

## **Incarnation Nine**

### **Buddha – The Teacher**

Six hundred years before the birth of Christ, there lived in India a king called Suddhodana. He ruled over the province called Gaya. One night his wife, Queen Maya, had a vivid dream. She dreamt that angels whisked her away to a golden house high in the Himalayan Mountains. They bathed her and laid her on a silken bed. Then a white elephant carrying a lotus flower in its trunk approached her, touched her right side with the lotus, and a baby entered her womb.

Upon waking, the queen excitedly told her husband everything. The King summoned his adviser. His adviser could see past, present and future and foretold that the queen would soon give birth to a son who would become either a saintly king or a famous religious teacher.

Nine months later the queen gave birth to a son. On His body were all the signs of a great person. He had long ear lobes and the soles of His feet bore the marks of chariot wheels. His parents gave Him the name Siddhartha Gautama. Sadly, just eight days after His birth, the queen died.

As the child grew, King Suddhodana constantly remembered the wise man's words. He was hopeful that Siddhartha might become a powerful king, but he was afraid also. "Perhaps my son, he thought, "will be happy to renounce the kingdom and become a wandering saint." He therefore ordered his servants that the Prince should never, under any circumstances, leave the palace grounds. He gave Siddhartha everything. The Prince wore costly silks and jewels, and ate the finest foods. The country's finest musicians, dancers and actors entertained Him. He married a girl more captivating than the celestial beauties of heaven.

Still, Prince Siddhartha was not entirely happy. There rose within His heart a longing to know what lay beyond the palace walls.

One day, when He was twenty-nine years old, Siddhartha managed to escape the vigilance of His father's guards and left the palace grounds for the first time in His life. Seated on a chariot, He passed a wrinkled, grey-haired man hobbling by with a walking stick. He then saw a man lying beside the road, wheezing and coughing blood. Almost immediately there passed a procession of people, weeping and carrying a lifeless body. Siddhartha didn't know what to make of it. He stopped a passing monk and enquired, "Who are these people and what are they doing?"

The sage replied, "Young man, no one who takes birth in this world can avoid the three types of suffering: Old age, disease and death."

Shocked at his news, Siddhartha returned undetected to the palace. "Why must there be suffering?" He asked Himself repeatedly. He vowed to Himself to solve these problems. One night, whilst everyone was sound asleep, He crept from the palace, and entered the forest, never to return. He lived the life of an ascetic, accepting great discomfort. He did not care for the clothes He wore, nor the food He ate. Sometimes He fasted for weeks and bathed in freezing mountain streams.

Still, Siddhartha was not happy. Previously life's luxuries had not brought contentment; but neither had His present life of deliberate discomfort. Finally, He broke His fast and took to what

His followers call today “The Middle Path”. He was moderate in everything. He neither ate too much, nor too little; neither slept too long, nor too short.

One day sitting in meditation under a giant Bo tree, He fixed His gaze on the northern star. His attention became unwavering and He attained peace of mind. He was free from all worldly desires, from lust, greed and anger. From that day on people called him Buddha. It is only the body that gets sick, becomes old and dies - knowing this, He achieved His ambition to become free from all miseries.

As was foretold, Lord Buddha became famous as a religious teacher and gathered thousands of disciples. He taught the principles of compassion and non-violence. The people of the time were largely atheistic and misusing the Vedas for their own selfish purposes. In the name of the scriptures they were opening huge slaughterhouses and killing daily thousands of innocent animals. Therefore, Lord Buddha outwardly rejected the Vedas and stressed a strictly vegetarian diet. In this way He saved the poor animals and, at the same time, tricked the atheists into following Him, an incarnation of God.