

## Section: 9: The Past Lives of the Buddha

In this section, we explore the past lives of the Buddha—his journey as a Bodhisattva across countless rebirths—and his ability to recall not only his own previous existences but also the rebirths of other beings.

The concept of rebirth is a fundamental teaching in Buddhism. According to the Dhamma, when a being passes away, they take birth again according to the actions (*kamma*) they have performed in this life. Wholesome *kamma* leads to a fortunate rebirth in a higher realm, while unwholesome *kamma* results in rebirth in a lower state of existence.<sup>i</sup>

**Bhikkhu Bodhi explains:**

**“According to the Buddha’s teaching, all beings except the arahants are subject to ‘renewal of being in the future’ (*punabbhava*), that is, to rebirth.** Rebirth, in the Buddhist conception, is not the transmigration of a self or soul but the continuation of a process—a flux of becoming—where successive lives are linked by a causal transmission of influence rather than by substantial identity. The fundamental pattern that underlies this process is the teaching of dependent origination, which also reveals how rebirth is possible without the need for an enduring self.”<sup>ii</sup>

### The Buddha’s Ability to Recall Past Lives

The Blessed One possessed extraordinary knowledge, known as ***The Ten Powers* (*dasabala*)**.

<sup>iii</sup> Among them were:

- The ability to understand the law of *kamma* and its results (*kamma vipāka*) in all beings.
- The ability to see the rebirths of beings, knowing whether they would take birth in a higher or lower realm.<sup>iv</sup>

### The Buddha’s Recollection of Many Past Lives

On the night of his enlightenment, the Buddha described his profound experience of recalling his past existences:<sup>v</sup>

When my mind was fully concentrated, purified, bright, unblemished, free from imperfections, malleable, wieldy, steady, and attained to imperturbability, I directed it to the knowledge of the recollection of past lives.

I recollected my manifold past lives: one birth, two births... a hundred thousand births, many aeons of world-contraction, many aeons of world-expansion, many aeons of both contraction and expansion.

There I was, bearing such a name, belonging to such a clan, with such an appearance... This was my livelihood, these were my experiences of happiness and suffering, this was the duration of my life. Passing away from there, I arose elsewhere...’ Thus, with their aspects and particulars, I recollected my countless past lives.

**“This was the first true knowledge attained by me in the first watch of the night.”<sup>vi</sup>**

Through this supreme vision, the Buddha not only realized the cycle of his own past existences but also gained insight into the vast and intricate workings of *samsāra*, the endless cycle of birth and death.

### The Buddha's Power to See Ninety-One Aeons of Past Lives

The Appearance of Former Buddhas'

In this discourse, the Blessed One described in detail the Buddhas who had appeared in the world before him, beginning from ninety-one aeons ago:<sup>vii</sup>

*"Monks, ninety-one aeons ago, the Lord, the Arahant, the fully enlightened **Buddha Vipassī** arose in the world. Thirty-one aeons ago, the Lord **Buddha Sikkhī** appeared; and in that same thirty-first aeon, the Lord **Buddha Vessabhū** arose. In this present fortunate aeon, the **Lords Buddha Kakusandha, Konāgamana, and Kassapa** appeared in the world. And now, monks, in this very same fortunate aeon, I too have arisen as a fully enlightened Buddha."*<sup>viii</sup>

### The Appearance of Beings in Heavenly Realms

On one occasion, the wanderer Vacchagotta<sup>ix</sup> asked the Buddha whether any *Ājīvakas*—followers of a sect that rejected the law of *kamma*—had, upon passing away, been reborn in the heavenly realms.

The Blessed One replied:

*"Vaccha, when I recollect the past ninety-one aeons, I do not recall any Ājīvaka who, on the dissolution of the body, was reborn in heaven—except for one. And he was one who upheld the doctrine of the moral efficacy of actions, the doctrine of the moral efficacy of deeds."*<sup>x</sup>

Thus, even among those who doubted *kamma*, only one who recognized the power of wholesome actions attained a fortunate rebirth.

### The Longstanding Generosity of People

At one time, the headman Asibandhakaputta,<sup>xi</sup> attempting to challenge the Buddha, questioned him:

*"Venerable Sir, why is the Blessed One traveling with a large Saṅgha of monks at a time of famine and scarcity, when crops are blighted and have turned to straw? Is the Blessed One not bringing ruin to families, misfortune to families, the destruction of families?"*<sup>xii</sup>

The Blessed One replied:

*"Headman, I recollect ninety-one aeons into the past, and I do not recall any family ever being destroyed merely by offering cooked alms food. Rather, whatever families are wealthy—with abundant gold and silver, abundant possessions and means of subsistence, abundant wealth and grain—they have all become so through generosity, truthfulness, and self-restraint."*

With this, the Buddha affirmed the profound truth that giving, honesty, and discipline are the causes of true prosperity, not only in this life but across countless lifetimes.



