SIR TASHI NAMGYAL MEMORIAL LECTURES 1972

BUDDHA AS A MAHAPURUSA

By

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This booklet is composed of the three Sir Tashi Namgyal Memorial Lectures delivered under the auspices of the Namgyal Institute of Tibetology, Gangtok on the 26th, 27th and 28th October 1972. It was most gracious of the Chogyal and Gyalo to have been present on the occasion. It was equally kind of the Political Officer, Sri K. S. Bajpai and Mrs Bajpai to have come to listen. I cannot adequately express my gratefulness to Dr. A. M. D’Rozario, not only for having invited me to deliver these lectures on behalf of the Namgyal Institute but also for all the kindness that he showered on me during my stay at Gangtok. To him and Mrs Rozario I convey my grateful thanks. As desired by Dr. D’Rozario the lectures have been set ready with proper textual documentation and suitable illustrations to be released as a book issued by the Institute.

Buddha who was a world personality had outstanding qualities that made him the most distinguished among the great Masters of thought in Ancient India. His teachings have offered solace to innumerable nations in the world. The followers of Buddhism comprise a great chunk of the world population. This in itself is an indication of the extraordinary arresting power of Buddha’s great qualities that have made him a great Mahapurusha. The subject of this book is a recounting of these qualities, pointedly drawing attention to them, with suitable illustrations. I am grateful to the Namgyal Institute of Tibetology for bringing out a handsome book like this.

C. Sivaramanuri
Salutation to the Chogyal and Gyalmo of Sikkim, the Political Officer and Mrs. Buipai and distinguished friends:

It is my first and pleasant duty to thank the Namgyal Institute of Tibetology and to you, Sir, for providing me this opportunity to deliver the Sir Tashi Namgyal Memorial Lectures. The late Denjong Chogyal Chempo Tashi Namgyal was a great personality with a rare insight, catholicity, nobility of spirit and aesthetic vision. It was one of the great rare qualities in ancient rulers that they excelled in their knowledge of literature and art, not to parade their prodigious learning but to appreciate and reward poets and painters: \textit{Vidadhām satkītye bahūsrutam.}

If the late Chogyal Tashi Namgyal could be a distinguished painter, a patron of learning and an able ruler, he has only followed a great tradition of rulers as painters and poets, as patrons of learning and faith, as vortaries at the altar of knowledge, and as administrators. I, therefore, personally feel it is a great good fortune that these lectures are associated with his memory that is perpetuated in this Institute that fosters Buddhist learning and Art.

Philosophic speculations had so sharpened the intellect of the seers in ancient India that the 	extit{dāرانas} were evolved and developed. These systems of philosophy constitute a treasure-house of thought. The 	extit{Upaṉiṣhads} contain valuable germs of speculative thought which were variously interpreted by successive philosophers in the land. When 	extit{Aṭṭaśatru}, on a moonlit night, evinced a desire to meet the greatest men of thought and intellectual speculation, called his council of ministers and wise men to consult who was the greatest master he could visit that very night, he was told of a number of saintly persons of great intellectual calibre, but of them all, he chose the Gautama Buddha, whom his half-brother 	extit{Jivaka} suggested as worthy of visit in his Mango grove where he was staying at the moment. Disciples like 	extit{Jivaka}, 	extit{Amrapāli} and 	extit{Anāthapindaka} vied one with the other, in presenting Buddha and his order with groves provided with monasteries. 	extit{Jatavana} was the greatest pleasuance of them all, purchased at an enormous cost by the richest merchant in the land from prince Jeta, by spreading gold coins on the entire surface, in which a large monastery for monks, with the 	extit{gandhakuti} for Buddha, was erected to make it a penance grove. 	extit{Aṭṭaśatru}, a parricide, deeply repented his grievous crime and desired to expiate his wicked act. He had asked how he could free himself from such heinous sin. But none could absolve him of it. When he approached Buddha, the stillness in the grove, where a large congregation was listening to the Master in pindrop silence, impressed him very much, nay even frightened him. With reverence he approached the Master and laid his problem before him. Buddha asked him whether he truly repented.
for his unwise action. "Ayé" he said. Instantly came forth the answer from the Master, "if you truly repent you are absolved of the sin." It is well known that sin is predhān and its extermination āhitā, extermination of sin is predyāchitta, but it had never occurred to all the other wise men whom Ajātaśatru had met that sincere repentance rid one of a sin, however heinous it may be. It was left to Buddha to demonstrate it.

Ajātaśatru became such a great devotee of Buddha thereafter that when the Master passed away, and the news was to be conveyed to him, it was done very gently, so that he could not lose his composure and faint away or probably even die of a shock. These two incidents were considered so important that representations of these episodes in art have immortalised them. The visit of Ajātaśatru both at Bārhaṭ and at Amaśāvatī illustrates how he approached the Master with a large retinue, including his harem, all on elephants, stopped at the entrance of the grave, so that the Master was approached on foot reverentially. Jivala's suggestion to Ajātaśatru that he should meet the Master on that beautiful moonlit night is an additional theme in this context chosen to be illustrated at Amaśāvatī. The label at Bārhaṭ makes it very clear that it is Ajātaśatru's visit that is portrayed here. The episode of unfolding the news of Buddha's parinirvāṇa at Kusinagara in the region of the Mallas is seen one of the most interesting paintings from Kizal in Central Asia. Here is depicted a large painted scroll illustrated for Ajātaśatru to see the principal events in Buddha's life, his birth, his enlightenment, his turning the wheel of the law and his death, parinirvāṇa. It was slowly in this context of one score following the other that the last revealed to the king that the Master was no more, and, to an extent, minimised the shock that he could not more see the physical form of his beloved Master any more.

Buddha taught the eightfold path of a righteous code of conduct; and made it clear that it is escape from the three fold miseries in this world, as the Sāṅkhya system always put it, that would lead one to parinirvāṇa. His famous couplet, very often inscribed on Buddhist sculptures, and usually styled the Buddhist formula, explains in a nutshell the great teachings of Buddha: ye dhamma heturāduhāna hetam teḥāham tathāgata hivasatena tathādāhānaḥ teḥāham. The causes of dharmas arising as consequences of their causes were narrated by Tathāgata, as also the means to overcome them. Thus elucidates the great monk Buddha. The Sāṅkhya philosophy in its very first śāstra gives exactly the same: dukkharaśayaḥphātṛa jāhāna tadapāphātāke hetu: 'is the whole world is overwhelmed by the threefold miseries, there is consequently the desire to know the means to overcome them.'

According to the Lālitaśīrṣā, it is known that prince Siddhartha was educated with the greatest care by his father. Both is intellectual
and physical prowess the prince proved himself the best, He learnt as many as sixty-four scripts, a large variety indeed. It is this great intellec-
tual superiority that gave him an objective view of life, and made him try
the various experiences towards the goal of supreme knowledge. In
physical prowess, he was not any the less behind the rest of the youth
of his day. In fact, it was only he who could, like Rama, by a single arrow
strike seven Śāla trees. He was the greatest bow-man of his day. The
care that Śuddhodana took for schooling Siddhārtha is often chosen as
a theme for depiction in sculpture. The child was sent in a small cart
drawn by four rams, a quail one, that could amuse the child as was the
wort in those days. He carried the board on which the alphabets could
be drawn, a board that has survived till today in the Punjab. And this
is a sculpture from the Gandhara region beyond the frontiers of the
Punjab. From Sriguna, not far from Chandīgarh in the Punjab, has
been recovered a very important terracotta plaque to illustrate a child
learning the alphabet, how the letters first written by the teacher, were
repeated by the child in the same manner, so that there was a fine settled
hand. Calligraphy was greatly valued, and the princes that could write,
read and speak as well were also good calligraphers. In fact the learned
man was called kriyākṣara, one who had practised letters. It is through
the letters that the ocean of literature was covered. As Kālidāsa would
have it: ११४ । । योजयितव ग्रहणाय वाक्यमय व सामान्यमे सामान्य एवं
११५ । । गौजात्। 'The prince entered the ocean of literature, as through a river,
by proper comprehension of letters'. In Indonesia, the stress on the
physical prowess of Śākyamuni has been laid in splendid panels showing
him as a bow-man.

At Amrāvatī, the way Śuddhodana acted, being very much con-
cerned about his son Siddhārtha, of whom the sooth-sayers had predicted
a dual possibility, that he would either be a universal monarch or the
supremely enlightened one, is graphically portrayed in a very suggestive
manner. He was almost imprisoned in the interior apartments of the
palace, in the company of moon-faced damselfs, without ever an idea of
the several miseries that existed in the world around, so that the thought
of renunciation could never arise. The prince is seated in the harem
holding three cords in his hand, the cords that bound him down to a
life of pleasure from which there was no escape. There were palaces
constructed according to the text of Buddha's Life for him to enjoy every
season to its utmost so that never could he know the ills of life.

At Nāgārjunakonda, the sculptor has gone a step further. He has
shown him not only in the harem amidst pleasures, but by an ingenious
device a stream is shown in the foreground, in which an extremely charming
damself swims along, holding a swan, suggesting her gall is that of a swan,
as she glides even while swimming, with the grace of a Swook on the surface of water; and according to the line of the Mṭhukhatiṣṭhā the beautiful damsels are pleasure-boats on the placid surface of the stream of love, which the sculptor has specially kept in mind, as also the decoration of the prow of the boat, with the motif of the swan, the most graceful of aquatic birds.

In Fundukistan, early terracotta figures sometimes representing the Buddha, are bejewelled. In Pāla art, which follows this tradition, the bejewelled Buddha is shown crowned. He is in all attitudes of the Buddha, in dhūṁma, in bhūmisparsa, in dharmachakrasamudra and so forth, but always wearing a crown, earrings, necklace, armlets, bracelets and other jewellery. This is as much as to express the prediction of the sooth-sayers to Buddha that the prince would be a universal monarch or a monk. It is therefore a combination of both these possibilities in the same sculpture. As the inspiration for the sculptures of Nepal was mainly from Pāla, this peculiar mode of representing Buddha bejewelled is found here also.

