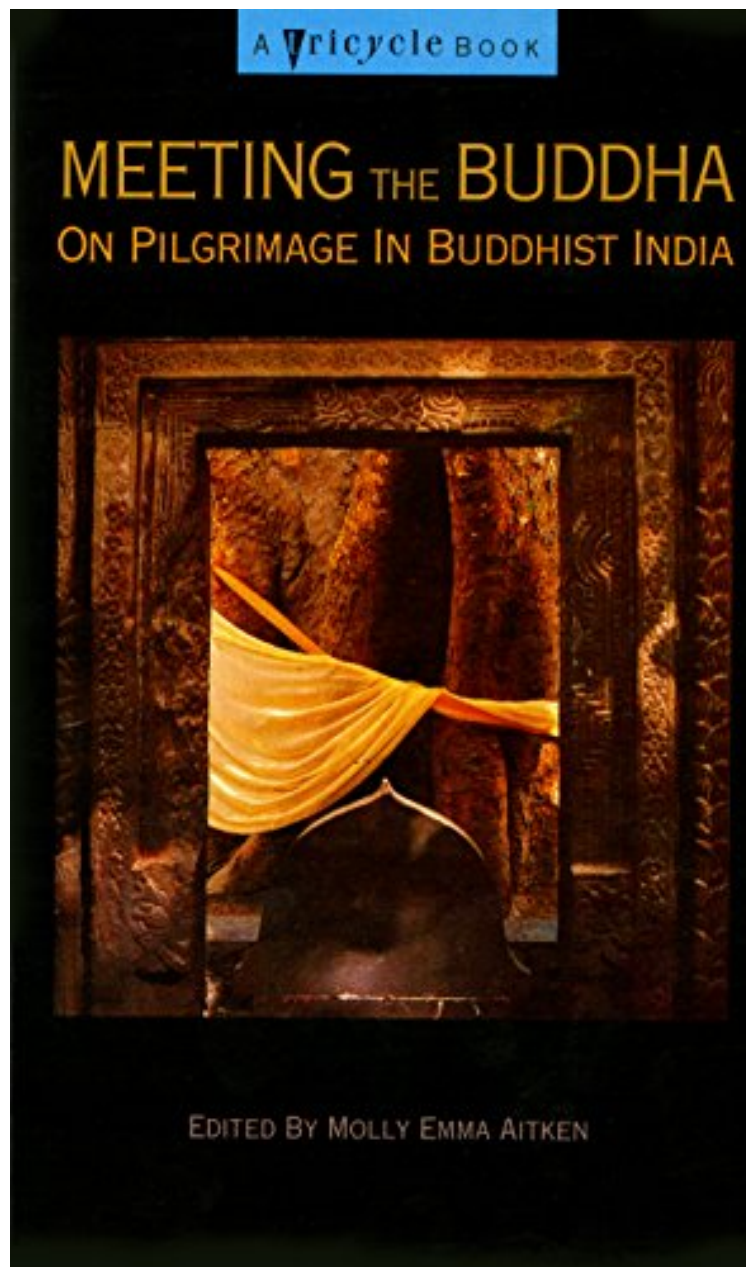


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Meeting the buddha: On Pilgrimage in Buddhist India

Von Molly Emma Aitkin

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Von Molly Emma Aitkin : Meeting the buddha: On Pilgrimage in Buddhist India before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Meeting the buddha: On Pilgrimage in Buddhist India:

KundenrezensionenHilfreichste Kundenrezensionen1 von 1 Kunden fanden die folgende Rezension hilfreich. A lively

account of the Buddhist holy places Von Ein Kunde I really love this book. Having been to Bodh Gaya and Sarnath myself, I find that these accounts by generations of pilgrims really bring the images and feelings back to me. And the descriptions of the other places (Lumbini, Kapilavastu, Rajagriha, Shravasti, Sankasya, Vaisali and Kushinagara) are so vivid and alive that I now almost feel like I've been to all of them too. I'm sure that anyone with an interest in Buddhism, India, pilgrimage or travel will appreciate this book. 0 von 0 Kunden fanden die folgende Rezension hilfreich. A great introduction to the main Buddhist sites Von Ein Kunde This book paints a moving picture of the main Buddhist holy sites in India through the accounts of many centuries of pilgrims and travellers down to the present time. For anyone interested in learning more details of the history and background of these and other Buddhist holy sites, I'd also recommend "Holy Places of the Buddha," by Dharma Publishing (also available from .com). Both of these books are wonderful guides to the Buddhist holy places, and complement each other very nicely.

