

History of Sakya-Muni Buddha



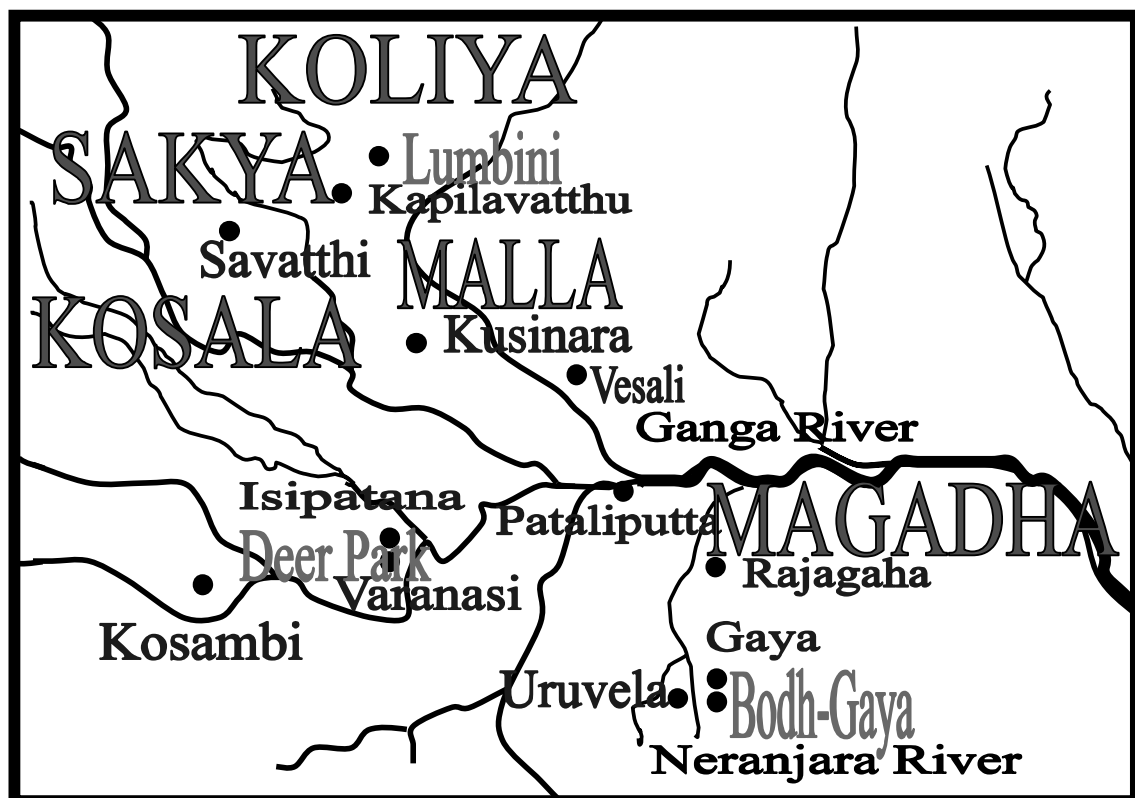
Prince Siddhartha Statue in Nepal: The statue is on the way to Lumbini from the India-Nepal border (Photo taken in December 2001).

The Sakya-Muni Buddha was the founder of Buddhism, a religion originated from North India. The full name of the Buddha is Siddhartha Gautama. He belonged to the Sakya clan. His father was King Suddhodana of Kapilavatthu, a small kingdom in southern Nepal near the India boundary today. His mother was Queen Maha-Maya, a princess of Koliya, North of Kapilavatthu.

A. Prince Siddhartha's Childhood

1. Prince Siddhartha's Birth Place

On a full-moon day of the fourth lunar month, according to the customs in those days, Queen Maha-Maya was on the way to her parents' home to give birth to her first child. On the way from Kapilavatthu to Devadaha (a city of Koliya), she stopped and took a rest in the Lumbini Garden, under a flowering sal tree. At this very place, in southern Nepal today, the queen brought forth a son, who was later named Siddhartha, which literally means, "*The one who will achieve his aim*". Later, Emperor Asoka (?- 226 BCA) of India erected a stone pillar engraved with a horse figure to mark the prince's birthplace. On the pillar, there were 93 Asokan (Brahmi) characters including "*Hida Budhe jate Sakyamuni*" (Here was born the Buddha, the sage of the Sakyans). Today, the world Buddhist community agrees that Prince Siddhartha was born in 624 BCE (Before the Common Era).





Emperor Asoka's Pillar at Lumbini Garden: The pillar is at the south face of the foundation of an ancient temple that was built at the location of the very sal tree where Prince Siddhartha was born (Photo taken in December 2001).

2. Prince Siddhartha's Virtuous Characters

Seven days after giving birth, Queen Maha-Maya died. The queen's sister, Princess Pajapati Gotami, nursed the prince as her own child. Prince Siddhartha was very modest and intelligent. He became skilled in many study disciplines such as history, literature, philosophy, religion, martial art, etc. However what made his teachers and friends respect him were his humility and loving nature.

Prince Siddhartha's compassion was developed very early and very widely. His love covered from insects to humans, from old people to children. One day at the age of eight, during a ceremony of the ritual of rice field ploughing, Prince Siddhartha recognised the sufferings of all living beings, from the hardship of farmers under the burning sunshine, the pain of earth worms being cut by ploughs, to the fighting of birds for painful worms. The scene touched deeply the young prince: He felt sorrow for all living beings. He retired from the ceremony and sat silently under a rose-apple tree. He recollected what he had seen. As he looked deeper and deeper in the natures of the sufferings, his mind became more and more concentrated and calm.