Though according to the story of the life of Buddha, Ajātaśatru got the exact likeness of the Master created for him in gāvīraka wood, there is not a single representation in human form of the Buddha till the first century A.D. All the early representations of the Master illustrating various incidents from his life have been symbolic, and the way the symbols have been manipulated to emphasise the grandeur of the Buddha, and the importance of each individual incident, is indeed very interesting. The main symbols of the major incidents in Buddha’s life are very simple and are of frequent occurrence. These are the pāraśurāma to suggest his birth, the Bodhi tree for his enlightenment, the wheel flanked by deer for his dharmachakrasamudra, his turning the wheel of law at Sarnāth (Mrgāsāva) and the stūpa for his parinirvāṇa or passing away. These are the four principal ones. The other symbols associated with Buddha, but not representing Buddha himself, are the lion, proclaiming him the lion among the Śakyas, the lion here meaning the foremost, the elephant suggesting not only the dream of Māya but also glorifying him as the foremost of the Śakyas, as the term khaṭajāra also meant the most precocious, and he was the most precocious of the Śākya line. It was as the white elephant that Bodhisattva entered the womb of Māya. This is also thereby suggested. The bull is a symbol of not only the best and the most precious of the kind, as Buddha obviously was among the Śakyas, but also the taurine zodiacal sign in which he was born. Buddha was born in ṛṣiḥkhatiṣṭhā. The horse is a symbol of the great renunciation, the prince that could give up an empire to seek supreme knowledge, the enlightenment, which he had during his seven previous births aspired to.
attain, and had consequently qualified himself by his great qualities of self-control and sacrifice, and so richly deserved.

The symbolic form of Buddha particularly at Amaravati, Nâgâ-jumna-kençâ, and in the Krishna valley in general, took a special shape as a flaming pilar, topped by a wheel with a triratna, the three-pronged symbol for it, with the foot on lotus at its base. This shows that even in the veneration of the symbol of Buddha, the followers that had reached the stage of Mahâgâna in the first century A.D. had come to realize a greater glory in Buddha than the former Sthaviras or the Theravâdas, who would necessarily place dharma above Buddha and sângha. Here was Buddha represented in the three-pronged symbol as the central one of triratna flanked by dharma and sângha on top of the rest of the symbols, which represented from bottom to top all the principal deities of the Brahmanical pantheon, which with the zeal of a new and fast-growing creed, they glorified beyond the most venerated deities of glory. Thus, the triratna was far beyond the lotus symbolizing Brahmâ, the lettuce-born, the feet suggesting Trinâkrama Vishnu, whose three feet paced measured the universe, beyond Sahâna-Rudra and Agni the post symbolizing Siva and the flames Rudra, combining attributes of Sâsânjurs, Vetâhrata, Bahubali, Kapardi of tawny locks, etc., of Rudra with Agni, and the coming together of both in the birth of the most effulgent celestials, Sûdana, who also Agni-bhak beyond the wheel representing the solar sign, Sūrya himself, who according to tradition is the embodiment of the trinity, vīra-gaurâyâsaharanârâdâminâ and the three Vedas blazing forth in that form, trayevâ evât sa api maha’ntaradhihit hiruvamâsah purushah.

This symbol is prominently shown in many episodes, usually where it is the standing Buddha, and where his great glory is to be specially stressed. It is interesting that this symbol which exclusively occurs only in the Krishna valley has traveled as far away as to reach even Central Asia. In one of the murals from Bâlabâste in Central Asia this occurs with several other symbols on the bare body of Buddha. Incidently this is the only example of a representation of Buddha where the torso appears without a monk’s cloak covering it. It is generally believed that only the Jain Tirthankars have the triratna mark on the chest, but as it is only a mahâprajnâ lâkshana it should also occur in the case of Buddha. Triratna, as is well known, is a special mark of Vaiṣṇava who is purusottama or the exalted anûmanâ-prajñâna. All mahâprajñâ have this lâkshana or symbol. Since the Tirthankaras or Jinas are always nude and bare-bodied, the symbol is clearly seen on their chest, but there rarely occurs a scene from Buddha’s life where he is without the saṅghârya on his body. In this particular picture, the interesting feature is that a
number of symbols are brought together to emphasize his greatness. On the
arms, this Shivafigurade symbol is repeated to suggest his exaltation. The
thunderbolt is to suggest that he could have been the supreme emperor
like Māndhātā, that he was was as a Bodhisattva, for all his great merits
in his previous birth, entitled even to onehalf of the throne of Indra
himself. The idea of the ideal king or an emperor on earth as an equal of
Indra is so ubiquitous in literature that Nahapana, the great king of the
Kshatrapa dynasty, imprinted the thunderbolt and the arrow on his coin
to show that the bow-man he was on earth, was equal to the thunderbolt
wielder Indra in heaven.

The galloping celestial horse Uchchashārapas, Chinilāmaṇi and other
symbols are to suggest the super-celestial nature of Buddha. The amṛtākṣara, with the snake entwined around its neck, is to suggest the
churning of the ocean for ambrosia (amṛta) with Vāsuki as the churning
stick for the mount Meru, and the crescent moon above it is also an
indication of the ambrosial nature of Buddha's mind and its celestial
qualities. In fact, Buddha's teaching was to go into an eternal state in
parinirvāṇa and escape the miseries of life. True knowledge was
the ambrosia that was the remedy for the threefold pain on earth.

The importance of this jvalatāmbha as symbol of Buddha is seen in the
fact that this used by the Amarāvati sculptor most effectively, where some
of his greatest achievements are involved, not otherwise. We can take
instances.

Buddha's subjugation of Nālagiri is counted among the eight great
incidents in his life and so represented in medieval panels in miniatures,
that encircle the main figure of Buddha either in bhūmapāra or the
dharmachakrapravartana attitude, both from Sarnāth and from Nālandā.
The medallion from Amarāvati, to be counted among very best aesthetic
creations of the Śrāvānaballava sculptor, adopts a synoptic method of
representation of successive moments of action, a devise that is continued
both in Iśavakavi sculpture from Nāgarjunakonda and in Vākāṭaka painting
from Ajanta. Both at Amarāvati and at Nāgarjunakonda it is the flaming
pillar that represents Buddha. The fury of the stately elephant, rushing
along in the streets of Rājagriha, creating panic everywhere among the
people running helter skelter for dear life, with people less agitated but
more with a tender feeling for the monks they loved and revered in the
balcony above, is a contrast to the repeated moment of the elephant's
docile demeanour, kneeling at the feet of the Master, whom, even as an
animal, he could discern as superhuman, with a calm and composed troop
of monks behind him, the spectators from the balcony this time suffused
with an overwhelming reverential attitude for the Master who could
subdue even the fiercest brute.
Another incident is that of Agulimala, who was a terror to one and all. He was so feared and dreaded by even the king's guards, that none dared approach him, and he was free to collect, by his unassailed cruelty, a garland of human fingers to be brought as a fee to his teacher, who hoped to get rid of him by putting him on a task, that meant sure capital punishment for him at the hands of the king. But none could oppose him or fight him face to face. Agulimala was the terror of the land. The culminating point of this fiendishness was his lack of feeling even for his mother, who, as she approached to stop him from such untold cruelty, was about to be killed by her own son just for her finger, a son for whom the mother's heart overflowed with affection. The merciful Buddha in his *pravāhana* or mental eye saw what was happening and was there miraculously the next moment. The sight of the Master overpowered all action even in the human monster, completely changed his mind, made him realise the presence of a superhuman seer. He fell at his feet and was converted by the Master who suffused him with love. Here in this episode the Master is represented at Amaravati by the flaming pillar. The mother is still there as Agulimala approaches with a sword; and in the presence of standing Buddha represented by the flaming pillar symbol, this strange aberration of the human species knels in all humility. It is again a synoptical representation of two scenes in panel—one closely following the other.

A third incident in Buddha's conversion of Yasa and his friends. Some fashionable young men of Vailâli chose to amuse themselves by enjoying a holiday, and each one, accompanied by a young damsel, regaled himself. There was a beautiful courtesan whom Yasa had brought along but she escaped from his company and disappeared. In search of her, he ran along and, instead of her, found the great Master, who counselled him not to run after an ephemeral thing, but to think of a nobler goal in life. Thus he was immediately converted and his companions who came along were also similarly initiated. It is this that is represented in a sculpture on one of the uprights of the rail around the stupa at Amaravati. Buddha here is again depicted as a flaming pillar.

Even while seated, Buddha is occasionally shown shooting up behind the framework of the back of his throne as the flaming pillar, the feet alone being separated for depiction on the footstool at the foot of the throne. This is also on certain chosen special occasions. An instance is the salutation of the Śākyas on the Master's arrival in Kapilavastu. A beautiful medallion, now in the Museum at Amaravati, shows the Master enthroned. The physical form of Buddha is absent, the flaming pillar shoots up behind the empty throne, the foot occurring on the footstool. All the Śākyas, young and old, men and women, princes and princesses, are in the act of
adoration. This is one of the great incidents, and naturally this devise is again resorted to.

But when, as prince Siddhārtha, he performed the greatest act in his life, the great renunciation, threw away his royal turban and disengaged all his jewels from his body, it is a pair of Devas fluttering above his head holding a crown, as in the sculpture from Amarāvatī, now in the British Museum, that signifies this noble incident. Since he was not yet the Supreme Enlightened, and was yet the beloved Śākya prince, it is a royal crown, a crown of triumph and victory, that is held above his head, to praise a great act, an act of supreme sacrifice.

In his great compassion, the Bodhisattva, the essence of knowledge, descended from the Tushita heaven and came to the earth, not so much to be born to become the Supreme Enlightened, but more to help the millions of suffering by imparting the truth of the highest knowledge he was to attain. This is the Bodhi, composed of such great qualities like maitri, karunā, etc. Buddha's concept of approach to the world was the utmost friendliness, compassion, sympathy, affection and love. Even to the worst, like Angulimala, Buddha could give only his love and affection. No wonder, he could win back to saintly life the worst hardened criminal. Both at Amarāvatī and at Barabudur, the descent of the Buddha or the Bodhisattva is magnificently portrayed, his decision to be born on earth, his announcement that gladdens the gods, his assuming the form of a white elephant, his descent as queen Māyā dreams of it. The elephant is not an elephant in rut. It is the elephant, the noblest of animals, of the highest stature, self-sacrificing, full of affection and the very embodiment of wisdom and auspiciousness. This avatāra or descending to the earth to be born is not as an avāvatāra or a partial energy set foot on earth, as of Vishnu, when he was born as Rāma or Krishna, but the Bodhisattva completely removing himself from the Tushita heaven on to the earth. This was a great celebration for the gods. Even the spirit of the gods is elevated when, without the selfish thought about their missing Buddha who was ever with them, they would gladly allow his company for the terrestrials.

