

= Kaundinya =

Kau??inya (Sanskrit ; Pali : Ko??añña) also known as ?jñ?takau??inya , Pali : Añña Ko??añña) was a Buddhist monk follower of Gautama Buddha and the first to become an arhat . He lived during the 6th century BCE in what is now Uttar Pradesh and Bihar , India .

= = Life = =

Kaundinya was a brahmin who first came to prominence as a youth due to his mastery of the Vedas and was later appointed as a royal court scholar of King Suddhodana of the Sakyas in Kapilavastu . There Ko??añña was the only scholar who unequivocally predicted upon the birth of Prince Siddhartha that the prince would become an enlightened Buddha , and vowed to become his disciple . Ko??añña and four colleagues followed Siddhartha in six years of ascetic practice , but abandoned him in disgust after Siddhartha gave up the practice of self @-@ mortification . Upon enlightenment , Siddhartha gave his first dharma talk to Ko??añña 's group . Ko??añña was the first to comprehend the teaching and thus became the first bhikkhu and arahat .

Ko??añña was regarded as the foremost of the five initial disciples of the Buddha and later travelled around India spreading the dharma . Among his notable converts was his nephew Pu??a , who the Buddha acknowledged as the foremost preacher of the dharma . In his final years , he retreated to the Himalayas and predeceased the Buddha .

Ko??añña 's previous rebirths are described in many accounts in Buddhist literature . These accounts show that he had vowed in previous existences to be the first to comprehend the dharma when it was to be proclaimed by an enlightened Buddha . They also document that the seeds of his relationship with Gautama Buddha as the first arahant were sown in previous existences in which they had crossed paths .

= = Early years = =

Ko??añña was born before the time of Siddhartha to a wealthy brahmin family in a town named in Donavatthu , near Kapilavastu , and was known by his family name . When he was growing up , he mastered the three Vedas at a young age and excelled in the science of physiognomy (lakhana @-@ manta) .

Ko??añña became a young Brahmin scholar in Kapilavastu in the Sakya kingdom of King Suddhodana . He was one among the group of scholars who were invited to the royal court to predict the destiny of Crown Prince Siddhartha at his naming ceremony . Siddhartha was the first child born to Suddhodana and Queen Maya in twenty years of marriage and much interest surrounded the infant from royal society and the public alike . All the other scholars raised two fingers and offered a twofold prediction : That Siddhartha would either become a Chakravarti (supreme king) or would renounce the world and become a supreme religious leader . Ko??añña was the only one that explicitly predicted that Siddhartha would renounce the world to become a Buddha , raising one finger and stating his prediction .

Ko??añña thereafter vowed that he would follow when Siddhartha became an ascetic to learn from the future Buddha 's findings . In the meantime , Suddhodana attempted to foil Ko??añña 's prediction because he wanted his son to succeed him in ruling and expanding the kingdom . Suddhodana made intricate arrangements to shield Siddhartha from all worldly suffering in order to steer his mind away from spiritual matters , pampering him with all the material luxury and sense pleasures that he could find . However , Siddhartha finally persuaded his father to allow him out of the palace to meet his subjects . Suddhodana agreed , but attempted to present a sanitised image of human existence by ordering beggars , old people and sick people to be kept from the streets . Despite this , Siddhartha saw the four sights which prompted him to reevaluate his view of the world .

= = Renouncement and Arahamthood = =

When Siddhartha was aged 29 , he renounced the world to become a sama?a (ascetic) . Ko??añña , along with Bhaddiya , Vappa , Mahanama and Assaji , variously described as four of the other scholars who had read Siddhartha 's future or the sons of those scholars , followed him into the ascetic life , with the approval of Suddhodana , who was worried about Siddhartha 's safety . They were known as " the group of five " or " the group of five fortunate ones " . After Siddhartha had mastered all the teachings of Alara Kalama and then Uddaka Ramaputta , he left and began practicing self mortification along with Ko??añña and his four colleagues at Uruvela . Ko??añña and his colleagues attended to Siddhartha in the hope that he would become enlightened through self @-@ mortification . These involved self @-@ deprivation of food and water , and exposing themselves to the elements to near @-@ death for six years , at which point Siddhartha rejected self @-@ mortification . Ko??añña and his colleagues became disillusioned , believing Siddhartha to have become a glutton and moved away to Sarnath near Varanasi to continue their practices .

