

**Lumbini to Kusinara:
The Lay Life of Prince Siddhartha
(Volume 3)**



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The Lay Life of Prince Siddhartha**

Volume 3

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Cover Image: The journey of our Gotama Buddha—who, in the fullness of his youth, renounced royal luxury to take up the ascetic life in search of the path to end the suffering of Samsara—began in the royal palace of Kapilavastu, in the Sakkyia Realm of ancient India. It was within this royal abode that he spent the first 29 years of his life. Sutta discourses record that despite living amidst supreme comfort, Prince Siddhartha was keenly aware at times of the impermanent and unsatisfactory nature of life. This image portrays such a moment: the prince gazing out at the world beyond through a high window of the palace.

**The Gift of Dhamma excels all gifts,
The taste of the Dhamma excels all tastes,
The delight in Dhamma excels all delights.**
(Dhammapada: 354)

Presentation

This publication was compiled to express our gratitude for the immense benefits we constantly receive by following the noble teachings—the Dhamma of the Blessed One. Our effort is like trying to collect the water of the vast ocean into a small vessel with our hands. In this spirit, it is fitting to recall the words of Vidagama Maha Thero from the *Budugunaalankāraya*, which beautifully express the reverence one feels in making even the simplest offering to the Buddha:

**The Blessed One was honoured
And revered with celestial coral flowers.
I have only this humble work to offer to Him, the Great Sage.
My gift is but a wildflower—Yet who can say it is unworthy?**

Remembering those modest words, we offer this humble offering — like an innocent flower in the forest— at the golden feet of the Blessed One.

**“To the Great Sage—an ocean of virtues bestowing blessings,
A healer for the suffering of all beings,
And a dispeller of the dense darkness of ignorance—
I bow in joyful reverence.”**

(Lowada Sangarawa: Ven. Vidagama Maitreya Thero)

Upasika Sudhamma,
Month of Esala, (July) 2026,
Bundanoon, New South Wales, Australia.

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With much respect and gratitude, we gratefully acknowledge the exceptional English translations of Tipitaka by Venerable Sangha: Bhikkhu Bodhi, Bhikkhu Brahmalī, Bhikkhu Sujato and Mr. Maurice Walshe a devout Buddhist which we used in this work as our primary sources.

Introduction

The primary purpose of this volume, titled **“From Lumbini to Kusinara: The Wondrous Dhamma Journey of Gotama Buddha,”** is to present the incomparable forty-five-year life story and compassionate mission of Gotama Buddha—from His birth as a royal prince in the Sal Grove of Lumbini to His Supreme Parinibbana beneath the Sal trees of Kusinara. Based primarily on the Pali Tipitaka and Buddhist tradition, and enriched with historical and archaeological insights where appropriate, this work seeks to present the Buddha’s extraordinary mission and pivotal life events in a clear manner, bridging ancient wisdom with the contemporary world.

This publication is designed to be released as a multi-volume series, with each volume focusing on significant milestones in the Buddha’s life. Together, they outline His birth as Prince Siddhartha in the Sakya realm, His renunciation of royal comforts in Kapilavastu in search of Truth, His severe austerities in Uruvela, His realization of Supreme Enlightenment through the Middle Path, and His tireless forty-five years of walking from village to village to share the Dhamma for the well-being of all beings, culminating in His Parinibbana in the Upavattana Sal Grove of the Malla Kings at Kusinara.

As you turn these pages, you will trace the sacred footsteps of the Buddha across the dusty roads of ancient India—meeting kings, outcastes, philosophers, and humble farmers alike. You will see how He transformed their lives through the simple yet profound message that the cessation of suffering is achievable by all. Within these pages lie the sacred turning points of an extraordinary life, offering timeless examples of wisdom, patience, rational inquiry, and boundless loving-kindness cultivated over four decades of selfless service.

This work is more than a historical biography; it serves as a spiritual guide for anyone seeking a meaningful and peaceful life. The Buddha’s awakening—transcending the darkness of ignorance through supreme effort and wisdom—stands as a powerful testament to the potential of

human effort. As the greatest spiritual light in human history, the Buddha laid down a path that remains fully accessible to us today.

It is with deep reverence that we present this third volume, **“Lumbini to Kusinara: The Lay Life of Prince Siddhartha”**. The first two volume has been published under the titles respectively: Volume 1: **“The Noble Birth of the Buddha.”**, and Volume 2: **“The Sacred Land of the Buddha’s Birth”**.

If reading this account of the Buddha’s wondrous life brings devotion and peace to your heart, our humble endeavour will have achieved its highest purpose.

In Isipatana’s quiet shade,
The Sage set free the Wheel of Truth,
A timeless light for gods and men.
For forty-five devoted years,
He walked the dusty roads of India,
Soothing the world’s quiet —
With boundless empathy and love.

Like an ancient chariot bound with cord,
His body aged, yet never wavered;
Through mountain frost and desert sun,
He bore the lamp of liberation.

Through mountain cold and desert heat,
With His noble Sangha by His side,
He dispelled the night of delusion,
For all who sought the dawn.

Guided by boundless compassion,
Anchored in unshakeable peace,
He trod the quiet path to Kusinara,
To rest beneath the blooming Sal trees.

May the light of the Dhamma shine forever!
May all beings attain the supreme bliss of Nibbana

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Volume 3: The Lay Life of Prince Siddhartha

In the preceding volumes (1 and 2), the circumstances of the birth of our Gautama Buddha—then Prince Siddhartha—in the beautiful Lumbini Garden were described. Furthermore, an in-depth analysis was conducted—drawing upon the Tripitaka, historical traditions, and archaeological evidence—to confirm that the sacred site of the Buddha's birth was indeed Lumbini, which belonged to the Shakya realm.