Kurzbeschreibung From E.M. Forster to Peter Matthiessen to Allen Ginsberg, many of the world's most acclaimed writers have traveled to the holy lands of India seeking spiritual enlightenment. Their lyrical and highly personal recollections are compiled here for the first time in one volume, taking readers on a colorful journey to each of the eight Buddhist pilgrimage sites of India. Kurzbeschreibung From E.M. Forster to Peter Matthiessen to Allen Ginsberg, many of the world's most acclaimed writers have traveled to the holy lands of India seeking spiritual enlightenment. Their lyrical and highly personal recollections are compiled here for the first time in one volume, taking readers on a colorful journey to each of the eight Buddhist pilgrimage sites of India. Leseprobe. Abdruck erfolgt mit freundlicher Genehmigung der Rechteinhaber. Alle Rechte vorbehalten. A Japanese pilgrim wearing a robe stamped with the symbols of Buddhist shrines he has visited. Introduction by Andrew Schelling The householders life, says old Buddhas document The Digha Nikaya, is full of dust and hindrance. And immediately you feel it, right in your shoes. From the start, Buddhism showed a sharp impatience for stay-at-home habits. It has spread out from India, traveled to China and Japan, Southeast Asia, Europe and America, and in twenty-five hundred years hasnt shaken that fine old skepticism. The impulse to ramble is as old as humankind. We have ample testimony of a close ancestral connection to migratory animals, and it appears that the earliest calendars were incised animal bone, small enough to slip in a pocket as the human clan arranged its year by traveling to seasonal food sources. Archaeologists are uncovering routes of migration our human forebears followed, keeping herds of reindeer and antelope, bison and sheep in sight. For most human beings, for tens of thousands of years, home was quite literally on the hoof. The hunter, the nomad, the rambler, and finally the pilgrim. Perhaps it is no more than the swift human intellect and our proud, strong legs following a primordial hunger to see whats around the bend, over the next hill, or just upriver. Every child grows up in a landscape both seen and imagined. Parents, relatives, and friends bring home tales of marvelous places. The elderly revisit their childhood landscapes by turning them into further stories. These brilliant outward-looking eyes never quite catch up with that shimmering ability to see things and locations within. Poems, journals, hagiographies, the diaries of merchants and seekers, accounts of sailors and soldiers traditions of storytelling never disappear. How many records do the libraries hold now of visits to India a continent known in its own treasury of tale and legend as Jambudvipa, the Rose-Apple Island? Tale and legend? Stations of pilgrimage, like stories, get more, not less rich as the generations roll past. The earliest human art cliff walls pecked with meaningful designs or pictographs caves delicately and inspirationally peopled with ocher and manganese animal forms were not undertaken at places of permanent residence. They were at locales to which people journeyed, passing by on migratory circuits, or at a later date making special efforts to visit: they were ceremonial centers, shrines, locations of brave human deeds and brilliant supernatural occurrences. Peerless art and innovative architecture arise to commemorate the old stories, and in their wake spring up field tents, or little guest lodges, to make the sites hospitable for visitors. Everyone hungers to visit and revisit the locales associated with legend. To some, this life of rambling and migration takes such hold of the imagination that it comes to seem the one life worth leading if only for some brief period. If only once in a lifetime. The early Buddhists were an order of wandering alms-seekers. A ragtag bunch, they could be found at crossroads and river fords, along highways, camping in city parks, or sheltering in forest groves. India would scarcely offer such a range of destinations for the Buddhist pilgrim had Shakyamuni Buddha settled into a secluded ashram like a Brahman priest, or lived out his days as a philosopher king in his fathers palace. The model he took for himself and his followers that of philosophical rambler, beggar of food, tatter-robed paraclete, inveterate pilgrim was an old one. Others before him had gone to the forests and highways for centuries, tired of rigid social forms and a predictable religion of the kitchen and bedroom. Indias great casteless community of the homeless was already ancient in Buddhas day. The pilgrim, the wanderer, the forest dweller, figures so familiar to the old epics, to poetry and legend, that the arts of India seem charged with them. The Buddhas resolve as a young man to leave his fathers palace, what the annals call his Great Going-Forth, came after seeing the Four Signs. On successive days he encountered an old man, a sick man, a corpse and, lastly, a wandering mendicant on perpetual pilgrimage to the source of life. You meet similar mendicants on every pilgrimage route in India today, at all the temples and riverbanks. You see them on trains, in taxis and rickshaws, traveling by

private cars. But mostly they have gone and continue to go forth by foot. How can we separate the notion of pilgrimage from the primal instinct to set out on a walk, shake off the householders dust, and simply see something new? Our bones ache with it. The word pilgrim along with its Latin original, peregrine, simply means a person who wanders across the land. The old Sanskrit words from India spring from the same irresistible source. A yatrika is a Rambler, a thirthayatrika a wanderer who frequents crossroads and riverbanks. You may think the world of nation states, superhighways, and rigidly drawn borders no longer accommodates such folk, but in India they ramble as they have for millennia a tradition that traces itself back to a prehistoric pan-Asiatic shamanism. It was near Taxila in 323 B.C., after fording the Indus River, that Alexander the Great's army encountered a community of spiritual goers-forth. The fierce, ragged, skull-carrying mendicants they met were not Buddhists but sadhus on pilgrimage into the Himalayan foothills holy to Siva. But before the Greek soldiers were done with India they would bring back accounts of a Buddhist civilization that took for its principal emblem the shramana or homeless wanderer, who owned only a patchwork robe, begging bowl, and razor to tonsure the head. The Greeks coined their own term, gymnosophist naked philosopher to describe these figures. And ever since, homeless men and women of religion, perpetual pilgrims, have exerted the strongest fascination over foreign travelers to India probably because nowhere else has such a community so durably established itself. Buddhism picked the archaic tradition up from epic and wisdom book, and placed the wanderer at the core of its discipline. Even the initial settling in of the bhikkhu and bhikkhuni (ordained monk and nun), which occurred during Buddha's lifetime, did not spell an end to the wandering life. It arose as a provisional response to cycles of weather. July and August are India's monsoon season. Every year torrential rains pour from the sky, rivers overflow, and water makes the roads nearly impassable. Sakyamuni Buddha counseled his students to sit out the periodic downfalls as specified rain retreats. Certain of these shelters developed over time into permanent centers. Some received donations of land and used financial gifts to raise walls and spires, meditation halls, stupas, and libraries. With the blossoming of Buddhist civilization, the vast viharas of north India came into existence centers of meditation, art, learning, philosophical debate, and trade. The one at Nalanda, founded in present-day Bihar state in the fourth century C.E., accommodated up to ten thousand resident yogins, scholars, and artists at a time. Yet for all the massive walls, the kitchens and libraries, the halls of worship, no concept of staying put ever fully caught on. Etymologically, the word vihara means a place to wander about. To consider these way stations colleges or monasteries misses something crucial. You'll see, if you visit the expansive courtyards...