

In The Dawn of Awakening

as edited by

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Narada Thera, in *The Buddha and his Teachings*, describes the first stages of the awakening after abandoning a previous period of extreme asceticism:

“Regaining his lost strength with some coarse food, he easily developed the first *jhāna* which he gained in his youth. By degrees he developed the second, third and fourth *jhānas* as well. By developing the *jhānas* he gained perfect one-pointedness of the mind. His mind was now like a polished mirror where everything is reflected in its true perspective. Thus with thoughts tranquillized, purified, cleansed, free from lust and impurity, pliable, alert, steady, and unshakable, he directed his mind to the knowledge as regards 'The reminiscence of past births' (*pubbe-nivāsānussati māna*).

“He recalled his varied lots in former existences as follows: first one life, then two lives, then three, four, five, ten, twenty, up to fifty lives; then a hundred, a thousand, a hundred thousand; then the dissolution of many world cycles, then the evolution of many world cycles, then both the dissolution and evolution of many world cycles.

“In that place he was of such a name, such a family, such a caste, such a dietary, such the pleasure and pain he experienced, such his life's end. Departing from there, he came into existence elsewhere. Then such was his name, such his family, such his caste, such his dietary, such the pleasure and pain he did experience, such life's end. Thence departing, he came into existence here. Thus he recalled the mode and details of his varied lots in his former births.

“This, indeed, was the First Knowledge that he realized in the first watch of the night. (Narada 22, 1998)

“Dispelling thus the ignorance with regard to the past, he directed his purified mind to 'The perception of the disappearing and reappearing of beings' (*cutūpapāta māna*). With clairvoyant vision, purified and supernormal, he perceived beings disappearing from one state of existence and reappearing in another; he beheld the base and the noble, the beautiful and the ugly, the happy and the miserable, all passing according to their deeds. He knew that [some] individuals, by evil deeds, words, and thoughts, by reviling the Noble Ones, by being misbelievers, and by conforming themselves to the actions of the misbelievers, after the dissolution of their bodies and after death, had been born in sorrowful states. He knew that these good individuals, by good deeds, words, and thoughts, by not reviling the Noble Ones, by being right believers, and by conforming themselves to the actions of the right believers, after the dissolution of their bodies and after death, had been born in happy celestial worlds. Thus with clairvoyant supernormal vision he beheld the disappearing and the reappearing of beings.

“This, indeed, was the Second Knowledge that he realized in the middle watch of the night.

“Dispelling thus the ignorance with regard to the future, he directed his purified mind to 'the comprehension of the cessation of corruptions' (*asavakkhaya māna*). In this particular text only three are mentioned. Here *bhava* means the desire to be born in the realms of form and formless realms (*rūpa* and *arūpa bhava*). He realized in accordance with fact: 'This is sorrow,' 'This, the arising of sorrow,' 'This, the cessation of sorrow,' 'This, the path leading to the cessation

of sorrow.' Likewise in accordance with fact he realized: 'These are the corruptions,' 'This, the arising of corruptions,' 'This, the cessation of corruptions,' 'This, the path leading to the cessation of corruptions.' Thus cognizing, thus perceiving, his mind was delivered from the corruption of sensual craving; from the corruption of craving for existence; from the corruption of ignorance. Being delivered, he knew, 'Delivered am I' (*vimutto'smi.*) and he realized, 'Rebirth is ended; fulfilled the Holy Life; done what was to be done; there is no more of this state again.' (*khinā jāti, vusitam brahmacariyam, katam karaniyam nāparam itthattaya.*)

“This was the third knowledge that he realized in the last watch of the night. (Narada 23)

“Ignorance was dispelled, and wisdom arose; darkness vanished, and light arose. (Narada 24)

Characteristics of the Buddha

“After a stupendous struggle of six strenuous years, in his 35th year the ascetic *Gotama*, unaided and unguided by any supernatural agency, and solely relying on his own efforts and wisdom, eradicated all defilements, ended the process of grasping, and, realizing things as they truly are by his own intuitive knowledge, became a *Buddha* — an Enlightened or Awakened One.

“Thereafter he was known as *Buddha Gotama*, one of a long series of Buddhas that appeared in the past and will appear in the future. He was not born a Buddha, but became a Buddha by his own efforts. The Pāli term Buddha is derived from '*budh*,' to understand, or to be awakened. As he fully comprehended the four Noble Truths and as he arose from the slumbers of ignorance, he is called a Buddha.

“Since he not only comprehends but also expounds the doctrine and enlightens others, he is called a *sammā sambuddha*__a Fully Enlightened One__to distinguish him from *pacceka* (individual) Buddhas who only comprehend the doctrine but are incapable of enlightening others. His disciples addressed him as *Buddha*, *Bhagavā* (Exalted One), *Sugata* (Wellgone One) etc, while alien followers addressed Him as *Bho Gotama*, (Venerable *Gotama*), *Samana Gotama* (Ascetic Gotama), etc., Referring to himself the Buddha used the term '*Tathāgata*' meaning 'He who hath thus come,' 'He who hath thus gone.' (Narada 25)

“Before his elightenment he was called Bodhisatta which means one who is aspiring to attain Buddhahood. Every aspirant to Buddhahood passes through the Bodhisatta period__a period of intensive exercise and development of the qualities of generosity, discipline, renunciation, wisdom, energy, endurance, truthfulness, determination, benevolence and perfect equanimity. In a particular era there arises only one *sammā sambuddha*. Just as certain plants and trees can bear only one flower, even so one world-system (*lokadhātu*) can bear only one *sammā sambuddha*.

“The Buddha was a unique being. Such a being arises but rarely in this world, and is born out of compassion for the world, for the good, benefit, and happiness of gods and men. The Buddha is called '*acchhariya manussa*' as he was a wonderful man. He is called '*amatassa dātā*' as he is the giver of deathlessness. He is called '*varado*' as he is the giver of the purest love, the profoundest wisdom, and the highest truth. He is also called *dhammassāmi* as he is the Lord of the Dhamma (doctrine).

“As the Buddha himself says, 'He is the Accomplished One (*tathāgata*), the Worthy One (*araham*), the Fully Enlightened One

(sammā sambuddha), the creator of the unarisen way, the producer of the unproduced way, the proclaimer of the unproclaimed way, the knower of the way, the beholder of the way, the cognizer of the way.'”
(Narada 26)

Reference

Narada Thera. 1998. *The Buddha and his Teachings*. Taipei: Corporate Body of the Buddhist Educational Foundation.