

## Module 1: The Many Lives of the Buddha

### Reading 1: The Buddha's Birth and Youth



Before he was born, the **Buddha's** mother had a dream. She dreamed of a shining white elephant that flew toward her and dissolved into her body. When she woke up in the morning, she told her husband about the dream. The Buddha's father was a king and asked the wise people of his court what the dream meant. They predicted that she would have a son who would grow up to be a great man, either a great ruler or a great teacher. This pleased the Buddha's parents.

The Buddha's mother was traveling in Lumbini when he was born. When it was time, she found a comfortable place under a tree and held on to one of its branches for support. The baby prince emerged from her side and was caught by the gods Indra and Brahma before his feet could touch the ground. The prince, who could walk and talk as soon as he was born, took seven steps in each of the four directions (north, south, east, and west) and announced that this was his final rebirth! Lotus flowers sprang up under his feet with each step. Then the queen, her attendants, and the prince returned to the palace.

His parents named the young prince Siddhartha. The king wanted a son who would follow in his footsteps and become a great ruler, so he trained Siddhartha to do all of the things a great king should be able to do. Siddhartha studied hard and practiced things like archery and horseback riding, mastering them all. When he was older, Siddhartha married and had a son of his own. Siddhartha's life in the palace with his family was wonderful, and his father sheltered him from any discomfort or unhappiness.

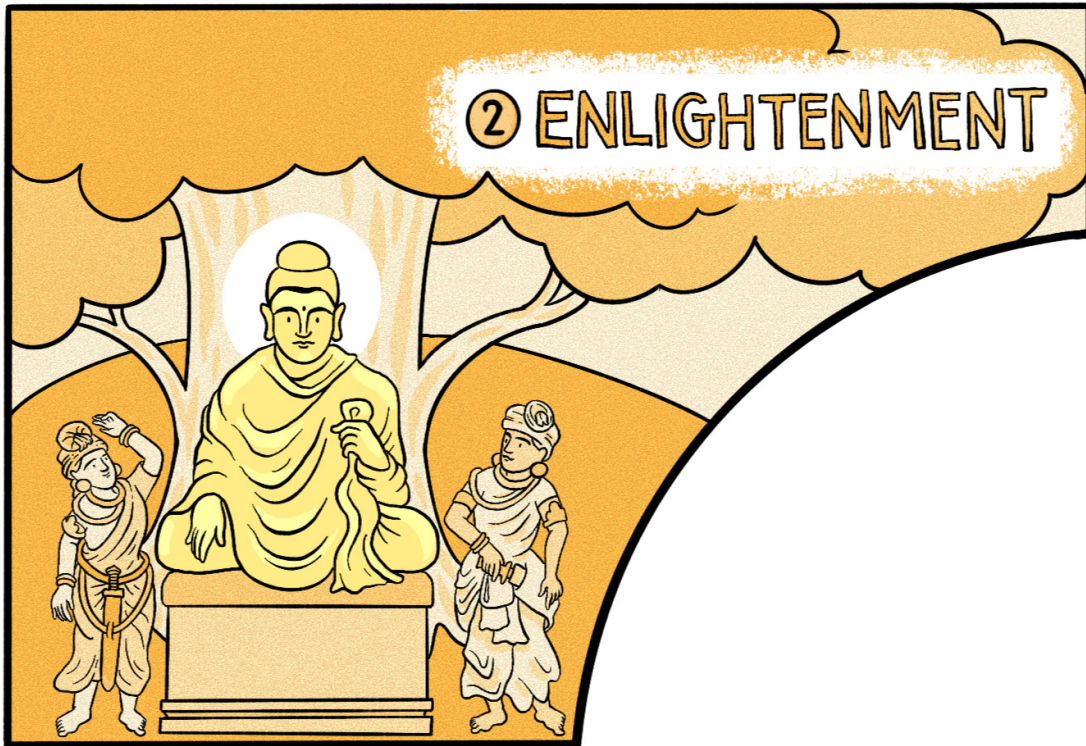
One day, Siddhartha wanted to go on a chariot ride outside of the palace. When he was traveling through the streets of the city, he saw something that shocked him. He saw a person who was sick, a person who was old, and a person who was dead. Siddhartha was so sheltered inside the palace that he had never met anyone who suffered the slightest bit or was unhappy in any way. He didn't know what sickness was. He didn't know that people eventually get old. He didn't know that everyone eventually dies. He became overwhelmed and upset by this news, but he also saw a fourth person in the city. He saw an ascetic, a person who gives up the comforts of life, like nice clothing, good food, shelter, family, and friends, and devotes themselves to study and practice in order to discover an important truth about the world.

When Siddhartha returned to the palace, he asked his father to tell him how he could avoid the suffering he saw others experience. His father told him that he could not avoid old age or death; this is the fate of every living being. Siddhartha was overcome by this news. He lost interest in all of the things in the palace that used to make him happy. Eventually, he decided to leave the palace and his family, and to seek the cause of suffering, just like the ascetic he saw in the city. He could not bear to say goodbye to his wife and child, so he slipped out quietly in the night.

Questions:

- What was unique about the birth of Siddhartha?
- Why was Siddhartha shocked by what he saw outside the palace?
- What is an ascetic?

## Reading 2: The Buddha's Enlightenment



After Siddhartha left the palace, he traded clothes with someone, took off his jewelry, and cut off his hair. He wandered around, seeking a way to overcome suffering and death. He studied with important teachers who emphasized ascetic techniques of extreme renunciation. Siddhartha practiced living in harsh conditions of heat and cold, eating little to nothing, and wearing thin robes. He grew so weak that, one day, he fainted. When he woke up, he thought that he was no closer to finding an end to suffering than he had been the day he left the palace. He ate a little food to get his strength back, found a tree to sit under, and vowed not to get up until he achieved his goal.

As he sat under the tree and meditated, he realized several important truths. He saw that neither his sheltered life of luxury as a prince nor his ascetic practices of renunciation would help him achieve his goal. Both of these paths were extremes, and the solution was to follow a **middle way** between these two extremes.

He also understood that everything in this world was connected or interdependent through cause and effect. Every action has a result; it causes other things to

happen. Kicking a wall can cause a person to hurt their foot. Every action has a cause. Maybe feeling angry caused the person to kick the wall. And what caused them to feel angry? This goes on and on in an endless chain of cause and effect. The word **karma** means action, and in Buddhism, it refers to both actions and their results, to cause and effect. And this karma doesn't stop when a person dies.

Siddhartha knew that this was not his only lifetime; he had been born before, not just once, but many times. All beings were stuck, like him, in this loop of birth and death called **samsara**. In each lifetime, he produced karma, which caused him to be reborn again, sometimes as a human, sometimes as an animal or something else. And in each lifetime, he suffered. The way out of this loop, the way out of suffering, was to stop producing karma.