After Siddhartha became the enlightened Gautama Buddha , he sought to find his former teachers Arada Kalama and Udraka Ramaputra in order to teach them . Realising that they had died , the Buddha decided to find Ko??añña and his colleagues to share his teachings . Ko??añña and his companions were skeptical of Gautama Buddha after his abandonment of asceticism , and initially refused to acknowledge his presence , except to offer a seat on the ground . However , the ascetics were soon won over when they sensed that the Buddha had changed since they left him . The Buddha preached the Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta , which deals with the Four Noble Truths and the Noble Eightfold Path , the core pillars of Buddhist teaching regarding the intrinsic suffering of existence and how to deal with it . Ko??añña reached the sot?panna stage of arahatthood upon hearing this , becoming the first human to comprehend the teachings . The Buddha acknowledged this by remarking " annasi vata bho Kondanno (meaning " you have realised , Kondanna ") .

Five days later , hearing the subsequent Anattalakkhana Sutta regarding anatta , Ko??añña gained full arahantship . Ko??añña thus became first arahat . Having realised arahantship , he requested the Buddha for permission to retire from the world , which was granted with the words " ehi bhikkhu " . Ko??añña thus became the first bhikkhu (monk) in the Buddha 's dispensation , known as the sangha . Later , the assembly at Jetavana declared him to be the foremost among the first bhikkhus and the disciples of long standing .

= = After enlightenment = =

Following the emergence of the sangha , Ko??añña and the other monks travelled with the Buddha by foot through the Gangetic plains area of what is now Bihar and Uttar Pradesh to spread the dharma . Ko??añña helped to convert many followers to the Buddha 's teaching , the foremost being his nephew Punna , born to his sister Mantani . This occurred while the Buddha was at Rajagaha , where he had immediately gone after first communicating his Realisation in order to honour his promise to show his teachings to King Bimbisara . In the meantime , Ko??añña returned to his home town of Kapilavastu and ordained Punna . Punna attained arahantship and 500 of his clansmen become monks . Punna was later acknowledged by the Buddha as the foremost of the disciples in preaching skills .

As one of the senior monks of Gautama Buddha , some of Ko??añña 's writings and discourses to other monks are recorded in the literature . A poem consisting of sixteen verses in the Theragatha is attributed to him . The first of these is said to have been recited by Sacca in praise of Ko??añña , after Ko??añña had preached the Four Noble Truths to Sacca . In other verses , Ko??añña is shown admonishing monks who had fallen into ways contrary to Buddhist teaching . Ko??añña also acknowledged his own struggles against Mara , the demon who attempted to prevent the enlightenment of the Buddha . Ko??añña was also praised in the Udana by the Buddha , who observed his deliverance from the destructiveness of craving .

After a period within the sangha , Ko??añña retired to the Himalayas for the last twelve years of his life . This is attributed to two reasons in Buddhist literature . The first reason was that Ko??añña considered his presence to be a source of inconvenience for Sariputra and Moggallana , the two

chief disciples of The Buddha . As the seniormost member of the sangha , Ko??añña lead the monks on the alms @-@ round , but during dharma talks , the two chief disciples sat on either side of the Buddha and Ko??añña behind them . The two chief disciples were uncomfortable sitting in front of Ko??añña , so he decided to solve the problem by absenting himself . The other reason to which Ko??añña 's leave is attributed was to spend more quiet time in religious practice , which was rendered difficult due to the attention that the sangha gained from the public .

According to the Samyutta Nikaya , Ko??añña retired to the banks of the Mandakini Lake in the Chaddanta forest , said to be the abode of the paccekabuddhas . It was said that the 8000 elephants in the forest took turns to catering for his needs . Ko??añña only left once , to farewell Gautama Buddha . Ko??añña kissed the Buddha 's feet and stroked them with his hands . He advised his disciples not to mourn him before returning to the forest to pass away the following morning . He was cremated on a large sandalwood pyre which was constructed with the help of the elephants , and the ceremony was presided over by Anuruddha , one of the ten chief disciples and five hundred other monks . The ashes were later taken to Veluvana , where they were enshrined in a silver stupa .