After countless eons wandering through the vast cycle of *samsara*, the Bodhisatta at last fulfilled his supreme aspiration—bringing an end to all rebirths. In this final existence, he descended into the world one last time, not for himself, but to illuminate the path of liberation for the welfare and happiness of all beings.<sup>xiii</sup>

#### Scriptural Evidence of the Buddha's Previous Births as a Bodhisattva

The *Khuddaka Nikaya* of Sutta Pitaka contains three key texts that describe the past lives of the Bodhisattva:

##### **1 The Great Chronicle of Buddhas (*Buddhavamsa*)<sup>xiv</sup>**

This text narrates the appearance of twenty-five Fully Enlightened Buddhas, beginning with Buddha Dīpankara and culminating with Buddha Gotama. It recounts the moment when our Bodhisattva first made his aspiration to attain Buddhahood in the presence of Buddha Dīpankara. Additionally, it details the lives of the twenty-four Buddhas who appeared before Buddha Gotama, along with significant events such as their birth, enlightenment, and final passing.<sup>xv</sup>

##### **2 The *Cariyāpiṭaka* (The Canon of Conduct)<sup>xvi</sup>**

This scripture describes twenty-four previous lives of the Bodhisattva, illustrating the perfections (*pāramīs*) he cultivated on his path to Buddhahood.

### 3 The *Jātaka* Tales (Stories of Past Lives)<sup>xvii</sup>

These beloved narratives recount numerous past births of the Bodhisattva, depicting his noble qualities and unwavering resolve to attain enlightenment for the welfare of all beings.<sup>xviii</sup>



**Bodhisattva as the ascetic Sumedha at the feet of the Buddha Dipankara aspiring to be the future Buddha.**<sup>xxix</sup>

#### Other Suttas Revealing the Bodhisattva's Past Lives

Beyond the three key texts mentioned earlier, several suttas in the *Sutta Piṭaka* also recount the previous births of the Bodhisattva. According to the scriptures, the Buddha would reveal his past lives on special occasions—either to clarify a point of Dhamma or in response to a request from his disciples. Below are selected excerpts in which the Blessed One spoke of his former existences:

As an Attendant to Brahmā Baka<sup>xx</sup>

On one occasion, Brahmā Baka mistakenly believed that his existence was eternal. The Buddha, knowing his thoughts and moved by compassion, appeared in the Brahma world to dispel his delusion. In their discourse, the Blessed One revealed that in a past life, Brahma Baka had been his teacher, and he, as the Bodhisattva, had been Baka's devoted attendant named Kappa.

*"I was your apprentice named Kappa;  
You thought him intelligent and devout:  
That was your ancient practice of vow and virtue,  
Which I recollect as if just waking up."*

As the Brahmin Student Jotipāla in the Time of Buddha Kassapa<sup>xxi</sup>

Once, while traveling with a large Saṅgha in the Kosalan country, the Buddha smiled upon seeing a particular place off the main road. Venerable Ānanda, noticing this, reflected:

*“What is the reason, what is the cause, for the Blessed One’s smile? Tathāgatas do not smile for no reason.”*

Approaching the Buddha, Venerable Ānanda inquired about the cause of his smile. The Blessed One then revealed that in a distant past, this very place had been a prosperous town called Vebhaliṅga, where the monastery of the former Buddha Kassapa once stood. He recounted how a humble potter named Ghaṭikāra, a devoted disciple of Buddha Kassapa, had inspired his close friend, the young brahmin student Jotipāla, to visit the Enlightened One. Upon hearing the Dhamma, Jotipāla became a disciple of the Buddha Kassapa. The Blessed One then declared:

*“Now, Ānanda, you may think: ‘Certainly, someone else was the brahmin student Jotipāla on that occasion.’ But it should not be regarded thus. I was the brahmin student Jotipāla on that occasion.”*<sup>xxii</sup>

The *Ghaṭikāra Sutta* (SN 2:50) further describes how, after passing away as a non-returner (*anāgāmi*), Ghaṭikāra was reborn in the Brahma world. As Brahma Ghaṭikāra, he later visited the Buddha and spoke these words:

*“In the past, I was the potter Ghaṭikāra in Vehaliṅga...  
I was a lay follower of the Buddha Kassapa...  
I was your fellow villager;  
In the past, I was your friend...”*<sup>xxiii</sup>

### [The Brahmin Chaplain of King Mahāvijita](#)

Once, while the Blessed One was residing in Ambalathika Park near Khānumata village, the Brahmin Kutadanta approached him with a profound inquiry. He sought guidance on how to conduct the great triple sacrifice with its sixteen requisites in the most righteous and meritorious way.

In response, the Blessed One recounted the story of King Mahāvijita, a sovereign of ancient times who wished to offer a grand sacrifice. Before proceeding, the wise king consulted his chief minister and chaplain, the learned Purohita. With wisdom and discernment, the chaplain instructed the king on performing the sacrifice with sixteen noble requisites—ensuring that it was conducted without the taking of life. Instead of bloodshed, the offering consisted of pure gifts: ghee, oil, butter, curds, honey, and molasses, symbolizing generosity and compassion.

Deeply moved by the Blessed One’s words, the Brahmin Kutadanta asked, “Venerable Sir, in that past life, were you the king or the chaplain?”

