

# SKYwriting

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The Buddha in meditation.  
Sind, 5th century.

## Gautama Buddha (563-483 B.C.)

### LIFE SKETCH

Name	Gautama Buddha
Father's Name	King Śuddhodhana Gautama
Mother's Name	Queen Mahāmāyā
Birth Date	Full moon-Vaiśākha, 563 B.C.
Sex	Male
Caste	Ksatriya (Warrior)
Place	Kapilavastu, INDIA
Marital Status	Married
Lifespan	80 Years

### IMPORTANT FACTS ABOUT HIS BIRTH

Queen Mahāmāyā was returning to her parent's home for the delivery, as was the custom. On her way she rested in the Lumbini Garden, surrounded by Aśoka trees. A male child was born on the full moon day in the month of Vaiśākha (Spring). He was named Siddhārtha which means "every wish fulfilled." One week later, the queen died. Her younger sister, Mahāprajāpati became Siddhārtha's foster mother.

### ENVIRONMENTAL INFLUENCES

#### Home

As a child, he was deprived of a mother's love. Asita, a hermit, predicted that if the prince remained at the palace, he would become a great king. But if Siddhārtha embraced the religious life, he would become a buddha (enlightened one, awakened one).

#### Education

At the age of seven, the prince began his lessons in the civil and military arts. It is said that he also studied traditional Vaidic literature from Brahmins.

#### Caste

Ksatriyas of his time were dissatisfied with the existing religion.

## UJJĀYĪ

### Breathing with Sound (First Stage)



#### Technique

Sit in any comfortable meditative pose.

Raise the chest first while inhaling, then imagine the expansion of the rib cage, and then the abdomen. Keep the abdomen slightly contracted.

Then follow the reverse order in exhalation: contract the abdomen, rib cage, and finally chest, but without too much movement of the chest.

Take the breath in with a partial closure of the glottis, as a person does in snoring, but in a smooth, rhythmic, controlled way. Then exhale with the sound. Learn from a Yoga teacher how to produce the proper sound. You can also try this method to produce the proper sound: exhale through your mouth with a "ha" sound, then do the same with your mouth closed.

After mastering the exhaling phase, try inhaling with sound. According to tradition, Pūraka (inhaling) through both nostrils, Kumbhaka (retention), and Recaka (exhaling) through the left nostril is prescribed (H.P. II, 51-53). It is suggested that beginners only practice the inhaling and exhaling phases, using both nostrils, with a natural pause between the two. Close your eyes and attend to the sound you produce. Repeat ten times.

#### Suggestions

1. Do not bother, at the beginning stage, with the ratio of inhalation and exhalation, as is often mentioned in the Yogic literature.
2. Learn to breathe with sound, rhythmically and smoothly, with both nostrils.
3. Slowly, gradually, increase the duration.
4. If a nostril is clogged and you cannot breathe properly, learn nasal cleansing practices from your teacher.
5. Exhale first before you start Pūraka.
6. Start with ten cycles; increase gradually under the supervision of a teacher.

#### Results

It helps to overcome tension and to vitalize the body in general, and the nervous system in particular. It relieves depression and may induce deeper states of consciousness. If properly guided, it is very helpful.

#### Discussion and References

The meaning of the word Ujjāyī is that which leads to success (Prāṇāyāma, p.52). The traditional method for inhaling through both nostrils and exhaling through the left seems to practically double the duration of exhalation.

Inhalation in Yogic breathing is done in a particular manner and therefore, in Yogic terminology, the word Pūraka is used, which is a different word than the word for normal inhalation, Śvāsa. So is the case with Yogic exhalation, or Recaka, as differentiated from normal exhalation, Praśvāsa. Yogic retention is known as Kumbhaka, which is different than normal retention, or holding the breath. These terms, Pūraka, Kumbhaka, and Recaka are used for various Prāṇāyāma, or breath control techniques; i.e., the style of inhalation and exhalation differs among the techniques (H.P. II, 46-48).

Prāṇāyāma occupies a special place in Yogic literature.

*A Teacher's Guide for Beginning Yoga*, Chapter XXVI

ॐ वायुर्मे प्राणे श्रितः ।

प्राणो हृदये ।

हृदयं मयि ।

अहममृते ।

अमृतं ब्रह्मणि ॥

Om vāyurme prāṇe śritaḥ /

prāṇo hṛdaye /

hṛdayam mayi /

ahamamṛte /

amṛtam brahmaṇi //

OM

Vayu (air) dwells in my Prana (breath);

the breath in the heart;

the heart in me;

I in immortality.