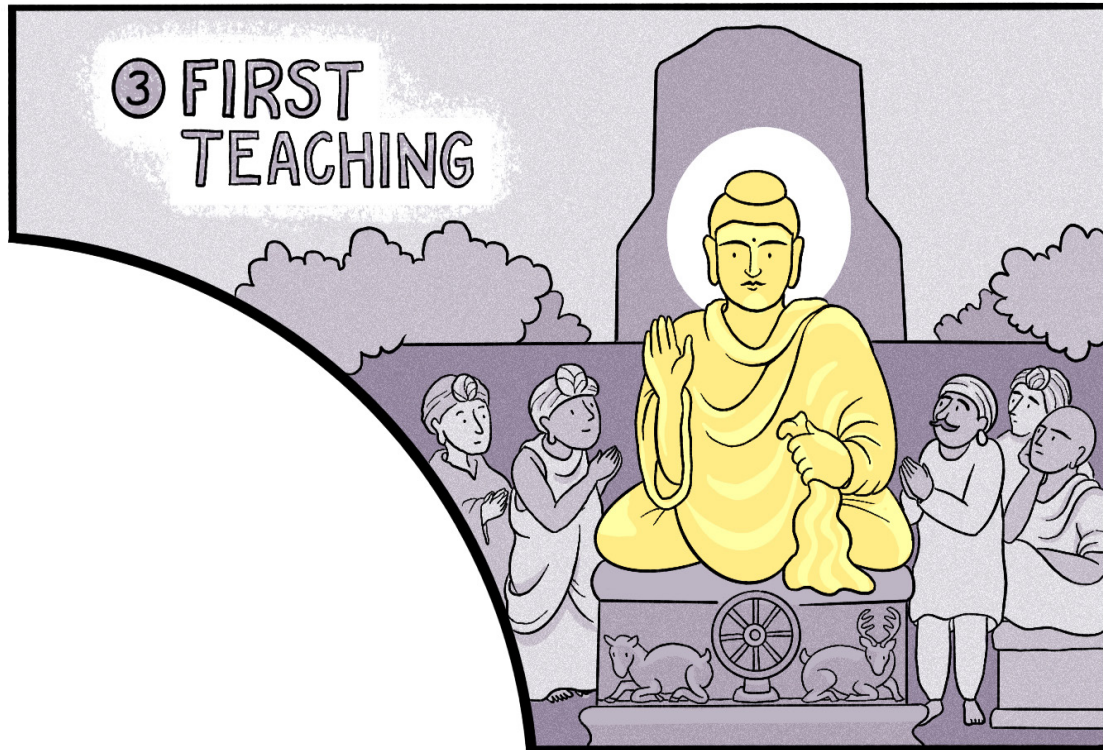
Siddhartha realized all these things sitting under the tree. But someone wasn't pleased with him. A deity named Mara oversees the cycle of samsara. Mara tried to stop Siddhartha from becoming a **buddha** and escaping his grasp. He threw weapons at Siddhartha to destroy or distract him, but nothing worked. Finally, he said to Siddhartha, "What right do you have to sit there and escape my grasp by achieving **enlightenment**?" Siddhartha reached down and touched the ground. Since the earth was there during each of his previous rebirths, it could testify to his achievements and his ability to become enlightened. Making this gesture, he said, "The earth is my witness!" And with that, he defeated Mara. He defeated the cycle of birth and death, of cause and effect, that everyone was trapped in. He became a buddha.

"Buddha" is a title, not a name. It means "awakened." A buddha is someone who has woken up to the way things really are, who understands the truth about reality. What a buddha realizes is called enlightenment. The Buddha did not claim to have invented these truths, only to have understood them. And the tree that the Buddha sat underneath when he became enlightened is called the Bodhi Tree—the tree of enlightenment—in a town called Bodh Gaya.

Questions:

- Describe some of the truths Siddhartha realized that led to enlightenment.
- What is the meaning of the hand gesture Siddhartha makes?

### Reading 3: The Buddha's First Teaching



After the **Buddha** gained **enlightenment**, he sat under the tree for a long time, thinking about what he had realized. At first, the Buddha did not want to share this realization. It was difficult, and few would understand. But he eventually decided he would share it with others. He looked for a group of five of his former friends and fellow students. At that time, the Buddha's friends were staying near a city called Varanasi in northern India. The Buddha joined them and sat down beneath a tree. Then he told them what he realized when gained enlightenment.

The Buddha left the palace to find a way to end suffering, and he taught this to his friends. He told them that all beings suffer, there is a cause of suffering, it is possible to end suffering, and there is a path to end suffering. This is called the **four noble truths**, which are in a word 1) suffering; 2) cause; 3) end; and 4) path.

The first truth is that all beings suffer. The Buddha taught that there are different kinds of suffering, not just feeling pain or discomfort. Sometimes we suffer because things just hurt. Sometimes we are unhappy because we want things we don't have, and sometimes because the things that make us happy are temporary—they'll eventually go away.

Imagine you really want some ice cream but don't have any, which makes you sad. If you do have ice cream, you may enjoy it while you're eating it. But at the same time, you might feel sad as the amount in your bowl gets smaller and smaller. Or maybe the first bite was too cold, and you felt brain freeze! These are all different kinds of suffering.

The second truth is that suffering doesn't just happen on its own. Suffering has a cause. Think again about feeling sad if you don't have any ice cream. The cause of that suffering is the feeling of wanting something we don't have. You might also feel sad if you have ice cream, but someone takes it away. Your attachment to the ice cream, that feeling of my ice cream, causes unhappiness when it's gone. In these cases, it's not the ice cream itself that's causing suffering. It's the feelings about the ice cream that cause unhappiness. So the cause of suffering is that want, that attachment or desire.