The Blessed One replied with serene authority:

**“Indeed, Brahmin, I was the Brahmin chaplain who guided that sacrifice.”**<sup>xxiv</sup>

### [King Mahāsudassana, the Wheel-Turning Monarch of Kusāvatī](#)

As the Blessed One lay in the sāl-grove of the Mallas in Kusinara, approaching his final Nibbāna, Venerable Ānanda, overcome with sorrow, respectfully implored him:

*“Lord, may the Blessed One not pass away in this humble town of wattle-and-daub, deep in the jungle... There are great and illustrious cities—Campa, Rājagaha, Sāvatthi—where devoted Khatiyas, Brahmins, and householders would honour the Tathāgata’s passing and provide for his funeral in a manner befitting his greatness.”*<sup>xxv</sup>

With infinite wisdom and compassion, the Blessed One revealed the true nature of Kusinara. He narrated the story of King Mahāsudassana, a righteous and noble Wheel-Turning Monarch who once reigned over this very land when it was known as Kusāvatī—an opulent and flourishing city, filled with splendour and prosperity.

Concluding the account, the Blessed One turned to Ānanda and declared:

“Ānanda, you may think that King Mahāsudassana was someone other than me. But do not see it so—for I was King Mahāsudassana then.

**See, Ānanda, how all those conditioned things of the past have vanished and changed! Thus, all formations are impermanent, unstable, and offer no lasting refuge. Knowing this, Ānanda, one should not take delight in them, but instead, let go, transcend them, and be truly liberated”**<sup>xxvi</sup>

#### [Jotipāla, the Son of the Chaplain of King Disampati](#)

Once, while the Blessed One was dwelling at Vultures’ Peak in Rājagaha, Pañcasikha of the Gandhabbas approached him with deep reverence. After paying homage, he recounted a remarkable event—the visit of Brahma Sanankumāra to the celestial assembly of the Thirty-Three Gods. Addressing Sakka and the assembled deities, Brahma Sanankumāra proclaimed:  
<sup>xxvii</sup>

**“For how long has the Blessed Lord possessed such mighty wisdom?”**

In response, he narrated a distant past life of the Buddha, when he was born as Jotipāla, the son of the royal chaplain of King Disampati. Upon his father’s passing, Jotipāla, renowned for his profound wisdom, became the king’s chief chaplain and was honoured with the title **Mahā Govinda—the Great Steward**.

In time, however, Mahā Govinda perceived the fleeting nature of worldly grandeur. Filled with spiritual aspiration, he renounced the household life and embraced the path of homelessness. So profound was his influence that many among the people—including noble kings—followed him, becoming his disciples. He devoted himself to the practice of the four Brahmavihāras—boundless loving-kindness, compassion, appreciative joy, and equanimity—guiding his followers toward rebirth in the radiant Brahma-world.

After recounting Brahma Sanankumāra’s narration, Pañcasikha turned to the Buddha and inquired:

*“Do you remember this, Lord?”*

With serene wisdom, the Blessed One affirmed:

“Indeed, Pañcasikha, I was the Brahmin, the Great Steward, who led those disciples on the path to the Brahma-world. Yet, Pañcasikha, know this:

**That holy life did not lead to complete liberation. It brought only rebirth in the brahma realm. However, the holy life I now proclaim—the Noble Path—leads beyond all conditioned existence. It leads to true disenchantment, to the cessation of craving, to the unshakable peace of Nibbāna.**<sup>xxviii</sup>

#### [The Chariot Maker to King Pacetana](#) <sup>xxix</sup>

On one occasion, while addressing the Saṅgha, the Blessed One recounted a past life to illustrate who is capable of standing firm on the spiritual path and who is not. He narrated the story of **King Pacetana** and his royal chariot maker:

As the king prepared for an impending war, he commanded his chariot maker to craft a pair of wheels for his royal chariot. With great care and precision, the craftsman dedicated **six months** to forging a single wheel. When the king inspected his progress, he was surprised to find that only one wheel had been completed. Urging him to hasten the task, the king set a deadline—he needed both wheels in just **six days**. The chariot maker complied and swiftly finished the second wheel within the given time.

When the time came to test them, the king, unable to distinguish any difference in appearance, questioned the chariot maker. In response, the craftsman demonstrated their qualities. He took the wheel that was made in six days and set it rolling—it went only a short distance before **wobbling and collapsing to the ground**. However, when he rolled the wheel that had been carefully crafted over six months, it **moved steadily, covering a great distance before coming to rest upright, firm upon its axle**.

Amazed, the king asked why the two wheels behaved so differently. The chariot maker explained:

“Lord, the wheel that took six days to complete has a rim, spokes, and nave that are crooked, faulty, and poorly fitted. Thus, it rolled only as far as the momentum carried it before faltering and falling. But the wheel that took six months to craft was made with precision—its rim, spokes, and nave are free from faults, well-balanced, and perfectly aligned. For this reason, it rolled steadily, as far as its momentum carried it, and came to rest upright as though fixed on an axle.”

