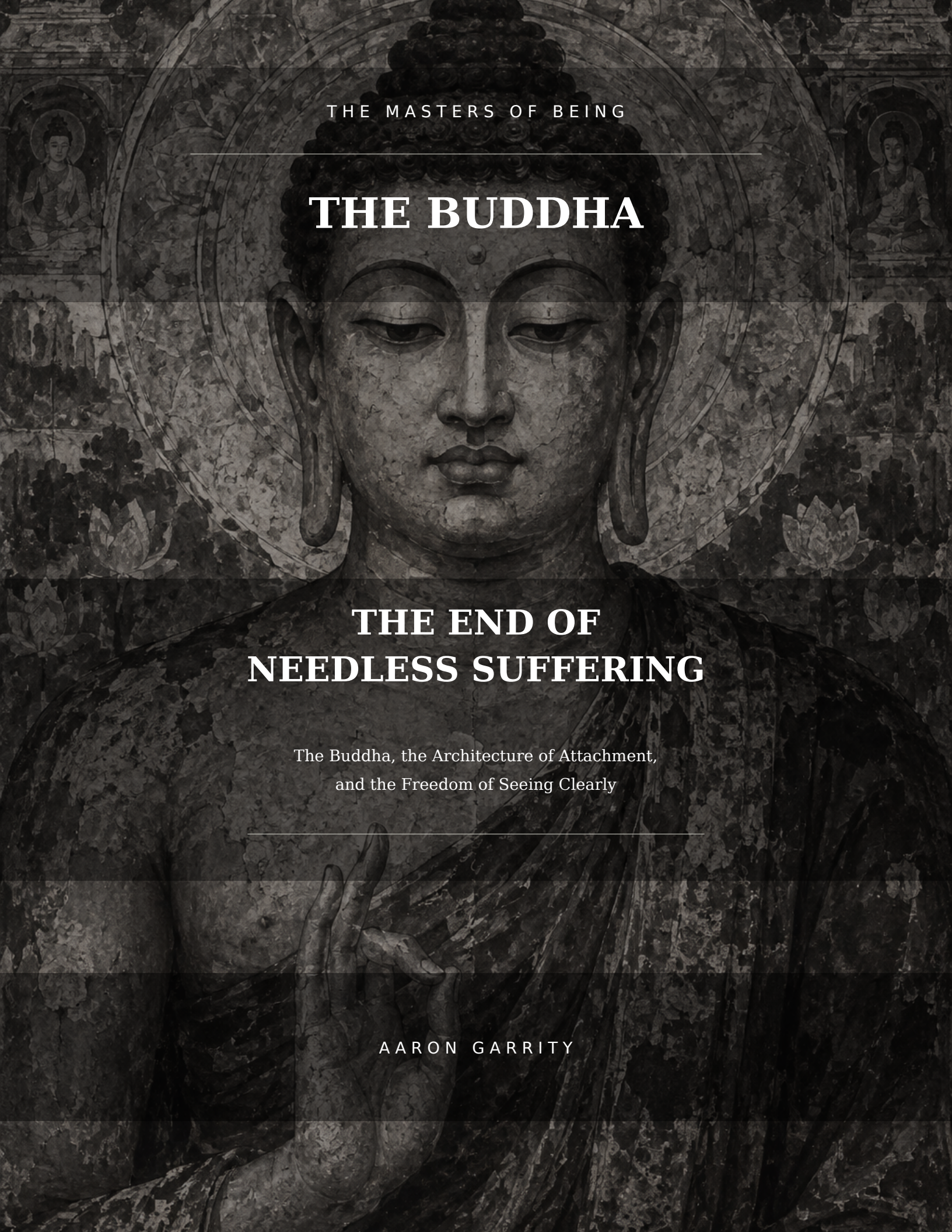




THE MASTERS OF BEING

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# THE BUDDHA

## THE END OF NEEDLESS SUFFERING

The Buddha, the Architecture of Attachment,  
and the Freedom of Seeing Clearly

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THE MASTERS OF BEING

PROLOGUE

# THE PALACE WE BUILD AGAINST LOSS

For much of my life, I believed suffering came from what life took from me.

I understood pain. I understood disappointment, betrayal, and the collapse of things once believed permanent. I knew what it meant to build something with enormous conviction, to watch it rise beyond what most people thought possible, and then to discover that success does not make anything immune to change.

What I understood less clearly was how much suffering came afterward.

It came through the mind's refusal to release what reality had already altered. Through the demand that life return what it had taken, preserve what I loved, and become again what it had ceased to be.

There is the loss itself.

Then there is the argument we continue having with it.

The Buddha built his teaching inside the distance between those two things.

Before he became the Buddha, Siddhartha Gautama was a protected son. According to tradition, his father, fearing a prophecy that the prince might abandon the throne for a spiritual life, attempted to keep suffering outside the palace walls. Youth surrounded him. Beauty entertained him. Illness, aging, and death were hidden from view.