Here, significant historical events are presented—drawing upon the Tripitaka, Buddhist tradition, and historical and archaeological evidence—detailing how the Buddha grew up as Prince Siddhartha in the royal palace of Kapilavastu, spent his youth amidst magnificent royal luxuries, and ultimately renounced all worldly comforts to undertake the Great Renunciation (departing from the household life).

1.The Lay Name of the Buddha

Although the Buddha's lay name is not explicitly mentioned in the Tripitaka sources, He is known throughout the entire Buddhist tradition by the name 'Siddhartha Gautama' (Prince Siddhartha). The name 'Gothama' (Pali) or 'Gautama' (Sanskrit) refers to His noble clan's name. 'Siddhartha' is the personal name given to the prince during the naming ceremony, which was conducted in accordance with the traditional customs of ancient India. ¹

The literal meaning of the name "**Siddhartha**" is "one who successfully accomplishes his intended purpose." When examining the noble life story of the Buddha, it becomes evident that the name "Siddhartha" is perfectly suited to His character; He personally realized the supreme goal of Sambodhi

(Enlightenment)—liberating sentient beings from the ceaseless cycle of suffering inherent in birth, aging, sickness, and death.

The names 'Siddhartha' or 'Siduhat' are frequently used in the commentaries on the Tripitaka (particularly in texts such as the Jataka Commentary) when describing the Buddha's lay life. Similarly, the name 'Siddhartha' is employed to describe the Buddha's lay period in prominent Mahayana and Sarvastivada texts, such as the Lalitavistara (dating to the 3rd century CE) and the Mahavastu (dating to the 4th century CE). This name is also used in the Mahavamsa, the great chronicle of Sri Lanka.

However, throughout the Pali Tripitaka, the Buddha is referred to by the outside world as "Buddha Gotama" or "Samana Gotama" (the Ascetic Gotama). It also appears that the Buddha used the clan name "Gotama" when declaring his own identity.

This is stated as follows in the Buddhavamsa Pali of the Khuddaka Nikaya:²

"I am the Fully Enlightened One named Gotama, who was born into the Sakya clan and who brought renown to the Sakya lineage..."

During the time of the Buddha, individuals from other religious traditions often addressed Him as "Samana Gotama." For instance, in the Cūlasaccaka Sutta of the Majjhima Nikāya (MN), Saccaka—a disciple of Nigaṇṭha Nātaputta—refers to the Buddha as "Samano Gotamo." Similarly, in the Vatthūpama Sutta in MN, the Brahmin Sundarika Bhāradvāja addresses the Buddha as "Bhavat Gotama."

Based on all these source-based details, it is evident that the Buddha's clan name was "Gotama". However, out of respect for

historical traditions, we have decided to use the name ‘Prince Siddhartha’ to refer him in his lay life.

(Throughout the Tripitaka, the disciples of the Buddha addressed Him using honorific titles such as ‘Bhagavā’ (The Blessed One), ‘Sugato’ (The Well-Gone One), and ‘Mahā-samaṇo’ (The Great Ascetic).)

2. Prince Siddhartha's Parents

Prince Siddhartha's noble parents were King Suddhodana—of the Gautama lineage and the Shakya clan of the city of Kapilavastu—and Queen Mahamaya, who belonged to the Koliya clan. Historical traditions indicate that this royal couple lived their lives sharing a bond of deep mutual respect and compassionate affection.

As a righteous and just ruler, King Suddhodana is extolled in the Buddhist tradition as a monarch who upheld law and justice; he commanded the highest esteem from both his royal court and his subjects. Queen Mahamaya, renowned for her exquisite beauty, was a noble lady of high birth, distinguished by her virtuous character, moral integrity, and compassionate nature.³

According to the Maha-apadana Sutta of the Digha Nikaya:⁴

“In this auspicious aeon (Bhadra-kappa), the Buddha appeared in the world. He was born into the Gautama lineage and the Kshatriya caste. His father was King Suddhodana, and his mother was Queen Maya. His kingdom was Kapilavastu...”

Furthermore, in the Buddhavamsa Pali, the Buddha declared:⁵

“...My father is King Suddhodana, and the mother who brought me into this world is Queen Maya.”



**Noble Parents of the Buddha: King Siddhodana and
Queen Mahamaya**

Thera Kaludayi—who spent his childhood in the city of Kapilavastu with Prince Siddhartha and later became an Arahant—also declared the following:⁶

“The The father of the great seer is named Siddhodana; and the Buddha’s mother is named Māyā. Having borne the Bodhisattva in her belly, she rejoices in the Third Heaven.”

3.The Passing of the Buddha’s Mother in Infancy

Both historical Buddhist tradition and the teachings of the Tripitaka confirm that Queen Mahamaya passed away on the seventh day after the birth of Prince Siddhartha. When Venerable Ananda inquired about this significant event, the Buddha stated:⁷

“Ananda, that is indeed so. The mothers of Bodhisattvas have short lifespans. On the seventh day after the Bodhisattva is born, the mother passes away and is reborn in the Tusita heaven.”

This loss of his mother during his infancy likely laid the fundamental groundwork for the Bodhisattva—the future Buddha—to deeply contemplate and comprehend the impermanence of existence and the suffering inherent in separation from loved ones. It is evident from this that a profound, albeit subtle, realization regarding the suffering of worldly existence became deeply ingrained in the young prince’s mind at an early age.

4: The Bodhisatta’s Stepmother – Queen Mahāpajāpati Gotamī

Following the passing of Queen Mahāmāyā, Queen Mahāpajāpati—who was Queen Mahāmāyā’s younger sister and King Suddhodana’s second consort—stepped forward to act as the young Prince Siddhartha’s stepmother, showering him with boundless maternal affection and compassion. The deep love and devotion Queen Mahāpajāpati Gotamī felt regarding the privilege of being the Buddha’s stepmother and foster mother are clearly illustrated by this statement found in the Therī-apadāna:⁸

**“Well-Gone-One, I am your mother,
and you are my father, Hero;
Lord, who Gives the Good Teaching’s Joy,
O Gotama, I’m born from you.**

**Your body, made of flesh and bones,
was reared up by me, Well-Gone-One;
my flawless body, made of Truth,
was reared up by you, Gotama.**

**Women can easily obtain
the name “King’s Mother” or “Chief Queen.”
The name, “Mother of the Buddha”
is the hardest name to obtain.”**

Furthermore, this statement made by **Venerable Ananda** clearly affirms the genuine maternal affection Queen Prajapati held for Prince Siddhartha:⁹

“...Lord, Mahaprajapati Gotami was your stepmother. She rendered great service to the Blessed One. She nurtured your limbs during your infancy. After your mother passed away, she raised you by feeding you milk transformed from her own blood...”

