

Chapter 1: Pilgrim's Way

The “four signs” (old age, sickness, death, and the samana) are mentioned by the Buddha as having been witnessed by his (legendary) predecessor, the Buddha Vipassi. See Digha Nikaya, Mahapadana Sutta (sutta 14). [DN ii, 22–29]. There is very little autobiographical or accurate biographical material concerning the Buddha—especially his early life—in the texts that originated during or soon after his lifetime. Much of the personal history of the Buddha seems to have been created a few hundred years after his death, when the patronage of Emperor Ashoka had made “Buddhism” a popular religion. People then needed a person to hang the teachings on.

The Ganges and Indus river systems were receiving and absorbing invasions of outside peoples even before the Aryans. Archaeologists now reckon that not only did a civilized society precede the conquest by the then barbaric Aryans more than 4,000 years ago, but there had also been a previous conquest by the peoples that the Aryans overcame. The statistics on the present-day condition of Bihar state came from Muthiah (1990) and Bhargava (1989). The potted history of the Ganges plain came from Moon (1989) and Spear (1978). The names Fa Hsien and Hsuan Tsiang (and similar spellings used by others) are, according to modern transliteration of Chinese, spelled Fa-xien and Xuanzang.

References:

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