



Biography of Sakyamuni Buddha

Original Text and Illustration by Gunapayuta et al.
Adapted by Danuse Murty

Buddhist Council of New South Wales

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Dr Danuse Murty

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Namo Tassa Bhagavato Arahato Samma Sambuddhassa.

(Homage to the Blessed One, the Consummate One,
the Supremely Enlightened One.)

BIRTH

1. India, before the time of the Buddha, was called Jambudvipa. It was divided into many kingdoms, large and small, some of which were ruled by kings and some of which were ruled jointly by several royal tribes.



2. One of those many small kingdoms was called Kapilavatthu. It was located on the north bank of the Rapti River, on the rim of the Himalayas. The ruler of this kingdom was King Suddhodana of the Sakya Clan. His family name was Gotama, and his queen was called Mahamaya.

3. After they were married, King Suddhodana and Queen Mahamaya lived very happily together. After many years the queen became pregnant. She asked the King to permit her to return to her home city of Devadaha, to give birth to their child. King Suddhodana readily consented and ordered the troop of royal attendants to prepare for the trip and to clean up and beautify the roads the queen would travel on.



4. At the junction of Kapilavatthu and the city of Devadaha was a place called Lumbini Park. Every summer, people of the two cities flocked to this park to rest or to play under the Sala trees. They enjoyed the beautiful flowers blooming all over the tree-branches and the melodious twittering of birds and the humming of the ever-busy honeybees.

5. The time Queen Mahamaya arrived at Lumbini Park was on the fifteenth of June, the full moon-day (according to the reckoning of the Thai tradition). This day is now according to the solar calendar the full moon-day of May of every year. As the time was getting close to noon the weather was very hot, so she ordered the troops to stop so that she could rest for a while in the shade of the trees. But before long, while walking around under the sala trees enjoying the beautiful scenery, she felt her birth pangs and soon after gave birth to a prince amidst the songs of birds and humming bees.

6. Queen Mahamaya gave birth to the prince in the Lumbini park, and the palace maids in her attendance were very busy in looking carefully

after the queen and the prince. The palace maids also requested the queen and the prince to return to Kapilavatthu. King Suddhodana was very happy at the sight of the newborn prince. He ordered additional care for the queen and the prince.

7. On the mountains outside Kapilavatthu, lived many hermit sages. Among them was Asita, an old sage who was much respected by the people and King Suddhodana. When Asita found that the king was the proud father of a new prince, he rushed to the palace at Kapilavatthu in order to read the physiognomy of the prince.

8. When the old sage arrived to the palace, King Suddhodana, to show reverence to Asita and expecting blessing from him, ordered that the prince be brought out. Asita looked attentively and discovered that the prince, indeed, had a look of great virtue in his facial expression. He was very excited, and a smile of joy appeared on his face; but almost as quickly a tear dropped from his eye.

9. King Suddhodana was puzzled. He asked Asita why he wept. Asita replied: "The prince has the look of the Great Man. Some day he will attain Enlightenment, perfect in both wisdom and virtue, and become the Teacher and Master of men and devas. I wept because of my age. By the time the prince attains Enlightenment and becomes the Saviour of the world, I shall not be around." After saying this, he knelt down to pay respect to the prince. Unconsciously, King Suddhodana followed him, also kneeling down to the prince.

10. Five days after the prince's birth, King Suddhodana gathered many scholars in the palace-hall in order to decide on the name of the prince. After conferring with each other, the scholars selected "Siddhattha", which means "Realisation of all aims", as the new prince's name.

11. During the day of the naming ceremony, the scholars had a chance to view closely the virtuous look on the prince's face. They unanimously predicted: "If the prince succeeds his father and becomes a king, he will become a Cakkavatti; but if, instead, he leaves home to pursue spiritual freedom, he will become a Buddha." But one young

scholar, named Kondanna, firmly testified: “When Prince Siddhattha grows up, he will abandon the throne in pursuit of supreme wisdom, and he will attain perfect enlightenment and become the first supreme teacher of the world.”

12. The people and scholars of the country all wished for the Prince to become a Universal Monarch when he grew up. King Suddhodana wished for this too. He certainly did not want his son to leave home and become a teacher, for he expected the prince, when the time came, to have a family like other human beings, raise children, and succeed him in ruling the country.



13. Two days after the prince was named, Queen Mahamaya died of some illness. Everybody was grief-stricken at this turn of events, but the saddest person was, of course, her husband King Suddhodana, for Queen Mahamaya was a woman of the highest caste and also the most virtuous of the ladies of the court.

CHILDHOOD

14. After Queen Mahamaya passed away, King Suddhodana entrusted another concubine with the task of taking care of the baby prince - Mahapajapati, Prince Siddhattha's aunt. She took care of the prince and brought him up with as much devotion as she would have shown to her own son. So, Prince Siddhattha never really knew his own mother.



15. Under the careful eye of his aunt Mahapajapati, the prince gradually grew up. He was very handsome and healthy, a perfect darling to everyone. When he was eight years old, the King began to invite all kinds of masters to the palace to educate him in the skills of reading, composition, mathematics, archery and other arts.

16. Since every one of his teachers was an expert in his field, Prince Siddhattha completed all his studies with ease and thoroughness. When speed of progress and level of accomplishment were considered, his great abilities were apparent. People, including his

teachers, father, and aunt, were really surprised to see that prince Siddhattha really had no difficulty at all in learning anything. Once any skill or knowledge was demonstrated or explained, he immediately understood, remembered, and never forgot it.

17. Even though Prince Siddhattha was such a clever pupil and, at the same time the crown prince, the heir to the throne, he never neglected to treat his teachers with good manners and respect. For the prince believed that only through the instruction from teachers could men acquire knowledge of very great value. Besides, the nature of the prince was such that he treated everyone with equal friendliness and politeness.

18. Prince Siddhattha's accomplishment in physical skill was no less than his virtuous conduct. Besides being friendly and polite, the prince was also very courageous. He never feared or hesitated when competing with other boys in various skills. During that time, all males of the royal tribe were educated to become gallant knights. The prince, since his early youth, had been trained to be a kind and brave knight, and he was also able to drive a chariot very skillfully.

19. There was a chariot race, which the prince had won against the toughest rival in the country. Although the competition of this sort required that the participants struggle very hard for victory, yet the prince treated his horse gently. The horse, in return, also exerted its full strength and with all its might helped the prince to become the victor. For the horse, too, felt that the prince should be only a winner, not a loser.

20. The prince was gentle not only to his own horse, but he was kind also to all other animals. Being a crown prince, Siddhattha had never encountered suffering and misery in his life. But his sympathetic nature made him aware that all creatures, whether people or animals, equally like happiness and dislike suffering and pain.



21. At the age of eight, the prince began to show, in his conduct, a particularly compassionate nature. In any place and on any occasion, he never intentionally harmed any creature; on the contrary, he tried to save any suffering creature. For example, one day the prince saw one of his attendants beating a snake with a rod. He immediately stopped the attendant, telling him not to beat it.



22. One day, Prince Siddhattha was playing with his companions in the palace garden. Among them was Devadatta, a cousin of Prince Siddhattha, whose personal character was entirely different from the Prince's.

23. Prince Siddhattha was friendly and polite, and his heart was full of kindness and compassion. He never oppressed others, but often helped the oppressed. Prince Devadatta was cruel and jealous and fond of killing. This day Devadatta was carrying his bow and arrows, shooting the flying swans for fun. One swan was shot in the wing and fell to the ground. It was badly wounded and appeared to be in much pain.

24. Siddhattha quickly ran up to the swan and picked it up. Removing the arrow from its wing, he wrapped the wound with cool leaves to stop the blood and softly patted its body. Devadatta angrily stepped over to him, intending to snatch the swan, at the same time yelling at Siddhattha, demanding that he return the bird to him.

25. Under no condition would Prince Siddhattha return the wounded bird to him. He said: "If the bird had died, it would probably belong to the shooter; but as long as it is still alive, it naturally belongs to the saver." But Prince Devadatta insisted: "I shot the bird down, so it belongs to me!" Finally Prince Siddhattha suggested: "Let the scholars of the country settle this argument at a conference." Prince Devadatta agreed to this.

26. On the day when the scholars met to discuss various matters, there was plenty of dispute over the swan. They all had different opinions. Some said the bird should belong to Prince Siddhattha because he had saved its life. Some, on the contrary, believed that prince Devadatta should have the bird because he had brought it down. Everyone seemed to have his own reason for choosing one point of view or another.

27. Finally, a young scholar stood up, loudly proclaiming, "All living creatures belong to those who save or protect their lives, not to those who damage their lives. In fact, this wounded bird shall belong to its saviour, that is, Prince Siddhattha!"

28. The conferring scholars all accepted the statement made by their young colleague, unanimously deciding that the bird belonged to Prince Siddhattha, for he was the one who had saved its life. So Prince Siddhattha carefully nursed the swan until its wound had completely healed. Then he set the bird free to fly back to the forest, to live a free and pleasant life among its own kind. From that day, prince Devadatta began to hate prince Siddhattha and secretly plot against him.



ROYAL TILLER FESTIVAL

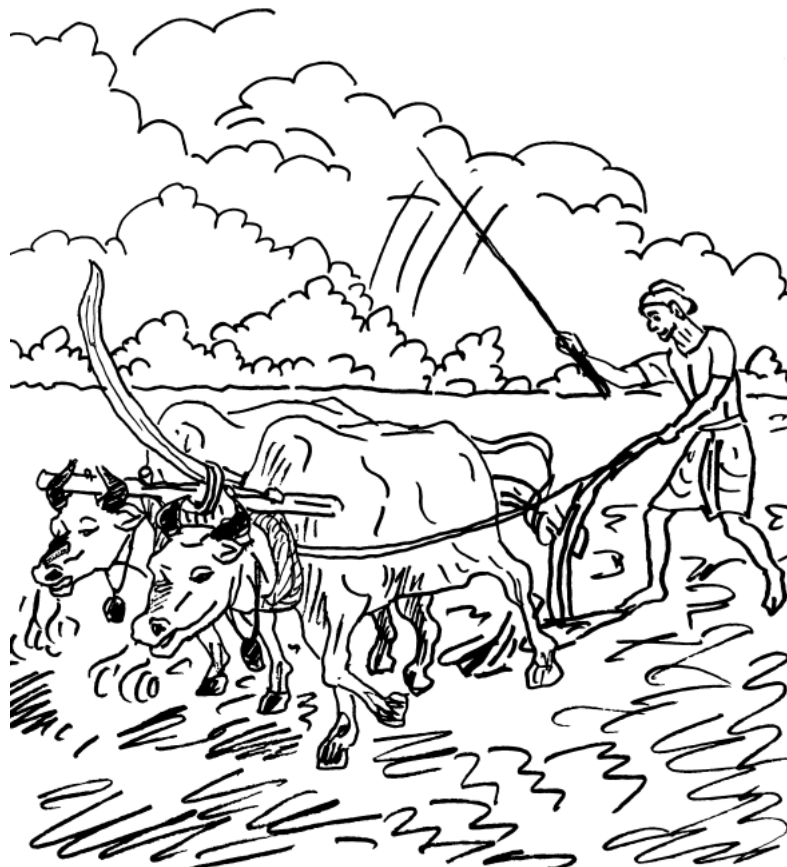
29. Every one of these Indian people knew that everything they needed depended on the soil, and so they considered the tilling of the soil and the producing of food as their most important work, which would benefit the country as well as themselves. Hence, a yearly practice was observed in which the king and his ministers all went to the fields in person to take part in a tilling and plowing ceremony at seed sowing time. They did this to set an example for the people, showing them that plowing the soil and growing crops was not a demeaning work, but was, on the contrary, a great work that one could do.

30. In Kapilavattu, the end of summer marked the season for the farmers to start tilling. King Suddhodana and his officials customarily led the Royal Tiller Festival outside the city. Every year this was a big ceremony. The people of the city all came out to see the King plowing the land and to enjoy the very colorful feast. On this day also, Prince Siddhattha accompanied King Suddhodana to the ceremony.

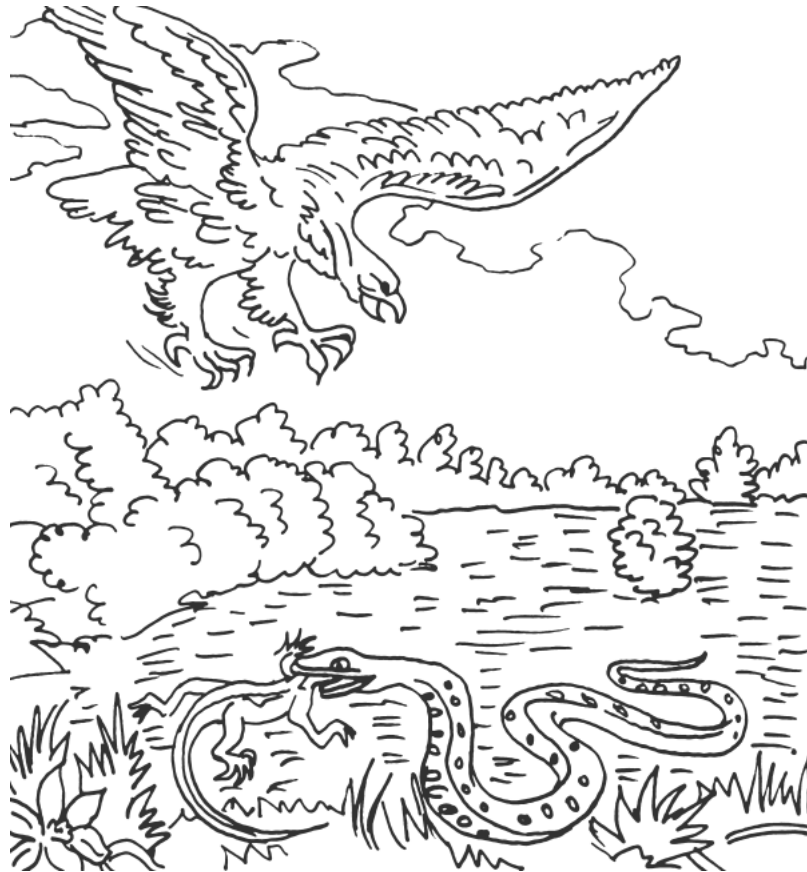
31. The King began the ceremony in the field. He raised a beautiful gold-decorated plow and began to plow the land. A group of officials followed him, plowing the land with silver-decorated plows. The stiff brown mud was loosened and was then ready for seeding.