Immortality dwells in Brahman.



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Hatred does not cease by hatred,  
but only by love;  
this is the eternal rule.

BUDDHA

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### Other events

While visiting Lubini Park, Siddhārtha beheld a decrepit old man, a diseased man, a dead man and a religious ascetic.

At about the age of eighteen, King Śuddhodhana arranged his marriage to the Princess Yaśodharā who was the daughter of Suprabuddha, the Lord of Devadaha (the brother of the late queen).

When Siddhārtha was twenty-nine, Yaśodharā bore him a son named Rāhula.

### REACTION

Marriage and the birth of his son did not overcome the emotional and mental struggles that Siddhārtha experienced in relation to sickness, old age and death. At age twenty-nine he decided to leave his home and live the life of a mendicant. He left the palace at night while his wife and son were sleeping. He rode his favorite white horse, Kanthaka, accompanied by his charioteer, Chandaka. He shaved his head and traveled south then eastward, carrying a begging bowl.

### PRACTICES

Siddhārtha visited prominent teachers such as Ārāda Kālāma of Vaiśālī and Udraka Rāmaputra of Magadha. He learned and practiced methods for attaining Nirvāna, but after sometime he was dissatisfied with their approach. He left them and went into the forest of Magadha. For the next six years he performed severe ascetic practices of fasting and meditation on the bank of the Nairanjan River.

During this period he had five companions (disciples) who stayed with him. When after six years he had not realized his goal of inner peace and enlightenment, he concluded that severe ascetic practices were futile. He took a bath in the river and accepted a bowl of milk from a maiden named Sujātā.

His disciples were disappointed, they thought he had "fallen", so they left him. Siddhārtha was very weak but he was determined never to leave that place until he found the way to enlightenment.

He sat for meditation under a big tree. It is said that the experience came to him when the morning star appeared in the eastern sky. He was thirty-five years old. From that time he became known by different names such as Buddha, Tathāgata, Śākyamuni.

### TEACHING

His mental state now healthy (enlightened), he returned to Vārānasi. The five disciples who had left him became his first followers. King Bimbisāra, King Śuddhodhana (his father), his step-mother, Princess Yaśodharā (his wife) and all the members of the Śākya clan became his followers.

He lived on alms and taught people his way of life. For about forty-five years he preached in the language of the people, faced threats on his life, established the Saṅgha (community), and emphasized Karuṇā (compassion).

He formulated the four noble truths (Catvāri Ārya Satyāni):

1. The truth of suffering (Duhkha)
2. The suffering caused by craving (Tanhā)
3. The cessation of suffering (Duhkha Nirodha)
4. The eightfold path (Ārya Aṣṭāṅga Mārga) – right understanding, thought, speech, action, occupation, effort, mindfulness and meditation.

These truths are difficult to understand. They are the result of insight meditation. Dharma (law, teachings) in Buddhism covers all aspects of life. Buddhists seek refuge in the Buddha, the Dharma and the Saṅgha.

### FINAL MESSAGE

Buddha died at the age of eighty after a short illness. When he was on a missionary journey from Rājagriha to Srāvasti, he predicted that in three months he would enter Nirvāna.

Food offered to him by a blacksmith named Cunda made him critically ill. With great pain and effort he reached the forest that bordered Kuśinagara. It is said that, lying between two large Sala trees, he taught his disciples until his last moment.

Buddha's message was "Decay is inherent in all component things. Work out your own salvation with diligence." And also, "My disciples, my last moment has come, but do not forget that death is only the vanishing of the physical body. The body was born from parents and nourished by food. Just as inevitable are sickness and death. But the true Buddha is not a human body. It is enlightenment..."

Under the guidance of his favorite disciple, Ānanda, he was cremated at Kuśinagara.

### SUMMARY and CONCLUSION

Born a prince. Deprived of mother's love. Married a beautiful wife. Blessed with a son. Frustrated with life. Became a mendicant. Wandered in search of truth. Practiced intensely. Got nowhere. Let go and the answer came (enlightenment). Returned to the world. Faced death threats. Shared his experience of love (Ahimsā, compassion). And left the legacy that is Buddhism, followed by 300 million people.

The ancient texts of Buddhism include: The Tripitaka, Anguttara Nikāya, Dhammapāda, Samyutta Nikāya, Sūta Nipāta and Dīgha Nikāya.

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From the forthcoming book,  
**Explorers of the Truth**  
by Vijayendra Pratap