For Buddha, heaven itself was nothing so wonderful that there should be a special sanctity attached to it. It was like some neighbouring village for him, and if the Master proceeded to heaven, it was mainly to give the benefit of his true knowledge to his mother Māyā who was in heaven, and that purpose done, he came back to the world by the triple jewelled ladder with Śākra and Mahābhrāma attending on him, one holding up the umrella and the other waving the chhatra for him. As early as in the second century B.C. itself, the triple ladder is shown signifying the triad that used it. As usual in symbolic representation, the central ladder shows a foot at the top and a foot at the bottom, starting in heaven and ending
upon earth. Just as Buddha is not shown in physical form, even Śakra and Brahmā, consistently with this, are made invisible. But the tradition of defying Buddha to the extent that highest gods attended on him, is much older than the third century B.C. as, after all, the panel at Bharhut records visually, only an earlier tradition. In Kushāna sculpture from Mathurā, the triple ladder occurs among the earliest sculptures.

The descent of Buddha at Sakkāsa was considered so important that a great ruler awaited him on earth, Prasenajit of Kosala. The ladder slowly came to be a pañcālakṣaṇa or a flight of steps in Pāla sculpture. The earlier Vakataka painting at Ajantā gives one of the most impressive incidents from Buddha’s life, showing a large congregation awaiting the descent of the lord as he came down the jeweled ladder. Princes, noblemen, monks, a large host on either side of the ladder, throng for a vision of the Master, who appeared so miraculous. This favourite theme is Pāla sculpture would just indicate the Master flanked by Brahmā, four-faced and Śakra. A Masterpiece of metal sculpture in the Patna Museum is probably a unique one to represent this theme in this medium.

But in Thailand, the sculptor thought of different device for representing Buddha’s descent. Very often in Thailand and Cambodia Brahmā has a single face, though the four faces are not completely ruled out. The preference is always for a single face. At any rate in representing him as flanking Buddha, he has a single face. Probably even multiplicity of heads that Buddha lacked, was considered a superiority that could be avoided. The triple ladder was substituted by another device to indicate the descent, and this is the most interesting. It is an eagle shaped like Garuda, Garuda is the mount of Vishnu—vīṣṇupāda. The word vīṣṇupāda itself in Sanskrit means atiśāva or the sky, viśnu vīṣṇupādām tā tu as Amaraśīva would have it. So by a pun on the word vīṣṇupāda, the vehicle of Vishnu styled vīṣṇupāda, that soars in the sky is taken for the sky itself which is also vīṣṇupāda, whence Buddha came down through the sky on the earth from heaven. Thus the meaning is complete. On the wings of the bird rest Śakra and Brahmā, while on the body it is Buddha, the important central figure. This is a wonderful device, a device followed specially in Cambodian art, a speciality in Khmer art.

At Bharhut, there is a double lined triangle indicating the chakramārāgam of Buddha. The label itself mentions it as the chakramārāga, the walk. Buddha maintained his health by a regular exercise of a definite stroll every day. It was this which was called the chakramāra. Only in the symbolic representation, at a very early date as this, has this been specially shown with a stress in India. But later, in the medieval period, at any rate, there is no sculpture to indicate Buddha walking. In Gandhāra sculpture, on the other hand, instead of the formal samāhāyga in which
Buddha is so shown standing in all other Indian sculptures, there are lovely stuccos, indicating the movement of the Master's legs. It is, however, only in Thailand and in Cambodia that a full-fledged walking Buddha became a favourite. It shows Buddha with one leg forward and the other bent, with only the toes resting on the ground, and the heel upraised, that indicate the walking Buddha. Almost like Śiva, striding (ākrama) as Tripurāntaka, Buddha in Thailand is shown moving along.

Like the saulabhīya of Rāma, the saulabhīya of Buddha is proverbial. Rāma is styled paurabhāsī, smītaḥ bahāsī and smīta paurabhāsī. The first to speak, speaking with a smile and the one who speaks prefacing his speech with a smile. The great prince that Rāma was, looked at with awe by the people, who would almost be dumbfounded in his presence, always reassured them and made them feel perfectly at home in his presence, as he was the first to lovingly address them, prefacing his speech with a smile, all the more to help them know that he was in a happy mood, and would give them every opportunity to freely express their wails and woes, their difficulties if any, and request any remedy that lay in his hand.

Buddha was similarly available. Always gracious, Buddha pitied the humblest, and gave everyone a chance to elevate oneself. Even Ānapātī, the fabulously wealthy courtesan was almost redeemed by Buddha. Out of compassion, he would present himself at an opportune moment, to teach people to leave a better life. There is a telling story of how Buddha appeared before a fabulously wealthy merchant to teach him to be unselfish. Buddha sitting in his gandhakūṭa knew what was happening. The rich merchant was pining because of an unfulfilled longing, and was getting pale and emaciated. On being questioned by his wife, the reason for his sudden deterioration in health, he confessed that it was his intense desire to eat specially prepared cakes, which he had not being eaten by someone else. For him who could afford easily anything, there was no difficulty in having the cakes prepared at home, but so great a miser was he, that the apprehension of the large quantity that would have to be prepared at great expense to feed all his family and retinue, including his wife, prevented him from satisfying his palette. His wife, smilingly reassured him that she would cook it for him in the topmost terrace of their mansion, unobserved by others, also assuring him that she would not partake of any of the preparation. The greedy merchant was overjoyed but as he was enjoying in perfect secrecy, as he imagined, lo and behold! Buddha came floating in the air, and entered the balcony on the terrace.

Even the parsimony of the merchant could not override his reverence for the Master, to whom at once he offered first the preparations for which his mouth had been watering. A sermon from Buddha was enough to
remove this veil of ignorance in the merchant, and established him in a
generous way of life. Buddha's talk with a ploughman and the parable
of the ploughman that he had given in one of his discourses is very well
known. He spoke to everyone convincingly and approached individuals
with affection and goodwill. His accessibility to all, his compassion and
sympathy distinguished him, and made him distinctive as the highest born,
who chose to live among the humblest, and carry his message to the least
of them all.

Yet even to the celestials like the devas, nāgus, yakshas may even to the
Lord of the Celestials, Śakra himself, he was an object of not only veneration
but even of awe. Śakra could not approach him without knowing
his pleasure. The visit of Śakra to Buddha is the Indraśayāgīsa is a
significant illustration to this point. The Lord of the Celestials took care
to take along with him Pitrīvantaka, the great celestial musician, who
played the harp at the entrance of the cave, to create a pleasant mood in
the Master, conducive for his joyful reception of Śakra, awaiting at his
door to have his audience. This is as much as to say, that Buddha, though
easily accessible to all, whom he himself approached, individually,
fully conscious of the necessity of such, was yet the highest, even beyond
the celestials, and who could only be approached by the 'right effort in the
direction by those who sought him.

It does remind us to the several hymns of the Śāra saints from South
India who have addressed Śiva, expressing their inarticulacy to thank the
Lord, who came so near to them, the humblest of the humble, though
his nature and grandeur was a mystery little understood even by the
highest celestials like Viṣṇu and Brahmā, who were closest to him. That
is why he is styled Bhaktavrata. This compassion towards the devotees
is again a great characterization of Buddha.

The lord of Vaikuṇṭha abandoned celestial glory in a trice, and
even as the Goddess of Prosperity, even by his side was questioning the
reason for his haste, without waiting for his mount Garuda or even for
his weapons like the wheel and the club or the bow, suddenly rushed to the
succour of the elephant in distress, caught by a powerful crocodile in the
lake, where he had gone for a plunge. This noble beast, lord of the herd,
was piteously calling for help, and the help did come at last, when his
physical strength was of no avail, and the Lord's grace could alone save
him. One of the special iconographic forms of Viṣṇu is Karivarada, or
just Varada, as he is known, one who granted the boon of mercy to the
elephant in distress. A parallel in Buddha's life is seen not only in his
subjugation of Nalagiri, but also in the incident where he chose to live
with the wild animals of the forest, to teach his quarreling disciples a
lesson. As Buddha always wanted amity and love amongst all, he could
not tolerate pettiness and quarrelsome tendency amongst his disciples. When staying in the Ghoshtirāma monastery, he found some young monks prone to quarrel among themselves on petty things, he decided to move away for a while to the interior of the neighbouring Parleyparka forest, where even the animals that knew his great worth and distinction, approached him with reverence. In this forest, the elephants would bring a fresh twig for him every morning to brush his teeth, another a fresh garment for him to wear, while a third prepared his seat to help him sit and meditate, as a fourth gently waved tender shoots of leaves to make him comfortable. This was the care that animals bestowed on him in return for the abundant affection that he had for even the humblest of creatures.

Like Rama who was served by Hanuman or Sugriva, with utmost devotion and affection, there is a story of how at Vaisali, Buddha was offered a bowl of honey by a monkey, most reverently. After all, the animal could procure only honey from a hive in the forest and this being the sweetest and the best he could offer, he gave it to the Master, who graciously accepted it.

The quality of dākshāya is very great in Buddha. In Sanskrit rhetoric, a dākshāya nāyaka, one equally attached to each individual consort in a harem, was considered the noblest. Dākshāya is an abundance of uniform courtesy, which is denied to none, and equally offered to all. It is very difficult indeed to oblige one and all, but one who is endowed with the quality of dākshāya would strive to be friendly and obliging to the utmost to one individual as to another. Buddha, who was abundantly endowed with this quality, could not disappoint the foulo lokapālas, who each individually brought a begging bowl for him, in which to partake of the food that Sujāta had brought to offer him. He accepted all the four bowls, and by pressing them one on the other, made them a single one.

This great quality is again seen in his equal concern and affection for the Lichchhavis and the Koilivas, who, though closely related, were determined to fight it out between themselves over a petty quarrel about their mutual share of water for irrigation from the river Rohigaj and devory, one race, the other, each hoping for oneself a victory. Buddha appeared on the scene, as in his mental eye, this battle between the two clans stood forth clearly as in a mirror. The presence of the Master, and the sermon from him, were enough to destroy all wicked thoughts of destruction, and a catastrophe was averted. Both the great clans returned home to live in peace. It is thus very clear that Buddha had not only the feeling of maitreya in abundance, but also he practised those tenets that by precept conveyed to one and all. His compassion was equally overwhelming.