32. At lunchtime, the attendants of Prince Siddhattha all went to enjoy the feast, leaving the prince alone. So Prince Siddhattha walked by himself to the shade of a thriving Jambu tree, sat down, settled his mind by calming its whirling thoughts, and began to contemplate: “The King, the officials, and the farmers are here to hold the Royal Tiller ceremony, and now they are happily feasting.”

33. But those oxen did not seem to be happy at all. They had to exert a force greater than their physical strength, to pull the plows and to break the hard earth. They toiled so much that they could not stop panting. Obviously they were not happy. While the people here were enjoying themselves today, they all had to do hard work. And if, occasionally, they were to do something not quite up to their master’s expectations, harsh threats and merciless whips would fall on them.



34. The prince also noticed the activities of various other creatures around him. He saw a lizard, which was crawling out from a crevice in the earth, catching and eating working ants with its tongue. Shortly afterwards, a snake approached, killed the lizard by biting through its head, and swallowing it. Just at that moment, the prince was astonished to see a hawk suddenly descend from the sky, seize the snake, tear it apart and eat it.



35. Siddhattha again went into deeper thought and began to ask himself: “If things are like that, then is it not true, that which is said to be beautiful in life, will also have an ugly part?” At last the prince came to realise that although he was very happy now, there was however a kind of great suffering, that was always present for mankind and all beings. Although the Prince Siddhattha was still young he was able to have such profound thoughts and to attain to the state of detachment from all sensual things and enter into the first meditation absorption (first jhana).

36. When the Royal Tiller ceremony and the feast were over, the attendants began to think of the prince. They rushed back to him and found the prince sitting motionless under the Jambu tree like a stone statue. They awakened him and told him that the king was looking for him, for it was time to go home. On the way, Prince Siddhattha felt compassion for all creatures, because every single creature, while keeping itself alive, has to struggle constantly against pain and suffering.



37. Knowing that the Prince had thought about the ultimate truth troubled King Suddhodana. He feared that if such thoughts were not eliminated, the prince probably would soon leave him and abandon the country, and then there would be no one to inherit the throne. He felt that the only way to change the prince's mind was to double the happiness and pleasure available to him in the royal palace. To achieve this end, his first plan was to construct three splendid new palaces.

38. The first palace was built of fragrant wood. Inside, the air was warm, and everything was designed for maximum comfort. This was the prince's winter palace. The second was the prince's summer palace, which was built of polished marble. The third palace, built of brick, had a green-tiled roof. This was the prince's lodge in the monsoon season. King Suddhodana also ordered that a beautiful garden be built around the three palaces, which was to have many ponds, containing lotus plants of various colors. So the prince could take a walk, or a horseback ride, or do whatever he enjoyed most.



MARRIAGE

39. The years went by very quickly, and Prince Siddhattha had now become a young man. All the material things the King had given him turned out to be valueless to the contemplative prince. The King had thought that his actions would make the prince happy, but everything proved to be in vain.

40. He then summoned his ministers to a meeting, asking them if there were any other means to prevent the Prince from abandoning his position as potential leader of the country, to become a religious teacher, as the old Asita had predicted. The officials offered this opinion: “The best way to hold the prince is to seek out the most beautiful girl in the land and have the prince get married her. Once the prince has experienced the sweetness of married life, he will choose nothing else. Then he will follow your intention and take over the throne in the future.”

41. The King considered the suggestion offered by the ministers as all right. So he ordered that the selection of the most beautiful girl in the country was to take place. On the particular day set for the selection, all candidates had to come to the city of Kapilavatthu. Each of them was required to walk in front of the prince and would receive a present from him. The King also ordered a group of highly intelligent officials to be stationed in the place where the beautiful girls were to pass before the prince. Their duty was to observe carefully which girl the prince liked best.

42. On the day of the beauty contest, candidates from all over the country passed, one after the other, in front of the prince. They were all very beautiful. Each of them received a present directly from the hand of the prince. The girls were all very happy and felt honored to accept a present from the prince. However, when they returned to their groups, they all began to fear that they might not be pretty enough.

43. For they felt that, Prince Siddhattha was unlike other young men, he had not paid attention to their beauty at all. Indeed, the prince had handed a present to each of the girls, but his mind, all the time, appeared to be centered on some other thing, which was much more important than the smiling appearances and beautiful and sensual bodily movements of the girls. And that was why some of the girls said that when the prince had handed them presents, they felt that he was not an ordinary human being at all, but, on the contrary, that he was a celestial being.

44. The line of girls had come to an end, and the presents were all given away. The prince still sat calmly, thinking about other things. Everyone thought that the last contestant had come before the prince and received her present, but suddenly a beautiful girl entered hastily, for she had arrived late.

45. When this girl entered, the observers noticed that the prince was somewhat astonished. Like the other girls had done, she also walked before the prince, shyly with bowed head. But after she had passed by, she looked back smilingly and asked: “Any present for me?” The prince replied: “I am really sorry, but all the presents are gone. However you may have this!” And he took from his neck a beautiful golden chain and wound it about the girl’s arm.



46. The officials who were ordered by the King to observe, were very happy to see this. They discovered that the girl who had entered last was Yasodhara, the daughter of King Suppabuddha. They reported this to King Suddhodana, who sent his minister to visit King

Suppabuddha, proposing that Princess Yasodhara marry Prince Siddhattha.

47. The people at the foot of the Himalayas were strong and brave. So, according to the custom of the Sakya Clan, when a young prince was about to marry, he had to demonstrate to the public that he was a clever man, and as skilled in horseback riding, archery, and fencing as the brave young men were. Respecting this custom, Prince Siddhattha openly invited all the clever and brave youth of the country to a contest of skill at Kapilavatthu.

48. Every one of these youths was an expert horseman, archer, and fencer. Each young man, in turn, demonstrated his skills in front of the King, his officials and the people. Prince Siddhattha also participated in the contest, riding his white horse Kanthaka, and he turned out to be the most skillful of all the youths. In archery, Prince Siddhattha shot farther than his cousin Prince Devadatta, who was regarded by all as the best archer in the country.

49. As a swordsman, Prince Siddhattha was able to cut down a tree with one stroke. After he struck the tree, the tree remained standing, so the witnesses thought the prince had missed. But when the wind began to blow, the tree toppled slowly down, for the prince had sliced through the tree with no trace; the blade of the sword had passed through the tree as if it had cut through cream. In the fencing contest, the prince was also the victor with honour. Before that, his stepbrother, Prince Nanda, was generally recognized as the top swordsman.

50. Next came the horseracing contest. Prince Siddhattha's white horse Kanthaka ran so fast that the other racers were left far behind. So the other contestants complained: "The prince wins so easily just because he has the fastest horse. Anyone riding Kanthaka would win the first place. But if someone were to race that rarely mounted strange black horse, then whoever the rider might be would surely be the loser."

51. So they exchanged their horses, everyone trying, in turn, to mount that fierce proud black horse, but it threw everyone to the ground. It was now Prince Aniruddha's turn to try, and being the best rider in the country, he mounted the black horse with only a slightest effort, and then he whipped it hard to force it to run around the yard.

52. However, Prince Aniruddha stayed in place for only a moment, for unexpectedly this fierce, untamed horse reared, turned its head, and caught the Prince's leg in its mouth and threw him from its back to the ground. If the yard guards had hesitated in going to help him or remained behind the horse without beating it, the wild animal would most probably have killed Prince Aniruddha.

53. Now it was Prince Siddhattha's turn to mount. Everybody felt that if even prince Aniruddha, the best rider in the country, had been thrown and almost killed, Prince Siddhattha could probably do no better. But Prince Siddhattha approached the horse lightly and put one hand on its neck, while rubbing its nose with his other hand and at the same time softly whispering a few words, and then tapping the horse on the sides of its body.

54. Everybody was quite surprised that the fierce black horse had really calmed down, letting the prince ride him and obediently moving forward or backward as the prince directed. The people who were gathered there clearly saw that the horse was acting completely according to the prince's will. It was the first time that any person had ever dared to come close to this proud horse and tame it without a whip.

55. Finally everyone agreed that prince Siddhattha was the best rider in the country and most qualified to be Princess Yasodhara's husband. And King Suppabuddha was also very pleased to give the hand of his beloved daughter to the young, courageous Prince Siddhattha in marriage.

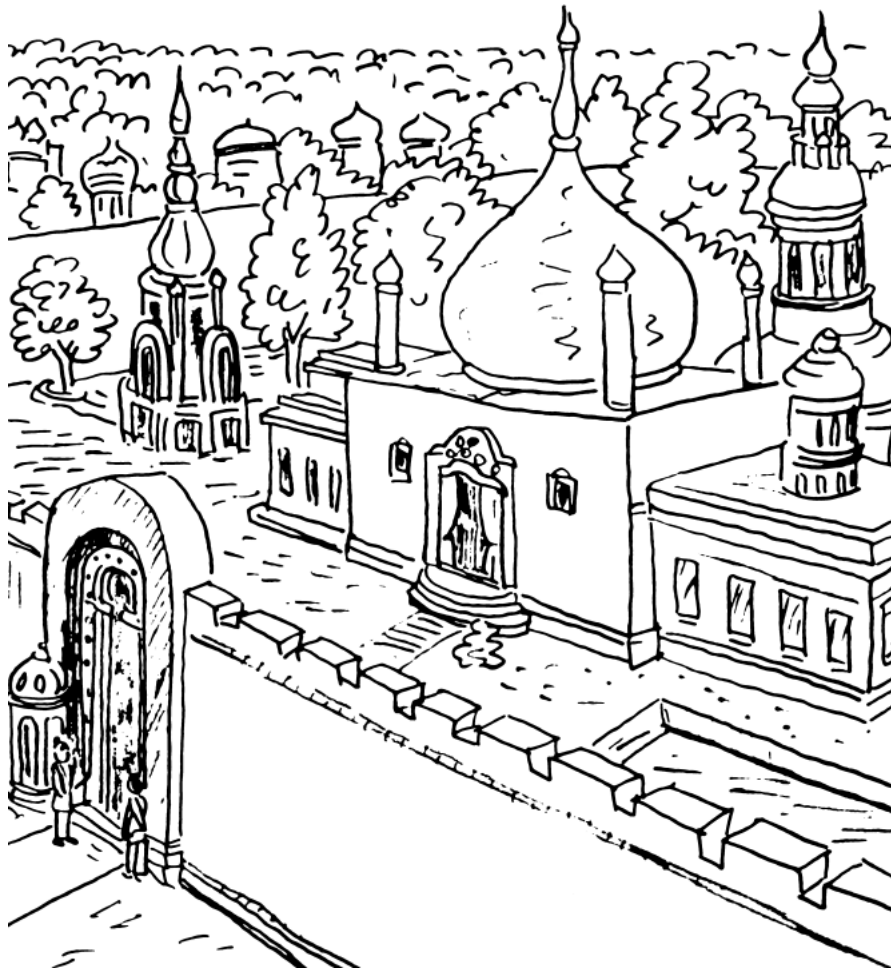


56. The wedding of Princess Yasodhara to Prince Siddhattha was an event in which the whole country rejoiced. The young couple lived in a palace that King Suddhodana had specially built for them, one which contained all kinds of splendid accommodation designed for the sole purpose of giving them comfort, satisfaction and pleasure. Now King Suddhodana began to feel relaxed, trusting that the prince would no longer think about leaving home.

57. In order to prevent the prince from thinking of leaving home or of other things, King Suddhodana ordered that no one should ever mention in front of the prince anything to do with misery or unhappiness, such as old age, sickness, death, etc. The attendants of the prince were ordered to constantly provide songs, dances, and music and never to appear tired before him.

58. In addition to this, the King ordered the construction of high walls all around the palace and gardens where the prince lived. Only healthy

and young people were allowed to enter into the gardens and palace from beyond the walls. Should someone within the walls accidentally fall and injure himself, the person had to be taken out immediately and could not return before complete recovery. The gates of the garden were closely guarded to prevent the prince from going outside for any reason, except with the King's permission.



FOUR SIGHTS

59. Although King Suddhodana had a selected group of attendants for the prince, and tried in every way to keep his son from experiencing anything unpleasant in his life, the prince was not as happy as his father had hoped. The prince eagerly desired to see other joyful things of the world, things that were beyond the palace walls. The prince also wanted to know what the lives of people, other than those of the sons

of kings and their officials, were like. Time and time again the prince pleaded with his father, informing him that he would never be happy unless he could see the outside world.

60. Unable to refuse the persistent demand of the prince to travel outside the palace, King Suddhodana finally consented. He ordered that, on the day of the prince's outing, every house must be cleaned, painted and decorated with flags and flowers. Along the way no one was allowed to be seen working, and blind, sick, old and leprous people had to stay home until the carriage of the prince had passed.

61. Everything was ready. Prince Siddhattha in a splendid carriage, came out of the palace and toured around the city. Everywhere he saw crowds of people with smiling faces enthusiastically welcoming him. On seeing the prince, some people shouted: "Long live the prince!", while others approached his carriage and spread flowers on the road. The carriage thus continued moving on along the flower-covered path.



