



This painting shows Siddhartha soon after his birth. At the far right, King Suddhodana holds his son. Queen Maya sits to the left of the king. Royal court members kneel below them.

Buddha a Sanskrit word meaning “enlightened;” the name given to the man who founded Buddhism

16.2 Prince Siddhartha’s Birth

Prince Siddhartha was born about 563 B.C.E. in the present-day country of Nepal, near the Himalayas. His father, Suddhodana, was a powerful king. His mother was Queen Maya.

According to Buddhist tradition, before her son was born, the queen had a dream. In the dream, she was carried high over the Himalayas to a silver mountain and set on a silver couch. A white elephant with six tusks walked around her and then struck her in the right side.

The king and queen asked the Brahmins, or Hindu priests, to explain her dream. “You are carrying a child who will be a great man,” they told the queen. The Brahmins declared that the prince’s future held two possible paths. As a prince, he could rule the universe. But if he left his royal life to see the suffering in the world, he would become the **Buddha**, one who is enlightened.

The queen gave birth to Prince Siddhartha in a garden. Stories say that after the prince’s birth, a soft, warm rain of heavenly flowers fell on the baby and his mother. According to Buddhist tradition, the infant prince already looked a few years old and could walk and talk. Siddhartha began his remarkable life by taking a few steps and declaring, “I am the leader of the world and the guide to the world.”

16.3

Prince S
powerfu
made by
he migh

The l
of the w
and bea
houses,
every ne
amusem

The p
he alway
Some da
wonder

At th
noblewo
nights. I
enjoying
they had