Concluding the story, the Blessed One turned to the Saṅgha and revealed:

**“Monks, in that past life, I was the royal chariot maker.”**

With this parable, the Buddha imparted a profound lesson—just as a poorly made wheel cannot stand firm, those who are **crooked in body, speech, and mind, neglecting the path, will falter and fall away from the Dhamma**. But those who **train with diligence, cultivate integrity, and perfect their practice**, like the well-crafted wheel, will stand unwavering in the Noble Dispensation, steadfast in the journey toward liberation.

#### [King Makhādeva of Mithilā and King Nimi](#) <sup>xxx</sup>

Once, while the Blessed One was residing in the Makhādeva Mango Grove of Mithilā, he smiled at a particular place. Seeing this, Venerable Ānanda, knowing that Tathāgatas do not smile without reason, respectfully inquired about the cause of his smile. In response, the

Buddha recounted the story of King Makhādeva, a ruler of Mithilā in times long past—a king who upheld righteousness and observed the Uposatha days with great devotion. During that era, lifespans were long, and King Makhādeva ruled for many years. Yet, mindful of the inevitability of aging, he made a solemn vow. He instructed his royal barber:<sup>xxx</sup>

**“When you see the first grey hair upon my head, inform me at once.”**

In due course, the barber discovered a single strand of grey hair and reported it to the king. Recognizing this as a sign of impermanence, the king renounced his throne, entrusting the kingdom to his son. Before departing into the homeless life, he gave him this solemn instruction:

*“...Dear prince, when you too see grey hairs upon your head, do not delay. Carefully instruct your eldest son in kingship, then shave off your hair and beard, don the yellow robe, and go forth into the homeless life. Continue this noble tradition established by me—do not be the last to uphold it.”*

Thus, the tradition of renunciation established by the Bodhisatta as King Makhādeva endured for generations. Successive kings, following his footsteps, relinquished their thrones upon the sight of grey hairs. The last in this noble lineage was **King Nimi**, who likewise renounced the world upon aging and embraced the ascetic life.

However, his son, King Kalārajanaka, broke the tradition. When old age approached, he clung to his throne, forsaking the path of renunciation. With this, the noble practice established by King Makhādeva came to an end.

Turning to Venerable Ānanda, the Blessed One revealed:

“Ānanda, you may think that King Makhādeva of that time was someone other than me. But you should not see it so. I was King Makhādeva on that occasion. It was I who instituted that noble tradition, and for many generations, it was upheld. Yet, Ānanda, that practice, though meritorious, did not lead to true liberation. It brought only rebirth in the Brahmā-world.

But now, Ānanda, I have established a far greater practice—one that leads not to mere celestial rebirth, but to true disenchantment, to dispassion, to the complete cessation of suffering—to Nibbāna.

***Therefore, Ānanda, I say to you: Continue this noble practice I have now established. Do not be the last to uphold it.”***<sup>xxxii</sup>

#### [As Brahmin Velāma Who Gave Great Alms](#)

Once, the Blessed One taught the householder Anāthapiṇḍika<sup>xxxiii</sup> on the art of giving, illuminating the proper way to offer alms. In his discourse, he recounted the inspiring story of a noble Brahmin named Velāma, renowned for his boundless generosity. Velāma bestowed magnificent alms in nine diverse forms—ranging from golden bowls to silver bowls—with each type offered in the astonishing quantity of 84,000.

Then the Buddha spoke:

“You might be inclined, dear householder, to think, ‘Those great alms offering was made by some other Brahmin Velāma.’ But understand this: I was that very Brahmin Velāma.

**Yet, at those alms offering, there was not a single recipient truly worthy of the gift—none who had purified their being. Imagine, then, how far greater the merit would be if one nourished even a single person fully accomplished in insight.”**<sup>xxxiv</sup>

## Wholesome Deeds and the Thirty-Two Great Marks<sup>xxxv</sup>

On one occasion reflecting his past lives the Buddha said:

*Monks, in countless former lives and across myriad realms, the Tathāgata, born as a human, performed mighty and virtuous deeds. He was unwavering in his conduct—perfect in body, speech, and thought—and practiced generosity, self-discipline, observance of fasts, and honoured his parents, ascetics, Brahmins, and clan elders with deep respect. Through these innumerable meritorious actions, he amassed a vast reservoir of wholesome kamma.*

*At the dissolution of his body, this abundant merit bore fruit. He was reborn in a heavenly realm, where he enjoyed a long, blissful life endowed with beauty, radiant splendour, profound happiness, influential power, and refined heavenly perceptions—sights, sounds, smells, tastes, and tactile experiences that surpassed those of other devas. Even as he left that divine realm to be reborn on earth, he carried with him the distinguished mark of the Great Man: feet that tread evenly, each step placed, lifted, and set down with perfect balance.*<sup>xxxvi</sup>

The above statement of the Buddha conforms that cultivating true generosity and virtuous conduct bring goodness in to this life and future lives too.