The Buddha regarded Mahāpajāpati Gotamī as His mother and accorded her the highest respect. After the Theri Mahāpajāpati attained Parinibbāna, the Venerable Ānanda placed her bodily relics in a bowl and offered them to the Buddha. On that occasion, the Blessed One addressed the Sangha of monks and spoke as follows: ¹⁰

**“Just as the trunk of a standing,
gigantic timber-bearing tree,
impermanent, breaks into bits,
however massive it may be,
so Gotamī, who was a nun,
has reached her final nirvana.**

**O! it is a marvellous thing!
My mother who's reached nirvana,
leaving only relics behind
did not grieve and was not wailing."**



Queen Prajapati lovingly cared for the infant prince.

In later times, Queen Prajapati became a significant figure in the history of the Buddha's Dispensation (Buddha Sasana); after her ordination as a bhikkhuni, she was known as Maha Prajapati Theri (Prajapathi the Great Bhikkhuni), she became the first woman to enter the noble Bhikkhuni Sangha during the life of the Buddha. Buddhists across the globe continue to honour her with profound respect today, recognizing her as the embodiment of the noble qualities of extraordinary devotion to the Buddha, perseverance, and compassion.¹¹



**Prince Siddhartha and Prince Nanda living together
in the Kapilavastu palace with brotherly affection.**

5. Prince Siddhartha's Sister and Brother

Princess Nanda and Prince Nanda were the royal children born to King Suddhodana and Maha Prajapati Gotami. Buddhist historical traditions indicate that both were younger than Prince Siddhartha. In later times, both the brother and sister entered the monastic order of the Buddha and had the great fortune of attaining the supreme state of Arahantship. ¹²

This passage from the Tripitaka concerning the Venerable Nanda clearly confirms that he was the brother of the Buddha: ¹³

“...At that time, the Venerable Nanda—the brother of the Blessed One and son of His aunt—addressed many monks as follows...”



**Prince Siddhartha's younger sister—Princess Nanda,
known as Beautiful (Sundara) Nanda.**

(Image credit ¹⁴)

Furthermore, the Mahāvagga Pāḷi of the Vinaya Piṭaka contains a significant passage from the occasion when King Suddhodana—deeply grieved by the ordination of Prince Rahula—met the Buddha and described the nature of parental love; in this passage, he declares that both the Buddha and Prince Nanda are his own sons. ¹⁵

The Arahant Nanda speaks thus in his own Apadāna Pāḷi: ¹⁶

“... In a past life, I offered a great almsgiving to the Buddha Padumuttara. By the power of the merit gained from that act, He prophesied that I would one day become the younger brother of the Buddha Gotama.”

Similarly, Princess Nanda entered the Buddha's Dispensation alongside her mother, Queen Prajapati, and attained Arahantship as an eminent Bhikkhuni (Theri Nanda). In her Apadana discourse, Theri Nanda stated that she was the Buddha's own sister: ¹⁷

**“My eldest brother’s the Buddha,
the middle one’s likewise a saint...”**

6: Other Sakya Relatives

Although the Tripitaka sources do not provide a direct or detailed account of the Buddha's entire extended family, the discourses reveal that the Sakkyan princes Ananda, Anuruddha, and Tissa came to the Buddha, practiced the holy life, and attained Arahantship. Furthermore, Mahanama Sakya stands out as a prominent senior lay follower (upāsaka) who attained the stage of Stream-entry (Sotāpanna) within the Buddha's Dispensation.

Princess Yasodhara (later the nun Bhaddakaccana)—the daughter of Queen Amita, a sister of King Suddhodana—was the chief consort of Prince Siddhartha. Although her brother, Prince Devadatta (Devadatta Bhikkhu), also entered the Buddhist monastic order, the Tripitaka records that he later became intensely greedy for material gains and offerings, thereby destroying his own spiritual life.

According to Buddhist historical traditions, the kinship ties on both sides of Prince Siddhartha's family can be more easily

understood through Charts 1 and 2 presented here:¹⁸ (see: next page).

7: Miraculous Events in Prince Siddhartha's Childhood

Here, we intend to describe—in accordance with Buddhist historical traditions—several miraculous and extraordinary events from Prince Siddhartha's childhood that directly influenced his subsequent noble life.

7.1: The Omen of the Ascetic Asita

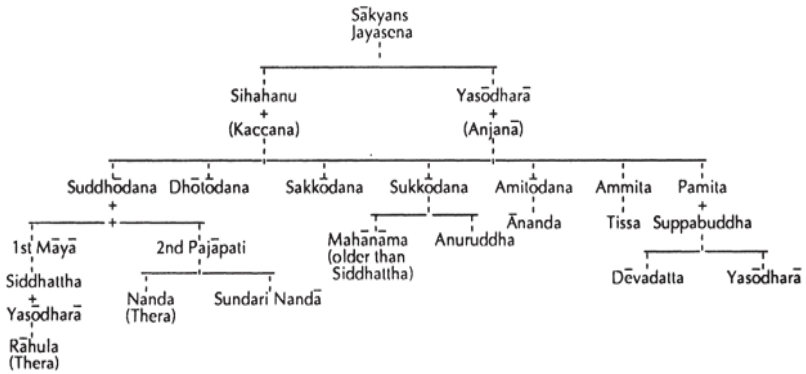
Upon learning from the host of deities that the Great Bodhisatta had been born in the sacred grounds of Lumbini, the ascetic Asita (also known as Kaladevala) arrived at the royal palace of Kapilavastu to behold the infant prince. ¹⁹A master of the science of auspicious signs as well as the Vedic mantras, the ascetic examined the infant prince's physical characteristics and, with profound reverence, declared:²⁰

“This prince is peerless; he is the greatest among all two-footed beings (humans). One day, he will undoubtedly attain Supreme Enlightenment (Buddhahood).”

