

Buddha - The Man & His Mission

Lecture 1, 05 Jul 2015

Why do we start with the Buddha? Had it not been for the Buddha, there would have been no Dhamma story. So any understanding at all about what Dhamma is about has to start with who the Buddha was, and what he stood for. If you have no clarity on that concept, your understanding on what is Dhamma can be skewed.

- A) Was he real? How do we know?
- B) Who was he?
- C) What was he?
- D) Why is he important?
- E) Why do we need to know him properly?

When we talk about *who* the Buddha was, we are talking about biographical details eg. his birth, his life, what he did. *What* he was refers to his role - what role did he play, the significant things he did and why were they significant.

WAS HE REAL? HOW DO WE KNOW?

SOURCES

Best Sources

- **Archaeological evidences**

The best historical information comes from somebody who lived about 200 years after the Buddha. He wasn't even from the Buddha's time. He was King Asoka, the emperor of probably India's first Mauryan empire.
- **Asoka's pillars**

Asoka left behind edicts carved on pillars, rocks & caves. For Asoka, a king and emperor of such standing, to acknowledge the existence of such a spiritual teacher, it is reasonable to assume that this teacher had actually existed. In one edict, he mentioned that "this is the place where the Buddha was born"; there were also edicts that talked about his teachings, different suttas were mentioned → we can assume that the Buddha was a teacher; & his teachings were commonly known, or else King Asoka (a very busy man) wouldn't be in touch with them.

Other Sources

The best details we know of the Buddha did not come from King Asoka but from these other sources:

- **Literary work and oral tradition**

Buddhist canonical texts. Captured originally via oral tradition. People were quite excited about the Buddha, so there were lots of literature and commentaries about him. Buddha must have been a source of inspiration, or else there won't be all this proliferation of material about him and his life. Much of which was a little fictional, but nevertheless, with these people getting all carried away talking about him, the Buddha must have been quite a prominent person at that time.

- **Canon from the Buddhist sects and from non-Buddhist sects.**

Non-Buddhist texts : Hindus talked about Buddha being the 9th reincarnation of Vishnu.

WHO WAS HE?

BIOGRAPHICAL DETAILS

Very sketchy. Even corrupted. Unavoidable.

Childhood backdrop :

He lived a long time ago & people in those times were illiterate. Talked a lot (no written record) so corruption of facts was inevitable. This resulted in lots of strange material that surfaced about his life.

- **Born over 2500 years ago. Exact period still debated.**

In fact, the debates are so intense even the *century* of his birth is still being debated on. But for our purpose, it does not matter.

- **In Kapilavatthu (Modern day Nepal)**

- **Eldest son of one of the chieftains of ancient warrior Sākyan tribe.**

Being such an old tribe, the Sākyans (aryans) must have been one of the first people from Central Asia to invade India and stake out lands for themselves. That's why the Sākyans were very rich - because of such fertile agricultural land. The Buddha's father wasn't a king but a chieftain, but in the old days, he was referred to as a Rajah.

- **Lost mother at birth, brought up by maternal aunt and step-mom.**

Ananda, in one of his conversations with the Buddha, revealed that the Buddha was brought up by Prajāpati Gotami, his maternal aunt and stepmother. From here, we know that his mother passed away, but we do not know for sure whether she actually did pass away 7 days after his birth.

- **Much loved. Had a couple of siblings and many cousins.**

- **Doted by his father, pampered lay life.**

The Buddha himself talked about being very pampered. He had three palaces built for him, to take into account the seasons and difficult weather. He spent a lot of time playing with his siblings and cousins - they had a very good relationship. When the Buddha came back to the Sakyan tribe to teach Dhamma, a lot of his cousins joined him. Very significant - princelings leaving their homes to become monks 2,500 years ago. A very tough life (as monks) but they had enough faith in the Buddha to want to join his ranks.

- **Groomed for leadership position on tribal council.**

The Sākyans ruled by a rudimentary form of democracy. Being the eldest son, the Buddha was expected to take over from his father. He was thus being prepared to lead and do organization work. That's why it is not surprising that he could organise the Saṅgha so well.

Details of his adult lay life were sparse :

- **Was married**

Incidentally, we do not even know the name of his wife. The name "Yasodharā" came from the commentaries.