## Previous Lives of Other Beings

In his boundless compassion, the Blessed One often shared the previous lives of various beings to illuminate the eternal truths of the Dhamma. Here are some treasured accounts:

### Lives of Five Buddhas Who Appeared Before the Buddha Gotama

One day, the Bhikkhu Saṅgha, residing in Anāthapindika’s park in the serene Jeta Grove, gathered in the Dhamma hall after the meal to reflect on their former lives. As they engaged in this heartfelt discussion, the Blessed One approached them and gently inquired about their conversation. When the Saṅgha explained, he warmly asked if they would be willing to hear a discourse on past lives. With open hearts, they consented.<sup>xxxvii</sup>

In his compassionate and clear manner, the Buddha then recounted a magnificent vision of time: over ninety-one aeons, seven fully enlightened Buddhas appeared in the world.

### Appearance of the Seven Fully Enlightened Buddhas

The Blessed One explained that ninety-one aeons ago, **Buddha Vipassī** arose; thirty-one aeons ago, **Buddha Sikhi** arose. In the same thirty-first aeon before this **Buddha Vessabhū** emerged. In the present fortune aeon, five Buddhas—**Kakusandha**, **Konagamana**, **Kassapa**, and finally **Buddha Gotama**, the Blessed One himself—manifested to guide all beings with their profound wisdom. The sutta even lovingly details the lives of these Buddhas—their families, moments of enlightenment, and the names of their chief disciples.

Overwhelmed by the depth of this revelation, the monks marvelled at the Tathāgata’s extraordinary psychic abilities. One of them expressed in awe:

*“Friends, it is truly marvellous—the Tathāgata’s immense power and insight. He recalls the past Buddhas who have attained Parinibbāna—their births, names, clans, lifespans, and the noble assemblies that accompanied them. But tell me, how did he come by such penetrative knowledge? Was it a deva who revealed these things to him?”*

Later, having left his seclusion, the Buddha returned and kindly asked, “What conversation did I interrupt as you sat together?” When the monks shared their discussion, the Blessed One replied with gentle assurance:

“The Tathāgata understands these matters by his own deep penetration into the principles of the Dhamma; and indeed, the devas, too, have shared their wisdom with him.”<sup>xxxviii</sup>

#### The Tathāgata’s Penetration of the Past Buddhas

The Buddha elaborated thus:

And so it is, monks, that through his profound penetration of the Dhamma’s essence, the Tathāgata recalls the past Buddhas—those Fully Enlightened Ones who have attained final Nibbāna. Having cut through the countless complexities of existence, they blazed the path of liberation, bringing an end to the cycle of birth and death. With perfect wisdom, they transcended all suffering and exhaustion, leaving behind only the pure radiance of their teachings.

The Tathāgata remembers them—those Blessed Ones who came before—recalling their births, their names, their noble clans. He reflects on the span of their lives, the twin disciples who upheld their teachings, and the assemblies of devoted followers who walked the path under their guidance.

*“These Blessed Lords arose in the world thus; they were known thus; their noble lineage was thus. Such was their flawless virtue, such was their Dhamma, such was their wisdom, such was their dwelling, and such was their final liberation.”<sup>xxxix</sup>*

Thus, monks, the lineage of the Buddhas shines unbroken, a beacon of wisdom illuminating the path for those who seek the end of suffering.

#### The Buddhas: Beacons of Liberation

Throughout the vast expanse of time, when the light of the Dhamma fades, a Buddha arises—like the sun dispelling the deepest night. They come, not for themselves, but for the welfare of countless beings lost in the endless cycle of birth and death.

From aeon to aeon, these supreme beings have trod the noble path, illuminating the way to the Deathless:

- ◆ **Buddha Vipassī**—the first of the Seven Buddhas, whose wisdom shone like a golden dawn in a distant age.
- ◆ **Buddha Sikhī**—a guiding light for those seeking liberation from suffering.
- ◆ **Buddha Vessabhū**—who walked the world, offering the Dhamma like a refreshing rain upon parched lands.
- ◆ **Buddha Kakusandha**—the first of the present aeon, bringing refuge to weary hearts.
- ◆ **Buddha Konāgamana**—whose presence inspired the noble and faithful.

- ◆ **Buddha Kassapa**—a beacon of discipline and virtue, who upheld the Dhamma with unwavering strength.
- ◆ **Buddha Gotama**—the peerless one, the perfectly enlightened teacher who compassionately revealed the path in this very age.

Through immeasurable eons, countless Buddhas have appeared, each revealing the same timeless Dhamma—the path of virtue, meditation, and wisdom that leads beyond suffering, beyond sorrow, beyond all that is impermanent

Time and again, these Enlightened Ones have arisen to open the gates of freedom for those bound by saṃsāra. They are the incomparable guides who, out of boundless compassion, extend their hands across the ocean of suffering, calling out:

*"Come, O seekers of truth! Walk this ancient path of wisdom, virtue, and meditation, and cross beyond birth and death. For those who heed, the shore of Nibbāna is near."*

And those who listen, those who walk in their footsteps, cross beyond the endless wandering. They taste the highest peace, the unshakable bliss of Nibbāna.

Thus, the Buddhas come, age after age, not for their own gain, but as selfless guides, offering the supreme gift—the way to the Deathless.

May we remember their boundless compassion. May we walk the noble path! May we awaken!