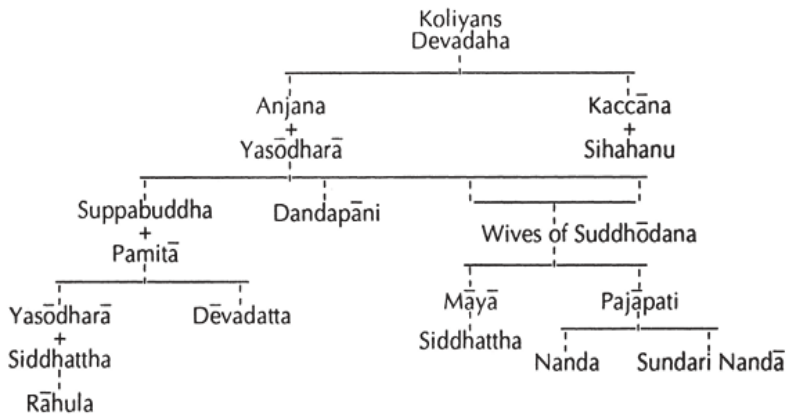
According to Buddhist tradition, King Suddhodana took this wondrous prophecy of the ascetic Asita to heart; as the prince matured, the King did his utmost to keep him within the lay life by surrounding him with every worldly royal luxury. ²¹

PRINCE SIDDHATTHA'S GENEALOGICAL TABLE

Father's Side



Mother's Side





Asetc Asita observing the noble features of the infant prince

(Picture credit ²²)

7.2: The Prince Attains the First Jhana on the Day of the Royal Ploughing Festival

According to historical records, on the day of a royal ploughing festival, Prince Siddhartha—then seven years old—sat motionless in the shade of a rose-apple tree, engaged in meditation, and attained the bliss of the first Jhana. ²³ Sources from the Tripitaka also clearly confirm this wondrous event.

Reflecting in later years on this experience of the first jhana (meditative absorption) attained during childhood, the Buddha stated that the bliss of concentration experienced at that young age served as the fundamental basis for realizing the futility of the ascetic practices undertaken over six years, and for discovering the 'Middle Path'—which was instrumental in attaining Enlightenment. ²⁴



The child prince meditating under the Rose Apple Tree

7.3 – Prince Siddhartha’s Boundless Compassion and Wisdom

The following incident, vividly described in Buddhist literature, clearly highlights the boundless compassion, humility, courage, and wisdom that resided in Prince Siddhartha’s heart: ²⁵

On one occasion, Prince Siddhartha compassionately nursed a swan back to health after it had fallen from the sky, severely wounded by an arrow shot by Prince Devadatta. Claiming ownership of the bird because he had brought it down, Devadatta attempted to seize the swan by intimidating Siddhartha. However, the humble and profoundly wise

Bodhisattva chose not to quarrel with Devadatta; instead, he presented the matter before the royal tribunal to secure a fair verdict. The royal court of justice then delivered its historic ruling:

“In this world, a life belongs to the one who nurtures and protects it, not to the one who seeks to destroy or harm it.”



Prince Siddhartha protecting the injured swan

(Picture credit ²⁶)

This remarkable incident demonstrates to the world the innate compassion, kindness towards all living beings, and the

fundamental Buddhist philosophy of non-violence that Prince Siddhartha possessed from his early childhood. Buddhist tradition holds that this childhood event was also a primary reason for Devadatta Thera's later hostile actions against the Buddha.

8: Youth and Royal Education

Although the Tripitaka does not contain detailed accounts regarding this, historical traditions indicate that Prince Siddhartha completed his higher education—including the eighteen major arts and sciences befitting a prince—under renowned teachers at the ancient institution of Taxila. His later discourses clearly demonstrate that he possessed extensive knowledge and profound practical experience in various fields, including statecraft, jurisprudence, the art of warfare, and the socio-political systems of the time.²⁷

9: Prince Siddhartha's royal wedding

According to historical Buddhist traditions, at the young age of sixteen, Prince Siddhartha married the extremely beautiful and wise Princess Yasodhara (Bhaddakacchana).²⁸ This is also confirmed by the following sutta, The Buddha said thus:

"Bhaddakacchana (Yasodhara) was my chief queen."²⁹

According to the Therī-apadāna Pāḷi, when the Arahant nun Yasodharā approached the Buddha to seek permission for her Parinibbāna, she reflected on the past and spoke as follows:³⁰

**"I am Yasodharā, Hero;
in the home I was your chief queen,
born in the clan of the Śākya,
established among the women."**



The Royal Marriage of Prince Siddhartha and Princess Yasodhara

Furthermore, according to the Mahāvagga Pāḷi of the Vinaya Piṭaka, on the occasion when the Buddha visited the royal palace of Kapilavastu for the first time after attaining Enlightenment, Rāhulamātā (Princess Yasodharā) pointed out the approaching Buddha to the infant Prince Rāhula and spoke to him thus: ³¹

“Rahula, look—that is your father .”