62. Then, all at once, a white-haired old man, dressed in dirty rags, limped out of his house and reached the road before anyone could stop him. His haggard face was full of wrinkles and freckles, his eyes dull and dim, and only one tooth remained in his dry and withered mouth. His back was severely hunched and he had to rely on a cane to move his body. Wailing and begging along the road, he would certainly have starved to death if he had failed to get food for even one day.

63. People were very much upset by the daring appearance of this old man since this was the prince's first excursion, and the king had issued an order prohibiting the presence of all old and sick people. They rushed to stop this old man from advancing further, wanting to drive him home, but it was already too late. The prince had already seen him!

64. Prince Siddhattha was quite surprised at the sight of the old man. He did not know what that creature was. So he asked his driver Channa: "Channa! What is that? A person? If he is a person, why is his back so curved and not as straight as other people's? Why does he shake? And the hair, why is it white? What happened to his eyes? Where are his teeth? Are some people born this way? Channa! Tell me what all this means!"

65. Channa replied: "This is an old man. He was not born this way. When he came into the world, he was like everybody else. At first, he was also a strong and distinguished youth, having dense black hair and bright eyes. After having lived for a long time, he has changed into this shape. Don't let it bother you, Prince, for it is only the business of this old person."

"What does it mean, Channa?" The Prince continued: "Do you mean that it is very ordinary? Do you say that everyone will look like this after having lived for a long time, or is it not necessarily so? I have not seen this condition before!" Channa replied: "When one has lived a long time, he will be like this. It cannot be avoided."

66. "Channa! Do you really mean that everybody will be like this some day, even you and I? My father? My wife? Is it possible that all

of us will some day have no teeth, have white hair and be hunchbacked, moving around with canes and shaking like this old man?” “Indeed so!” answered Channa. “When one lives long enough, he will be like this man, for no one can avoid getting old!”

67. Prince Siddhattha immediately told Channa to drive him back to the palace, for he was no longer in the mood to continue his journey around the city. He only wanted to be alone so that he could contemplate deeply the dreadful problem that he had just encountered. Soon he became aware that although he was the prince, the successor to the throne, he and the people dear to himself would, nevertheless, lose everything some day in the future. All his joys and pleasures would turn into nothing, for there would be no way to avoid getting old and, in this matter, no one is an exception, whatever his condition may be - rich, poor, powerful or ordinary.

68. That night, Prince Siddhattha could not sleep. He was very disturbed when he thought that some day he and his wife would become old like that old man he had seen during the day. He then began to have grave doubts, thinking: “Has there ever been anyone in the world who has tried to find a way to avoid or transcend the cruel process of aging? If I, putting aside everything else, concentrate solely on this problem, can I not find a way to benefit myself and all other people?”

69. Someone related the incident that had happened during the excursion to the King. The King was very sad, and again ordered that a search be undertaken for interesting things to distract and amuse the prince. But, as had happened before, all was in vain. The young prince was not only indifferent to these things, but also once again asked his father’s permission to go out, this time alone and unannounced, in order to see all the things of every day life.

70. Naturally the King did not want to give his permission, for he was afraid that this time the prince would see many ordinary people, who have to sweat and toil all their days, not sons of kings and rich men. He also feared that what the old sage had predicted might, indeed,

come true. But love and compassion for his son finally forced him to permit the prince to go as he had requested. But he still hoped that those unpleasant things might not be seen by the prince.

71. This time Prince Siddhattha went out on foot. He was disguised as a youth of a noble family and was followed only by Channa, who also dressed differently in order not to be recognized. So the prince, for the first time, saw the activities of an ordinary day in the capital. Many people were doing all different kinds of work. Blacksmiths pounded iron pieces with steel hammers to make plows, sickles, and oxen cart wheels, etc.

72. Along the streets there were shops of rich merchants; craftsmen were making all kinds of adornments for women; dye shops were full of cloth of various colors; bakeries sold cakes to people waiting to buy them. At that time Prince Siddhattha felt happy and was very glad to see the conditions of these industriously working people.

73. But soon bad and ugly things began happening again. While the prince was strolling along, he suddenly heard a moan on the roadside, which sounded as if someone was calling for help. The prince approached the area, looked at the place where the moan was coming from, and found a man lying on the ground. His body was twisting incessantly, both his face and body were discoloured with a nauseating purple hue, his eyes rolled back and forth in his head, and every time he struggled to rise he fell heavily to the ground again, never making it to his feet.

74. Since Prince Siddhattha was very compassionate, he quickly approached the man and held him up, placing his head upon his own knee, and so making him feel more comfortable, and then asked what caused the pain and why he could not stand up. The man tried to say something, but he did not even have the strength to speak. Channa hastily approached, and the prince asked: "Channa, tell me why this man is in this strange condition! Look how he is breathing! Why does he not answer me?"

75. Channa shouted in horror: “Don’t touch this man! He is a sick person! Poisons flows in his veins, and toxic poisons are burning inside him, making it difficult for him to breathe so that soon he will stop breathing.” The prince asked: “Will other people be like this? Could I, too, become like this?”

Channa answered: “If one comes into close contact with him, one may very possibly become like him. My prince, please lay him down and don’t touch him, for the poison of the disease in his body may be passed on to you, and then you may well become sick like him!”

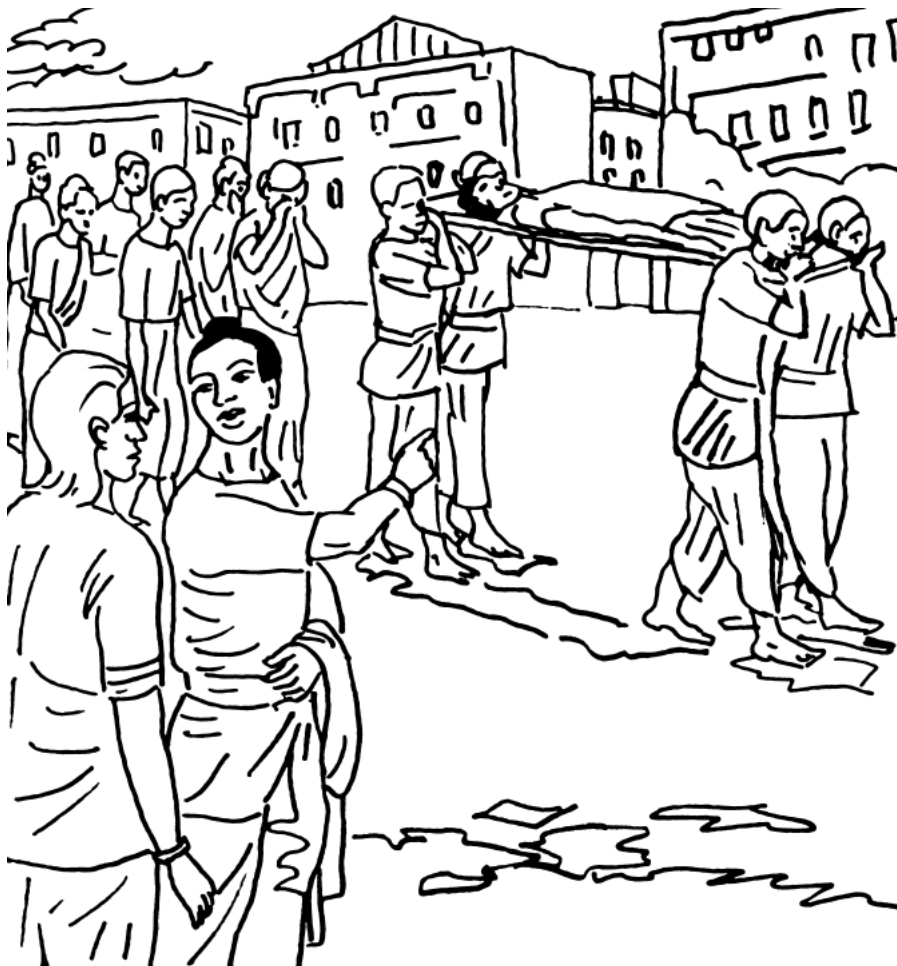


76. “Channa! Apart from this illness are there other serious illnesses?” “Yes, there are many, and they are all in the same way painful.” “Are there no people who can help? Can’t mankind conquer the sickness when it attacks? That’s too frightful!” “It is very common, and no one knows on what day he will get sick, for one can get sick anytime and

any place.” “Is it true, Channa? Anybody may get ill, including my whole clan and even me?” “Yes, even you may get sick also.”

77. “If it is like this, then the existence of man in this world is only to be feared, since nobody knows whether he might not, when he goes this evening to sleep, be transformed on the following morning into a sick man like that one. Channa, is that so?” “Yes, it is so. No one in the world knows when he may become sick, suffer, and end by dying.” “Death? What does it mean? It’s very strange, Channa. What is death?” “Please, Prince, just look over there!”

78. The prince looked where Channa directed him, and he saw a group of people marching along lamenting. Four men in front carried a stiff, immobile person on a board, a person with shrunken cheeks and gaping mouth, speechless and ugly. Although the four men rocked the board quite sharply and clumsily, the person lying on top did not say a word. The prince watched the group moving along and began to wonder why they all wept and why the person on the board did not caution the carriers to proceed more carefully.



79. After moving on a little further, the group stopped. They placed the person they were carrying on top of a pile of wood and started a fire. The prince was shocked, and his hair stood on end. Yet the person continued sleeping quietly even as the fire began to lick his head and feet. The prince asked in a trembling voice saying: “Channa, why does that man stay asleep and let them burn him?” “That man is dead. He has feet, but can no longer walk; he has ears, but can no longer hear; he is not conscious of anything. He has absolutely no feeling for heat, cold, fire, or snow. He is already dead!”

80. “Dead? Channa! This is death? Shall I, the son of the King, also die like that man? My father, Yasodhara and all the people I know, will they also some day be like that man on the pile of wood?” “Anybody who is alive will someday die. There is no way to avoid it. No one can live forever. Men cannot stop the coming of death.” The prince remained silent and said no more, he felt the fearfulness of death imprisoning everybody, without there being a way to escape death.

81. Prince Siddhattha quietly returned to the palace, went to his room, sat down alone, and thought deeply about what he had seen. Finally he said to himself: “It is too frightful that everybody in the world must die some day and that no one can prevent this. Ah! There must be some way to avoid it. I shall do all I can to discover the way by which my father, Yasodhara, myself and all other people will no longer be controlled by the power of old age, sickness and death. I must do my best to find the way!”

82. Sometime later, while the prince was riding in the garden, he saw a monk in a yellow robe. The prince watched the monk attentively, perceiving that his mind was full of peace and happiness. So the prince asked Channa: “What is the life of this sort of person like?” Channa replied: “This is a person who cultivates the way, a person who has left his family and given up his desire for sense pleasures, in

order to seek the way of deliverance from worldly suffering.” The prince was very pleased to hear the name ‘monk’ spoken.



83. During that whole day, the prince sat quietly but happily in the garden, his mind captured by the idea of becoming a monk. Just then someone told the prince that his wife had given birth to a lovely boy. But instead of expressing his joy, the prince was a bit agitated and said absentmindedly: “A bond has been born! A bond has been born!” It was because the prince spoke in this manner just at this time, that the newborn baby was named Rahula, which means a bond or a fetter.

84. Since the day of Rahula’s birth, those who lived with Prince Siddhattha all clearly noticed that the prince has changed entirely. He was more serious than before and more contemplative. King Suddhodana was very worried, indeed, about his son’s condition; and so he tried with his last effort to re-awaken Siddhattha’s interest in

worldly things, by searching the whole country for the most intelligent and beautiful dancing girls. He lodged them permanently in the prince's palace, ordering them to sing beautiful songs and to perform pleasing dances, which, he hoped, would bring the prince pleasure and interest in the things of this world.

85. At first the prince watched and listened to the dances and songs provided for him in order not to disappoint his father. But, in reality, these enchanting songs and dances attracted only a few inattentive glances from the prince, for his mind was concentrated on other things. The prince was thinking of one problem only - that is, how to liberate himself and all other people completely from the fearful aging, sickness and death. Finally the prince became tired and fell asleep, and so the dancing girls had a chance to rest until the prince had awakened, and then they performed again.



86. The prince woke up after a little while, finding that the dancing girls had all fallen asleep because of fatigue. While sleeping, they exhibited all kinds of ugly attributes, being entirely unaware of the impression that they were making. Some slept like pigs; some opened their mouths, dripping saliva, which damaged the make-up on their faces; some ground their teeth loudly like angry ghosts. They all appeared to be quite ugly and disgusting. The prince was very surprised to see how the girls he liked so much could be transformed in this manner.

87. This picture of the sleeping girls, once regarded as pretty and lovely by the prince, now appeared to be terribly ugly. It was, indeed, the most nauseating thing that had ever happened to the prince. Therefore, the prince became determined to shake off all that disturbed his mind, and to go out to search for real happiness and to become free from all pain and suffering. Prince Siddhattha rose silently, careful to avoid waking the girls, quietly left the room, and ordered Channa to get his horse Kanthaka ready.



88. While Channa was getting the horse, Prince Siddhattha felt that he should see his newborn son before he left. So he went to the room of Princess Yasodhara, where he found the princess, holding the baby in her arms, sound asleep. The prince thought: “If I move her hand, she will certainly wake up; if she wakes up, she will stop me from going. But I must go immediately, and I shall come back to see my son and his mother after I find the ultimate truth.”

89. In the silence of the night, prince Siddhattha left the palace without waking anyone. He left the city riding his very understanding horse Kanthaka. Only Channa followed him, and no one hindered them. After riding for a little while, the prince stopped his horse and turned around, taking a final look at the city of Kapilavatthu in the pure, bright moonlight; but his will to go on was unshaken!