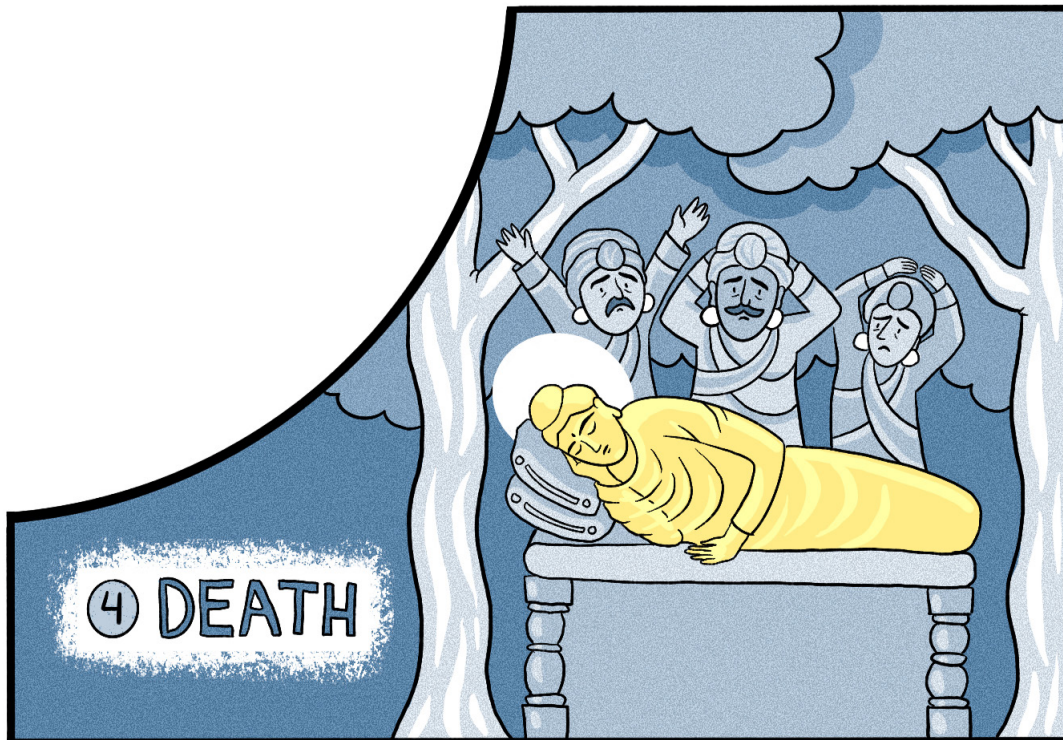
The third truth is that suffering can be stopped; it has an end. When the Buddha achieved enlightenment, he put an end to his suffering and stopped creating **karma**. So when he died, he wouldn't be reborn again. He could escape the cycle of birth and death called **samsara**. So he taught that there is an end to suffering and an end to samsara, to rebirth.

The fourth truth is that there is a path to follow to end suffering. Path here means the same thing as "way" or "method." The Buddha outlined the path to end suffering for his friends in his first teaching. It has eight parts and is called the eightfold path. It describes how to act, how to live, and how to understand things. The Buddha's friends all understood what he was saying and became enlightened too. This was the Buddha's first teaching. What he taught was called the **dharma**. Dharma can mean many things, but here it's similar to "truth" or "law," but law in the sense of "the way things are" and not in the sense of "here's a rule you need to follow." The Buddha's teachings are still referred to as the dharma today.

#### Questions:

- According to the Buddha, what causes suffering?
- How can one end their own suffering?
- What happens when Buddhists follow the dharma?

## Reading 4: The Buddha's Final Death



The **Buddha** spent the rest of his life teaching others what he had realized. He wandered around northern India teaching and eventually developed a large group of followers. As the community grew, they built places to live—what are sometimes called monasteries—and they built places to practice—what are sometimes called temples.

Some of the people who learned from the Buddha continued to live their regular lives. A farmer might listen to the Buddha teach then go back home and continue farming. Other followers chose to leave their regular lives, just like Prince Siddhartha did, and become monks and nuns. They spent their time listening to the Buddha, thinking about what he taught, and trying to achieve **enlightenment** themselves. Because they left their regular jobs, they survived by asking other people for food. Someone like the farmer might give them a bowl of rice to eat. This kind of exchange is an important form of Buddhist practice. Generosity, like giving someone food, can produce a good effect—good **karma**—for both the giver and receiver. That good karma can help someone achieve a better rebirth in the future. So while a farmer can't spend all day studying, they can support the monks

and nuns who do, benefiting both. The Buddha taught that there are many different ways to practice!

After teaching for many years, the Buddha grew older and realized that he was going to die soon. He went to a park with his students, found a place between two trees, and laid down on his side to rest. He asked his students if they had any questions about his teachings, about the **dharma**, but no one did. Then he said to them, “Everything changes and comes to an end. Work hard to achieve your own realization.” He closed his eyes, meditated, and passed away.

However, this death was different from the deaths and rebirths he experienced before. This was his final death. When the Buddha achieved enlightenment, he stopped producing the karma that keeps beings stuck in **samsara**. When the Buddha died this time, he would pass away and cease to be. This ceasing or ending is called **nirvana**. Nirvana means “to extinguish” or “to blow out.” When a candle is extinguished, the flame doesn’t go anywhere. Similarly, when the Buddha died, he would not be reborn.

What comes after the Buddha’s death is just as important as what came before. He told the community to burn his body and put his remains inside a stupa. A stupa is a type of structure made to hold the ash and bone left over after the Buddha’s cremation. His students built large mounds like hills and put the Buddha’s remains inside. These stupas became important places for Buddhist practice. People travel to them on pilgrimage—especially to the places he was born, became enlightened, first taught, and died. Stupas continue to be important places for Buddhists today. They look different from place to place, and people may do different things at them: light candles, burn incense, meditate, study, make offerings, or walk around the stupa to honor the Buddha. But these practices are all connected across time and place. Even though the Buddha passed away, stupas are places where people can connect with the Buddha, his teachings, and each other.

#### Questions:

- Based on the reading, what are some ways a Buddhist can create good karma?
- After achieving enlightenment, how was the Buddha’s death different from his previous deaths?
- What is a stupa and what importance does it hold for Buddhists?



**Module 1: The Many Lives of the Buddha**

# THE JATAKA TALES

## The Great Monkey King



MODULE 1: THE MANY LIVES OF THE BUDDHA

## Module 1: The Many Lives of the Buddha

**Directions:** Look closely at the illustration of the jataka tale below. Read the summary and story then answer the questions at the end. Be prepared to share your responses and thoughts about the story with the class.

**Summary:** A wise and compassionate monkey king ruled over a tree that grew extraordinary fruit. Concerned about what might happen if humans came to know of the fruit, he instructed his fellow monkeys to prevent any fruit from falling into the nearby stream, where it could be carried away. Despite their efforts, one fruit slipped into the stream. A king of a nearby city found the delicious fruit and wanted more of it for himself. So he sent people to attack the monkeys and drive them away from the tree. The monkey king made a bridge out of his body to help his fellow monkeys escape the tree, sacrificing himself to save his subjects. The human king was deeply moved by this display of courage, generosity, and selflessness.

**Story:** Long ago, the **bodhisattva** was born as a monkey. He was brave and clever, and he became the leader of the whole troop. The monkeys lived in a mango tree next to a river and were very happy eating the delicious fruit. The leader of the monkeys told everyone to be careful not to let any of the fruit fall into the water, in case they floated downstream, where others would notice them. He was worried that anyone who tried the fruit would want to have more of it for themselves. Though the monkeys tried to follow their leader's instructions, they overlooked one fruit. That fruit ripened and dropped into the stream. It was carried away, where it was eventually spotted by the king of that country, who was relaxing by the river. The king thought the fruit looked and smelled delicious, and he took it home with him.