### The Buddhas: Beacons of Boundless Compassion

From time to time, when wisdom fades and the world is shrouded in darkness, a Buddha arises—like the morning sun piercing the night<sup>xl</sup>

## Former Lives of Sakka, the Lord of the Devas<sup>xli</sup>

In the Sakkasamyutta of the Samyutta Nikaya, the Blessed One recounted the remarkable story of Sakka's previous lives. In those human incarnations, Sakka lived with unwavering righteousness and embraced a path of virtuous conduct. He undertook **seven sacred vows** with deep determination and heartfelt commitment—vows that, over time, transformed his life and ultimately elevated him to the exalted position of Sakka, the Lord of the Devas.

The seven sacred vows:

- 1) As long as I live may I: support my parents.
- (2) may I respect the family elders.
- (3) may I speak gently.
- (4) may I not speak divisively.
- (5) may I dwell at home with a mind devoid of the stain of stinginess, freely generous, open-handed, delighting in relinquishment, devoted to charity, delighting in giving and sharing.
- (6) may I speak the truth.'
- (7) may I be free from anger, and if anger should arise in me may I dispel it quickly.<sup>xlii</sup>



**Sakka, the Lord of the Devas also called Lord Indra: Statue of Indra Śakra in Zhihua Temple in Beijing, China**<sup>xliii</sup>

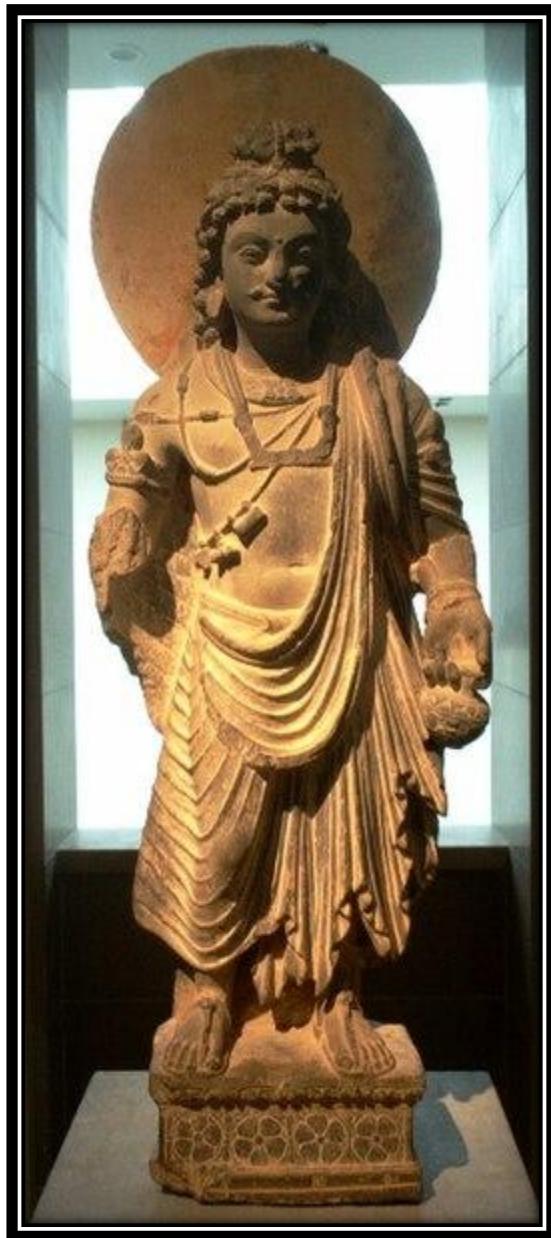
## The Future Buddha Metteyya: A Beacon of Hope

Just as the Buddhas of the past have arisen to illuminate the world, so too will another arise in the time to come. When human life spans reach eighty thousand years, there will appear the Blessed One, the Arahant, the fully enlightened Buddha Metteyya (Maitreya).<sup>xliv</sup>

Endowed with supreme wisdom and perfect conduct, he will be the Well-Farer, the Knower of Worlds, the incomparable Trainer of those who seek to be tamed. As a teacher of gods and humans, he will proclaim the timeless Dhamma, revealing the path to liberation—pure, complete, and sublime in every way.

With the clarity of direct knowledge, he will illuminate the universe, just as the present Buddha does now. Surrounded by thousands of devoted disciples, he will guide countless beings across the ocean of samsāra, leading them to the supreme peace of Nibbāna.

Thus, the lineage of the Buddhas remains unbroken, and the light of the Dhamma will shine anew for those who seek the path to liberation.



**The Future Buddha Maitreya** <sup>xlv</sup>

#### [The Rise and Fall of Humanity: A Lesson from the Buddha](#)

The Buddha revealed a profound truth—when people turn away from generosity and virtue, suffering multiplies. As greed and neglect take root, poverty spreads, leading to theft, violence, and the decline of life itself. In a world consumed by wrongdoing, human lifespan

dwindles, eventually reaching a mere ten years. In their delusion, people will see one another as enemies, bringing about an age of chaos and destruction.<sup>xlvi</sup>

Yet, even in the darkest times, a spark of wisdom remains. Some, realizing the devastation caused by their own unwholesome actions, will renounce violence and return to virtue. With the revival of morality, life will flourish once more, and human lifespan will gradually increase until it reaches eighty thousand years again.