90. Prince Siddhattha, riding his horse Kanthaka, arrived at the banks of the Anoma River by dawn. The prince dismounted, stood at the riverside, took off the precious dress he was wearing. Then he handed it to Channa, resolutely ordering him to take it and Kanthaka back to Kapilavatthu and tell the King what had happened. At this time, Prince Siddhattha Gotama of the Sakya Clan was twenty-nine years old. He left his country and family to become a monk in order to conquer all the pain and suffering of mankind.

HOMELESS LIFE

91. After Channa left him to go back to Kapilavatthu, Siddhattha stayed for seven days in the mango grove of Anupiya, near the bank of Anoma River. Then he journeyed southward and came to Rajagaha, the capital of the country of Magadha, the king of which was named Bimbisara. In the morning, he bathed in a stream near the city; then, like all monks, he entered the city to beg for food. The people of Rajagaha noticing the distinguished appearance of Siddhattha, offered him their best food.



92. Having obtained his meal for the day, Siddhattha left Rajagaha, heading toward Pandava Hill, where he ate his food. Since the day that Siddhattha had first begged for food in the city, the news had spread that a monk of a distinguished appearance and of serious and noble behavior had arrived. This news also reached the palace. King Bimbisara, knowing of the presence of such a monk, sent his son to check out the situation. He discovered that this monk was the prince of Kapilavattu, the successor to the throne, who had given up everything and become a monk in search of the means to liberate all mankind from the imprisonment of old age, sickness and death.

93. Having this knowledge, King Bimbisara went to Pandava Hill and invited Siddhattha to stay in his capital city, where it would be very convenient for the King to offer him food and all the necessities of life. But Siddhattha graciously declined the invitation, saying: "I cannot remain in one place before realising my goal and aspiration." So King Bimbisara made an agreement with Siddhattha that, when his aspiration of perfect enlightenment was realised, he would come first to the city of Rajagaha to instruct and enlighten King Bimbisara and his people.

94. One day Siddhattha left Rajagaha to go to the foot of the mountain where many hermits and sages dwelt. On the way, he saw dust falling down from the mountain amidst the pounding sound of animal hoofs. Going closer, he found a large flock of sheep and goats moving along like a mass of clouds. They were being helplessly driven towards the city. At the rear of the flock, a little lamb was straggling, limping along painfully, its leg wounded and bleeding. Siddhattha noticed the little lamb and its mother walking in front of it constantly looking back in deep concern for her offspring. His heart was filled with compassion.

95. So Siddhattha took the little lamb with its wounded leg up into his arms, gently holding it while walking along behind the flock. When he

saw the shepherds, he asked: “Where are you driving this herd to? They should normally be driven back in the evening! Why do you drive them back at noontime?” The shepherds replied: “The King is holding a big sacrifice today, and we have been ordered to bring one hundred sheep and goats each to the city by midday.” Siddhattha said: “I’ll go with you.” He carried the little lamb in his arms all the way to the city.

96. Walking behind the flock of sheep, Siddhattha reached the city; then he went towards the palace, where the sacrifice was being held. The King and a group of priests of the fire-worshipping cult were chanting hymns, while a big fire was burning on the altar. They were about to kill the flock of sheep as a sacrifice, but when the leader of the fire-worshippers raised his sword to cut off the head of the first sheep, Siddhattha quickly moved up and stopped him.



97. In a grave manner, Siddhattha stopped the action of the leader of the fire-worshippers and persuaded the participants to discontinue the ceremony. He said to King Bimbisara: “Your majesty! Don’t let these worshippers destroy the lives of these poor animals.” Then he told the worshippers themselves: “Life is inconceivably precious. Those who want to destroy it should realise that once it is destroyed it can never be recovered.” Siddhattha also spoke to people who were standing as witnesses to this event: “All living creatures cling to life, just like human beings. Why should people exert brutal force upon these friendly animals? The suffering of birth, old age, sickness and death will naturally take away their beloved lives.”



98. Siddhattha continued: “If human beings expect mercy, they should show mercy, because according to the law of cause and effect, those who kill will, in return, be killed. In short, if we expect happiness in the future, we must not intentionally harm any kind of creature.

Because whoever sows the seeds of pain and suffering will undoubtedly reap the same fruits.”

99. The manner in which Siddhattha spoke to the King, the fire-worshippers and the people of Rajagaha was peaceful and full of compassion, yet, at the same time, forceful and determined. He completely changed the intention and belief of the King and the fire-worshippers. So King Bimbisara again asked Siddhattha to stay in his country to teach the people to be compassionate and to protect animals. Siddhattha was deeply grateful to the King for his offer, but since he had not yet attained his goal of complete enlightenment, he once again gracefully declined the invitation and departed.



100. Leaving Rajagaha, Siddhattha journeyed on towards the place where Alara Kalama the sage, lived. Alara Kalama was one of the best-known scholars of that time, who had founded many institutes for learning of all kinds. Siddhattha stayed with Alara Kalama and studied very diligently under him. Soon his knowledge and capability could

be favourably compared to his teacher's, and he became recognized as a prominent and virtuous disciple of the old sage, a situation which made Alara Kalama very happy.

101. One day Alara Kalama said to Siddhattha: "Now you know everything that I know and are able to teach as well as I can. What I know you know equally well. There is little difference between us. Stay here and help me teach the students!" Siddhattha asked: "Don't you have anything else to teach me, Master? Can't you tell me how to escape from old age, sickness and death?" Alara-Kalama made no reply, for he had taught Siddhattha all that he knew.



102. What the sage Alara Kalama had taught Siddhattha consisted mainly of the knowledge of meditation, the way to make the mind very calm and then to remain in the calm of samadhi (concentration). But this kind of knowledge was neither thorough nor ultimate. It failed to satisfy Siddhattha, for it did not provide an answer to the problems

of life and death, old age and sickness, that had constantly occupied his mind. For this reason Siddhattha finally departed again to seek someone who might have higher knowledge than Alara Kalama and who would be able to teach him more.

103. Later, Siddhattha found that an old sage named Uddaka Ramaputta had profound learning and highly virtuous character. So he approached Uddaka Ramaputta, became his pupil, and studied and practiced devotedly until his knowledge and capability were equal to his master's. Uddaka Ramaputta also became very fond of Siddhattha, admiring his intelligence and talent, and urged him to stay and help him teach his disciples.



104. But Siddhattha was not completely satisfied with Uddaka Ramaputta's teaching. What he taught was, indeed, higher than Alara-Kalama's teaching had been. Practicing with Uddaka Ramaputta Siddhattha learnt how to make his mind very still and empty of all thoughts and emotions, and then remain in even a deeper samadhi than

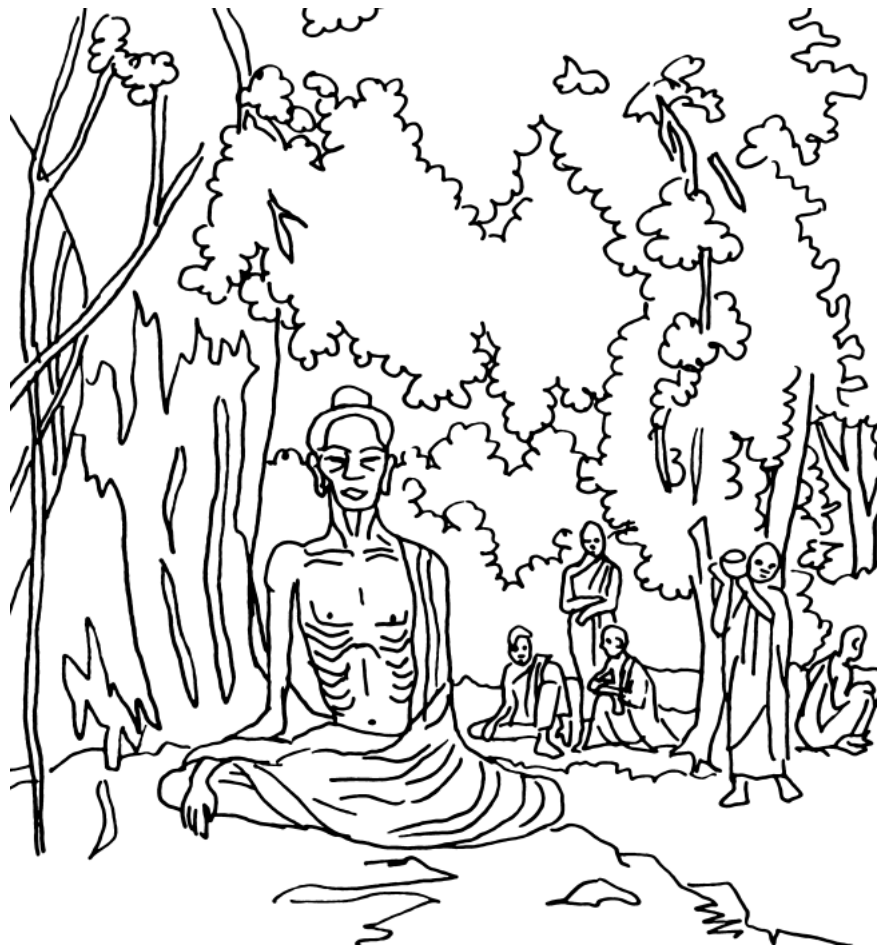
before. Even so, he still could not clearly understand the ever-present problem of life and death. Therefore, Siddhattha left Uddaka Ramaputta's place also, and now decided to stop visiting and learning here and there, but to search for the ultimate truth by means of his own wisdom and effort instead.

PRACTICING ASCETICISM

105. In that era, just as in modern times, there were many monks of various cults in India, who renounced their families to practice asceticism. They believed that, by starving themselves or tormenting their physical bodies, they could be reborn in the heavenly states amid eternal pleasure, and that the more they suffered during the present life, the more pleasure they would be rewarded with in the future. So they practiced hardship by indulging in all kinds of tough and strenuous acts.



106. Some of them gradually reduced their daily food intake until they were eating almost nothing at all and became extremely thin. Some stood silently on one foot. Some raised one of their hands, pointing to the sky until poor blood circulation finally dried and crippled their arms. Some clasped both hands tightly together and never loosened them, so that the fingernails completely penetrated the palms and grew through to the back of the hands. Some of them slept on boards pierced and fully covered with sharp nails.



107. Siddhattha did try, in various ways, to become an ascetic. He thought that if he increased his hardship to a certain degree, he would surely become enlightened. So when he came to Uruvela on his way to Magadha and found there a nice quiet place with level ground and lush trees, cool water flowing in a nearby stream, and a Senani Village not far away where he could go for alms, he decided to remain at that place to practice austere asceticism, using many special techniques.

108. At that time there were also five other persons - Kondanna, Bhaddiya, Vappa, Mahanama and Assaji - who had become monks and followed Siddhattha to Uruvela. They believed that Siddhattha would finally attain enlightenment by practicing asceticism with such complete devotion, and that when he became enlightened he would naturally teach them, as his disciples, what he had attained.



109. Siddhattha practiced a wide variety of special forms of asceticism and then began to reduce his diet until finally he arrived at the point where he was eating nothing at all. He became so thin that his whole bony frame was clearly visible, yet this hard practice did not discourage him one bit. One day, while he was meditating alone, he fainted because of exhaustion. At that time a shepherd boy just happened to pass by. He immediately realised that Siddhattha was about to die because he had fasted too much, for the people of that place all knew that this holy man had eaten nothing for many days.

110. So he ran back to his flock, pulled out a mother goat and returned to the place where Siddhattha had fainted. Then he helped Siddhattha recover consciousness by feeding him goat's milk. Now Siddhattha felt better and began to think: "How did I faint and revive, why am I better now?" Finally he concluded that without the goat's milk from the shepherd boy he would have died before ever attaining enlightenment.



111. The shepherd boy received Siddhattha's blessing and returned to his flock with great joy for having the opportunity to help to revive the holy man he so revered. Siddhattha continued to sit and meditate under the tree, and at dusk he heard a group of girls singing on their way to the city: "With strings too loose, the lute does not sound. Tighten the strings too much, they will break apart. Not too loose, not too tight, the lute sounds nice !"

112. Siddhattha was deeply moved by the girls' song. He had tightened his strings of life too much! Should he die before attaining enlightenment, all the hardships he had gone through would be fruitless. Tormenting one's physical body was certainly not the right way to seek the ultimate truth! So he decided to stop practicing asceticism and only to continue his mental diligence in his search for ultimate enlightenment. From that time on, Siddhattha regularly went for alms and ate every morning.

SUPREME ENLIGHTENMENT



113. Now Siddhattha's health was completely restored, and his complexion became as glowing as gold, the same it was when he lived

in the royal palace before. Although Siddhattha was quite clear now that attempting enlightenment by practicing strict asceticism was just as impossible as twisting sand to make a rope, the five monks who had followed him felt quite otherwise. They still firmly believed that practicing strict asceticism was the only way to enlightenment. When Siddhattha gave up asceticism and returned to normal eating habits, they thought he had become a glutton, so they left him alone and went to Isipatana (now Sarnath) near Varanasi.

114. One morning a girl named Sujata, who lived in the village cooked a pot of delicious rice porridge milk and brought it over as an offering to Siddhattha. After presenting the offering, the noble girl said: "I wish you success in your aspiration as I have succeeded in my aspiration!"* Siddhattha ate the porridge she offered him and felt it was very beneficial in improving both his physical and mental strength.

* Sujata had made a wish that a child be born to her, and then she offered food to Siddhattha to show her gratitude.