- **Took a long time before he had a son, Rahula.**

In those days, people marry young - about 15 to 16 yrs old. The Buddha, being eldest son & heir of a prominent tribal leader, couldn't breach convention. So he must have had his son much later because when Rāhula was born, the Buddha was in his late 20s.

- **Once boy was born, he left home for a wanderer's life.**

- **Believed to be 29 when he left.**

- **Considered very young to do that. Would have been a controversy.**

The above two points are important because there were implications in what the Buddha did. He breached conventional thinking. He did what he thought was necessary, and he did not care what people said.

- **Possibly elicited unfriendly comments.**

The conventional thinking at that time was that a person could leave home for homeless life only in his old age. That is why you can find statements made in the suttas of the Buddha being a teacher even though he had black hair (indicating youth). And this gave rise to doubts about whether the Buddha knew what he was talking about, and doubts about his attainments.

SPIRITUAL SEARCH

“In search of way out of dukkha” ie. Happiness

This point has to be understood. He did not search for the Truth, the meaning of life - these are philosophical points. He went in search of happiness. The Buddha’s quest was about solving a practical problem ie. there is dukkha in life, there is pain in life.

Dhamma is about truth when you see how your mind works. Dhamma is not about truth per se. Dhamma is about solving a practical problem with a practical solution ie. in search of a way out of dukkha.

Typical Indian practices of the day to attain holy-man status:

In the old ways, there were two methods of realizing spiritual truth. Actually, there were 3 methods: 1) Just enjoy life [Buddha rejected this because he enjoyed life for 29 years and it did not work]; 2) Meditation; & 3) Self-torture.

Meditation

- **Two teachers. Mastered skill quickly. Clearly gifted. But unimpressed. Left.**

Buddha approached two celebrity teachers at that time - Ālāra Kālāma and Uddaka Rāmaputta.

In the Parinibbana Sutta, the Buddha met a man named Pukussa just before he reached Kusinara. Pukussa told the Buddha that he was a disciple of Ālāra Kālāma. At that time, Ālāra Kālāma had been dead for 45 years. He must have been a great teacher to be fondly remembered after so long.

The Buddha learned the skills from these two teachers within a short time. They were so impressed with him that Ālāra Kālāma offered him joint leadership of his centre while Uddaka Rāmaputta wanted him to take over his place. The Buddha did not take up their offers, and left.

Self-torture

- Did this for almost six years. Very severe. Almost died. Luckily he had the wisdom to stop what he did.

In self-torture, there are so many things you can do to your form. The Buddha tried them all and almost killed himself. He knew he almost died. It would appear he started hallucinating even. And he knew that there was something wrong because he was literally at death's door but there was more and more dukkha and he did not see a way out.

ENLIGHTENMENT

While still recovering from near-death starvation and severe dehydration – reflected/reviewed practice. He had a moment of insight.

Decided method was wrong – Paññā moment:

1. Need quiet, objective, sharp & focused mind

He realized that what he needed was a mind that didn't "talk". A mind that is quiet, very still, able to reflect objectively on how it works. This shows that even though he was still recovering from near-death starvation, he still had lucidity of mind.

2. Needs jhāna

This insight was linked to a practice in his younger days where he experienced jhāna.

Marathon meditation, 12 hours straight!

Three types of knowledge realised:

1. Rebirth – death is not the end [6 to 10 pm]

The Buddha saw his past lives in detail – the family he was born in, his caste, down to the food he ate and the pain he experienced in his lives (down to these levels of resolution).

For average laypeople who experience past lives in their meditation, they would normally just see these experiences as proof that they exist → there is a soul!

It was different for the Buddha. He realized from his past lives that death is not the end, but just the beginning of the next life! Therefore, dukkha doesn't just last for one life, but goes on for lives and lives! He knew that he had to end the suffering in this life. Buddha's wisdom was just so different from the rest of us.

2. **Kamma – what shapes rebirth** [10 pm to 2 am]

Kammic drivers – The Buddha saw how people were reborn according to their actions, in other words, what drives/shapes rebirths. The Buddha said that when one sees rebirth, it is very easy to conclude wrongly. If you were to see a bad person getting a good rebirth, you may conclude that there is no such thing as kamma. And when you see a bad person getting a bad rebirth, you are likely to conclude that kamma is everything. But it is not so simple. Buddha kept saying that kammic forces are not easy to understand. Only the Buddha could truly understand the “mathematical equations” involved.