The palace was more than a residence.

It was an argument.

It suggested that reality could be arranged so carefully that sorrow would never enter. If the unpleasant parts of existence remained unseen, perhaps they could be made powerless. If the prince possessed enough pleasure, love, and security, perhaps he would never ask what any of it meant.

Human beings have been rebuilding that palace ever since.

We build it through wealth, romance, reputation, achievement, family, certainty, and the future we quietly assume will arrive. We build it whenever we ask something temporary to make us permanently safe.

For a time, the palace works. That is what makes it convincing.

Success can change the conditions of a life. Money can provide freedom, care, and opportunity. Love can give existence a depth it would not otherwise possess. There is nothing enlightened about pretending these things do not matter.

But none of them can promise permanence.

Every palace eventually develops a crack.

A business falters. A trusted person betrays us. A relationship changes. A parent dies. A child suffers. The body begins revealing the passage of time. A future we had already inhabited in our imagination refuses to become the life that arrives.

Then we discover that comfort was never certainty.

I have known both poverty and abundance. I have lived through seasons when the future seemed almost limitless, and others when much of what I had built, trusted, or expected was being dismantled. I have loved deeply enough to know the fear hidden inside love: the knowledge that what matters most to us can never be fully protected.

Fatherhood has made that truth more tender, not less. To love a child is to encounter beauty and impermanence at the same time. You want to hold the moment, yet the moment is already moving. The child grows while you are looking at them.

The temptation is to believe that nonattachment would require loving less.

It does not.

The Buddha did not awaken because he stopped loving  
life. He awakened because he stopped demanding that life  
remain unchanged in order to be loved.

That distinction lies at the center of this essay.

Attachment is not the same as devotion. It begins when love becomes possession, when purpose becomes identity, or when an outcome becomes the condition upon which we grant ourselves peace.

We can become attached to people, but also to apologies, explanations, positions, and former versions of ourselves. We can remain attached to an injustice through the private insistence that healing cannot begin until the past is corrected.

Some things should be repaired. Some wrongs require justice. Acceptance does not mean pretending that harm was acceptable. It means seeing what has happened clearly enough to decide what life asks of us now.

Siddhartha's protected world was broken open by four encounters: an old man, a sick person, a corpse, and a spiritual seeker. Whether the events unfolded precisely as tradition remembers them matters less than the recognition they contain.

Youth would pass. The body was vulnerable. Death would come. Yet perhaps there was a way to meet these truths without being inwardly destroyed by them.

The first three encounters revealed the problem. The fourth revealed a possibility.

What Siddhartha saw beyond the palace was not merely that suffering existed. He saw that it belonged to the conditions of human life. The old man was Siddhartha in time. The corpse revealed the end toward which every throne, body, and beloved face was already moving.

This was not pessimism.

It was contact with reality.

Most of us experience our own four encounters. Life eventually introduces us to what our private palace was designed to conceal. We learn that achievement does not protect us from grief, that love does not guarantee permanence, and that influence is not control.

Our first response is often to repair the palace.

We find another relationship, another ambition, another structure of certainty. We tell ourselves that the problem was not attachment, only that we attached ourselves to the wrong person, company, dream, or outcome.

Sometimes that is true. Discernment matters.

But beneath the correction, a deeper demand may remain:

This time, I will build a life that cannot be taken from me.

There is no such life.

This does not mean we should stop building. It means we should understand what building can and cannot accomplish.

Build the company. Love the person. Raise the children. Defend what matters. Create something worthy of remaining after you are gone.

But do not bury your freedom inside what cannot remain.

This is where the Buddha's teaching becomes both beautiful and severe. He does not ask us to withdraw from life. He asks us to relinquish the illusion that life must obey us before we can be at peace within it.

Pain will still come.

Grief may be the honest price of having loved. Betrayal can leave wounds that require time, distance, and the rebuilding of trust. Trauma cannot be dismissed with a spiritual phrase. The teaching becomes cruel if it blames people for every suffering they endure.

But pain is not the whole story.

There is what happens to us, and there is what the mind continues doing with what happened. It repeats the injury, rehearses the argument, constructs an identity around the wound, and waits for a past that cannot return.

Pain enters.

The mind builds it a home.

The Buddha's path begins with the possibility that this second structure can be seen. What can be seen clearly no longer has to govern us unconsciously.

That is awakening in its most human form.

It is not escape from ambition, love, fatherhood, leadership, or desire. It is freedom from requiring any of them to tell us who we are. It is the capacity to participate completely without being internally possessed by what we pursue.

The question is not whether we can avoid losing what we love. We cannot.

The deeper question is whether love can mature beyond possession, whether ambition can survive without captivity, and whether a human being can meet change without allowing every change to become a collapse of the self.

Siddhartha left the palace carrying that question.

So do we:

**Is there a freedom that does not depend upon life  
remaining as we want it to be?**

His life became an answer:

**Yes.**

But reaching that answer would require him to lose every false version of freedom first.