= = Previous and future rebirths = =

In line with the Buddhist doctrine of rebirth , the previous existences of Ko??añña are described in Buddhist texts . They repeatedly show a theme of Ko??añña having displayed religious inclinations in previous rebirths , many of which involve experiences with previous rebirths of the Buddha and his other leading disciplines . This is a common theme among the leading disciples , all of whom had many encounters with the future Gautama Buddha in previous lives , and is consistent with the Buddhist concepts of cause and effect and karma . In Pali language Theravada literature , Ko??añña is said to have begun striving for enlightenment in the time of Padumuttara Buddha , the 13th Buddha . The son of a wealthy householder at Hamsavati , Ko??añña saw the monk who was the first disciple of Padmuttara Buddha . Ko??añña 's previous rebirth bestowed on the Buddha and the sangha and wished that he was to be the first disciple of a future Buddha . Padumuttara is said to have prophesied the fulfilment of this in the era of Gautama Buddha , 1000 aeons into the future . After the passing of Padmuttara Buddha , Ko??añña constructed a jewelled chamber inside the cetiya in which the relics were stored and also made an offering of jewel festoons . The Apadana offers a variant on this reincarnation . It states that Ko??añña was the first person to offer a meal to Padumuttara and became a deva in the Tusita world . It further says and that during the time of Vipass? Buddha , Ko??añña was a householder named Mahakala who offered the Buddha the first fruits of his field in their nine stages of production . The Mahavastu gives another account explaining the origin of Ko??añña 's vow to attain arahanthood in his final rebirth . This account asserts that he was a potter at Rajagaha in a previous existence . A Paccekabuddha who was suffering from biliousness sought shelter in the potter 's hut and was cured . In time , several more Paccekabuddhas came to visit the hut to inquire about their colleagues health status . The potter asked which of them had realised the dharma first , to which the patient answered in the affirmative . Thereupon the potter made his vow .

Despite the differences in the accounts , all of them agree on his words when announcing his vow :

By the merit I have acquired by doing this service of attending on you , may I be the first of all to realise the dharma when proclaimed by an Exalted One . May I not crave for gain and honour . May I wish only for a solitary bed and begging bowl . May I lay aside my body among the cascades and forest glades , dying all alone .

Numerous previous rebirths in which Ko??añña and Gautama Buddha crossed paths are also noted in Pali literature . The Mahavastu cites a previous birth in which Ko??añña was a seafaring merchant who had lost all his wealth after a mid @-@ ocean shipwreck . Ko??añña then went in search of the king of Kosala , who had a widely known reputation for philanthropy . However , the Kosalan monarch had left his kingdom and surrendered his kingdom to the neighbouring Kasi king . The king of Kosala had done so to avert bloodshed , since the Kasi king had threatened to invade . Nevertheless , the Kasi king wanted to capture the Kosalan king and decreed a large reward for it .

The Kosalan king (Gautama Buddha in a previous rebirth) tied himself and asked the merchant to deliver him to Kasi so that the merchant would no longer be in poverty . However , when the Kasi king heard this , he withdrew his army and restored the Kosalan monarchy . The Kosalan king subsequently bestowed wealth on the merchant . Gautama Buddha cited this occurrence to illustrate how the ties between living beings extended into their previous existences . In another rebirth described in the Mahavastu , Koṭṭhāṇṇa and his four colleagues who were to become the first bhikkhus were seafaring merchants under the command of the future Gautama Buddha . The future Buddha sacrificed himself to save them from an ocean death . The Divyavadana describes two further rebirths of Koṭṭhāṇṇa . In one he was a bird named Uccangama . In another , he was a tigress and Gautama Buddha another tiger . The future Buddha sacrificed his own life by offering himself as meat to the hungry tigress so that it would not eat its own cubs .

The " Five Hundred Disciples " (eighth) chapter of the Mahayana Lotus Sutra predicts that in the future he will become a Buddha named Universal Brightness .