The important point is that from the kammic forces driving rebirth, the Buddha could figure out how to end kamma. This knowledge made it possible for him to realize the 3rd knowledge.

3. **Destruction of cankers – Nibbāna** [2 to 6 am]

How to turn off the ignition of rebirth, *that* one energy that keeps you going, life after life after life. Cankers are the stains that hold the mind down and force rebirth. The Buddha figured out how to stop these cankers, the result of that was the taste of Nibbāna.

Place of Enlightenment – Bodhigaya (Uruvelā, near River Neranjara).

It was believed that this happened on a full-moon night of Vesak, at a village near Uruvelā (a border garrison town). This village was originally called Gaya. It was re-named Bodhigaya only after we acknowledged that the Buddha was enlightened there.

Remaining 45 years of life devoted to teaching Dhamma.

These 45 years were mainly documented in the Pali Canon and various other canons, so it is safe and reasonable to conclude that the Buddha was a successful teacher and that he taught Dhamma.

Parinibbana at 80/81 years old in Kusinara.

The Buddha passed away in a little obscure remote place called Kusinara. It is always said that the Buddha passed away when he was 80. But if he passed away on his birthday, then he had to be 81.

This was life of a man we call Buddha in a nutshell. He spent a third in lay life. A little more than half as a teacher.

Buddha knew what it was like to live like us. True, he was a rich man and led a pampered life, but he also understood the pain of being forced into a life of responsibility. He understood the burden of a lay life. That's why after his enlightenment, he gave very good talks and answers that were relevant to lay life. He offered clever, practical solutions. The solutions were so useful that they are still relevant today.

A little more than half of his life was that of a practitioner and Dhamma teacher.

WHAT WAS HE?

THE ENLIGHTENED ONE

Literally, he who knows. The enlightened one.

Refer to our regular chant on homage to Buddha. His calling card.

The term "Buddha" is a title. In his time, he was not called the Buddha. His disciples called him the Blessed One, Bhante, the Tathāgata etc. People who were not of his school referred to him as "Gotama the ascetic". They never referred to him by name. In fact, his name is not found in the Pali Canon. The name "Siddhartha" came from commentaries.

In summary, he was said to be:

- "Special" being - enlightened

Iti pi so Bhagavā Araham Sammā sambuddho

This means that he was enlightened, different, special. His disciples went around telling others that he was enlightened, someone who knew the truth.

□ **A good/noble/upright man**

Vijjā-Carano Sampanno: vijjā (knowledge), carano (conduct).
The Buddha's conduct was immaculate. This is very important because, as a spiritual teacher, if your conduct leaves much to be desired, who will follow you? Being a good man is the minimum requirement.

□ **Practitioner - walked the talk**

Sugato Lokavidū: sugato (well-gone), lokavidū (knower of the worlds).
This means that the Buddha knows the practice, understands what has to be done, how to realize, how to be enlightened. He knew how to do it right.

What do the first three lines from the Buddha Vandanā tell you?

The Buddha must be a famous person, a good person, a good practitioner and know what he was saying. So minimally, you can say he was a decent man.

This is important because subsequently, his enemies tried to attack his reputation. He stood by his reputation. In the old days, there was no social media for publicity, so a person's reputation spread by word of mouth. He was not the only teacher - we know him because his teachings were the only ones left from a long time ago. But in the old days, there were many many teachers. He had to be able to stand out. At that time, it was not uncommon for people to "shop" for teachers as they were all over the place. Therefore, Buddha had to have a good reputation to draw students.

□ **Teacher - very skilled and taught a method that works**

Anuttaro Purisa damma-sārathī, Satthā Deva-manussānam:
The Buddha could teach anyone or anything who wished to learn to **tame the mind**. If you follow him properly, your mind will be tamed because his methods work.

□ **Sage - wise, knew what he was teaching.**

His teaching came from the word "lokavidū". This world is the world of the mind, the mental world. You have but one world, which is the world (inside us) that understands the world (outside). The Buddha knows the nature of the mind. Knower of the World therefore means Knower of the mind.

THE TEACHINGS

But what was he teaching? This is the crux of the story. If it's just about him, end of story. Not that, it is about Dhamma

The reason why we honour the Buddha today, why we remember him, why he matters to us, is because the teaching he left behind continues to be effective in helping us.