When the king tasted the fruit, he thought it was delicious. He declared, "Nothing could surpass the flavor of this fruit!" He wanted to know where it came from, so he ordered some of his people to hunt for the source of the fruit around the riverbank where he found it. The king went with them while they searched. Soon, they found the tree laden with the delicious fruit, but they also saw that it was full of monkeys who were eating the fruit. The king wanted all the fruit for himself and ordered his troop to shoot the monkeys with arrows.

The monkeys in the tree were terrified! The tree was surrounded, and there was no way for them to escape. But their leader was not scared. He calmly surveyed his

options, trying to find a way to save the monkeys. He jumped from the top of the tree across the river to another tree, where he was out of bowshot. But the great monkey was stronger than the others and knew the rest of the monkeys could not make the leap across the river.

The great monkey found a strong vine. He tied one end around his waist and the other around a sturdy tree branch. Then he took a huge leap back across the river and reached out to grab hold of the mango tree. He held onto a branch of the tree with his hands, while his body stretched across the river. He told the other monkeys to cross to safety, using his body as a bridge.

All the other monkeys ran across the bridge he made with his body, reaching the other tree safely. They tried to go gently across his back, but it was nonetheless very painful for the great monkey. By the time they all crossed, he was terribly bruised and injured from being trampled, and soon he swooned and fainted. Meanwhile, the king and his archers watched all these events from the ground in amazement. How could a monkey show such wisdom, compassion, and bravery by helping others? When the great monkey fainted, the king ordered his archers to gently help the injured monkey to the ground, where they placed a blanket under him and tried to make him comfortable.

When the great monkey regained consciousness, the king asked him why he endangered his own life to save the others. With his dying breath, the great monkey said that he was not afraid of pain or death. He was the leader of the monkeys and felt happy to have saved them. The king was filled with deep emotion and reflected on the responsibility of a ruler to look after their people. He said that the great monkey was truly a worthy king and ordered him to be carried back to his city, where he held a royal funeral for that king of the monkeys. Ever after, the king ruled his people justly and nobly.

#### Questions:


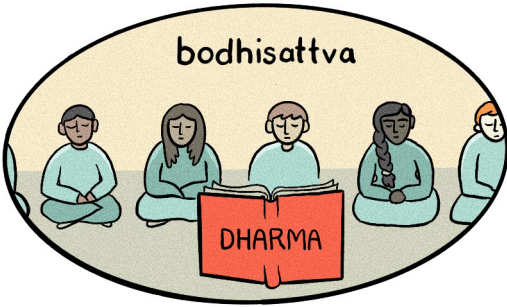
- What did the king learn from the monkey about being a good leader?
- What kinds of skills or qualities do you think the monkey developed during this lifetime?
- Think back to the story of the Life of the Buddha. Do you think the Buddha possessed any of these qualities? Why or why not?


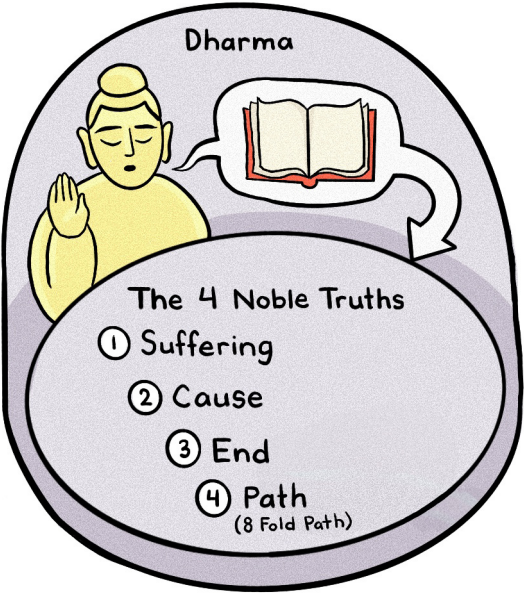


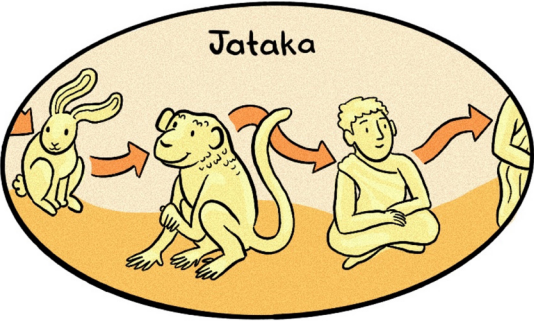
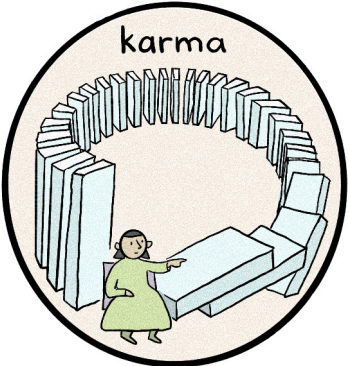
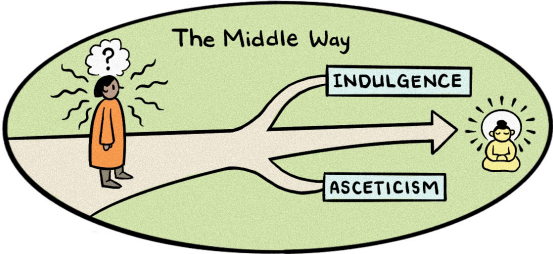
**Module 2: What did the Buddha teach?**

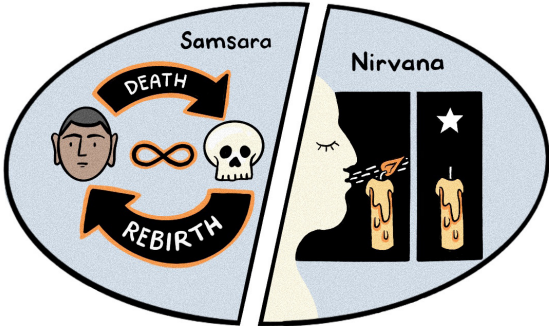
**Key Concepts Graphic Organizer**

**Directions:** Read the definition for each Key Concept, then write or draw an example of that definition.

Key Concept	Definition	Write or draw an example
 <p>An illustration of a Buddha figure with a serene expression, eyes closed, and a golden halo. The figure is set against a background of stylized green and blue waves. The word "Enlightenment" is written in black text above the figure's head.</p>	<p><b>enlightenment:</b> Bodhi (say: boh-dee) means enlightenment or awakening. Enlightenment is achieving a certain understanding of the way things are. When a person becomes a buddha, they are enlightened. They understand things like how karma and rebirth work. An enlightened buddha also knows all their past lives (jataka tales). Enlightenment leads to liberation from samsara, the cycle of birth and death.</p>	
 <p>An illustration of five people sitting in a circle on the floor. In the center is a large red book with the word "DHARMA" written on it. The word "bodhisattva" is written in black text above the group.</p>	<p><b>bodhisattva:</b> A bodhisattva (say: boh-dee-suht- vuh) is a person who aspires to become enlightened. Skills such as patience, wisdom, and generosity are necessary to become enlightened, and it takes many lifetimes. Each jataka shows how a bodhisattva works on developing those skills.</p>	