The compassion of Buddha led him to act quickly, and in a manner as above could do, to relieve suffering; and then he would necessarily perform
a miracle and achieve his object. A favourite theme in Nāgārjunakōṭā is
the subjugation of the Naga king Apālā. This story from the Devabhūma, is narrated again by Hsuan Tsang, in his account of Udāna
in the Gandhāra region, the modern Swat valley. The Naga king, who
had his abode at the source of the Swat river, caused such misery to the
tire region, destroying all the food products by contaminating the
stream, that Buddha, who could mentally visualise the situation here,
and moved by compassion for the people of this area, arrived at the
monstrous abode of the Naga, accompanied by Vajrapāṇī, who struck
the mountain with his thunderbolt and broke it asunder. The agitated
Naga prince came out in terrible fright and bowed to the Buddha, who
not only graciously admonished and converted him, but also prevailed on
him to refrain from his unkind acts to the people of the neighbourhood,
whose crops he devastated.

The theme is repeated in scripture from Nāgārjunakōṭā, where, in a
beautiful palace, within the interior of the mountain, is seated on his
golden throne, the Nāgarājā, in all his glory, along with his queens and
attendants of the harems. Buddha, with his supernatural glory, indicated
by the circular halo around his head and the pair of lotuses under his
feet, as a suggestion that as he walked a lotus spring up every time his
foot moved forward, is shown arrived at the spot. A long in his hair, though
the king of the beasts, looks agitated, and a herd of deer, frightened at
the thundershower sound of the struck rod, is shown galloping fast to save
its life. With a defiant look, almost like Mara in such an attitude,
Vajrapāṇī is shown smiting the mountain with his thunderbolt. The
Nāgarājā in the interior of the mountain is wonderstruck. The queens
and attendants are in great distress. This is one of the best examples of
illustration in the story of Apālā. The great importance of this
incident in Buddha's life is that out of his great compassion for all those
in distress, he swiftly acted in this manner, to relieve suffering.

This act of Buddha was, indeed, such a deep impression on his
disciples, that there are incidents to show how they acted exactly like
their Master, and relieved similar suffering by acting exactly as Buddha did.
One of these is the act of Sagata a disciple of Buddha, who possessed
extraordinary powers, and subdued the Naga of the Mango ferry. When
Buddha was once journeying from Śrāvasti to a place known as Bhadravāsako, the simple folk of the region like the cowherds, goatherds,
culturists and others warned him of a deadly snake in that region.
Buddha who knew his purpose, proceeded undaunted towards a grove
near Bhadravāsako. It is here that Sagata proceeded to encounter the
Naga, and by his superior power overcame the Naga king, and converted
him to the faith of the Buddha. There is a rare representation of this
from Nāgarjunakoṇḍa. On a large casing slab, the lower panel illustrates Buddha proceeding towards Bhadravati, where the simple folk approach him with a tale of their woe and warn him of the Nāga infesting the region. Buddha is next shown seated, with Vajrakīrti attending on him, and the disciple Sāgata begging him to permit him to act and subdue the Nāga. The panel above shows Sāgata defying the Nāgarāja, who is repeated twice, first in the company of his quen's queens in his palace, and next, facing the young monk with a weapon in his hand in an attitude of fierce attack; but immediately above, with his hands clasped in adoration, admitting his folly, and reverently explaining his willingness to follow the faith of the Master.

Buddha's compassion is again evident in another very important incident in his life, when he proceeded towards the dwelling of the Yaksha Ālavaka, not only to convert him, but also to save the small child that a selfish king was offering to the Yaksha to save his own life. The story goes that Ālavaka once went a-hunting, and in the forest, was overpowered by a mighty Yaksha, also known as Ālavaka. As the Yaksha was a cannibal, the king, to save his life, promised to send him regularly every day a man with a large bowl of rice. He thus depleted his kingdom, first of all the criminals condemned to live in imprisonment, next of the aged folk, and ultimately of even the juvenile population. In twelve years, all his resources were exhausted, and it was the turn for his son, a child, to be offered to the ogre. The day prior to the offering of the prince to Ālavaka, Buddha noticed in his mental vision this tragedy, and immediately proceeded to the dwelling of the Yaksha Ālavaka, when he saw on the throne, as the womenfolk received him with honour and paid obeisance. The Yaksha himself was away in the Himālaya, where he was informed by his doorkeeper Gandakīha of the arrival of the Master. Furious at the thought that a human had dared to approach and take a seat in his palace, the Yaksha quickly returned and showed all the respect to the Master, who had approached Buddha, as his weapons were impotent against the power of the Master. He was amazed, and taking a chance, asked Buddha to go away. Buddha, knowing that love and affection would ultimately win, obeyed. Equally amazed at this attitude of the monk, he asked him to come back. Again, the Master obeyed. But when he repeated this, in the hope that he could tire the Master by constantly going out and coming back, he was mistaken, as the Master would not move again. The Yaksha then put impossible questions, hoping thereby, that if the Master could not answer any of them, he could deceive him, but Buddha not only answered all his questions, but also admonished him, that he repeated his wicked acts, was at once converted to the faith and bowed before the
Master. It was just then, at that time of day-break, that the infant prince was brought in, with a large bowl of rice, as food for the monster. The Yaksha, ashamed, placed the child at the feet of the Buddha, who gave it back to the nurses, to be brought up, ultimately to become his disciple. The story is illustrated in Nāgarjunakondā, where Alavaka is shown rushing towards Buddha, seated calmly. Disregarding even his queens, the wicked monster is shown pointing his spear defiantly, as if to pierce the Master and kill him in a trice. He is again shown, this time, seated with his queens at the feet of the Master in deep adoration. Here is a small panel within a panel, almost an idea conjured up, to explain the attitude of Buddha. It is the old story of how a man clings to a rope, with the imminent danger of falling into a deep pit, infested by poisonous reptiles and scorpions. Nibbling at the top and almost cutting the rope, suspended from the bough of a tree, is a cat. This is an allegorical sculpture of the life of man, who clings to life, holding on to the rope, apprehending any moment his fall into the dangerous pit, the abyss of ignorance, sustaining himself, however, only on a few drops of honey falling from above, the taste of which lures him to cling on. It is to save mankind in general, particularly here Alavaka, who, by his wickedness, is on the brink of falling into the deep chasm of his own cruelty and ignorance, that Buddha arrived even before the rope of life is completely nibbled, and to give him a draught of bliss through his sermon.

Buddha was not only a great Master who taught by precept the right path, but he also showed by practice how the noblest and the best could act as a beacon light to the less evolved and unsteady. An excellent illustration is found in Buddha’s own life. Objective in testing every process of elevation, and unafraid of death, he determined to starve himself. He plunged himself into meditation, unconcerned with nourishment for the body, and went up to the point of dropping down almost dead, completely emaciated and reduced to skin and bone, Suddhodanas, his father, had such trust in the words of his soothsayers that even though he was told that Buddha, who had reduced himself to this state, was no more, he would not believe it, and persisted in asserting that his son would finally become the supremely Enlightened One. All those whom he sent to get first-hand news of the condition of his son, being suffused by the grandeur of Buddha and initiated by him into the highest realm of the Truth, which, by the time they arrived, he had already realised and started disseminating to the world, never returned.

When Buddha visited Kapilavastu again, as the Enlightened One, he showed a rare strength of control over the mind, unknown even to the
greatest rishis, whose legends we know from the epics and other Purānic literature. Though, as a prince, he had loved Yasodharā more than his life itself, and was hesitant to leave her, and took a last look at the newborn child Rāhula, whom he loved so much, even as he thought of renouncing the world, like the great monk that he was, Buddha was absolutely unconcerned about her consort that once was. Still, after waiting long enough to see whether she was among the numerous kind folk that came to kneel at his feet, he understood that Yasodharā would not approach Buddha because she felt that if at all he had any consideration for her, he would surely pay a visit to her in the palace itself. It was a great moment in Buddha’s life to go into the harem unperturbed and establish his triumph as a monk by treating his once beloved wife as a mere lay devotee. With due consideration for her as a great princess, Buddha approached her absolutely as a stranger, but with the highest consideration for one whom he would willingly bless as devotee. This great respect for human feelings in Buddha, and his complete control of his senses, that would never make him wave in his asceticism, is indeed a great lesson from his life.

More than that was a culminating point, a great test even for Buddha himself, probably even more difficult than the overcoming of the lure of Māra before his enlightenment. His only aon, the child on whom he once doted, the only hope for his line as the heir to the throne, after his own father Śuddhodana, Rāhula, sent by his mother to ask for his patrimony, hoping thereby that the great monk would be so moved as to come back to the life of a householder, was given the highest patrimony, as Buddha himself felt. He made the little child a monk, and taught him the supreme wisdom that dawned on him under the Bodhi tree. Buddha was not unaware that this act of his would exterminate his direct line of succession to the throne. Śuddhodana was so shocked and grieved at this act of Buddha that he at once took a solemn promise before the Master that he would no more initiate anyone into his order of monks except with the explicit consent of the guardians of the adolescent.

Buddha was so conscious of human frailty that when his wife Yasodarā, along with his own foster mother, Mahāprajāpati Gautami, came to his home with a request for being admitted as members of his order as nuns, would not agree to the proposal, though he was fully conscious of what he owed to Mahāprajāpati Gautami, who brought him up almost from within a few days of his birth, when his mother, her elder sister, had passed away. He was firm in his determination, yet because he wanted to be unkind to them, but because of other reasons. The importunities of Ānanda, whom he could refuse nothing, at last and finally, made the Master agree to what he considered would be a disaster.
for his order. He expressly revealed to Nanda his opinion that the life of his order of monks would be reduced by a half by the admission of nuns. Buddha had an extraordinary foresight into the future, and whatever he did, he did with a great circumspection. When he originally disapproved the idea of an order of nuns, it was purely because of his anxiety to prolong the life of his order; but finally he bowed to the inevitable and allowed it.