To do what? To resolve the pain in the mind. For those who truly understand what he taught and make it a part of your lives, your gratitude to the Buddha will be immeasurable.

HIS MISSION

His 45-year mission :

Completely devoted to teaching people how to overcome the negativities in their minds so that they can experience happiness, unconditioned bliss & joy.

Negativities - our instincts, our cravings, our anger, jealousy, fear; our tendency to resent when things don't go our way, to covet someone else's things, to covet what we don't have etc. This list of negative emotions and instincts is very very long.... If we can purge these instincts, we will be happy.

The Buddha's mission was to teach the methodology to help individuals overcome their negative instincts.

THE TEACHINGS

Method / Way / Path out of dukkha OR way to happiness in this (and next) life.

The teachings are both a method AND a path. What is the significance?

A method implies a system/package of training → there is a framework, steps, a series of things to do. But Buddha himself consistently calls it a path (magga), a way, implying that it is a journey. It is a process whereby the individual starts to change gradually. This is a journey of self-discovery, or a journey to understand the mind. It takes time, it takes effort. It will not happen overnight.

And the Buddha himself puts it as Happiness in this life, and the next. What does that mean?

In this life, if you get the understanding correct, and the practice nailed, you should be happy. If you are not happy, you did not nail it. The point is, if you find that you are not happy, you cannot say that you are a student of the Buddha, because you did not get his method right. Measurement as to whether you are on the right path: Are you happier?

To sum it up, the teaching is a method, a system of training as well as a process. It takes time, it is gradual, it *will* happen for you, if you get it right.

TO WHOM DID HE TEACH?

Anyone who wanted to and could see Dhamma

In the early days when the Buddha started teaching, he threw in the criteria of “could see Dhamma”. Subsequently, this criteria was not important. As long as you are very sincere in seeking the path and you want to know where this path leads you, he would teach you.

No discrimination – gender, age, caste, socio-economic status, intellect, moral standing etc.

- from 7-80 yrs of age

No official limit placed on the youngest and oldest age. There was this very old man - so old nobody wanted to admit him into the order. The Buddha asked his disciples to remember whether this man had been kind to any of them (even just once), and return the favour by admitting him. In the end, it was Sāriputta who admitted him.

- the nun order

In ancient India, women were at the bottom of the totem pole, even lower than the sacred cow. The assumption in India’s ancient society was that women couldn’t understand Dhamma. It was also considered inauspicious for women to participate in religious activities. That’s why sons were highly valued.

Buddha not only taught women, he also opened the Saṅgha to women. It would have been the controversy of the century.

- **social outcasts - lepers**

eg. people from low castes, people who had breached caste rules.

- **servants and slaves**

There were many disciples of the Buddha who were palace servants, and they had a hand in influencing their masters. [As a palace lady (of high rank or royalty), you would not come out to mingle with the crowd. The only people you would speak to would be your maids].

- **the slow**

Refers to the intellectually slow. It is our natural instinct is not to teach someone who is very difficult to teach. Eg Cūḷa Panthaka - he was so slow that he could not even memorize one stanza (four lines) after one month. His brother (also a monk) told him to go home. Cūḷa Panthaka then went to the Buddha to say goodbye. Buddha gave him a white cloth, asked him to face the morning sun, use the cloth to wipe off the sweat on his brow, then rub the cloth and say, "Dirt be gone". When Cūḷa Panthaka kept doing that, the white cloth became stained. And as he kept staring at the stain, he realized anicca (impermanence) and with that, he realized the Dhamma.

The Dhamma is not about how smart you are, it is about how intuitively wise you are.

- **even a serial killer**

Aṅgullimāla – when this man converted and joined the order, it caused a ruckus. The king had mobilised his forces to capture the killer. The plan was to give him a grand stand-off ie. a public execution, but his plans were thwarted when Buddha admitted him into the Saṅgha. With him in the Order, the king had to bow to Aṅgullimāla instead. [When we read the words in the Sutta, they come across as very clinical and therefore do not convey the real emotions behind the story. Aṅgullimāla killed people and kept the thumbs of his victims as souvenirs. So having to accept Aṅgullimāla as a member of the Saṅgha was most probably very hard.]