 <p>A circular illustration of a Buddha figure in a meditative pose, with a yellow halo behind his head. The word "buddha" is written above the figure.</p>	<p><b>buddha:</b> This is a title for someone who has achieved a great realization or enlightenment. It means awakened, to wake up. A buddha (say: boo-duh) is a person who has woken up. There can be many buddhas, but when we refer to the Buddha (capital “B”), we mean the person called Siddhartha who lived in India around 500–300 BCE</p>	
 <p>A circular illustration of a Buddha figure with a speech bubble containing an open book. The word "Dharma" is written above the figure. Below the figure is a list titled "The 4 Noble Truths":</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>① Suffering</li> <li>② Cause</li> <li>③ End</li> <li>④ Path (8 Fold Path)</li> </ul>	<p><b>dharma:</b> Dharma (say: dar-ma) means different things in different religious traditions. In Buddhism, dharma is what the Buddha taught. Its meaning is similar to “truth” or “law.” Dharma means law in the sense of “the way things are” (like the law of gravity) and not in the sense of “here’s a rule you need to follow.” When the Buddha teaches the four noble truths and the middle way, he is teaching the dharma.</p> <p><b>four noble truths:</b> The four noble truths are 1) the truth of suffering; 2) the truth of the origin of suffering; 3) the truth of the end of suffering; 4) the truth of the path. Put another way, these truths say: suffering exists, there is a specific cause of that suffering, it is possible to put an end to suffering, and these are the steps for ending suffering.</p>	

	<p><b>jataka:</b> Jataka (say: jah-tah-kah) are stories about the past lives of the Buddha. Before he became the Buddha, he was reborn many times in different forms, usually as a human or animal. The jataka tales recount how, during each of these lives, he worked on developing certain skills or qualities necessary for becoming a buddha (such as generosity, wisdom, and patience).</p>	
	<p><b>karma:</b> Karma means action. It refers to actions themselves and to their results (cause and effect). Karma is what causes people to be reborn and die again and again. It is also responsible for what a person experiences during their life. When a buddha becomes enlightened, they understand how karma works. Buddhas also stop creating new karma once they become enlightened.</p>	
	<p><b>middle way:</b> The middle way or the middle path is the way between the “two extremes” of indulgence (the Buddha’s life as a prince) and asceticism (the Buddha’s life after giving up everything). The Buddha realized that neither his sheltered life of luxury nor his ascetic practices would help him reach his goals of overcoming suffering and death. The solution was to follow a middle way.</p>	

	<p><b>nirvana:</b> Nirvana (say: ner-vah-nah) is freedom from the suffering and rebirth of samsara. The Buddha achieved nirvana when he gained enlightenment. From that point on, he did not produce any more karma. When he died, he was not reborn and was freed from samsara. When a person achieves nirvana, they stop creating karma, which is what causes suffering and rebirth. Nirvana is compared to blowing out a candle. In this analogy, karma is the flame; once it's extinguished, a person achieves nirvana. Nirvana is the goal some Buddhists want to achieve, like the Buddha, but not all Buddhist traditions work toward nirvana.</p>	
	<p><b>samsara:</b> (say: sahm-saah-rah) Samsara means wandering, and it refers to the cycle of death and rebirth that all beings are trapped within, “wandering” from lifetime to lifetime. Samsara is the cycle of suffering that the Buddha sought to escape.</p>	