At every stage, however, Buddha taught the world that it was beauty, particularly feminine charm, that lured men; and when he converted Nanda, the newly wedded charming prince, with the very personification of beauty in a damsel as his wife, it was purely to elevate him by and to assure him the supreme Buddha. One of the most touching scenes in Buddha's life is his conversion of Nanda against his will. The prince was lovingly helping his consort Sundari at her toilet. Though there were numerous pranidhanas to help her at her toilet, he himself lovingly dressed her braided hair with flowers. It was just at that moment that Buddha stood at his door. Torn between his passion for Sundari and his affection and reverence for the Master, Nanda yielded to the latter, and ran to the door to receive the bowl of the monk to offer him food, but Buddha turned around and made for the monastery. Nanda had to follow him, almost hypnotised. Arrived at the monastery, Nanda, whose mind was entirely with his beloved Sundari, was made a monk, much against his will, as he could not deny the master even the most impossible wish of his. As a few days passed, without the mental state of Nanda reforming, Buddha decided to give him a suitable lesson. He took him along to the garden of the celestials, floating through the clouds in the sky. On the way, Buddha pointed out an old decrepit, one-eyed monkey and asked him how he compared its beauty with that of Sundari, also known as Janapadakalyani, the fairest lady of the land. Nanda, of course, expressed that there was no comparison as both were the extreme limits of beauty and ugliness. Arrived in heaven, Buddha pointed to the most alluring pink-footed damels under celestial trees, kalpavyuhas. Nanda was dazed at their beauty. The time, came forth the question from the Master, asking him how he compared them with Sundari. In truth, Nanda had to confess, that in the presence of the pink-footed celestial damels, Sundari was almost in the position of the monkey to her. Buddha promised fat pink-footed damels to Nanda, if he concentrated his mind on the supreme knowledge that he taught him. Nanda succeeded in this great concentration, but when the supreme knowledge dawned on him, it also gave him the highest concept of how shallow and skin-deep was the concept of beauty. When Buddha smilingly asked him whether he would still have the pink-footed damels, Nanda smiled back, and confessed to the Master
that physical beauty and charm were so more of any consequence to him. This is the way that the Master taught his disciples how to overcome most of the trials and tribulations in life. This is a favorite theme in sculpture, both from Amarāvatī and Nāgārjunakonda, a charming though touching episode lovingly portrayed. A Gandhāra sculpture in the National Museum shows the toilet of Sundari, the Master at the door of the palace, and Nanda receiving the bowl. In Amarāvatī, a sculpture continues the story from where he was helping his consort in the dressing of her coiffure, by making him follow the Master to his monastery; the cutting of his locks and giving him the attire of a monk is there, but as he follows the Buddha, his face is turned back to have a last glimpse at the beautiful tear-eyed princess gazing at him from the balcony in despair. The panel from Nāgārjunakonda depicts Buddha floating in the air with Nanda, the monkey on a tree stump and, beyond, in the celestial garden, the pink-footed damsels, the very perfection of physical form.

The highest strength of character singles out Buddha as one of the greatest yogī. He was in fact Sakyamuni, the sage par excellence. As he lay on his death-bed his life ebbing away, Āranda, who loved him dearly, was in tears. He expressed his great sorrow and prayed to Buddha to continue to live longer, which was easily within his power, but Buddha would not do so. Like king Arthur who spoke to his beloved knight Sir Bedevere, 'the old order changeeth yielding place to new', Buddha is his magnificent paramāchārya, gave him a true picture of the evanescence of the world and the inevitable nature of death, the surviving factor being only dhamma, in which all his beloved monks were to take refuge. He himself was inevitable to disappear: from this mortal existence. This was again a great message. Just as, fully determined, he overcame Māra during the Māradārshānya, even at the point of death, Buddha wished not to live a day more, as he fully realized it was essential to allow natural laws to have their way.

Buddha was human in his outlook and even behaviour. Though he was adored by the celestials and could control even their lord, Sakra himself, yet he submitted himself to the attention of a physician to overcome his physical ailments. When Dāradatta arranged for injuring Buddha by engaging ruffians, and a splinter hurt the heel of the Master, Jivaka was called in, to dress up the heel and heal the wound. He similarly allowed himself to be protected by the Nāga Mucchilinda, when there was a storm, soon after his enlightenment. The great reptile wound himself around the Master, and held up his large hoods over him, as he sat in contemplation for a whole week, till the storm abated.

Possessed of super-natural powers, Buddha used them to the minimum, and completely forbade his disciples from performing miracles. He was so
human in his outlook that in the company of the terrestrial, he would not have the celestial come in and disturb the composition of the former. When a certain Nāga, in his great desire to listen to the Master, came along and joined a great assembly of listeners, as the Master expounded his doctrine, Buddha, finding that his presence frightened the humans, advised him to be away from the spot. The Muchilinda incident, a great favourite in the Kṛṣṇa valley found great favour with the sculptor in Thailand and Cambodia. There are several examples of the Buddha protected by Muchilinda Nāga in this area. At Amaravati and Nāgarjunakonda, the snake itself, for the great act of his sheltering the Master for a week, was so venerated, that there are several carved śrīśa slabs with this theme, which was often repeated. Asoka's visit to Buddha has a special graphic representation at Bharhut with labels in Brāhmi explaining the incident. Similarly in Gandhāra sculpture the scene has its depiction.

But Buddha did use his miraculous powers occasionally, when there was a real need for it. The Jātillas were the most stubborn in their faith, and would not be converted. Buddha was warned by the Jātillas not to spend a night in their sacrificial pavilion, where there was the most virulent Nāga, of which everyone was afraid. But Buddha not only stayed there, but got the huge Nāga subdued, and so transformed, that he could come into his bowl. This amazed the Jātillas. All the more amazed were they, when there was intermittent rain, a large sheet of water all over, and as the Jātillas looked on almost helpless, while Uruvela Kalyapa, from among them, came in a boat to help our Buddha, the Master walked on the waters and reached the other side. The conversion of the Jātillas is a great incident in Buddha's life.

But his normal mode of conversion was by his sermons and parables, and a straight approach to convince the people that his path of knowledge was the right one. Several of his greatest disciples were thus converted, Śāriputra, Maudgalyāyana and others.

There are two sculptures, one, a frieze on an architrave from Mathurā, and another, an upright from the Amaravati rail, now in the British Museum, that suggestively point to the greatness of Buddha, that was known even to the birds and trees, not to talk of the humans. The very way in which nature responded to the greatness of Buddha, brings out, in the most effective manner, his pre-eminence as the Enlightened One, that brought a new message of deliverance to the world.

The sculpture in the British Museum is an exceedingly interesting one. Buddha is here represented symbolically, as trying to cross the river Nandījārā, the foot-prints across the stream suggesting his wading through the waters. There is a flight of swans on the wing, moving clockwise, to
suggest their respectful salute to the Master, whom they were perambulating in adoration. A yet, on the other side of the bank, bending forward, is just indicative of its stretching forward to help the Master to hold its bough, as he got on to the shore. The carvings on the architrave from Mathurā, now in the National Museum, also represents the adoration of Buddha by a flight of swans, again on the wing, moving clockwise. Buddha is not shown in physical form, but only symbolically.

In India, a very important belief is that developing of a super-natural light, in terms of pre-eminence in qualities, intelligence, piety and so forth, is an account of the grace of luminous objects like the sun and the fire: yatte agne tejass manaham taJayav bhagyam yatte agne shriyas tenham shriyav bhagyam. This is warchas, tejas, shriyas, and ojas, bright hue, splendor, luminosity and power, so often mentioned in the vedas, were sought from brahmacharya onwards, from Agni. The word deva itself means one that shines. A circle of light was also conceived. The sun blazing in the sky has been conceived as the three Vedas blazing as a halo of light: adhyoga, asha evamavalam tapati tatra tad ritas sa risham manalam sa risham lokotha ya esa esam anandam citra bhuvana tani yaupayam sa yajamah manalam sa yajaham lokas satih trayayeva vilah tapati ya esha antanahite hriovaravaha parashah. The sun is a blazing oca, composed of the hymns of the Rigveda, in which, the flames shooting up, compose the hymns of the Sāmaveda, and the golden anthropomorphic form in it is the hymns of the Yajurveda, and this golden form itself is the personified triad or the three Vedas blazing forth.

Accustomed to this familiar idea of a golden blazing form in the halo, it is no wonder that Sūkṣṭhā felt she saw a blazing golden figure under the Bodhi tree as Buddha sat there just before his enlightenment. He was shining in all his glory, and to the eyes of Sūkṣṭhā, he appeared a celestial. It is then she approached him reverently, and offered the special food she had prepared of the essence of the milk of a whole herd, as the offering to the spirit of the tree. This vision of glory of Buddha’s effulgence, making him look almost a circle of light, is here to emphasize not only his great qualities, his pre-eminence among mortals and almost a celestial glory, but also to proclaim the importance of the blazing Supreme knowledge sambojita that he was to attain under the very tree.

The Lord of the highest wisdom, according to Brahmanical lore, is Śiva as Dakṣihānāra, the great Teacher seated under the banyan tree. The Bhāgavata counterpart of this is Nara-Nārāhya, Vishnū (Nārāyaṇa) as the supreme ascetic, Yogaṇārāhya as Śiva is known, under the banyan tree. These two ascetic forms are specially associated with the tree, the Bodhi tree, the tree of supreme knowledge. The Buddhas that preceded
Gautama, had, even one, his own tree, and even the Tirthabaharas of the Jaina faith have individually a tree.

The spreading shade of the tree is symbolic of the Master’s supreme knowledge which brings relief to the millions that are exposed to the blaze, rigour and fatigue of a long and endless distance of ignorance rushing through a cycle of births and deaths, the escape or relief from which is possible only under the cool shade of the tree of knowledge as Samara-puñavan Dakshita avowed it in describing the form of Dakshinamurti, vinayam arthim vahayavitam asamam istaramaha-vasati prapade and the hand in the attitude of delivering the sermon for enlightening the disciples is suggestive of the transmission of the supreme knowledge. In the case of Dakshinamurti, whose thumb and first finger come together, to suggest the prabodhakamudrā or the fingers in enlightenment, the notation is conveyed in the line, prabodhakāhānasamuheto prabodhakamudrā-bhāraman prapade. It is this simple prabodhakam is an enlarged form, where both the hands are brought together, to compose the dharmachakra pravrttanamudrā of Buddha, that indicate his first sermon.