Will ignore those who were lazy and refuse to follow instructions, "kill them".

The Buddha told a horse trainer that, for these people, he would "kill them". This means that the Buddha would not talk to them, instruct them or teach them.

What is the moral of the story here?

Taking the Buddha as an example, you will teach whoever is willing. You will only walk away only when they do not want to learn from you. Don't push.

METHOD OF TEACHING?

- Sample of his style, too many stories.
- First and foremost - sensitive to the needs and moods of listener.
- Feed them, calm them, disarm them.
- Simple and easy to understand and appreciate topics first; complex ones only when they are ready.

The Buddha did not launch into a talk. It wasn't his style. He would first assess whether people were receptive. He would get a sense of whether they were ready, and if they were ready, then whether they were ready for more difficult Dhamma. If not, he would start with something simple first.

This is called Gradual Training [Anupubbī-kathā]:

- 1) Dāna - Giving,
- 2) Sīla - Morality,
- 3) Sagga - Heavens,
- 4) Ādīnavā - Drawbacks,
- 5) Nekkhamma - Renunciation,
- 6) Cattari Ariya Saccaṇi - Four Noble Truths.

Dāna is a good thing, it opens the heart and makes it light. If you are a good, decent person, there is a chance that you will hear the teaching on Dāna and your heart will get light. By doing this, the Buddha is preparing your mind to listen to the Dhamma. You will be happy because there is a likelihood that you just gave. The people in ancient India liked to do Dāna to the practitioners because they believe they will get something in return. Dāna was therefore a popular subject.

Sīla - Are the Five Precepts just words or do they really sink in and become a way of life for you? For people who are struggling with these morality parameters, it is important for them to realize that morality is important. Their vipāka* can be quite messy if they do not observe morality. Buddha was trying to help them.

* vipāka = the consequence and result of a past volitional action. [accessstoinsight]

The next - the way to the Heavens (Sagga). How do you become such a good person that your next rebirth (to heaven) is assured? With this, the Buddha gradually takes you to the next topic of Ādīnavā (Drawbacks) - the dangers of indulging.

Finally, the joy of moderation → Nekkhamā (Renunciation). This is the practice already. Without even mentioning the Four Noble Truths and Noble Eightfold Path, he takes these people all the way to the Dhamma.

That is the brilliance of the Buddha → Dāna is simple, Sīla is obvious, Sagga is to give people joy. And then he talks about the dangers of indulging and the joy of moderation. That's pure Dhamma. So in one simple process, he takes you through the understanding of his teachings. And if your mind is soft and open in his presence, that's when you enter the stream.

A lot of people who entered the stream at that time had understood the Dhamma in this way. And at the point when you understand the Buddha, your mind stops clinging so tightly, and it starts to loosen. This means that, as part of entering this stream, you must learn to let go.

There are also people who went to the Buddha hungry. The Buddha offered them food. There is this story in the Dhammapada where a man spent the whole day looking for his cow, so by the time he saw the Buddha, he was very tired and hungry. The Buddha gave him food, which created a ruckus among the monks because it was not the practice for monks to give laypeople food.

There were also people who went to the Buddha crying. Many people did, especially women. Many of them had lost their children. Child mortality must have been very high in those days. The Buddha would tell them stories to calm them down so that he could get through to them.

To the intellectuals/educated/those who asked questions:

There are broadly two categories of people who went to see the Buddha:

- the masses
- the intelligentsia ie. philosophers, wanderers of other sects, the educated who approached him with all kinds of questions.

Four ways to answer :

1) Categorically

He would either give a “yes” or “no” answer. Sometimes, he would explain further ie. if there were four points to a question, he would answer the four points categorically.

2) In detail

If being categorical doesn't complete the answer, he would give them details. [Refer to discourses in Dīgha Nikāya & Majjhima Nikāya]

3) With a question

When there is a problem to the question, he would pose another question like “when you say this, what exactly do you mean?” He would get the person to define or elaborate on the question in order to seek clarification.