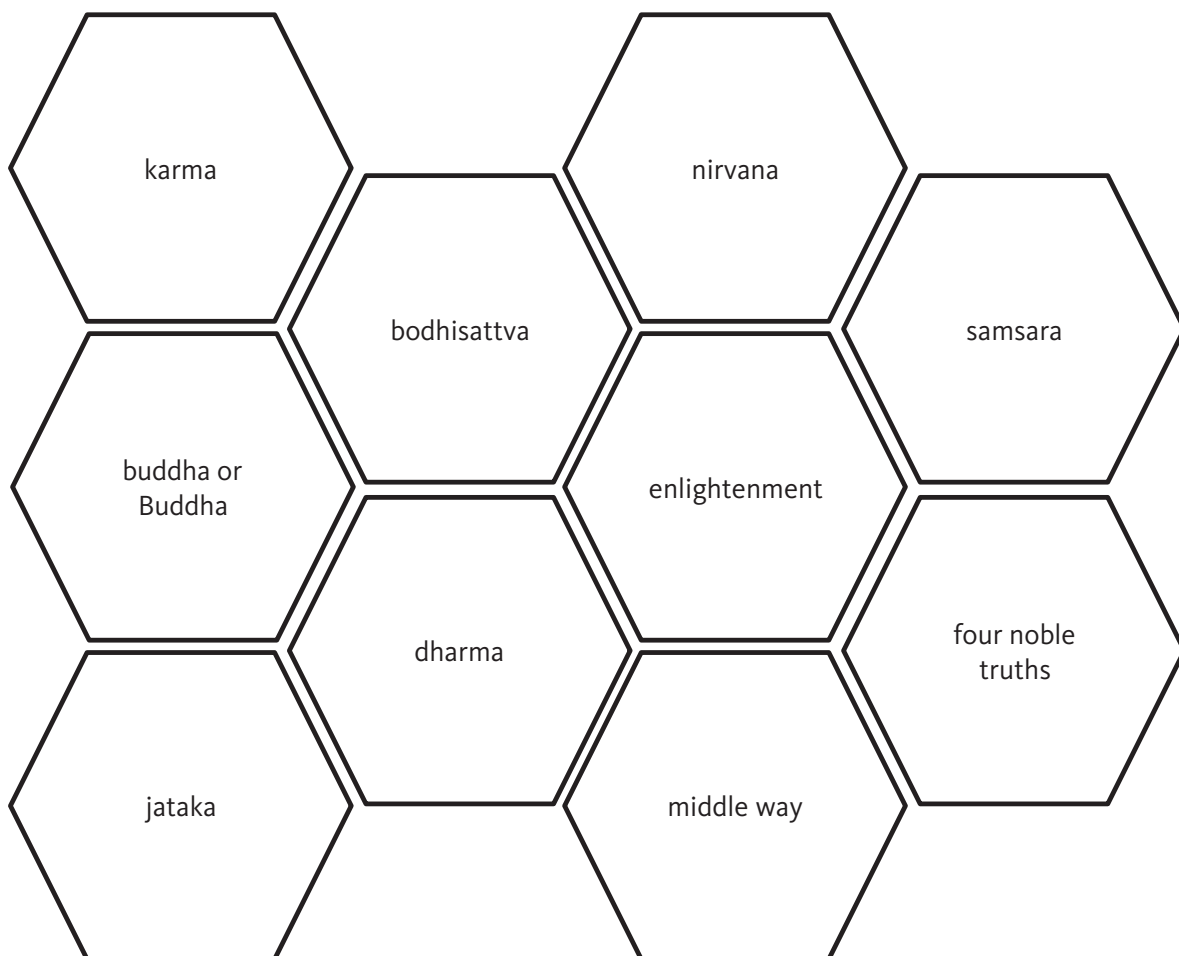


## Module 2: What did the Buddha teach?

### Hexagonal Thinking Key Concept Activity

**Activity:** Hexagonal thinking is a way we can organize concepts by making connections between vocabulary words or identifying concepts that are related to one another.

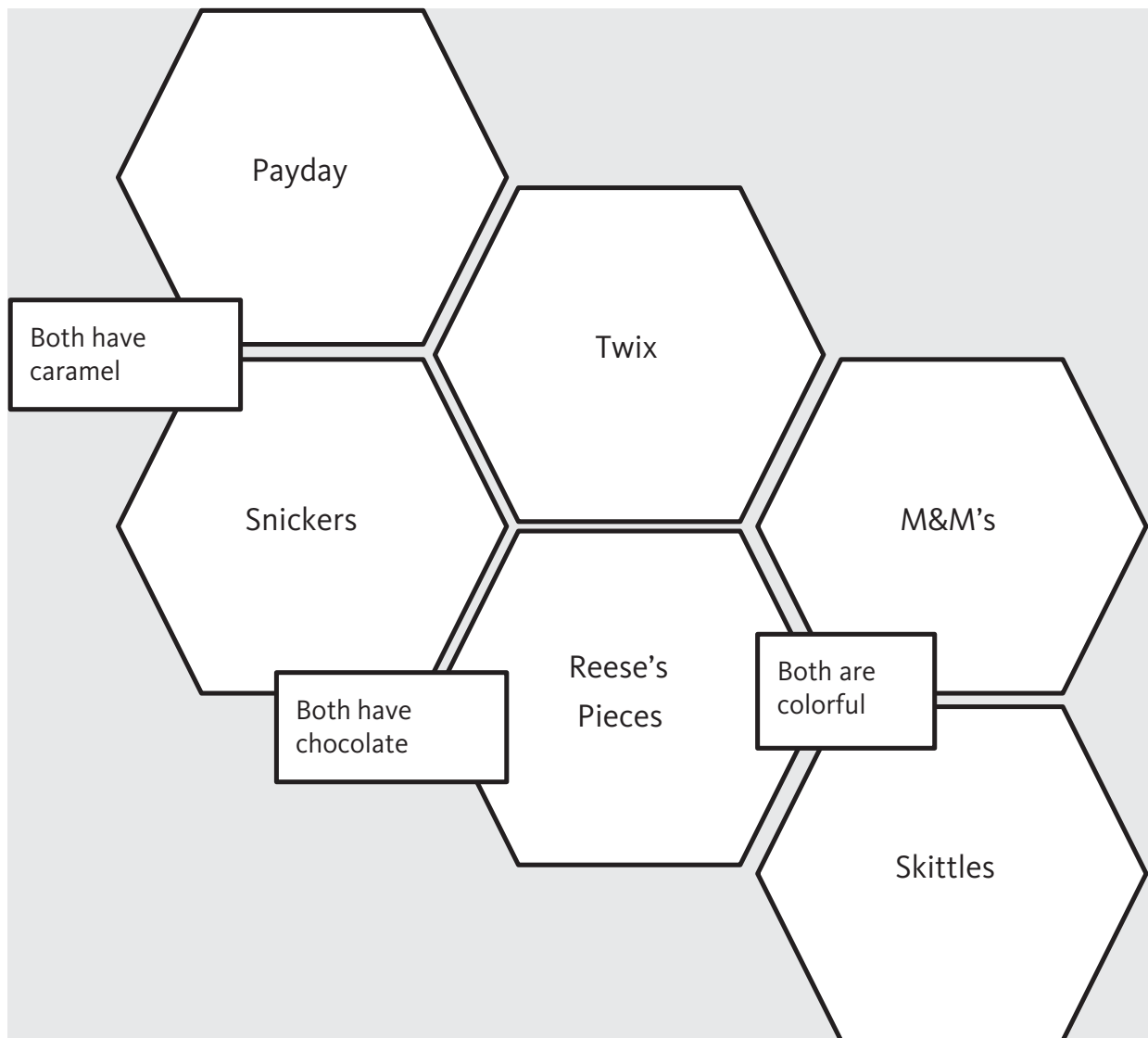
**Directions:** Cut out the hexagons below with the Key Concepts. Rearrange the hexagons on a blank sheet of paper. Connect the concepts to each other based on how you think they relate, then explain that connection in one sentence next to each group.



## Module 2: What did the Buddha teach?

### Hexagonal Thinking Key Concept Activity

Hexagonal thinking is a way we can organize concepts by making connections between vocabulary words or identifying concepts that are related to one another. The hexagons below are arranged based on connections between the vocabulary words. The rectangular boxes explain the connections.



### Module 3: The Spread and Diversity of Buddhist Traditions

**Directions:** Look closely at each object image and complete the table for each one. Compare and contrast the objects at the end of the activity.

	<b>Questions</b> <i>Write your responses below</i>	<b>Evidence</b> <i>Provide one piece of visual or textual evidence to support your response</i>
<b>Source</b>	What is the object's title?	
	Who created this object?	
	What materials were used to create this object?	
<b>Contextualize</b>	When was this object created?	
	Where was this object created?	
	In what sort of setting or environment might this object be used? <i>For example, indoors or outdoors, in public or in the home, by one person or in a group.</i>	
<b>Analyze</b>	How might this object be engaged with or used by Buddhist practitioners? <i>Consider materials, weight, size, location, etc.</i>	

Student Handout E: Object Analysis

	<b>Questions</b> <i>Write your responses below</i>	<b>Evidence</b> <i>Provide one piece of visual or textual evidence to support your response</i>
<b>Source</b>	What is the object's title?	
	Who created this object?	
	What materials were used to create this object?	
<b>Contextualize</b>	When was this object created?	
	Where was this object created?	
	In what sort of setting or environment might this object be used? <i>For example, indoors or outdoors, in public or in the home, by one person or in a group.</i>	
<b>Analyze</b>	How might this object be engaged with or used by Buddhist practitioners? <i>Consider materials, weight, size, location, etc.</i>	
<b>Synthesize</b>	What are some similarities between the objects you analyzed?	
	What are some differences between the objects you analyzed?	