Even his bodhi knowledge itself has been wonderfully interpreted by the sculptor, who evolved, as the centuries passed, a special mode of delineation, normally, from the early centuries of the Christian era, both in Kusiśa and Śatavahana, Gāndhāra and Gupta sculpture. It is bump of the ukhṣṭha that has meant a spurtting of the brain of Buddha into something unusual, raising him above even the most gifted of the humans. This was the ukhṣṭha. The most prominent of mahāpratīkā lakṣhaṇas. This ukhṣṭha is taken for granted in the case of Chakranārī mahā-
rājas whose brilliance is beyond all praise. Jambhūdhamma, for example, the great prince, Buddhissatva himself so born for demonstrating the highest form of sacrifice, that offered his own body to save another, has the ukhṣṭha on his head, ukhṣṭhaḥ spīṇḍa uṣṇa mārṣhantar vṛkṣṭiyāyam anarūm. The bump on the head and the ārōtri or the single curl of hair between the eyebrows indicate its greatness as a Mahāpratīkā. The same is always characteristic of Buddha. The ārōtri between the eyebrows is only an indication of the yogic character of the Master who concentrates through his eyes on the tip of his nose. The eyebrows that shoot up converge towards the central curl that they touch, like the parallel contour of the eyelashes that makes an upward curl that converge on the tip of the nose.

The sculptor was not quite satisfied with a mere hump for indicating supreme knowledge. He wanted something more than that and more significant. That is why a small flame came to be introduced in South Indian representations of the Buddha, towards the end of the Pālava period, which developed into a fiercer flame in the Chola regime. The Cholas being a maritime folk, that maintained the largest navy that
India ever had, particularly under Rājendra, the idea of the flame on the bump spread further to Ceylon, Burma, Thailand and Cambodia, where there is a whole series of bronzes and sculptures of Buddha all over South-East Asia with a prominent flame on the ushnisha, to represent the blaze of light on Buddha's head, indicating his supreme knowledge. Earlier, however, the idea of the circle of light so appealed, that it started as a simple halo in Gāndhāra sculpture, changed into a halo decorated with a scalloped edge in Kushāna sculpture, and finally ended in a much more elaborated large halo, almost beyond the proportions of the body of the Master himself, but yet most pleasing, and with a border tastefully decorated with the design of the kalpa-vāstu, wish-fulfilling creeper, with birds and blooming flowers intertwined. In some of the bronzes from the Gāndhāra region, however, the simple Kushāna halo was changed into a peculiar circle of light, shooting forth arrows in the form of the rays of the sun, of which same fine examples in metal are now found in a couple of museums in the United States of America. This is to emphasise a greater blaze, illustrative of the solar shine, rather than a softer and more mellowed though large-proportioned light of the moon, even if it were that of the full moon. It may here be recalled that the crescent moon on Śiva's head, as he subdues the monster of ignorance under his foot as Nārāyaṇa or Dakṣiṇājāmbū, in both forms as a teacher par excellence, signifies the destruction of the evil of ignorance, which is the starting point of the birth of knowledge as a crescent moon, to develop and culminate as knowledge in its entirety, the full moon.

In the case of Rāma, it is said that he never uttered a thing twice Rāma dvīr nāhīṃ khaḥṣeṣṭha. Once said, it is said in its entirety and in all its significance. His mind, thought, word and deed all went together in one string of truth, yasi tadākṣat na tan māyāḥ. If Rāma said a thing, it could never go in vain. It should resolve into truth. In other words there could be nothing uttered by Rāma except what would be the absolute truth. It is the same in the case of Buddha. When Buddha said a thing, it was always an utterance of the utmost truth. To illustrate this there is a very interesting incident from his life. At Rājagṛha, Buddha once blessed the wife of a Jaina, Subhadra, with a noble son, and when she was big with child, the Nigranthas of the Jainas who were jealous of Buddha, got her husband to give her a drug that killed the pregnant woman, and hurriedly carried the corpse to the funeral pyre, so that it could be burnt, and Buddha's word proved false, but this was not to happen. Even at that stage, Buddha said the child would be born, and when the Master approached the flaming funeral pyre, out from the dead corpse came out the little child as the time was ripe for him to be born; and as he was born amidst flames, he was named Jyotiśka. Jyotiśka later proved to be
a great intellectual. Buddha's word was thus demonstrated to be the truth. There are representations of this important incident in Gandhara sculpture. This is particularly interesting in highlighting one of the great qualities of Buddha as a mahâparâhu. Like Râma, he was, satyavâda mâyâparâhu.

Râma was not only endowed with the highest qualities but was also the most beautiful prince on earth. That is why Vâlmiki has said, "he who had not a look at Râma and in whom the glance of Râma had not fallen, was to be deplored. His own inner self would condemn him at highest": ya tu rânam na pûryen sam cha râma na pûrya na nînditasa vaselale vaâmadhyenam rîgâharu. Buddha was not any the less beautiful. Even as a monk, his beautiful form was alluring. Like Śurpaṅgahâ, who approached Râma, entranced by his charm, there was a high-born damsel, Mâgandiyâ, herself a patron of beauty, desperately in love with the alluring form of Buddha, who, naturally, put her off, but this so enragèd her, that when, by his beauty, she fascinated Udyâna, his charming king of Kauambi, and married him, she tried in many ways to harm Buddha, who would not so much as even look at her, but summarily distanced her away. The story of how Mâgandiyâ tried to harm the good-natured Śâlavatî, her co-wife, for no other reason except that she had the highest reverence for Buddha as a master and a saint, and the discomfiture of Mâgandiyâ in her wicked attempts to harm Śâlavatî, are narrated in a striking sculptural panel from Amârâvatî. Buddha had not only great divine qualities, but also the greatest personal charm, as he was born the most beautiful prince of his day. It is this that has immortalised the charming form of Buddha as the accepted portrait of his, in the most of perfection of beauty, whether in Greek-inspired sculpture from Gandhara or in the purely Indian mode, in Kôhâda, Siarâhâna and Gupta sculp-ture. If the highest personal charm and beauty of masculine figure is to be seen in the face of Śâla in the Ekamukhâlha from Kôh in the Allâhabad Museum, it is almost its replica that is seen in the face of Buddha in the dharmacharâgrauaruma attitude from Sûrâhâ. The Apôlo type from Gandhara is too very well known to be specially described.

While Buddha was at first strictly against the order of nuns, he had finally to yield to the importunity of Ânanda, and that is how Mahârajâpâti Gautameśi led an order of Buddhist nuns, theri. However, Buddha had no prejudice in such matters, and it cannot be forgotten that Buddha allowed Âsa-râpâli to come into the fold. He accepted the magnificent monastery that she constructed for the Buddhist order with her immense wealth. When she renounced both her unsold wealth and ravishing beauty to become an orange-robed nun, shorn of physical elegance and material comfort, it was Buddha who readily welcomed her to then imple life. The grove presented by her to Buddha is famous in Buddhist legend.
In the Rāmāyana, Rāma had always considered himself a human, a son of Daśaratha. He never thought of himself as an immortal, descended on the earth for fulfilling a mission, and he completely acted in the most human way, though as the perfection of man. Krishna, all the time conscious that he was the highest celestial born on earth, for the fulfillment of a mission, acted like a human being, occasionally prone to perform miracles, just when there was a necessity for them. Buddha, like Krishna, was absolutely conscious of his superiority over even the deus ex machina and Mahābrahma. He knew of his earlier births, and the various stages of his evolution as a Bodhisattva, ultimately to become the Supremely Enlightened. Still, he had no ego or pride in him, and did not live differently from an ordinary man. The most wonderful tribute to Buddha in this, the human way of life that he chose to live, is to be observed in several incidents, where Devadattas, his wicked cousin, attempted on his life. When there was a wound on his heel through one of such mishaps, Jīvaka, the half-brother of Ajītasatru, the greatest physician of the day and a devoted disciple of Buddha, was always called in to attend on the Master, administered medicines and relieved him of pain. This was Buddha at whose gate in the Indraśūla Jāhā stood Śakra himself seeking audience.

Yet Buddha knew the past, present and future. In defining Bhagavān, it has been said that it is only the one who knows the origin of beings, their annihilation, their coming into being and departure from the world, true knowledge leading to bliss and ignorance that causes sorrow and suffering, that is to be known as Bhagavān: upanātim pralayam chaiva bhūtānām āgatim satīṃ vetti vidyāṃ avidyāṃ chu sa viveko bhagavān iti. According to this definition, it can easily be seen that Buddha was bhāgavān. An incident from his life clearly illustrates this. As Buddha was walking along, with his train of monks following him, as also his devotees, there was a dog on a mound near a house furiously barking at the approach of the people. Buddha explained to an amazed audience that this dog was in his previous birth a mower who without enjoying the vast wealth he possessed, buried it deep in a spot knowns only to him and zealously guarded it. After his death, he was born a dog and his intense attachment towards his wealth, put him exactly on the spot, where lay his buried treasure, which, even in that form of an animal, he was zealously guarding. His bark was so scare people away. When at the instance of the Master, there was a trial dig, the vast wealth was revealed. There is an excellent representation of this scene in a Gāndhāra sculpture, now in the Lahore Museum.

It is stated in the Upanishads, that sacrifice alone brings on immortality. Neither by worldly action nor by offering nor by accumulation of wealth is immortality attained, but only by renouncing the seemingly alluring
pleasures of life and complete sacrifice. This is what the seers have felt. The monks, who have renounced, leave the heaven that is in the inner cavern of the mind in which there is a light ablate. By accepting monkhood, and with a mind determined and resolute by deep contemplation on the highest philosophic thought of the Vedanta, and pure of heart, towards the end of their life, in the land of bliss they attain immortality, by a release from the bonds: na sarvasa na prajaya dahanam tyajyena amritaistam aanave gareva naktam nishtam gohyam bhadrata塔 tadasya vishnu vedaanta-vishnu-devam artha-rajas yoga-jñanaprad yatastas buddha-anuvratah te brahmaloke it paramnaksat parimuchyansant sarve.