In this golden age, a righteous wheel-turning monarch, King Sankha, will rule with justice and truth. And in this time, the world will be blessed with the arising of the future Buddha, Metteyya, who will illuminate the path of Dhamma once again, leading countless beings to liberation.

Thus, the cycle continues—suffering arises from unwholesome deeds, and peace returns through the practice of goodness. The choice is always ours: to descend into darkness or to rise towards the light of the Dhamma.

### Conclusion: The End of Samsāra

Reflecting on the Buddha's past lives, we witness a luminous tapestry of compassion, wisdom, and unwavering determination. In each incarnation, the Blessed One exemplified the transformative power of virtuous actions, showing us that every step on the spiritual path brings us closer to liberation from the endless cycle of birth, sickness, death, and sorrow.

The Buddha's teachings remind us that it is far better to choose the path that leads to the cessation of suffering than to remain entangled in samsāra. He encouraged us to see beyond the impermanence of this world and to embrace a life of mindful practice, cultivating insight, loving-kindness, and equanimity. Such a path, though challenging, offers us the ultimate freedom—a life where the calamities of existence give way to the profound peace of Nibbāna.

This narrative reminds us that the journey of spiritual growth is built upon consistent, dedicated practice. Even in human life, where challenges abound, every mindful step and every act of virtue accumulates merit, paving the way for profound transformation. May these cherished narratives remind us of the wondrous and mysterious ways the Dhamma unfolds, guiding all beings ever closer to enlightenment.

May we sincerely wish that we all find strength in our journey towards peace; may we have courage and wisdom in every step! May we acquire endless merit through our true generosity, kindness and our virtuous conduct! Each step taken with love and awareness not only nurtures our inner growth but also radiates peace and compassion to all beings.

Dear readers, let these past lives inspire you to persist with courage and compassion on your own journey. Every mindful act, every step taken with awareness and love, builds the merit and understanding needed to transcend the cycle of suffering. May the Buddha's timeless example guide you toward the radiant light of liberation, where the endless sorrows of samsāra finally come to an end, and you dwell in everlasting peace!

With those words we would like to end this section. In the Next section (10) we will focus on The Profound Greatness of the Buddha's Teachings.

## End Notes: Section 9

<sup>i</sup> These 2 suttas give detail analysis of workings of kamma: MN: 135 (Cūlakammavibhanga Sutta) & MN: 136 (Mahākammavibhanga Sutta)

<sup>ii</sup> See: MN: Introduction: Kamma & Rebirth, p. 31.

<sup>iii</sup> In Section 5 of this compilation the Ten Powers of the Tathāgata has been elaborated.

<sup>iv</sup> For details see: MN:12 ( Mahāśīhanāda Sutta)

<sup>v</sup> MN: 4 (Bhayabherava Sutta). \* AN8:11 (*Verañjā sutta*) also gives a similar account.

<sup>vi</sup> MN: 4 (Bhayabherava Sutta).

<sup>vii</sup> DN:14 (Mahāpadāna sutta)

<sup>viii</sup> DN:14 (Mahāpadāna sutta)

<sup>ix</sup> Later he became an arahant disciple of the Buddha.

<sup>x</sup> MN:71 (Tevijjavacchagotta Sutta)

<sup>xi</sup> He was formerly a student of Niganthanāthaputta; afater hering the discourse became follower of the Buddha.

<sup>xii</sup> SN42:9 (Families sutta)

<sup>xiii</sup> AI generated image.

<sup>xiv</sup> \* The Great Chronicles of Buddhas in Pali- Mahāsaṅgiti Tipitaka Buddhawamse (available on line : w.w.w. [suttacentral.net](http://suttacentral.net)) \* Buddhavamsa in English by Ven. Mingun Sayadaw, translated in to English by U Ko Lay & U Tin Lwin (available on line: Internet archive) \* Buddhavamsa & Chariyapitaka in Sinhala and Pali: Buddha Jayanti Tripitaka Series, Vol. 38 ( available online).

<sup>xv</sup> \* In the Introduction to Buddha Jayanthi Buddhavamsa and Chariya pitaka it states that on the occasion of the Buddha's visit to Kapilavastu, he performed the twin miracle (**yamaka maha pathiharya**) at the presence of his Sakyan relatives in order to dispel their doubt of the Buddha's enlightenment. On that occasion, Venerable Sariputta invited the Blessed One to relate the 'Chronicles of Buddhas'—The narration begins with the 'Story of Sumedha'- the then name of the Bodhisattva, asking approval of the Buddha Dipankara to become a future Buddha"n\* **The Great Chanting Book (Maha Pirith Potha)** mentions 28 Buddhas who appeared this world: The first three arose before the Buddha Dīpankara: Taṇhaṅkara Buddha, Medhaṅkara Buddha and Saṇḍakara Buddha. Then came Dīpankara Buddha, Koṇḍañña Buddha, Mañgala Buddha, Sumana Buddha, Revata Buddha, Sobhita Buddha, Anomadassi Buddha, Paduma Buddha, Nārada Buddha, Padumuttara Buddha, Sumedha Buddha, Sujāta Buddha, Piyadassi Buddha, Atthadassi Buddha, Dhammadassī Buddha, Siddhattha Buddha, Tissa Buddha, Phussa Buddha, Vipassī Buddha, Sikhi Buddha, Vessabhū Buddha, Kakusandha Buddha, Koṇāgamana Buddha, Kassapa Buddha, ending with Gotama Buddha.