115. That same day, Siddhattha went for a bath in the Nairanjana River; then he sat down under a sala tree by the riverbank and meditated, hoping to attain enlightenment in the silence of the night, when no one might be passing by. At dusk Siddhattha left the sala tree and walked to a large Bodhi tree, which he had chosen previously as the place for his meditation. On the way he met a straw-peddler named Sothiya and accepted from him an offering of a bunch of straw. So he made a seat with the straw and sat down under the large Bodhi tree, facing east.

116. Having sat down under the Bodhi tree, Siddhattha made a vow to himself: "Even if my blood dries up and my muscles shrink leaving skin and bones only, I will not leave this seat until I finally and absolutely achieve the goal of finding, for myself and all mankind, a way of deliverance from the suffering of the cycles of life and death." In short, Siddhattha sat under the Bodhi tree and vowed that he would not quit the spot until he had attained enlightenment.



117. Siddhattha let go of all outside disturbances, and memories of pleasures from the past. He let go of all worldly thoughts and devoted his whole mind to search for the ultimate truth about life. He asked himself: “What is the origin of suffering? How can one be free from suffering?” Since Siddhattha was still a young man, only thirty-five years old, images of the pleasures provided for him by his father, when he lived in the palace, still appeared in his mind from time to time.

118. To calm his mind, Siddhattha turned his attention to his breathing. At first many distracting thoughts and images appeared in his mind. But Siddhattha resisted all those temptations and gradually entered into first, second, third and fourth jhana. Finally his mind

became very calm, like a pond of still water. He was in a deep samadhi.



119. In the calm of samadhi, Siddhattha searched mentally, trying to find the origin of his own life. Thus he acquired the power to remember his previous lives. He remembered first one life, then two, then three, then up to many thousands of his lifetimes.

Having so ended ignorance about his past, he then directed his purified mind to see the rebirth process of beings in different worlds. Thus he also acquired the divine vision (clairvoyance), the power to see the disappearing and reappearing of beings. He saw that all beings pass from one life to another according to their kamma (thoughts, speech and bodily actions). Those beings who had done bad deeds had been reborn into sorrowful states of existence, and those who had done good deeds had been reborn into happy states, all according to their kamma.



120. Having so ended ignorance about the future, he directed his purified mind to fully realise the 4 Noble Truths: the universal suffering, the cause of suffering, the end of suffering and the way to this end. He then saw as it really is: the suffering - the cycle of rebirth; the cause of it – the craving (selfish desire) and ignorance; the end of it – the ending of the craving (Nibbana); and the way to that end – the Middle Path between the two extremes of self-indulgence and self-injury, the Noble Eightfold Path. Seeing that, his mind was liberated from all suffering. He then realised that his rebirth was finished, he had lived the noble life and had done what was to be done, so there was no more of that for him in the future. This was the third Insight-knowledge that he gained. So, at the age of 35, Siddhattha Gotama became Buddha, the Supreme Enlightened One.

121. Having attained the Supreme Enlightenment and freed himself from all suffering, the Buddha remained contentedly in the happiness of Nibbana; that is, the happiness arising from both cessation of all craving and liberation from all suffering. A week later he emerged from the meditation and reflected on the dependent arising (on how the life process arises, continues and ceases).

Later a Brahmana approached him under the banyan tree, saluted him courteously and asked: “Gotama! To be a true Brahmana and a noble person, what kind of a moral character must one have?”

122. The Buddha paid no attention to the rudeness of being called by name instead of by his title ‘Buddha’ or ‘Bhagavant’, but answered him directly: “A true Brahmana must abandon all evil, give up all conceit, pursue extensive learning and practice pure living. He must differ from ordinary people in his conduct to deserve to be called a Brahmana.” The Brahmana murmured to himself as he left: “This Ascetic Gotama really sees through my mind! This Ascetic Gotama really sees through my mind!”



123. Many days later, while the Buddha was resting under a pipala tree, two merchants passed by. They found the Buddha sitting extraordinarily calmly, and happily like somebody who had won the biggest battle, pleased with his victory. So they reverently offered the Buddha the delicious food they had brought with them; and being deeply impressed by the Buddha's appearance and speech, they requested that the Buddha accept them as disciples. The names of the two merchants were Tapussa and Bhallika. Because both of them took refuge in the Buddha, they became the Buddha's first two disciples.

124. After a long rest, the Buddha began to plan what he should do for the future. At first he thought: "The Dhamma I have comprehended is difficult and profound, and it can hardly be accepted by most people, whose desire for sense pleasures is very strong. Some people have few delusions. Some people have keen intellect and fairly little craving. Such people may be able to accept this Dhamma. They are like the lotuses that extend their stalks from the bottom of the pond up in the

air, to receive sunshine. So I should not hold this radiant truth a secret. I should make it known everywhere, so that all people can benefit from it.” Thus he decided to propagate the Dhamma.



BEGINNING TO TEACH

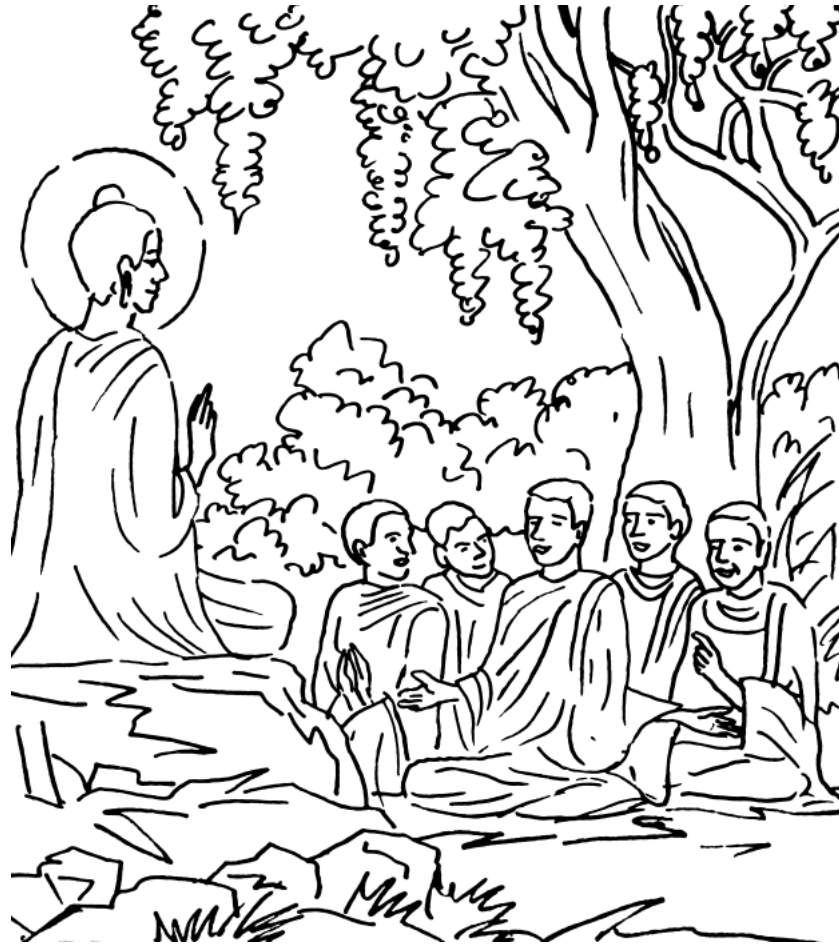
125. After making up his mind, the Buddha began to ponder: “Whom shall I teach first? This person must be inclined to the teaching of Dhamma and must be quick in understanding it.” First he thought of his own master Alara Kalama, who was a wise man of reason and had very light desires. He was definitely the person to accept the Dhamma. But he soon found that Alara Kalama had passed away. He then thought of his other master, Uddaka Ramaputta, but soon found out that he also had died. Finally, he remembered the five monks who had followed him before in the practice of asceticism at Uruvela. When he found that they were living at Isipatana (modern Sarnath) near Varanasi, he soon left to find them.





126. At Isipatana, when the five ascetics saw the Buddha approaching in the distance, they talked among themselves: “Look there! Monk Gotama is coming straight over. He has abandoned asceticism and became a greedy person. When he arrives, let’s not talk to him nor even greet him, nor take his robe or bowl. Let’s only prepare a seat for him. Let him sit down if he likes; otherwise let him stand. Who would bother to greet a man of shaky will like him!”

127. But when the five monks looked at the Buddha as he approached nearer to them, they found that he was not the sort of person they had thought him to be. They noticed that he was surrounded by a brilliant light (halo) and looked very noble. They had never seen such a one before. They were so astonished, that they unconsciously forgot what they had just been saying. One went to meet him and take the robe and bowl from the Buddha’s hands. Others prepared a seat and offered him some water.



128. After sitting down on the seat they had prepared, the Buddha told them: “Monks! I have realised the truth of the end of suffering (Nibbana). If you learn about it and practice the way to it according to my direction, you will soon be enlightened; not in the future life, but in the present life. I tell you nothing but the truth, that you must transcend birth and death by yourselves!”

129. On hearing the Buddha’s words, the five monks could not help doubting him; because they had seen him devotedly practicing asceticism in pursuit of the ultimate truth, but then he failed. Now he came and said he had already attained the unborn and undying Nibbana! So the five monks were reluctant to believe what the Buddha was saying, and they asked him many questions. At last the Buddha said: “Monks! Please think. Did I ever tell you all these things before when we stayed together? Did I ever try to convince you that I had found the supreme truth?” The five monks admitted that, indeed,

the Buddha had never said such things before, so they no longer refused to listen to the Buddha's teachings.



130. So on the full moon day of July 589 BC, the Buddha gave his first teaching (discourse) to the five monks at Isipatana. This event was later recorded as the First Discourse (Setting in Motion the Wheel of Truth). During this first talk, the Buddha explained the 4 Noble Truths to the monks. Kondanna understood everything, and all of his doubts about the Dhamma were cleared and he attained the first stage of enlightenment. Because of this he requested that the Buddha accept him as a disciple. Thus Kondanna became the first Buddhist monk (bhikkhu).

From that time on, the Buddha stayed with the five monks at Isipatana and taught them what he had realised. All the five bhikkhus practiced diligently and with the help of the Buddha they soon became fully enlightened arahants.

131. While the Buddha was in Isipatana, a young man named Yasa, who was the son of a millionaire of Varanasi, one day suddenly grew tired of his family and of his lustful life with many women. He ran away from home secretly and happened to meet the Buddha on his way. After hearing the Buddha teach and learning the benefit of the Dhamma practice, he rejoiced and requested permission to leave home and practice with the Buddha. On the same day, Yasa's father, in search of his son, met the Buddha and asked him about his son. The Buddha instructed him on appropriate points of the Dhamma causing him to understand. He felt happy and allowed his son to leave home and become a monk.



132. After hearing the Buddha's teaching, the rich man was very happy. He also took refuge in the Buddha-Dhamma, and expressed his wish to be a Buddhist lay follower and follow the Buddha-Dhamma. He then invited the Buddha and Yasa to his home on the next morning for lunch. Later, four of the best friends of Yasa also left home and

became Buddhist bhikkhus, and later led fifty young men of noble families to also become Buddhist bhikkhus. Without the need of the Buddha's supervision, they all learned and practiced diligently, and before long, they had all attained the stage of arahant.

133. When the Buddha had sixty bhikkhus as his disciples, he held a meeting directing the bhikkhus to propagate the Dhamma. The Buddha said: "Bhikkhus! I have been released from all the bondage of mankind and devas, and you have been released also. Go and spread the Dhamma to other places, to give more people the opportunity to gain freedom from suffering. Spread the Dhamma so that human lives may be purified and brightened. There are people in the world who have little craving. These are people ready for the Dhamma, and they will be able to understand it. I myself will go out to teach at Uruvela."



134. After the Buddha had sent out, for the first time, sixty of his arahant disciples to teach at various places, he left Isipatana and travelled toward Magadha in the south-east and finally arrived at Uruvela village. He took up residence at the place of the knot-hair cult, a group of a thousand people, the leaders of whom were the three Kasyapa brothers. In order to break through their wrong views completely, the Buddha explained to their leaders, basics of the Buddha-Dhamma which he had recently realised. After hearing the Buddha's teaching, they all were full of joy and made a request to leave home to become Buddhist monks. The three Kasyapa brothers and the thousand followers all became arahants later.



135. Then the Buddha took his arahant disciples and went to Rajagaha, to fulfill his promise to King Bimbisara to teach and enlighten the people of Magadha. Upon arriving at Rajagaha, Buddha and his disciples stayed at Palm Garden. With a fully compassionate

heart, he taught in various ways to make King Bimbisara and his people understand the Dhamma. They then expressed their wish to be the Buddha's disciples.



136. King Bimbisara told the Buddha that when he was a crown prince, he had a wish that besides being a king he would also be, someday, the first among all kings to hear the teaching of the Buddha. Now all his wishes had been realised, and so he decided to take refuge in the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sangha and formally become a upasaka (i.e. a Buddhist follower at home). Later he offered to donate Veluvana, a park in a bamboo grove, to the Buddha as a residence for the bhikkhus. Hence Veluvana became the first monastery in Buddhist history.

FIVE PRECEPTS

137. One morning, on his way from Veluvana to Rajagaha to beg for his daily ration of food, the Buddha encountered a youth who was wet through and through, looking as if he had just got out from water. The young man stood in the middle of the road and bowed one after the other to the east, south, west and north; then he raised his head and saluted the sky and at last knelt down and saluted the earth. Then he threw grain in all the directions he had saluted.



138. The Buddha watched the youth finishing his strange ritual in the thoroughfare and asked him why he did all these things. The youth replied that he observed that according to the directions that his father had given him before he died, and that the purpose of performing this ritual every morning was to prevent any evil thing happening to him

from any direction. After hearing his answer, the Buddha said to the youth: “It is very good that you can honestly follow your father’s instructions! But the real meaning of your father’s instructions and the ritual he wished you to observe is quite other than what you think.”