In the story of Buddha, it is well known that it is after witnessing scenes of distress, physical infirmity, illness, suffering and death, and particularly after noticing the serene blissful attitude of a monk, who had realised the absolute truth by renouncing all the phantasy of life, that made the prince make up his mind to follow suit, by renouncing even his kingdom, for attaining that beatific state of the monk. In sculptural representations of Prince Siddhartha having his home on Kanjaka, as in Sātavāhana, Yajñavalkya, Gandhāra sculpture and so forth, Devas are shown holding up the hoofs of the horse, as it trod the ground, within the precincts of the palace and beyond the gates of the city of Kapilavastu, at midnight. This was to muffle the sounds of the hoofs, which would awaken the sound in the palace, the guards within the city, and the general folk outside, all ever, in the town. The celestials were anxious that Siddhārtha should renounce the world, to become, ultimately, the greatest monk, to give an unprecedented message of dhamma to the world. It is this stage of immortality, the highest to be attained by a mortal, that the Devas themselves were anxious should be made known to the world. When Buddha made his son a monk, he gave him, as he considered, the highest heritage, particularly coming from him, the parental heritage, the heritage of immortality and bliss. It may be recalled that the Devas rejoiced when Bhārata in Tushita heaven resolved to come down to the earth as Siddhārtha, who was ultimately to become the Buddha. The celestials knew this great happening to be, and hence this their special rejoicing and celebration of the event. Again, as the prince renounced the world and fled on his horse Kanjaka, it is the celestials that helped him go unnoticed. This is the story of the bliss of immortality through supreme knowledge, which, no only the entire mortal world, but also the celestials sphere itself, highly prized.

Buddha was not totally cut off from the past. He had great respect for all that was good and great in the traditions to which he was born. To take an instance, there is the story of How Svarakia offended, a handful of grass to Siddhārtha, just after his renunciation, as he was to take his
seat under the Bodhi tree. This is to be seated on a pure seat of kusa grass. Kūhāsana, or a seat composed of Kusa grass, has always been considered in India as the purest. When the body was purified after a bath in the river Nerasārak, this grass, symbolic of purity, purified him all the more, as he sat on it. It is for this purification, that in all ceremonies, kūhāsana or the dārharāsana is used, and on the ring finger of the right hand, a kūlaputrika is worn. In the Mahābhārahya of Patanjali, there is a wonderful pen picture given of how Pāntin, sat facing east on kusa grass, wearing a kūlaputrika on his finger, with the pisus resolve to write out his great book of grammatical aphorisms. It is in the same manner, with the resolve to attain enlightenment that Buddha sat under the Bodhi tree, specially on kusa grass. This indicates the great regard Buddha had for the traditions of sanctity that could alone assure success to an undertaking.

Buddha was absolutely conscious of every stage of development of himself as a Bodhisattva. The Jātakas are not empty fables as a pastime for children. They represent the highest ideals of restraint, sacrifice, love for the entire universe. When Buddha, with his hand in dhāmisparīkamūkha, saluted upon the earth as a witness to all his great deeds of sacrifice in his immediately previous birth, as prince Viśvantara, we go into a story of a prince, who was the very embodiment of sacrifice, who gave away everything that he possessed, and which was coveted by another. It is no wonder that he gave away the miraculous elephant that was responsible for the prosperity of this realm, though he may have felt that it would cost him dear. But what is more important and astounding is that he did not shrink before the thought of giving away even his own little children, a boy and a girl, brought up in the utmost luxury, affection and love, and knew not what it was to bow down to or wait in attendance on another, and even his below wife. This was Viśvantara. The Mahākāpli Jātaka illustrates the Bodhisattva that, even as an animal and leader of the herd, gave up his own life, to save a troop of monkeys, by filling the gap of the temporary bridge of bamboo over the river with his own body. In the Cakkudhamma Jātaka, it is the six-tusked elephant, in which form, again the Bodhisattva, who could have just crushed the wicked hunter, rather on the other hand, magnanimously, with his own trunk, even as he was dying, cut his tusks to help him to have them. That was the spirit of sacrifice in this noble animal. In the Nigrodhamani Jātaka the Bodhisattva, as a stag and the leader of a whole herd, offered himself in the place of a pregnant doe, for being killed and utilised in the royal kitchen. This so touched the king, that after listening to a sermon from this adorable animal, he made this spot a haven for the deer to freely roam about without let or hindrance and any apprehension of a shot from a hunting bow. It is this place Māgadāva, in the vicinity of Banaras, sanctified in
one of his previous births, that Buddha chose for his first sermon, dharmachakrapravartana, the initial turning of the wheel of the Law, and it is this that accounts also for the deer flanking the wheel, which became a symbol of Buddha’s first sermon.

The compassion of Buddha is proverbial, and this compassion has been a thread that ran through all the different births of the Bodhisattva before he ultimately was born the Siddhartha. As king Śibi, he could give away flesh from his own body, cut by himself on refusal of such a ghastly crime by any of his courtiers, who loved him dearly, and when the miraculous weight of the bird so required it, he put his whole weight, and sat in one of the scales offering his body to the hunter, or to the hawk, as given in another version of the story. The same attitude is seen in another birth of the Bodhisattva as the emperor of the Vidyādharas, Prince Jīnatavājra, who offered himself in the place of the Nāga Śalapāda to help the Garuda have his feed on a promised offering of a Nāga everyday.

The spirit of renunciation in Buddha is again a steadfast factor that has survived through his different births. As king Mahājanaka he was untroubled by all the pleasures of royal life, and all the efforts of the queen Śivali proved futile in turning his heart away from his life of renunciation. The paintings at Ajantā give an elaborate narration of the queen’s attempt to lure Mahājanaka by dance and song and the pleasures of life in a palace. But in a panel from Bharhut it is the story of what led to Mahājanaka’s spirit of renunciation. A look at the arrow-maker concentrating on straightening an arrow by a look at it with one eye with the other closed that made him realize how only alone and single one could attain concentration on the absolute Truth. The sculpture from Bharhut is very telling indeed. The Kṣitigarbha Jātaka is a touching story of the odorous fish that offered itself as food when there was a big drought, which assured annihilation of thousands of living beings by an utter scarcity of food. The Śāka Jātaka, similarly, shows how even the little hare could offer its own body roasted up in the fire, into which it fell willingly, to provide food for a hungry hunter, and, in appreciation of which great act of sacrifice, we are told, the hare adorns the orb of the moon, where it was transported by Śāka himself. The Valahanka Jātaka, of which an early representation is on an upright of the kusāna period, but the most impressive one, in Cambodia not far from Angkor Vat, narrates how a large hearted horse, the Bodhisattva himself, born, saved a number of ship-wrecked merchants by carrying them away from the island of ogresses, where their doom was certain. These and other acts of sacrifice, compassion and universal love, bring out the great traits that make for ethical and spiritual advancement, ultimately to produce the Supremey Enlightened One. Great truths have thus been made manifest in the Jātaka which, as we know,
were stories narrated by Buddha, to recall how in his previous births as
an animal or a bird, he had tried to build himself up spiritually and
ethically, ultimately to become the Enlightened One.

One of the most oft-repeated scenes from Buddha's life is the miracle of
Śrāvastī. In fact, Buddha himself, who had forbidden his disciples
performing miracles unnecessarily, just showed this miracle as a necessity,
to demonstrate the futility of the attempts of the heretics who denounced
him and his teachings, as he could alone perform a miracle which could
not be approached even by the heretics. The story in the Dhammapada
Ajjhāvatthā narrates how Buddha rebuked Pindola Bhāraddāja for flying in
the air, a miracle that the heretics were unable to perform. Buddha for-
bade monks from exercising their super-natural powers. The heretics
immediately imagined that Buddha had completely forbidden miracles,
and he would not also perform miracles anymore. They were now brave
even to say that they had miraculous powers which they would exhibit
only after Buddha performed miracles. King Bimbisāra enquired of
Buddha whether the statement of the heretics was true that they could
perform miracles, but that Buddha would not. Buddha, however,
immediately told him that his prohibition of miracles applied only to his
disciples and not to himself, even as restrictions imposed on the entry of
others in the royal pleasure garden did not apply to the king. Buddha
now announced he would perform a miracle, four months hence, at the
foot of a mango tree. No sooner the heretics came to know of this, than
they tore up all the mango trees, even saplings, in and around Śrāvastī,
where Buddha was to perform the miracle. They were now confident
that there being no mango tree, Buddha's word could never come true.

However, Buddha entered the city on the appointed day, where the
King's gardener that very day found a ripe mango rich in flavour, which
he was carrying to the king. On sighting the Master, he reverently
offered it to him. Ananda crushed the ripe fruit and gave the juice to
Buddha, who accepted it, and instructed the gardener Dunda to plant
the seed there. A huge mango tree immediately sprang up on the spot,
and all the people of the neighbourhood rushed to see this wonderful
tree. The king ordered guards to protect the tree, the ripe fruit of which
was so delicious and so abundant, that one and all partook of it, and
abused the heretics for destroying a wealth of mango trees in the city.
Buddha now performed the promised miracle. Flames of fire shot up
from the upper part of his body, while streams of water flowed down
from the lower part. The front part of his body gave up flames, and
streams of water came down from the back. Taking three strides, he
rose up to reach the world of the Thirty-three, to expand his ahamма as
his mother. This was the miracle performed out of a necessity, and
Another great miracle was performed by the Master to help the gardener Sūmana, who had such great reverence and faith in him that as he was carrying five measures of jasmine flowers for the king, he conceived of a great desire to worship the Master with the flowers, though he knew that using the flowers for any other purpose than giving them to the king for whom they were intended, could even cost him his life or ransom. But he braved it, and as he threw handfuls of flowers at the Buddha approached with his retinue of monks, they remained suspended in the air like a canopy over his head. As he threw a few more handfuls, they descended like a curtain of a pavilion, and when all the flowers had been used, it was a regular gate of flowers for the Master to enter the city of Rājagaha. The citizens were filled with great wonder and paid great honour to the Master.

The story is interesting, as the wife of the gardener, learning from his husband, a śimpetron, as to what he had done, and fearing the consequences, ran to the king to confess and beg pardon, little knowing that the king himself was a devout devotee of Buddha, who welcomed this with joy, and proceeding to the Master, reverently took him to his palace, to partake of his hospitality. The flowers remained in position all the time, and the king honoured the gardener for his great devotion to the Master. The only representation of this wonderful scene is from Anārāvatī on a coping slab. This performance of a miracle was out of compassion for the gardener, who ran the risk of royal displeasure, through his immense devotion to the Buddha.

In this as well as in the earlier story, whether it was the mango that the gardener was taking to the king, or the flowers, as in the next story, there is an echo of Kūhā, the maid of the royal household of Kusma, carrying musk-perfumed sandal paste for the king, making it available for Krishna and Baladeva, whom she adored more as celestial come to the earth, and was rewarded by the former by just pulling her straight, rid ing her of the crooked twist in the body, converting her into the most beautiful damsel on earth.