According to the accounts in the Tripitaka, Yasodhara later became an Arahant nun endowed with great supernormal powers and wisdom, attaining a position among the foremost female disciples of the Buddha's dispensation.³²

The name "Yasodhara" appears only very rarely in the Pali Tripitaka; she is more frequently referred to by the names "Bhaddakaccana" or "Rahulamata." However, all historical traditions concur that Prince Siddhartha's wife during his lay life was known by all these names. Due to her exquisite beauty, Princess Yasodhara is also referred to as 'Bimbadevi' in certain traditions. However, the name "Yasodhara" is the one most popularly used within Sri Lankan and Thai Buddhist traditions. According to the lineage of Prince Siddhartha mentioned earlier, she was the daughter of King Suppabuddha and Amita Devi (who was King Suddhodana's sister).

10: Prince Siddhartha's Luxurious Lay Life

In later times, the Buddha Himself described the nature of the magnificent and comfortable life He had led as a householder, speaking thus from His own lips:³³

"I was delicately nurtured, most delicately nurtured, extremely delicately nurtured. At my father's residence lotus ponds were made just for my enjoyment: in one of them blue lotuses bloomed, in another red lotuses, and in a third white lotuses.

I used no sandalwood unless it came from Kāsi and my headdress, jacket, lower garment, and upper garment were made of cloth from Kāsi. By day and by night a white canopy was held over me so that cold and heat, dust, grass, and dew would not settle on me.

I had three mansions: one for the winter, one for the summer, and one for the rainy season. I spent the four months of the rains in the

rainy-season mansion, being entertained by musicians, none of whom were male, and I did not leave the mansion.”



In the lay life as a prince, the Buddha enjoyed exquisite royal luxuries

However, even amidst such exquisite royal luxuries, the fact that the Prince Siddhartha—while still in the prime of youth—cast aside all those royal comforts, regarding them as nothing more than a glob of spittle at dawn, clearly demonstrates how deeply he had contemplated and grasped the nature of suffering in the cycle of existence.

The spiritual strength gained through the cultivation of the Paramitas (perfections) throughout the infinite cycle of Samsara was capable of gradually awakening the Prince's wisdom. This is clearly demonstrated by his ultimate decision—made while still in the prime of youth and surrounded by every worldly pleasure—to renounce such transient comforts and seek the eternal truth (Nirvana-Nibbana).

11: The Relationship Between the Buddha and the Sakkyan Clan

In the first volume described how Prince Siddhartha was born as a royal prince of the Sakkyan clan in the Lumbini Grove. Therefore, it is deemed appropriate to present here a brief yet insightful account of the historical relationship between the Buddha and the Sakkyans.

A fundamental aspect of Buddhist history and tradition is the fact that Prince Siddhartha Gautama was born into the Sakkyan (Kshatriya) clan. Historical evidence indicates that the Sakkyan clan was a lineage of warriors as well as distinguished rulers. Great potentates who reigned during the time of the Buddha—such as King Bimbisara of Magadha and King Pasenadi of Kosala—also belonged to this same Kshatriya caste.

The Buddha stated: ³⁴

“...Monks, in this auspicious aeon (Bhadra-kappa), the Buddha appeared in the world. He belonged to the Gotama clan and was born into the Kshatriya lineage...”

Throughout the Tripitaka sources, the Buddha is acknowledged as the most distinguished member of the Shakya clan, a lineage held in extremely high regard in Jambudvīpa at the time. It was precisely

because of this noble lineage that the world came to know Him by the epithet "**Shakyamuni**" (the sage or seer who emerged from the Sakya clan).

The mutual respect and strong emotional bond between the Buddha and the Sakkyans are clearly illustrated by the following passage from the Mahāparinibbāna Sutta of the Dīgha Nikāya.³⁵ After the Buddha attained Parinibbāna in the city of Kusinārā, the Sakkyas of Kapilavasthu requested a portion of His physical relics as follows:

**"The Blessed One is our greatest kinsman.
Therefore, we too are fully entitled to receive a portion of
His physical relics."**

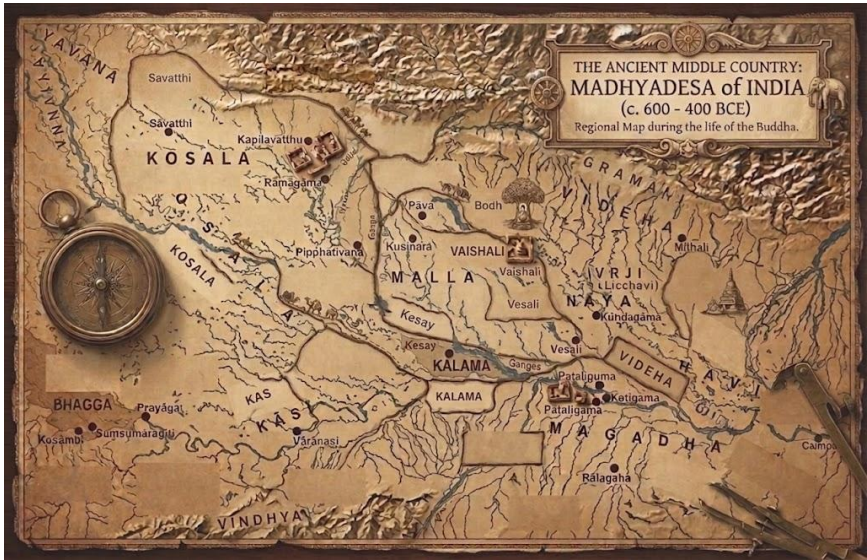
The relationship between the Sakkyans and the Buddha is further clarified by the inscription on the surface of the relic casket—containing the Buddha's relics—that was discovered in the **Piprahwa** region of North India in the 19th century.

"This deposit of the Blessed Buddha's relics (relic casket) is an offering made by the Sakkyas brothers—Sukiti (Sukirti) and his brothers—together with their sisters, sons, and wives."³⁶

Ancient Buddhist texts—such as Ashvaghosha's Buddhacharita (1st century CE), the Lalitavistara (3rd century CE), the Mahavastu (3rd–4th centuries CE), and the Nidanakatha (part of a 5th-century CE Theravada commentary)—unanimously describe the Buddha's royal lineage as the Shakya clan and identify their capital as the historic city of Kapilavastu.