**OBJECT 1:** *Sutra Scroll from Jingo-ji Temple: The Buddha's Teaching at Anupiya*, circa 1183–1185 CE. Japan; gold and silver ink on indigo paper, gilded copper or silver roller. Overall: 10 × 123 inches (25.4 × 312.4 cm). Founders Society Purchase, L. A. Young Fund, 61.5.

This is a Japanese illustrated handscroll. Several pieces of paper are joined together in a long sheet and attached to dowels at either end. The paper is rolled around the dowels when not in use. It is unrolled to show one section at a time while reading. The paper is dyed dark blue, and the text is written in gold ink. The illustration and decorative cover are drawn in gold and silver ink. The language you see is Chinese, which was often used for Buddhist texts in East Asia. This scroll is read from right to left, and not left to right, so the illustration is at the beginning of the scroll. The illustration shows the **Buddha** giving a teaching to an audience of two monks and two **bodhisattvas**. He sits on a lotus flower throne with his hands raised in a teaching gesture. There are hills, trees, and clouds behind him. The story in this scroll is a teaching the Buddha gives about **karma** and good moral behavior.

**OBJECT 2:** *Manuscript of the "Perfection of Wisdom in Eight Thousand Verses,"* circa 1160 CE. India; ink and opaque watercolor on palm leaf. Overall: 2 1/8 × 17 7/8 inches (5.4 × 45.4 cm). Gift of P. Jackson Higgs, 27.586.1A.

This is an illustrated page from a book made in India. The pages are made from the leaves of a palm tree. The two holes let strings bind all the pages together, then they are sandwiched between two wooden covers. Both sides of the page have writing on them. The language you see here is Sanskrit. It is a very old language often used for Buddhist texts. While this book was originally made in India, an inscription says it was later carried to Nepal. The text in the book is called the Perfection of Wisdom. Wisdom is one of the qualities a **bodhisattva** practices. The book discusses wisdom but also describes ways to create good **karma**, like making or reading a Buddhist text. The illustration on the left shows the Buddha's birth, and the illustration on the right shows the **Buddha** achieving enlightenment. The illustration in the center shows another **buddha** named Amitabha.



Student Handout E: Object Analysis

**OBJECT 1:** *Sutra Scroll from Jingo-ji Temple: The Buddha's Teaching at Anupiya*, circa 1183–1185 CE. Japan; gold and silver ink on indigo paper, gilded copper or silver roller. Overall: 10 × 123 inches (25.4 × 312.4 cm). Founders Society Purchase, L. A. Young Fund, 61.5.

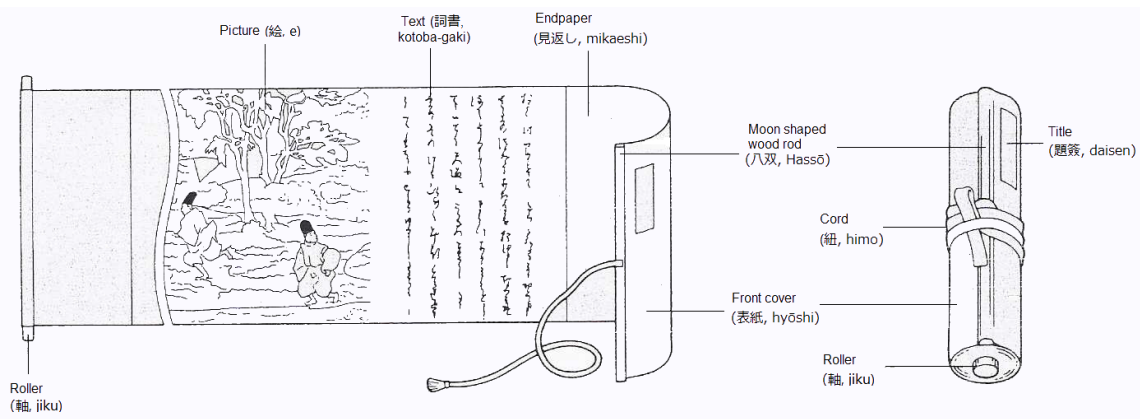


Diagram: Outline of an emaki (narrative picture scrolls from Japan). Masanori Aoyagi, *Nihon bijutsukan* The art museum of Japan, Tokyo: Shōgakkan, 1997, p. 560.

Student Handout E: Object Analysis

**OBJECT 2:** *Manuscript of the “Perfection of Wisdom in Eight Thousand Verses,”* circa 1160 CE. India; ink and opaque watercolor on palm leaf. Overall: 2 1/8 × 17 7/8 inches (5.4 × 45.4 cm). Gift of P. Jackson Higgs, 27.586.1A.



*Novice Monks Making Palm Leaf Manuscripts at the Wat Manorum, a major Buddhist temple and monastery in Luang Prabang, Laos, PLMP, National Library of Laos. Source: Wikimedia Commons.*

*Singhalese Manuscript 143, Painted wooden binding open to reveal palm leaves. Stylus included with manuscript. Wellcome Collection, London, UK.*



**OBJECT 3:** *Manuscript of the “Perfection of Wisdom in Eight Thousand Verses,”* circa 1160 CE. India; ink and opaque watercolor on palm leaf. Overall: 2 1/4 × 18 1/2 inches (5.7 × 47.0 cm). Gift of P. Jackson Higgs, 27.586.249A.

This is an illustrated page from a book made in India. The pages are made from the leaves of a palm tree. The two holes let strings bind all the pages together, then they are sandwiched between two wooden covers. Both sides of the page have writing on them. The language you see here is Sanskrit. It is a very old language often used for Buddhist texts. While this book was originally made in India, an inscription says it was later carried to Nepal. The text in the book is called the Perfection of Wisdom. Wisdom is one of the qualities a **bodhisattva** practices. The book discusses wisdom but also describes ways to create good **karma**, like making or reading a Buddhist text. The illustration in the center of the page shows the **Buddha’s** death. Two bodhisattvas are illustrated on the left and right.

**OBJECT 4:** *Buddha’s Descent from the Trayastrimsas Heaven,* circa 200 CE. Gandhara; schist. Overall: 46 inches (116.8 cm). City of Detroit Purchase, 25.63.