<sup>xvi</sup> **Note:** the introduction to the Cariyāpiṭka in Buddha Jayanthi publication says: *Why is the text is called Cariyāpiṭka?* It described the great conduct of the Bodhisattva in each his previous life, fulfilling all aspects (paramita) to gain the Buddhahood.

<sup>xvii</sup> Birth stories: \* Jataka (English): Translated by Bhikhu Sujato: [w.w.w.suttacentral.net](http://w.w.w.suttacentral.net). \* Sinhala and Pali: Buddha Jayanti Tripitaka Series: 3 volumes. (available online). In these 2 texts described 547 birth stories; in Sinhala 'Pansiya Panas Jatakaya' (550 birth stories) mentioned 550 births of the Bodhisattva.

<sup>xviii</sup> The Jataka Tales in the Buddhist Canon, the Buddha recounts the tales of his previous five-hundreds (500) plus incarnations, when he was a still an unenlightened "Bodhisattva" — not yet the Conqueror, the Buddha. The word "Jataka" means "birth" in both the Pali and Sanskrit languages. The Jataka tales, among the oldest and best known of Buddhist texts, refers to stories of the past lives of Siddhartha Gautama before he became the Buddha in his final life. These charming and helpful stories number in the hundreds, with each life illustrating different teachings: the Paramitas, the Four Noble Truths, the Bodhisattva Vows, the Eightfold Path, the Four Abodes, the Six Realms —

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all engagingly taught in the form of life stories. Each features the Buddha in diverse forms: he appears as an animal, a king, a wandering ascetic, a monkey and much more. Source: <https://buddhaweekly.com/the-jataka-tales>

<sup>xix</sup> Gandhara sculpture. Metropolitan Museum. NY. Source: Wikipedia

<sup>xx</sup> SN6: 4 (Brahama Baka sutta) \* This event is also described in MN:49 (Brahmanimantila sutta).

SN: Notes 391, p. 552: per Bhikkhu Bodhi: This verse refers to the Kesava Jātaka (Ja No. 346; see too Dhp-a I 342-44). Kesava was the name of the teacher: Baka Brahama.

<sup>xxi</sup> MN: 81 (Ghaṭikāra Sutta).

<sup>xxii</sup> MN: 81 (Ghaṭikāra Sutta).

<sup>xxiii</sup> SN:2: 50.

<sup>xxiv</sup> DN:5 (Kūtadanta sutta).

<sup>xxv</sup> See: DN:16 (Mahaparinibbana sutta)

<sup>xxvi</sup> DN:17 (Mahasudhassana sutta). \* This story is also mentioned in DN:16.\* **Note:** In DN:17 the Buddha said that seven of his previous lives he lived in the same place (the city of Kusavati) and he remembered discarding his body there.

<sup>xxvii</sup> See: DN: 19 (Mahāgovinda Sutta).

<sup>xxviii</sup> See: DN: 19 (Mahāgovinda Sutta).

<sup>xxix</sup> AN3:15 (Pacetena sutta)

<sup>xxx</sup> See Makhādeva Jātaka (No. 9) and Nimi Jātaka (No. 541). King Makhādeva and King Nimi were earlier births of the Buddha Gotama: see: MN: Notes: 806

<sup>xxxi</sup> MN: 83 (Makhādeva Sutta)

<sup>xxxii</sup> Ibid.

<sup>xxxiii</sup> He was the chief lay supporter of the Buddha, see: AN:1:249 (Foremost).

<sup>xxxiv</sup> AN:9: 20 (Velāma sutta).

<sup>xxxv</sup> In section 5 we have described the marks of a great man.

<sup>xxxvi</sup> DN:30 (Lakkhaṇa Sutta).

<sup>xxxvii</sup> DN: 14 (Mahāpadāna Sutta).

<sup>xxxviii</sup> DN: 14 (Mahāpadāna Sutta).

<sup>xxxix</sup> Ibid.

<sup>xl</sup> AI generated image.

<sup>xli</sup> SN11:12 ( Sakka's Name sutta).

<sup>xlii</sup> SN11:11.

<sup>xliii</sup> Ming dynasty Statue of Indra Śakra in Zhihua Temple in Beijing, China

(Source: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/%C5%Aakra\\_%28Buddhism%29](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/%C5%Aakra_%28Buddhism%29))

<sup>xliv</sup> DN:26 (Cakkavatti-Sīhanāda Sutta)

<sup>xlv</sup> Kushan Maitreya. Musee Guimet, Paris, Author: [PHG](#) at [English Wikipedia](#)

<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:KushanMaitreya.JPG>

<sup>xlivi</sup> DN:26.