. They are like babies in need of a mother; everyone must be dependent upon Buddha's mercy and compassion.

Buddha is a father to all the world; all human beings are the children of Buddha. Buddha is the most saintly of saints. The world is afire with decrepitude and death; there is suffering everywhere. But people, engrossed in the vain search for worldly pleasure, are not wise enough to fully realize this.

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Buddha saw that this world of delusion was really a burning house, so He turned from it and found refuge and peace in the quiet forest. There, out of His great compassion, he calls to us: “This world of change and suffering belongs to me; all these ignorant, heedless people are my children; I am the only one who can save them from their delusion and misery.”

As Buddha is the great king of the Dharma, He can preach to all people as He wishes. Buddha appears in the world to bless the people. To save them from suffering He preaches the Dharma, but the ears of people are dulled by greed and they are inattentive.

But those who listen to His teachings are free from the delusions and the miseries of life. “People can not be saved by relying on their own wisdom,” He said, “and through faith they must enter into my teaching.” Therefore, one should listen to the Buddha’s teaching and put it into practice.