4) No reply

There are broadly ten kinds of questions which the Buddha would not reply to. They refer to:

- a. Speculation about the nature of the physical world eg. is the world infinite - Does it go on forever? Is the world permanent? Does it exist forever?
- b. Existence of the Buddha after death - A lot of people were fixated about what would happen to him after he died. Why wouldn't the Buddha answer such questions? (Speculation by SB) The reason why he wouldn't reply is because of the start point. The start point to a question like “Would the Buddha exist after death?” assumes that there is an essence → an essence called “Buddha”. In doing that, you are already starting on a wrong premise. How is the Buddha going to answer that? It is too complex, it is unnecessary, and it is irrelevant to the practice. When you realise, and become an Arahant yourself, you will have the answer. If not, you don't deserve the answer.

To make impact – visual aid; similes, analogies; animated delivery, powerful, inspiring speaker.

We believe that the Buddha was a powerful speaker because of what other people said about him. Members of other sects sought debates with him - why would they do that if he was not a worthy speaker?

The fact that they sought him out must mean that he was very impressive. And given the kind of people the Buddha was able to draw eg. kings, he couldn't have been a nobody. And he was a very effective speaker:

Visual Aids

The Buddha was famous for using visual aids eg. when he picked up some leaves and showed them to his disciples for them to see the difference between the leaves in his hand and those in the forest, it was meant to demonstrate the difference between the number of things he was teaching them (leaves in his hand) versus what he knew (the leaves in the forest) → he was giving them just enough for them to realise Nibbāna.

There were many people in his time who received visual aids when they were taught by the Buddha, eg. there was this man who felt very disillusioned because he was very sure he couldn't see Dhamma. Originally, he was given the usual object for meditation ie. corpse. Day after day, after looking at corpses, he became very upset. He told the Buddha he wanted to go home. Buddha gave him a lotus and told him to look at it. While he was contemplating on the lotus, the Buddha sped up the process of decay, but this was the decay of something beautiful (unlike a corpse). As he was looking at the lotus, his mind settled and became calmer. He realised change → impermanence.

For the monks who thought they had realisation (but didn't), the Buddha sent them to the graveyard to look at corpses. That is when they discovered that their feelings were not neutral when they looked upon these corpses - there was aversion etc. They were shocked that they didn't actually have realisation. And as they were looking, the Buddha told them that this was the consequence of life (ie. the process of decay) and then they had realisation. There are many many other examples of the Buddha using visual aids.

Similes / Analogies

The use of similes & analogies is a very powerful tool because the Dhamma is very obscure, very sublime, and therefore not easy to explain. In order to explain certain concepts, the Buddha would use either similes or analogies from people's lives. If the monks (during their lay life) or practitioners were bakers or hunters, they would use baking/hunting analogies. The Buddha would use things that they were familiar with so that the points which were obscure would come alive for them, making understanding easier. And there were many farming analogies, because ancient India was a farming community.

SPREADING DHAMMA

We know he was very successful in spreading Dhamma.

Number of monks grew to thousands.

The king in Rājagaha announced that there were two thousand something monks (exact count was used). Normally, in suttas, a round number is indicated eg. 500 (which shows that there was a lot but nobody counted so the exact number was not known.) Because of that, there is a very high chance that the king gave a real number or a very close approximation to one. That means that there were really more than two thousand monks living in just Rājagaha alone.

Spread throughout quite a wide territory in his lifetime.

The Buddha's teachings started in Uruvelā and Isipatana, Benares. It went from there to Rājagaha, Kosala, Sāvatti etc - places in northeast India.

Who's-who of the day were his patrons – elite of society!

The people who were his biggest patrons were the political and business elite in society. This is important because if not for money and power, the faith and teaching couldn't spread so far. Throughout the centuries, there is no way a faith can spread without the backing of the elite in society.

The young, energetic, the best and brightest were drawn towards the Buddha. In his time, his teaching was considered very ahead of time. They never heard such teaching before. They found that it helped to solve their immediate mental problems and issues. Like it or not, it is the young, the best and the brightest with problems. They are the ones with much angst and restlessness because their minds work so fast. Because of that, they went searching.

In those days, there were all kinds of people having all kinds of problems, checking out all kinds of teachers and trying to understand all kinds of doctrines. That was normal. And the Buddha was able to attract the best - his arahants were among the richest in society at that time.

DIFFICULTIES

Had terrible enemies – framed, slandered, targeted for assassination.

There were tough times. It was a zero-sum game - whatever that Buddha gained was a loss for some other sect or school or teacher. So he got into all kinds of trouble. His life reads like a Korean drama: Episode 33 - Framed for This, Episode 45 - Slandered for That, Episode 79 - Targetted for Assassination etc.