139. “Your father told you to salute the east and spread grain. What he really meant was that you should respect and support those who have shown great kindness to you - that is, your parents. By saluting the south, you should understand that your father wanted you to respect and treat your teachers well. Saluting the west means loving and protecting your wife and children. Saluting the north means honoring your friends and relatives. By saluting the sky above, your father meant that you should pay respect to Monks, Brahmanas and Saints.”

140. “To salute the earth below means treating all with kindness and compassion, not only people, but also animals. Your father had all this in mind, so he told you to salute in this manner, to prevent evil from happening to you from any direction.” The Buddha then explained to the youth, whose name was Sigala, what one should do for himself and others in order to bring happiness and a better life to everybody now and in the future. The Buddha also instructed Sigala not to kill, not to steal, not to commit adultery, not to lie, and not to use any intoxicant - that is, he gave him the well-known Five Precepts.

141. Afterwards the Buddha advised Sigala to work and earn his living diligently, to take good care of the wealth he would accumulate, and at the same time not be greedy, and to use his wealth not only for his own benefit, but for others as well. The Buddha instructed him to divide his money into four portions: one part should be used for the support of his family; one part for the expansion of his business, one part to help the poor and the needy people of society; and the remaining part should be saved for any emergency. Sigala listened respectfully to the Buddha’s instruction and later requested the Buddha to accept him as a disciple. For the rest of his life he saluted the six directions in the manner and with the understanding that the Buddha had taught him.



UPATISSA AND KOLITA

142. During the Buddha's stay near Rajagaha, there was a well-known master of one of the heretical (unorthodox) schools, living in the area. He had about two hundred students, and among them Upatissa and Kolita were the most learned. However they were not satisfied with what their teacher had taught them. They hoped to learn the deeper knowledge about life - about life after death and about freedom from suffering. They were the best of friends, and their education and knowledge were on the same level. So they made an agreement that each would try his best with his intelligence and training to search for the highest knowledge, and that as soon as one had found it, he would immediately share it with the other.



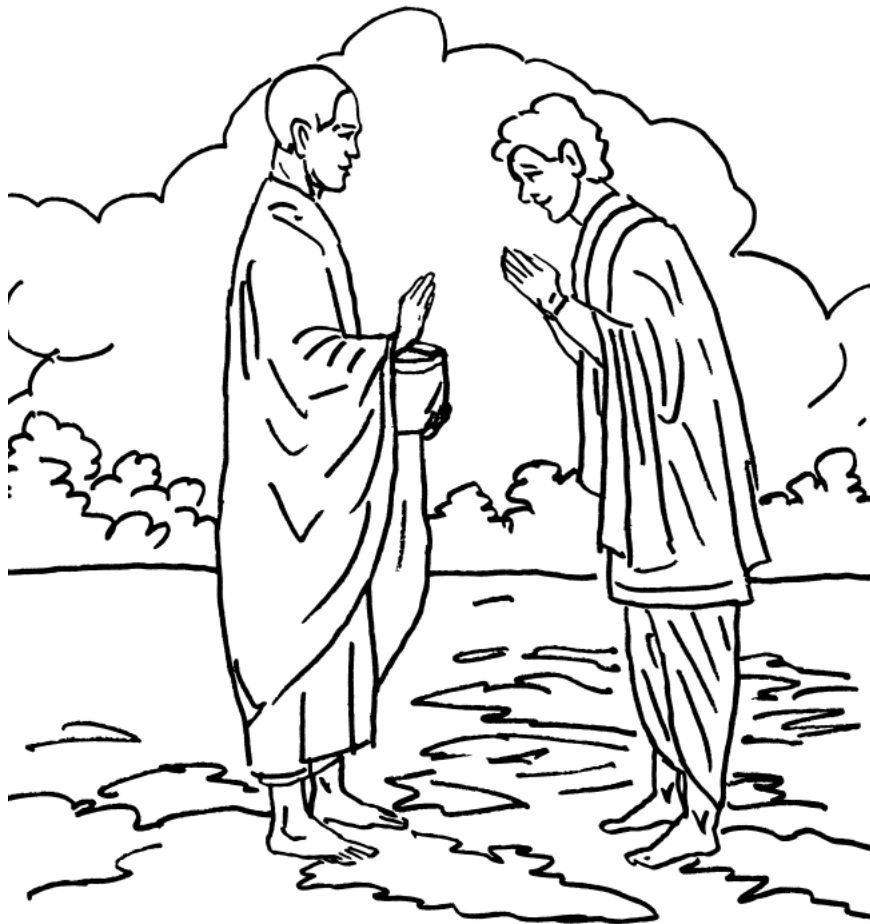
143. One morning, as Upatissa was walking along the road towards Rajagaha, he saw a monk with a food bowl. The monk looked so

radiant and peaceful, even when he was begging for food, that Upatissa was very much astonished. The nearer he approached to the monk, the more he wondered about him, because he looked so peaceful. It appeared that this monk was free from all fear. Upatissa thought: “This monk must have found the ultimate truth that we are pursuing, or he must be, at least, a disciple of one who has found the ultimate truth. I am anxious to know who his master is and what his master teaches. I must follow him. I must find the truth!”

144. But Upatissa felt that it was not appropriate to question him while he was begging for food, so he followed him at a distance until he had finished his daily begging and had left the city of Rajagaha. Then he came forward, respectfully gave his regards as if he were talking to an old acquaintance, and then asked him: “Venerable Master! You look so peaceful that I would really like to know who your teacher is. Under whose direction did you leave home and take up the pure life? What is the name of your teacher and what did he teach you?”



145. The monk answered smilingly: “Venerable Master! Let me tell you that there is a great sage of the Sakya Clan, who gave up his throne and left home to practice pure living. I left my home also to practice with this great monk. The Buddha is my teacher, and I practice according to his teaching.” Upatissa thought that perhaps he could learn the truth about life, which he and Kolita had been seeking for a long time, from this great monk. So he asked anxiously: “Venerable Master! What is this teaching of the Buddha? What has your master taught you? I would very much like to know.”



146. The monk answered in a mild tone: “It has not been a very long time since I left home to learn and practice with the Buddha. So, I have not learned very much about the Buddha’s teaching, and I am not able to explain it to you fully in detail. But if you would like to know only the general content of his teaching, I could tell you about it in a

few sentences.” Upatissa replied hastily: “I would very much like to know; please tell me just the general contents!” The monk said: “Fine! Now listen! The Buddha often said that ‘All things arise from causes and all things also cease as a result of causes.’ The Buddha also explained those causes.”

147. As Upatissa heard those words, he immediately understood their meaning. He realised that “whatever arises will also pass away”, and attained the first stage of enlightenment.

Upatissa then thanked the monk deeply and asked him where he might find the Buddha. Feeling very happy he then left, intending to pass the good news on to Kolita, that he himself had already realised the universal truth (Dhamma) they sought.



148. Now Upatissa’s face was glowing with happiness, just like the face of the monk who had told him the truth about the Universal law

of cause and effect. When Kolita saw him coming, he immediately knew that his friend had realised something special, so he asked: “My friend! Just look at the glow on your face! You must have found the truth which we have been searching for. Have you?” Upatissa answered joyfully: “Yes! Yes! My friend! I have realised the Dhamma beyond suffering.” Kolita asked eagerly: “How did you do it, my friend? How did you do it?” Upatissa told his friend Kolita about the remarkable monk he had met and repeated to him the words he had heard.

149. Instantly, Kolita also understood the monk’s teaching and attained the first stage of enlightenment. Finally the two of them went to see Buddha and asked him to accept them as bhikkhus. Later on they became fully enlightened arahants and the Buddha’s chief disciples. They were known everywhere for their high wisdom and great supernatural power under the more familiar names of Sariputta and Moggallana. The monk who told them the Dhamma about the Universal law of cause and effect was Bhikkhu Assaji, and the verse that was handed down became known as the ‘verse of Bhikkhu Assaji’.

INSTRUCTING ARAHANTS

150. When the Buddha was residing at Rajagaha, a conference was held at Veluvana for all the disciples on the full moon day of the third month (Thai era) of the Year. The meeting was initiated by the simultaneous return of the one thousand two hundred and fifty arahant disciples from their respective Dhamma propagating missions. Since they had not contacted each other, and yet had arrived on the same day to report their accomplishments to the Buddha, it was indeed a most unusual occasion and pleased the Buddha as well as his disciples very much.



151. The Buddha felt that this occasion was a proper time for instruction, so he gathered all his disciples together at Veluvana and instructed them to practice and teach following the same basic principles. The essence of this teaching was: 1) Do not do anything bad; 2) Do good; and 3) Purify your mind from defilements. There are four important things to remember about the occasion of this gathering; these are:



152. 1) All the attending disciples were arahants; 2) All these arahant disciples were bhikkhus ordained by the Buddha personally; 3) These one thousand one hundred and fifty arahant disciples did not make previous appointments to arrive on the same day; and 4) The Buddha's instruction given on that day became known as the Patimokkha Instruction. To celebrate these four memorable facts or events, Theravada Buddhists have celebrated the 'Dhamma-Respecting Festival' every year on the full moon day of the third month ever since that first conference was held.

VISITING HIS FAMILY

153. When King Suddhodana found that his crown-prince had attained Supreme Enlightenment and become Buddha and that he was staying at Rajagaha, he sent a young official named Kalodayin, one of the playmates from Siddhattha's youth, to invite him to Kapilavatthu. He wished he could see the Buddha once more while he was living. To fulfill his father's wish the Buddha promised to visit him, and so, at the suitable time, he and his disciples went to Kapilavatthu.



154. One evening the Buddha with his disciples arrived to Kapilavatthu. For the night they stayed at Nyagrodha Garden, outside the city, where King Suddhodana had provided residence for them. The next morning, as he did every day, the Buddha led his disciples through the streets of the city to beg for food. People watched them

marching along and someone went to report to the king. King Suddhodana was both surprised and angered to hear that the prince was begging for food from his own people.

155. King Suddhodana ordered his driver to rush him to the street where the Buddha was begging. On arriving, he saw the Buddha and his disciples marching along with their bowls already full of food. They were making their way through a crowd who were paying them respect, and they were just about to turn towards the palace. But King Suddhodana was angry and disappointed. The prince begging for food in his own country! In his own country the crown-prince was entitled to take anything he wanted without asking for permission at all! So the king, looking at the situation in this way, naturally felt quite irritated.



156. King Suddhodana went before the Buddha and reproached him in a tone of disappointment and indignation: “My son! Is this the good news that I, your father, am to receive? You have abandoned your father and left the country. You are the son of the king, but has the heir to the throne yet been decided? Oh! My son! Today you have done the most disgraceful thing to your father and the royal family. On what occasion have your ancestors ever done such thing. On what occasion have we ever accepted food like beggars?”

157. The Buddha spoke calmly to his angry, non-comprehending father: “Father! This is done, in reality, according to the custom of my ancestors.” King Suddhodana answered: “Everybody knows that your ancestors were kings and that none of them ever did such shameful things.” The Buddha continued calmly: “Father! It is true, but I am not talking about worldly ancestors.”



158. “Now I am perpetuating the tradition of all the Buddhas of the past. I mean that I am now the Buddha, and in begging I do what all of

my ancestors have done. All past Buddhas did so, and you must understand that begging for food is done for the purpose of converting people. What all the Buddhas practice, I also do.” After ending his speech, the Buddha explained some fundamentals of the Buddha-Dhamma to King Suddhodana to dispel his father’s anger. Then the King took the bowl from the Buddha’s hand and asked him and his disciples to accept food in the palace.

159. In the royal palace, after finishing the exquisite meal which the King had offered him, the Buddha began to teach him, his relatives, the officials and all the other people there. He explained in detail the supreme truth he had attained and the method for eliminating all suffering. Everyone in the audience was able to understand the teaching. They all gained confidence in the Dhamma and religiously put it into practice, and became followers of the Buddha for the rest of their lives.



160. Later, at the request of King Suddhodana, the Buddha took two senior disciples and went to lady Yasodhara's living quarters to see her individually, for she was quite sad at not having been able to hear the Buddha's teaching. The Buddha compassionately told her about the good actions she had done in the past and explained the Dhamma to her. At that time, Prince Rahula was seven years old. He was later ordained by the Buddha and became the first novice in the Buddhist tradition.



161. Besides Rahula, the Buddha also converted his step-brother Nanda and several princes of the Sakya Clan. They and many other young men of Kapilavatthu all left home and followed the Buddha as bhikkhus. After the Buddha had left Kapilavatthu, six more princes rushed to Anupiya village to ask the Buddha that he accepts them as

bhikkhus. Their names were Bhadrīka, Aniruddha, Bhagu, Kimbila, Ananda, and Devadatta.

162. Many years after he left Kapilavatthu, the Buddha went back again with his stepbrother Nanda, his cousin Ananda, and Sariputta and Moggallana. This time he went to visit his father King Suddhodana, who was seriously ill. Overjoyed at seeing the Buddha again, he showed some improvement, and everybody thought that the King might recover. But the improvement in his health did not last for long. Since King Suddhodana was very old, he could no longer resist the illness, and two or three days later his condition became serious once again and finally he passed away. His death caused everybody deep grief.