This is a stone relief sculpture. It comes from an ancient place called Gandhara, which covered parts of Pakistan, Afghanistan, and India. The sculpture was probably made to go on the outside of a stupa—a structure made to hold ash and bone that remained from the **Buddha’s** cremation. The outsides of stupa were often covered with sculptures like this one, especially of the Buddha’s life and **jataka** tales. Stupas could be small enough to hold in your hand or large like a building. This sculpture probably came from a large stupa. Going on pilgrimage to a stupa, walking around a stupa, and making offerings to a stupa are common forms of Buddhist practice that create good **karma**. There are several scenes depicted here. The main one shows the Buddha coming down from a heaven on a ladder. Above and below that are other events in the Buddha’s life, including his first teaching and his death. Vertical and horizontal bars separate the different scenes, like comic strip panels.



**OBJECT 3:** *Manuscript of the “Perfection of Wisdom in Eight Thousand Verses,”* circa 1160 CE. India; ink and opaque watercolor on palm leaf. Overall: 2 1/4 × 18 1/2 inches (5.7 × 47.0 cm). Gift of P. Jackson Higgs, 27.586.249A.



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**OBJECT 4:** *Buddha's Descent from the Trayastrimsas Heaven*, circa 200 CE. Gandhara; schist. Overall: 46 inches (116.8 cm). City of Detroit Purchase, 25.63.



A small votive stupa at the Indian Museum, Kolkata, also dated ca. 200 CE, shows the location of a similar relief panel with scenes from the life of the Buddha.



**OBJECT 5:** *Buddhist Prayer Wheel*, 19th century CE. Tibet; copper, bronze, wood. Overall (height by diameter):  $8 \frac{7}{8} \times 2 \frac{3}{4}$  inches ( $22.5 \times 7$  cm). Gift of Frederick Stearns, 90.1S14489.A.

Buddhist Prayer Wheels are popular objects in Tibet, where they are called “mani wheel.” The word “wheel” tells you something important about how they are used. A person holds onto the wood handle and turns the prayer wheel by rotating their wrist. The heavy ball and chain help it turn. The word “mani” is short for “om mani padme hum,” which is written on the outside of the prayer wheel. This special phrase can be repeated, like a chant or prayer, to create good **karma**. These special phrases are also on the inside of the prayer wheel, written hundreds or thousands of times on paper and curled up tightly. Rotating the prayer wheel is just like saying “om mani padme hum out loud,” but multiplied many times! “Om mani padme hum” is dedicated to the **Bodhisattva** Avalokitesvara.

**OBJECT 6:** *Portable Shrine to Bodhisattva Kannon*, late 18th–early 19th century CE. Japan; wood, metal, and gold. Overall (open):  $3 \frac{3}{4} \times 3 \times 1$  inches ( $9.5 \times 7.6 \times 2.5$  cm) Overall (closed):  $3 \frac{3}{4} \times 1 \frac{1}{2} \times 1$  inches ( $9.5 \times 3.8 \times 2.5$  cm). Gift of Mrs. James E. Griffiths, 16.21.

This is a small shrine with a statue of the **Bodhisattva** Kannon (say: kah-nohn), the Japanese name for Avalokitesvara. The Bodhisattva Kannon has a thousand arms and a thousand eyes, so he can see the suffering of everyone with his eyes and help them with his hands. The artist couldn’t fit a thousand arms here, but you can see many hands behind his shoulders. Because he wants to help everyone, Avalokitesvara is the bodhisattva of compassion. Compassion is a feeling of sympathy for the pain and suffering of others, and the wish to help end it. A shrine is a place or object that is sacred. Shrines can be places for devotion, worship, reverence, making offerings, and saying prayers. They can be any size, but this shrine is quite small, probably so it could be easily carried. The doors may help to protect the statue inside or hide it from view when not in use.



**OBJECT 5:** *Buddhist Prayer Wheel*, 19th century CE. Tibet; copper, bronze, wood.  
Overall (height by diameter):  $8 \frac{7}{8} \times 2 \frac{3}{4}$  inches ( $22.5 \times 7$  cm). Gift of Frederick Stearns, 90.1S14489.A.



*"A monk spins a prayer wheel a monastery the mountains of Garze." Sichuan, China.* *"Peregrina en el Potala"* Laura, Flickr. Itsperrygood, Wikimedia.

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**OBJECT 6:** *Portable Shrine to Bodhisattva Kannon*, late 18th–early 19th century CE. Japan; wood, metal, and gold. Overall (open): 3 3/4 × 3 × 1 inches (9.5 × 7.6 × 2.5 cm) Overall (closed): 3 3/4 × 1 1/2 × 1 inches (9.5 × 3.8 × 2.5 cm). Gift of Mrs. James E. Griffiths, 16.21.





**OBJECT 7:** *Shakyamuni as an Ascetic*, late 13th–early 14th century CE. China; wood with lacquer, gilding, and traces of color. Overall: 11 3/4 × 8 1/8 × 6 1/2 inches (29.8 × 20.6 × 16.5 cm). City of Detroit Purchase, 29.172.

This sculpture shows the **Buddha** Shakyamuni as an ascetic, a person gives up material comforts. His body shows signs of fasting, his feet are bare, and he wears a patchwork robe. The Buddha taught that neither luxury nor asceticism prevented suffering. Instead, he taught the **middle way**. This depiction of the Buddha is somewhat unusual. Some features identify him as an enlightened **buddha**: a patchwork robe, long earlobes, the dot between his eyebrows called an urna (say: oor-nuh), and the bump on top of his head called an ushnisha (say: oosh-neesh-uh). But other typical features are missing (a raised chair or throne, the hand gesture of touching the ground, a cross-legged posture, and short, curled hair). Because of this unusual appearance, scholars are not certain if this shows the Buddha before or after he achieved **enlightenment**.

**OBJECT 8:** *Votive Tablet with Buddha at the Moment of Enlightenment*, 9th–11th century CE. India; terracotta. Overall: 5 3/4 × 2 1/2 × 3/4 inches (14.6 × 6.4 × 1.9 cm) Including base: 7 × 4 × 3 inches (17.8 × 10.2 × 7.6 cm). City of Detroit Purchase, 27.278.

This votive tablet from India depicts the **Buddha** Shakyamuni. It is molded from a slab of clay. “Votive” here means to express a wish, desire, or prayer in devotion or gratitude. A votive tablet of the Buddha can be used to express devotion. The Buddha is depicted at the moment of **enlightenment**, with his right hand reaching down to touch the earth. He is sitting in front of a temple that was built centuries after he lived. Buddhists travel to the temple to make offerings, prayers, and express devotion. Clay tablets like this one may have been made as pilgrimage tokens or souvenirs that could be carried back home.



**OBJECT 7:** *Shakyamuni as an Ascetic*, late 13th–early 14th century CE. China; wood with lacquer, gilding, and traces of color. Overall: 11 3/4 × 8 1/8 × 6 1/2 inches (29.8 × 20.6 × 16.5 cm). City of Detroit Purchase, 29.172.



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