Based on the ancient map of Middle country) see next page) and historical evidence, the Sakkyas territory of ancient India Middle Land was situated at the foothills of the Himalayas, with Kapilavastu

serving as its principal capital. Although subject to the suzerainty of the then-powerful Kingdom of Kosala, the Sakkyans administered their own affairs through an oligarchic republican system in which power was shared among several kings and chieftains.³⁷



According to the Ambattha Sutta of the Digha Nikaya,³⁸ the lineage of the Sakkyans originated from the Solar Dynasty of the ancient monarch Okkaka. King Okkaka's sons, having been banished from the kingdom due to the influence of their stepmother—the queen—departed for the Himalayan forests and settled near a woodland abounding in Saka trees. The Ambattha Sutta records that King Okkaka was filled with great joy when royal emissaries reported on the princes' virtuous lives, their remarkable strength and vigor, and the purity of their lineage, prompting him to make a specific declaration.

“Truly wondrous! Those princes are indeed Sakkyas (men of great strength and capability)! Those princes are truly the Great Sakkyas!”

From that time onwards, that royal lineage became world-renowned by the name "Sakya." This demonstrates that the Sakkyas were a noble lineage distinguished by firm determination, unparalleled strength, and wisdom. Later, the Buddha Himself spoke of the might and glory of the Sakkyas in this manner:³⁹

**“The khattiya is the best among people
For those whose standard is the clan...
The sun shines by day,
The moon glows at night,
The khattiya shines clad in armour”**

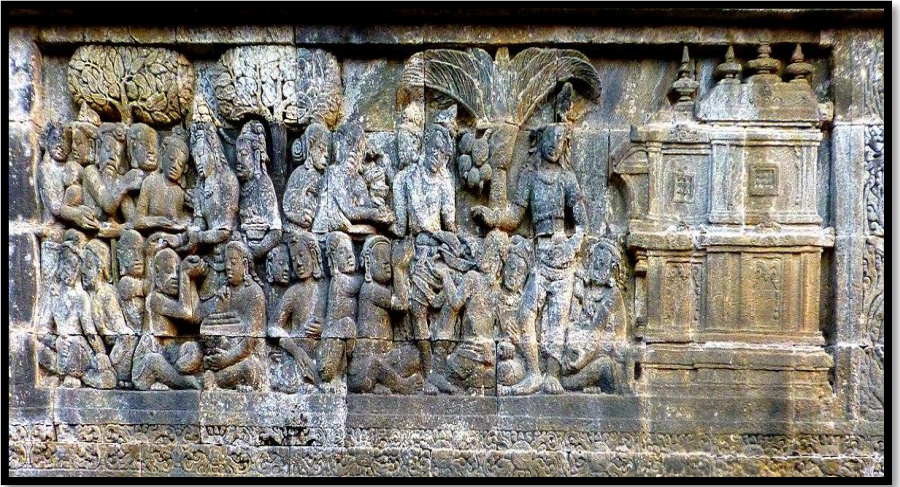
In this Sutta text from the Anguttara sect, the Buddha has shown the greatness of the Sakkyas as follows.⁴⁰

“...the aim of khattiyas; their quest is for wisdom; their support is power; they are intent on territory; and their final goal is sovereignty.”

The Sakkyans were renowned worldwide for their heroic qualities as well as their immense generosity. Noble patrons such as Mahanama Shakya—who greatly supported the Buddha's Dispensation—and Suppavasa, the Koliya princess and mother of the Arahant Sivali, stand as living testimonies to this.

12: The Great City of Kapilavastu

Both Buddhist historical tradition and the discourses of the Sutta Pitaka unanimously indicate that the city of Kapilavastu was the principal capital of the Sakkyans.



The Sakkyas frequently provided food, drink, and other goods to the priestly class as well as to the destitute and beggars.

(Picture credit: ⁴¹)

When the princes and princesses of King Okkaka left their homeland to dwell in the Himalayan forests, a great sage named "Kapila"—who was residing in a hermitage there at the time—provided them with the necessary protection and guidance. ⁴² Later, those princes returned to the Shakya territory, built a magnificent city there, and named it 'Kapilavastu'—meaning the site of the sage Kapila's abode—in honour of the sage who had assisted them. It was also in this historic city that Prince Siddhartha Gautama lived a life of great luxury until the age of twenty-nine, when he renounced worldly life.

It is emphasized in many places within the Sutta Pitaka that Kapilavastu was the capital city of the Sakkyans. On one occasion, the Buddha addressed the young Brahmin Ambattha, saying:

“Ambattha, this city of Kapilavastu is the very home of the Sakkyas; it is their capital city.” ⁴³



Ancient Royal Capital of Kapilavastu

Furthermore, the Sutta Pitaka records how a vast assembly of deities from ten thousand world systems came to pay homage to the Buddha while He was residing in the Great Forest (Mahāvana monastery) near Kapilvastu, the city of the Sakkyans. ⁴⁴ Kapilvastu is clearly identified as the capital of the Sakkyia kingdom in several discourses found in the Majjhima Nikāya, such as the Cūḷadukkhakkhandha Sutta, the Madhupiṇḍika Sutta, and the Sekha Sutta.

Mahanama Shakya, a prominent leader of the Sakkyia clan, once described the bustling nature of the great city to the Buddha in these words:

“Lord, Blessed One, this city of Kapilavastu is a vastly wealthy, flourishing, and prosperous metropolis. Its streets are constantly congested with people and vehicles; elephants, horses, chariots, and carts, along with throngs of people, are perpetually moving about the city...” ⁴⁵

That historic statement succeeds in conjuring up a vivid mental image of the prosperous and bustling atmosphere that prevailed in the ancient city of Kapilavastu.