MAHAPAJAPATI AND ANANDA

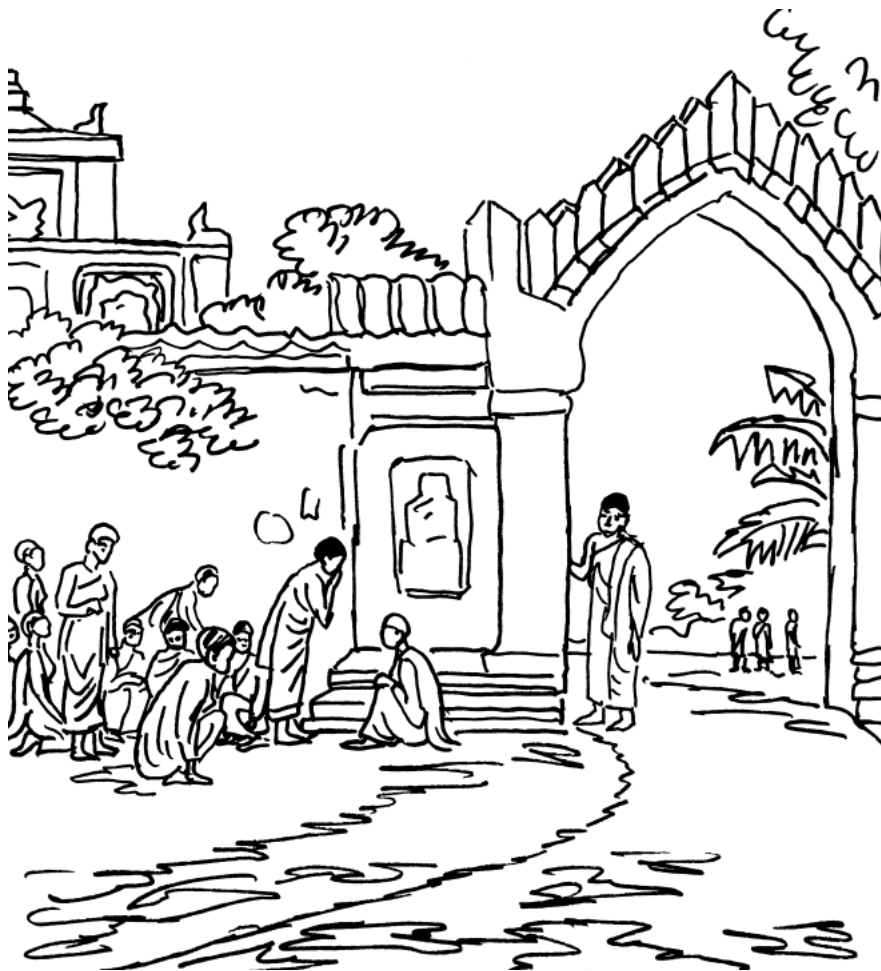
163. The Buddha's aunt, Mahapajapati, had nursed and brought up the Buddha as if he were her own son. When her husband, King Suddhodana, passed away, she became very sad and began to feel tired of the worldly life. She came to prefer a pure kind of life, liked to follow the Buddha, listen to the Buddha Dhamma and wished she could leave home and join his group of monks in the practice of the Dhamma. So she led a group of women who were unwilling to become court ladies, and they followed the Buddha everywhere.



164. Lady Mahapajapati asked for the Buddha's kind permission to let her leave home and become a nun, so that she could follow him closely and learn and practice according to his teaching as other bhikkhus did. Although she asked him again and again that she and the other women be accepted as bhikkhunis, she was three times

refused by Buddha. At this she became so disappointed and felt deeply hurt, that she and the other women all began to weep.

165. When King Suddhodana's cremation was ended, the Buddha left Kapilavatthu and began travelling and teaching from place to place. At one point he came to the country of Vaisali and resided at the Mahavana Monastery. Lady Mahapajapati and her group of women all shaved their heads, put on robes, and travelled on foot towards Vaisali. They could only walk a short distance each day, so it took them a long time to arrive finally at Mahavana Monastery, where the Buddha was staying.



166. When they arrived, after walking for a long time, their feet were all swollen, and their bodies had become thin and weakened by fatigue. Mahapajapati stood at the entrance to the monastery and could not hold back her tears. Ananda had just come out of the monastery gate and found the lady weeping sorrowfully. He asked her why she

was crying. The lady said: “Venerable Ananda! The Buddha did not allow me and my women to leave home. I want nothing else. I wish only to leave home and become a nun, and so I am crying!”

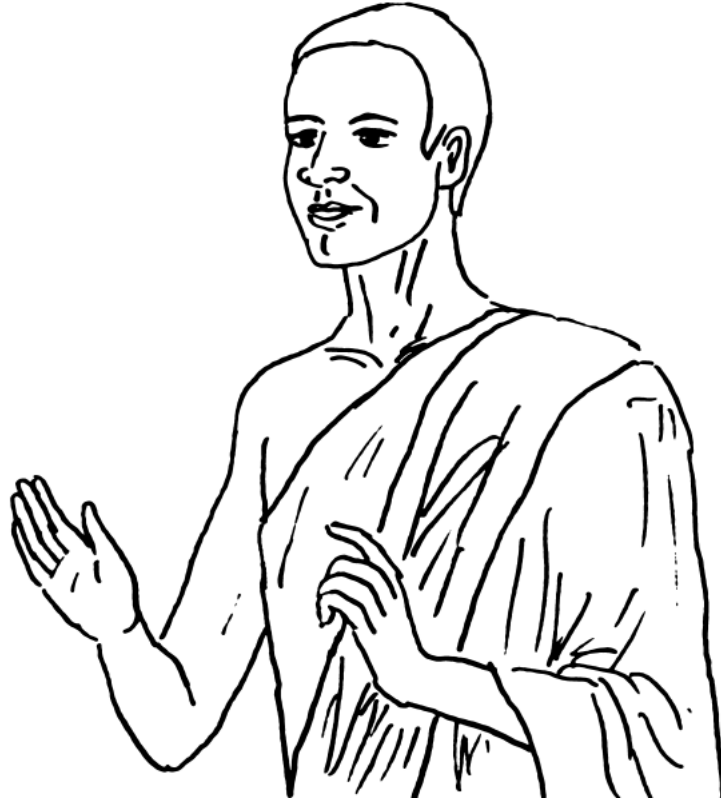
167. Ananda comforted her: “My noble lady! Please wait here for a little while. If this is so, I shall ask the Buddha to allow women to practice the Dhamma as well as the bhikkhus.” Promising the lady that he would do all that he could to help her, Ananda then went back into the monastery to see the Buddha. With deep respect, he asked that the Buddha show his mercy and let women leave home as men were allowed to do. But the Buddha replied: “Ananda! No, no! Do not ask me to do this!”

168. Ananda did not back down but, with courage, persisted in his plea for a second and even a third time; but even so the Buddha refused his request each time. Ananda thought to himself: “The Buddha does not consent to my direct request. Maybe he will consent if I plead in a different way.” So he asked: “Buddha! If women quit worldly affairs and become nuns and strictly practice pure living according to the Dhamma, will they be able to attain the four fruits? Will they be able to attain Nibbana?” The Buddha replied: “Ananda! If women quit worldly affairs, become nuns and practice according to the Dhamma, they too can during this present lifetime, attain Nibbana and the stage of arahant.”

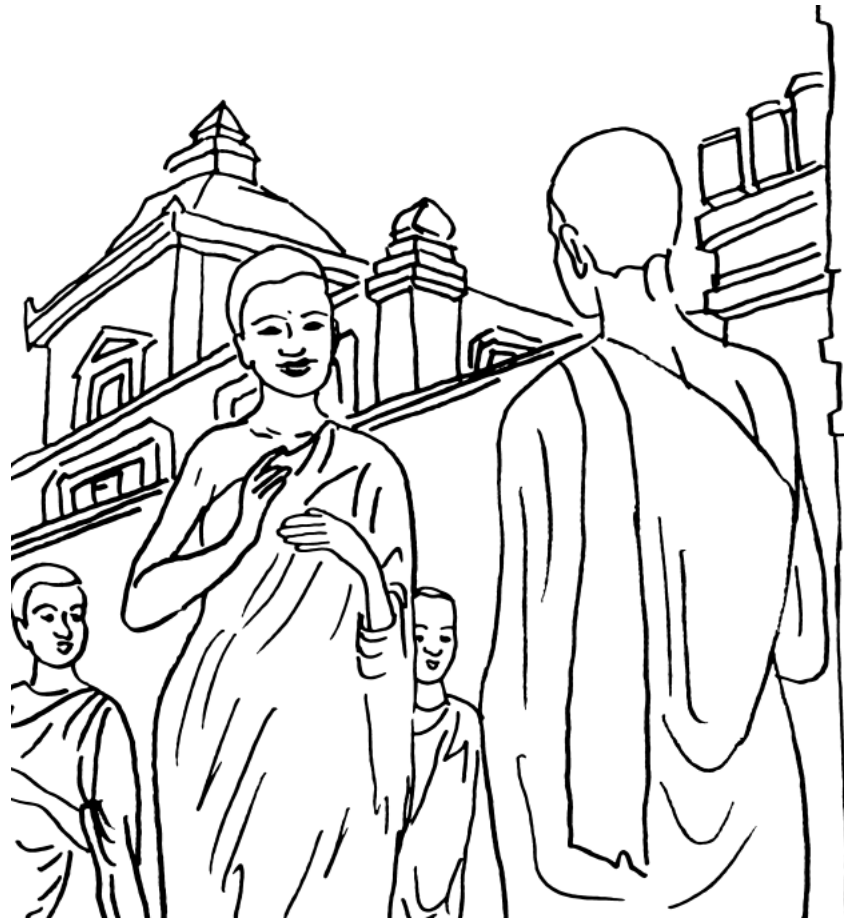
169. Ananda then said: “In that case, I beg you to consider that, lady Mahapajapati has in past, done you the greatest favour; because she is your aunt, as well as your foster-mother, and she breast-fed you from the time your mother passed away as well as taught you and brought you up in place of your mother. Buddha, I beg you, for the sake of this lady, kindly allow women to leave home like men so that they can also practice the Buddha-Dhamma in pursuit of the highest Noble Truth that you have explained to the people of the world.”

170. The Buddha said: “All right, Ananda! If Lady Mahapajapati is willing to observe the ‘eight monastic rules’ strictly, I shall allow her to leave home!” Then he explained those eight rules of conduct to Ananda, and finally he stood up and said: “Ananda! If lady

Mahapajapati willingly observes these eight rules all her life, she can be considered a bhikkhuni.”



171. Having obtained the Buddha’s permission, Ananda went out to tell Lady Mahapajapati what the Buddha said. The lady was very happy, and she said to Ananda: “Venerable Ananda! Young girls love to dress up; they shampoo and bathe themselves and then, with both hands, raise beautiful fragrant flower garlands to place on their heads, carefully adjusting and fixing this decoration. Likewise, I shall observe the eight rules as if they were a garland of flowers on a young girl’s head and make sure that this garland does not fall from my head throughout my life.”



172. Ananda returned to see the Buddha once again, bowed and then said: “Buddha! Lady Mahapajapati is willing to observe strictly the eight rules that you have given, so her desire to become a bhikkhuni has been fulfilled!” The Buddha said: “Ananda, with women in the order the correct teaching of the Dhamma will last for a shorter period than just with men; because this will create more difficulties in the Sangha. With women as nuns, the Buddha-Dhamma cannot last for very long.”

So in the fifth year after the Buddha’s Enlightenment, the order of bhikkhuni was established.

DEVADATTA

173. Of all the disciples of the Buddha, Ananda, his cousin, revered the Buddha most. He was, therefore, selected to be the Buddha's close attendant. Another of the Buddha's cousins had also left home and similarly become a monk when the Buddha was fifty-five years old. But this cousin's actions were opposite to Ananda's. Instead of respecting and helping the Buddha, he competed with him on every occasion, was very envious of him, and tried every trick, with the help of evil people among his relatives and friends, to disrupt the Sangha. This cousin's name was Devadatta.





174. Devadatta was a conceited man. He was especially dissatisfied because Sariputta and Moggallana, both not of the Sakya Clan, had been chosen to be the Buddha's chief disciples and were very much honored by all. So he left the Sangha and went alone to Rajagaha in order to contact Ajatasatru, the crown-prince of King Bimbisara. At Rajagaha he spoke in a manner that prince Ajatasatru admired and gained his respect. So the prince built a beautiful monastery near Rajagaha, which was to be used exclusively as Devadatta's residence, and promised to support him forever.

175. Many years later, the Buddha went to Rajagaha again. Devadatta visited him and requested his permission to establish a new sangha with himself as leader. The Buddha turned down his request, explaining that anything that divided a Sangha would not result in good consequences. But Devadatta continued with his plan regardless of the Buddha's warning, and he had the complete support of Prince

Ajatasatru. However, King Bimbisara, the prince's father, remained a firm supporter of the Buddha and refused to co-operate in establishing the new sangha.