In his 36th year of teaching, the Saṅgha was almost torn apart. Devadatta came along and took out one chunk of his Saṅgha. Even with the Buddha there, his Saṅgha split! That's how bad it went. For the people of the day, it was scary, because the Buddha was still around and that happened. He was old by then, so what would happen when he was not around? So there was a lot of fear at that time.

Also, one of his disciples, Mahā Mogallāna, was brutally murdered. He was a powerful draw because of his psychic powers so he had a lot of disciples.

RELICS DIVIDED

Given royal treatment when he passed away.

The Buddha clearly had a successful run. We know that because people fought for his relics. If he wasn't such a prominent teacher in his time, why would they give him royal treatment. The manner in which his body was treated was reserved for royalty.

Today, people get the impression that the Buddha *asked* for royal treatment. Assuming he actually asked, would he have received it if he did not have some standing among the people?

Odds are he didn't ask for royal treatment, but they gave it to him because his followers and disciples were numerous and probably very rich and powerful, so they wanted the best for their teacher. Their devotion was tremendous. If they had followed the Dhamma, they would have gained the sense of joy. Even today, we get this joy when we read Dhamma, so imagine the kind of joy they got in front of the Buddha. Given that kind of emotion, they naturally wanted to demonstrate the love and affection they had for him.

Eight ruling families fought over his relics (according to records)

Including Ajātasattu, king of the most powerful kingdom of the day (Magadha). The Sākyan and Koliyan relations from his maternal and paternal sides also came.

CONCLUSION

Why was the Buddha important?

Because without him, no Dhamma.

First, no one could have been able to teach Dhamma the way he did. Dhamma is very difficult to see. Just to understand Dhamma conceptually is tough. The Buddha did it without a roadmap, without guidance. No one helped him. He figured it out himself.

Second, let's say you know what Dhamma is. Teach, and you really will scratch your head eg. How do you teach someone who is depressed to be happy? Try teaching someone who has not been happy his entire life to be happy. Where do you find the examples to teach? Therefore, teaching Dhamma is tough.

Third, the Buddha gave a DIY methodology. Something that a person can work out by himself because the Buddha is not around anymore. The DIY is the 8-Fold Path. That is a method that works, that runs by itself. In the last lecture that the Buddha gave, one of the very last things he said was that as long as there is an 8-Fold Path in that school, there will be Ariyas. That means that as long as a school uses this method, they can see Dhamma, they can realise the Dhamma.

To recap : The Buddha realised the Dhamma on his own (no one else did, and no one else could); he came up with a method of teaching, and the method survived him. And 2,500 years later, the method is still with us. That is the impressive part. If it didn't work for us, it isn't the Buddha's fault!

No realisation of how mind works and thus no way out of Dukkha.

Realizing how the mind works doesn't mean you know how to get out. Knowing how something works doesn't make you a problem-solver. But there is no way you can solve a problem if you don't know how it works. So there are actually two parts here.

What you want is a way out of dukkha. What you have to do is to understand how the mind works. Once you understand how it works, then you have a decent, reasonable chance of figuring the way out.

And certainly no Saṅgha – no generations of practitioners realising the formula, practice and helping others.

At the end of the day, you still need people to figure it out. People who read the map, then figure out *how* to read the map, and then decide to help and guide others. That's all they can do. They can't read the map for you. They can only help you in figuring out the clues. And you have to tell yourself - "if they can do it, I can do it".

The Buddha is the man who discovered the map, the Dhamma is the map, and the Saṅgha are the people who figured it out and who try to keep the Dhamma alive. That is the essence of the Triple Gem.

Incidentally, generations of very grateful disciples soon built a personality cult around him.

Buddha was a man, no more than a man. A great man, unique in history. But over time, very grateful people began to build a personality cult around him.

Estimated by some scholars to be within decades of his death. By and by prompted to divinity, the rest is history.

Within decades after his death, the idea of him being more than a man, being divinity, started to surface. The scholars knew that - if you go into the world of academia and read the books written by scholars as they trace the history of Buddhism, they will be able to tell you roughly around what period the idea of him as divinity started to surface in a big way.

For our practice, we want to know the method. For the next 9 lectures, it will be on the method. The last lecture is on realisation.