Based on the details mentioned earlier, it is evident that—according to the Tripitaka and tradition—Kapilavastu, the city where our Gautama Buddha lived the lay life for 29 years prior to attaining Enlightenment, was situated in the central region of ancient Jambudvīpa. However, two differing views regarding the location of Kapilavastu have emerged, based on archaeological excavations conducted in modern-day North India and Nepal.

1. Nepal holds the view that **Tilaurakot**, located not far from Lumbini, is the ancient city of Kapilavastu.

2. India regards **Piprahwa**, situated in the Indian state of Uttar Pradesh near the sacred site of Lumbini, as the city of Kapilavastu.

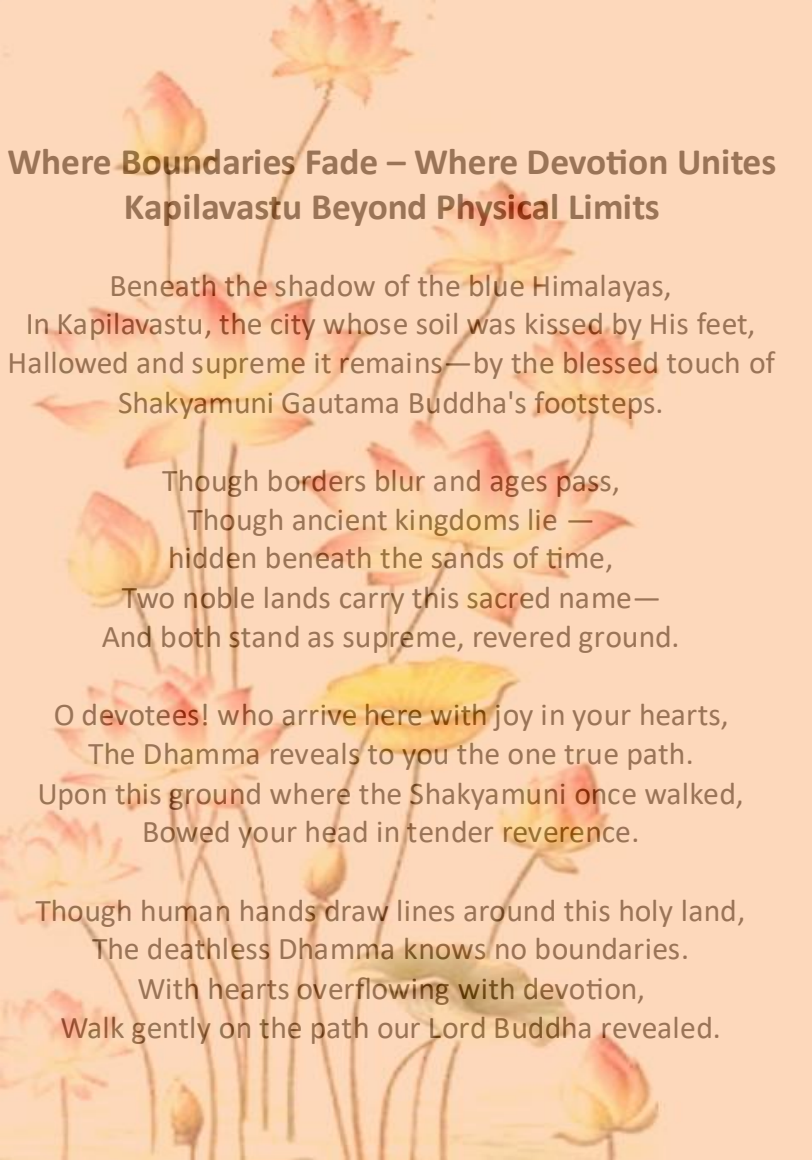
The historical and archaeological information underlying this debate is discussed in detail in volume (4) of this compilation.

Even though the precise boundaries have faded amidst the sands of time, the most compelling evidence that the city of Kapilavastu remains eternally alive in the hearts of Buddhists worldwide is the fact that countless pilgrims continue to visit both sites—Tilaurakot in Nepal and Piprahwa in India—to venerate the sacred ground once graced by the touch of the Buddha’s feet.

As seekers of the Dhamma, our stance should be to set aside unnecessary ideological debates and—grounded in the strong archaeological evidence emerging from these sacred sites—gratefully acknowledge that both present-day Tilaurakot and Piprahwa were integral parts of the greater Kapilavastu territory belonging to the ancient Sakya Kingdom.



Top image: The sacred site of Tilaurakot; bottom image: The Piprahwa Stupa. Pilgrims from all corners of the globe continue to visit these sacred sites, hallowed by the touch of the Buddha's feet.



Where Boundaries Fade – Where Devotion Unites Kapilavastu Beyond Physical Limits

Beneath the shadow of the blue Himalayas,
In Kapilavastu, the city whose soil was kissed by His feet,
Hallowed and supreme it remains—by the blessed touch of
Shakyamuni Gautama Buddha's footsteps.

Though borders blur and ages pass,
Though ancient kingdoms lie —
hidden beneath the sands of time,
Two noble lands carry this sacred name—
And both stand as supreme, revered ground.

O devotees! who arrive here with joy in your hearts,
The Dhamma reveals to you the one true path.
Upon this ground where the Shakyamuni once walked,
Bowed your head in tender reverence.

Though human hands draw lines around this holy land,
The deathless Dhamma knows no boundaries.
With hearts overflowing with devotion,
Walk gently on the path our Lord Buddha revealed.

Volume 3: End Notes

¹ See: 1) “A manual of Buddhism’ by Ven. Narada Thera, 2) Chapter 1: Naming Ceremonies: The Great Chronicles of Buddhas by Venerable Mingun Sayadaw.

² See: Pali Text Society (PTS) The Buddhavamsa and the Cariya Pitaka Edited by The Rev. Richard Morris, 1882.

³ The Nidanakatha of Theravada Tradition (5th century) and Lalitha Vustara, ancient Mahayana text also described the noble qualities of the Buddha’s parents. See also: The Great Chronicles of Buddhas by Venerable Mingun Sayadaw.