It is generally said that the future is revealed in the present. What one would be when grown up is easily observed in the propensities of the child itself. Judged from this also Buddha, as we know from incidents in his life, was not merely to become the Supremely Enlightened One, according to the assurance of the sooth-sayers, but also there were clear indications that he would become one of the greatest prophets the world had ever seen, possessing miraculous powers. As Kalidasa would put it bhavo hi lokābhyyudhayā tadariṇār or, as in the Therigāthā itself, bahūnam bha atiya maññi janagotama (Therigāthā 162).

The moment he was born, the child was so determined, that he walked
seven steps forward, announced that this was his last birth on earth, and he would become the Supreme Enlightened. As he walked, lotuses sprang up to receive his feet at every stride. Two Nāgarājas brought heavenly water to bathe him.

There is a vānsakāra, called nīchāramaṇa, when a child is taken to the temple of the family deity after the third month. When Siddhartha was so taken to the temple of the family deity of the Śākyas, the deity bowed to the child to indicate the greatness of the future Buddha.

Like the wise men of the east that came to see the child Christ, the wisest of the old sages, Astāra, bent with age, and with beard trailing, his matted locks tied up on his head, came to king Suddhodana to see his new-born baby. He took the child in his arms, and wept at the idea that being advanced in age, he would not live to listen to the words of wisdom of this child, when he would deliver the first sermon after his enlightenment in the Deer Park, near Banaras.

During the ploughing festival of the Śākyas, Siddhārtha, even as a child, placed under the cool shade of a jambh tree, to keep him in comfort, went into a state of bliss, and a miracle happened here. The shade of the tree moved not, irrespective of the time of the day and the movement of the sun. The Śākyas wondered at this miracle. Like the miracle of baby Kṛṣṇa narrated in the Bhāgavata, here is a story of occurrences in the early childhood of Siddhārtha that indicated his future eminence as the Supreme Enlightened One to be.

In medieval sculpture, particularly from Bihar, the sculptors have taken special care to indicate the greatness of Buddha in a telling fashion. Normally in sculpture, the birth of Siddhārtha is indicated by a pair of feet on a silken garment held by the four Lokapālas, while in Gandhāra sculpture, prominence is given to Śākra among the Lokapālas to receive the child on the silken garment, a special noteworthy feature here being the child indicated in anthropomorphic form, born not in the normal way but issuing from right side of queen Māyā as she stood under the Salu tree in the Lambha garden. This miraculous birth extol all the scenes of birth of other avatāras, like even Rāma and Kṛṣṇa, except of Sītā, who was not physically born at all, but still came into existence, thereby justifying her name Ayonijā. In medieval sculpture from Ihar and Uttar Pradesh, there is a peculiar representation of Brahmā and even Viṣṇu of the trinity represented, along with the Lokapālas, to witness, and hail the birth of the future Buddha. Similarly, in a parimalāsana scene from Sarnāth, the eight Dikpālas including Agni, Vāyu, Niṛīti and Indra, apart from the usual kour, Indra, Yama, Varuṇa and Kubera, are all seen hurrying on their respective vehicles, accompanied by more celestial and even important ones like Garēla on his mouse, Kārttikeya on his peacock, Brahmā on his
swan, and so forth, all to have a last glimpse of Buddha before he passed away. This is a great tribute, as it were, paid by the Brahmanical gods to Buddha. It may be interpreted in two ways, both as a friendly gesture from all the gods of the Brahmanical pantheon, realising Buddha to be an incarnation of Vishnu himself, as he was also by this time included in the Brahmanical pantheon as an avatar, or it may be understood as the claim of the Buddhists that Buddha was superior to all other ceolastics, but as there was already Buddha’s presence among the ten incarnations of Vishnu the former explanation cannot be ruled out.

The most interesting is that Buddha was like an eternity. It was not only when he was alive that he could perform the highest miracle, the miracle of Shravasti but even after his parinirvana, there was still the miracle of his showing his feet to Mahakasyapa, one of his esteemed disciples. The story goes that after the death of Buddha, his body was wrapped in the finest cloth a hundred times and the entire body was covered to be put in a sarcophagus, filled with sweet scented oil and placed on a large funeral pyre of sandalwood, but even as they attempted to light the fire, it would not burn. Anuruddha, one of the wisest disciples wondered and perceived the cause of the delay in the arrival of Mahakasyapa, whom still the body of the Buddha awaited. When Mahakasyapa at last arrived with a number of monks, went round the funeral pyre reverently, and wished he could see again the glorious feet of the Buddha, lo and behold, the feet appeared emerging from out of all that bound them, so that he could touch the feet with his head and do reverence. After this there was no difficulty in lighting the funeral pyre.

There were eight kings who claimed the corporeal relics of the Buddha, and threatened a battle, if each were not given a share of the precious relics of Buddha. At that moment, the Brahmin Droga mediated. He admonished the princes, and told them how unworthy it was of them to fight over the relics of one who had all his life taught patience, forbearance, affection and love. It was unworthy of them to receive the relics in the hands that held weapons to kill. Dividing the relics into eight portions he gave them each a share. Satisfied and pleased, the kings reverently took the relics in golden caskets and carried them each to their own realms.

There are representations of the division of the relics in sculpture both from Amaravati and from Bharhut. The most important fact here is that there was reiteration, after the passing away of the Master that the greatest lesson that the Buddha taught to the world was universal love and affection, forbearance and patience. The Upamsads always end a text with om bhur bhur bhur. Similarly the end of Buddha and the quartet over his corporeal relics re-established the doctrine of peace and affection, eternal peace, complete conquest of anger and the utmost forbearance.
The teaching of Buddha is almost epitomised as it were in a single short reply that he gave to Kāśi Bhadraśīja from the village Ekanala in the vicinity of Rājagriha. When this Brahmin was engaging himself in a ploughing festival with a large number of ploughmen taking part in it, Buddha, who knew by his divine insight that he could convert Kāśi Bhadraśīja to faith in the dhamma, at once presented himself on the spot. The Master's diligence and personality made everyone rash to him to pay him obeisance. Kāśi Bhadraśīja, however, was sceptical, and felt that this great monk was idling his time while, if only he worked, he could make the world so much the better by being at the top of it guide it like a king. He asked the Master why he did not plough, sow and reap and eat food, the fruit thereof, like himself and his companions, who were using the plough to the best advantage to enjoy the agricultural fruit of their labour. Buddha at once replied that he also ploughed, sowed and reaped. Kāśi Bhadraśīja wondered how this could be true when Buddha had neither the plough nor a field nor the bullocks. Buddha explained his position clearly that faith was the seed he sowed, devotion the rain, modesty the plowshare, the mind the root of the yoke, mindfulness the ground, energy his team of bullocks, leading to safety to the place where there is no sorrow. This was a greater fruit and the plough here was of a greater consequence than in mere agricultural labour. Kāśi Bhadraśīja was so impressed by this discourse that he immediately entered the order of the Buddha. The story is a telling one, as, even as prince Siddhārtha, Buddha has without mention of it to the Śakyas, make them understand, through the miracle under the jambh tree, that his mode of ploughing, sowing and reaping, the final fruit of the highest contemplation, was superior to their mere physical labour.

The teachings of Buddha in his every day talk to all those whom he met, apart from his regular discourses and the great suttas like the Paśupatiṣṭhānamātrīya, are gems of learning, conveyed in the simplest form, to the humblest and the highest, as his teachings were direct and appealing, easily understood and appealing to the heart, and consequently that brought the largest gathering of followers that any Master ever had. It is no wonder that Buddha's teachings of love and affection, selflessness, wisdom, overcoming of all modes of sorrow and suffering for the final realisation of a state of bliss, has found its way almost all over Asia. Buddha's personal conduct (charitra) and imitable example serve, more than his precept, to inspire his great followers to follow his footsteps, and tread a great path that he held out for all humanity. It is usually the kalyāṇa- gānat or the great qualities of avattas like Rāma and Kṛṣṇa, that are narrated with the utmost reverence. It is these again that distinguish Buddha his animt anuttaramūrti, the never-ending noble qualities. It is these that made Buddha the greatest of mahāpurushar that he was.

32
1. **Ajírasotra’s visit to Buddha, Sunga, 2nd century B.C., Bhishnupur, Indian Museum, Calcutta.**

2. **The death of the master is revealed to Ajírasotra through a scroll with the principal scenes of Buddha’s life painted on it, 5th-6th century A.D., Qoqol, Central Asia.**
3. Prince Siddhārtha in the Sārem holding to the three evils or bonds in life, Sāravāna. 2nd century A.D., Rājagaha, National Museum, Kathmandu.

5. Buddha with symbols marked on his body as mahaparusha lakshana, 4th-5th century A.D., Central Asian metal, Budapest, National Museum.


11. Descent of Buddha, Sunga, 2nd century B.C.,
Bharhut, Indian Museum, Calcutta.

12. Descent of Buddha, Kushângo, 1st century A.D., Mathura
Museum, Mathura.
13. Descent of Buddha, 10th century A.D.,
Bangkok, Thailand.

14. Chēśkrama, Sānci, 2nd century B.C., Bhārhat,
Indian Museum, Calcutta.
15. The walking Buddha, 12th century A.D., Bangkok, Thailand.

17. Gajendramoksha, Giepta, 5th century A.D., Dongarh.

18. Elephant adoring Buddha, Śāṅge, 1st century B.C., Bodhgaya.
19. Honey offered by monkey at Taisali, Sunga, 2nd century B.C., Sāsāthi.


24. Parinirvana of Buddha, Ananda standing beside him, Cave shrine at Polonnaruwa, 12th century A.D., Ceylon.

27. Conversion of the Fatilas, Sunga, 2nd century B.C., Sāñchi.


30. Buddha with jambon on shalika, 12th century A.D., Bangkok, Thailand.

33. Siddhārtha’s nivṛttinirvāṇa, celestial being the hoofs of Kanuka.
   Kushinagar, 2nd/3rd century A.D.,
   Nigirinivasini Museum.

34. The offering of Kuśa, grave, Gandhara, 3rd century A.D., Indian Museum, Calcutta.


41. Division of the relics, Sīrṭūṭha, 2nd century A.D. Amrāvati, Madras Museum.

42. Buddha and the ploughman, Sāngā, 1st century