⁴ DN:14

⁵ See: Pali Text Society (PTS) The Buddhavamsa and the Cariya Pitaka Edited by The Rev. Richard Morris, 1882.

⁶ Thg:10.1

⁷ Ud:5.2

⁸ See: Thi Ap17: Mahāpajāpatigotamī therīapadāna—Jonathan S. Walters.

⁹ MN:142.

¹⁰ See: Thi Ap17: Mahāpajāpatigotamī therīapadāna—Jonathan S. Walters.

¹¹ Details regarding the life of the Bhikkhuni Mahāpajāpati Gotamī within the Dispensation are discussed in detail in the subsequent volumes of this compilation.

¹² The Buddha declared that: **“the foremost of my bhikkhu disciples among those who guard the doors of the sense faculties is Nanda”** (AN1: 230); **“the foremost of my bhikkhunī disciples in among meditators is Nanda”** (AN1:240)

¹³ Ud:3.2

¹⁴ <https://siriyaasodaraseya.com/nanda-the-buddhas-half-sister/>

¹⁵ See: Theravāda Collection on Monastic Law by Bhikkhu Brahmali: Great Division: 41: Rahula.

¹⁶ Tha.Ap15 (Nanda Thera’s apadana)

¹⁷ Thi.Ap 25 (Nanda Their’s apadana)

¹⁸ Source: A Manual of Buddhism by Ven. Narada Thera.

¹⁹ This event has been described in Vol. 1 of this compilation.

²⁰ Snp:3.11: Nalaka sutta.

²¹ For details see: The Great Chronicles of Buddhas by Venerable Mingun Sayadaw.

²² The Kelani Vihara murals (Sri Lanaka) —this is a recreation based on a painting by the artist Solias Mendis.

²³ The Vap Mangula (Royal Ploughing Festival) of ancient India was a royal ceremony in which kings themselves took up the plough to inaugurate the ploughing season, seeking prosperity. According to the commentaries, Prince Siddhartha participated in this festival held at Kapilavastu when he was seven years old. Attendants left the prince alone beneath a Damba tree (Rose apple tree) while they went to watch the festivities. There, amidst the solitude of the surroundings—and aided by the meditative dispositions cultivated in past lives—the prince spontaneously entered into Antiparāsiti (mindfulness of breathing) concentration and attained the bliss of the first Jhāna (meditative absorption). Witnessing this marvel, King Suddhodana approached and paid homage to the prince with his palms joined in reverence. For further information, see: <https://pitaka.lk/books/buddha-charithaya/4-8.html>

²⁴ MN:36 (Mahasācchaka sutta)

²⁵ Source: <https://www.buddhanet.net/>

²⁶ IAMBUDDHIST: <https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=1278659594287965&set=a.478227184331214>

²⁷ See: The Great Chronicles of Buddhas by Venerable Mingun Sayadaw.

²⁸ See: The Great Chronicles of Buddhas by Venerable Mingun Sayadaw and Manual of Buddhism by Ven. Narada Thera.

²⁹ See: Pali Text Society (PTS) The Buddhavamsa and the Cariya Pitaka Edited by The Rev. Richard Morris, 1882

³⁰ Thi Ap 2: Yasodhara Their.

³¹ See: Theravāda Collection on Monastic Law by Bhikkhu Brahmali: Great Division: 41: Rahula.

³² “The Buddha has declared: the foremost of my bhikkhunī disciples among those who attain great direct knowledge is Bhaddā Kaccānā”. See. AN1:245

³³ AN3:39 (Delicate)

³⁴ DN:14

³⁵ DN:16

³⁶ This matter is detailed in volume 4 of this edition.

³⁷ For details see: Wikipedia.

³⁸ DN:3

³⁹ SN21:11 (Maha Kappina)

⁴⁰ AN6:52 (Khattiya)

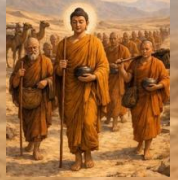
⁴¹ This is a sculpture from Borobudur Indonesia, made according to the description given in ancient book Lalithavistara
https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Borobudur_-_Lalitavistara_-_023_S_The_Sakyans_give_gifts_to_the_Poor_%2811247555616%29.jpg

⁴² Source: Dictionary of Pāli Proper Names by G.P. Malalasekera

⁴³ DN:3, In DN:14 Mahapadana sutta also mentioned Kapilavastu as the city of Sakkyans.

⁴⁴ DN:14 (Mahasamya sutta).

⁴⁵ SN45:21 Mahanama



Lumbini to Kusinara: The Lay Life of Prince Siddhartha (Volume 3)

The glorious birth of Gotama Buddha—the most extraordinary and peerless Teacher to appear in the world—was detailed in the first volume of this series. The second volume presented the narrative of the Buddha's birth in Lumbini village within the ancient Sakya realm, grounded in the Tipitaka, Buddhist tradition, historical records, and archaeological evidence.

This third volume is dedicated to exploring the pivotal twenty-nine years that Prince Siddhartha spent in the royal city of Kapilavastu. Skilfully weaving together Sutta discourses, beloved traditional accounts, and historical facts, the author portrays in clear and accessible language the Prince's parents, the early loss of his mother, and his upbringing under the boundless love of his foster mother, Maha Prajapati Gotami.

The text beautifully captures the Prince Siddhartha's close relatives and the miraculous events of his early years—the prophecy of the ascetic Asita, his attainment of the first absorption (jhana) beneath the Rose Apple Tree, and his profound act of wisdom and compassion in saving the wounded swan harmed by Prince Devadatta. Furthermore, it brings to light the unique bond between the Buddha and the Sakkyia clan, alongside the grandeur of Kapilavastu, their royal capital. Reading this serene chronicle of our Supreme Buddha's childhood and youth will surely fill your heart with deep faith and tranquil devotion