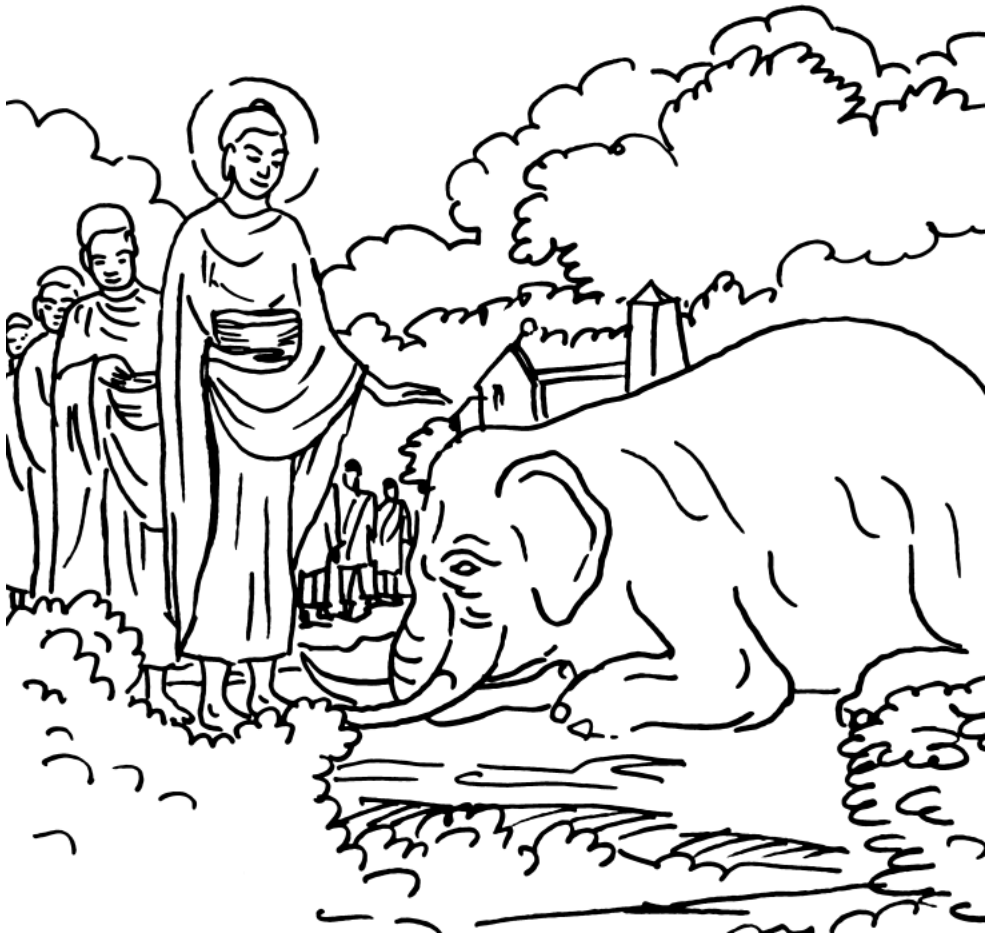
176. Using dishonest means, Devadatta enticed prince Ajatasatru so that he trusted Devadatta completely and did everything according to his wishes. When Devadatta was satisfied that he had firm control over the prince's will, he suggested to Prince Ajatasatru that he should expel his father and become King of Magadha himself; for then he could do whatever he liked, such as helping Devadatta establish the new sangha, without any hindrance. Prince Ajatasatru followed his suggestion. He put his father in prison, gave him no food, and finally, starved him to death. This incident occurred in the thirty-seventh year after the Buddha attained the state of perfect enlightenment.

177. Now Devadatta had enough power to make his move, because the new king was his friend and supporter, willing to do whatever Devadatta proposed to him. So Devadatta asked the prince to hire a group of skillful archers, for a high pay, to kill the Buddha. But when they came to the Buddha's residence and noticed the kindness and equanimity in the Buddha's manner, they were very much impressed and immediately realised that they should not harm the Buddha. So they went all together to the Buddha and confessed to him, that they felt guilty, at being hired to perform such an evil act. The Buddha forgave them and comforted them, and they, in turn, all vowed to follow the Buddha as his disciples.

178. When all plots to kill the Buddha by using other people failed, Devadatta decided to do it himself. He waited on the side of Grdhrakuta Mountain above a road near the Buddha's residence, which the Buddha often used to go on. One evening, just as the Buddha was walking by, Devadatta, hiding above, pushed a huge stone down the hillside, intending to kill the Buddha. But the stone, which was aimed at the Buddha's head, suddenly broke into many small pieces; only one sharp fragment hit the Buddha's foot, causing some bleeding but no serious damage. The Buddha returned to the monastery and received treatment from the famous physician Jivaka.



179. Again his deadly plot had failed, but Devadatta still wanted to harm the Buddha. This time he planned to set loose the wild elephant Nalagiri, in order to kill the Buddha on the road the Buddha took when he went begging for food at Rajagaha. However, when the wild elephant approached the Buddha, it did not act as Devadatta had expected, but, on the contrary, became calm, because it was tamed by the Buddha's enormous loving-kindness. So, Devadatta could do nothing and he gave up his plans to murder the Buddha, yet he still wanted to disrupt the Sangha.

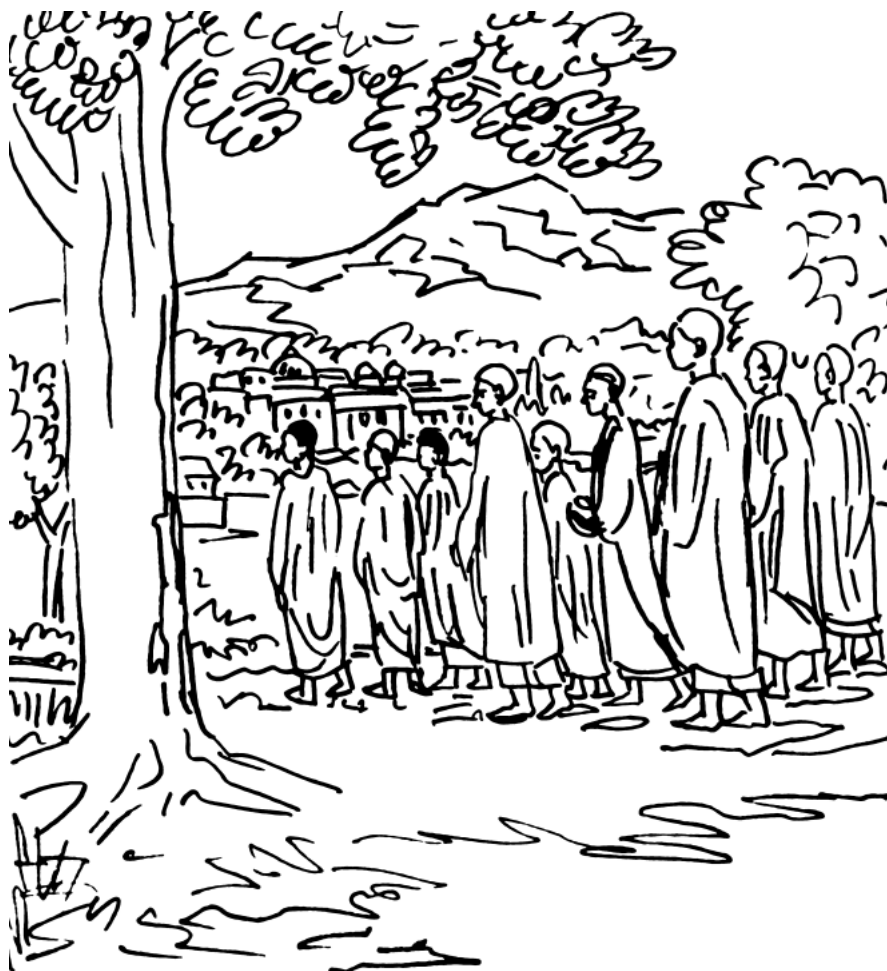


180. In order to give bhikkhus the impression that what he practiced was even stricter than what the Buddha taught, Devadatta once again went to see the Buddha, acting as if he had never even tried to disrupt the Sangha. He asked the Buddha to enforce a stricter code of behavior, as other monastic sects did, such as not allowing bhikkhus to live in covered houses, but only in the open, under trees in the forest. He also asked the Buddha to stop bhikkhus from eating any kind of meat, and he suggested to the Buddha that anyone who did not observe this rule should be expelled from the Sangha.



181. The Buddha openly refused Devadatta's request, saying: "If some bhikkhus prefer to live in the open or under trees, they are free to do so; but if anyone does not like to do so, he may choose to live in whatever kind of accommodation his patron provides." Regarding Devadatta's other suggestions for tightening up the rules, the Buddha

ruled in a similar manner: “If anyone wishes to eat only the food he has begged, or to wear clothes made only of cloth strips picked up in the woods or from garbage piles, or to eat only vegetables and no meat, he is free to do so; but if someone does not wish to do so, he does not have to.” Finally, the Buddha warned Devadatta: “Do not attempt to do anything to break up the Sangha, for you will reap the evil fruits of such an attempt.”



182. Devadatta, however, paid no attention to the Buddha’s warning and left feeling very spiteful. Soon he led away a group of bhikkhus who trusted him, formed a new sangha in the country with himself as their leader, and strictly observed his new code of living. Being aware of all this, the Buddha sent Sariputta to advise this group of bhikkhus to get themselves out of this unfortunate situation. Sariputta arrived just as Devadatta was taking his nap. He then related honestly what the Buddha’s view was regarding the formation of the new sangha,

and also pointed out to them many facts about Devadatta's character and actions. This new information and insight changed the minds of all the bhikkhus, and they all returned to the Buddha with Sariputta.

183. When Devadatta woke up from his afternoon nap, he noticed that everywhere it was unusually still. He came out to investigate and there was not a single bhikkhu remaining. After a while others told him that Sariputta had come and talked to the bhikkhus, and took them back to the Buddha. Devadatta was furious, but since he could not walk for a long way because his body was weak, he ordered his servants to prepare the sedan-chair and to carry him to see the Buddha, so that he could find out what the Buddha's purpose was in drawing back to himself all the bhikkhus.

184. When the bhikkhus found that Devadatta was approaching in a rage, they offered their opinion requesting the Buddha that he should hide himself, for they feared that an irritated Devadatta might become dangerous when he saw the Buddha. But the Buddha was not in the least afraid. He said to Sariputta: "Devadatta cannot do any harm to the Buddha." Later on, people found that what the Buddha had said was entirely true; for the bhikkhus were soon informed that Devadatta had died unexpectedly when the chair-bearers paused on the road for a short rest. From that time until the Buddha's Parinibbana, the Sangha was never disrupted again.

185. The Buddha taught and converted people for forty-five years. He travelled to and from the neighbouring kingdoms in India, both large and small, always on foot, never using any vehicle. During the rainy seasons, he stayed at monasteries offered to him by various patrons. The places the Buddha stayed at most often were Veluvana, near Rajagaha, offered to him by King Bimbisara, and Jetavana, near Savatthi, donated by Anathapindika. During all these years, the Buddha worked diligently every day to teach and to propagate the Dhamma.

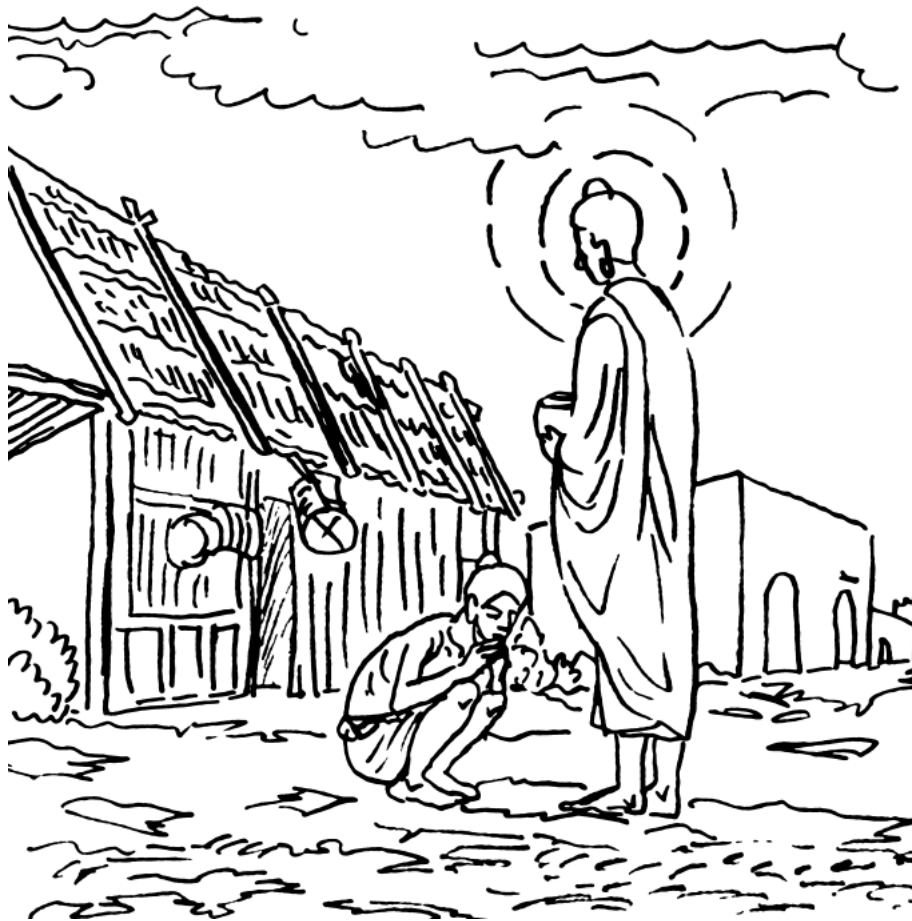


BUDDHA'S DAILY LIFE

186. The Buddha usually got up before dawn, took a bath, and then went into meditation to examine people's natures and development. When he found that someone was ready to accept his teaching, he would go to that person's place and teach him that very day. After daybreak, the Buddha put on his robe, took his bowl, and went for alms from people in the neighborhood. Sometimes he went alone and sometimes with bhikkhus in neat files, everyone with bowl in hand; and in a peaceful and gracious manner they passed by one house after another, accepting food from all patrons.

187. Sometimes there were people who respectfully invited the Buddha to their homes to accept offerings. The Buddha usually

accepted the invitation, but only if there was a good reason. At the patron's home, the Buddha would sit on a prepared mat, and the patron would take the Buddha's bowl and fill it with the best food and offer it to him. After eating the food and washing his hands, the Buddha explained the Dhamma to the people who were there, causing them to understand that after doing good, or bad things, they would correspondingly gain either happiness or suffering, in either this or in a future life. He also advised and instructed them to practice diligently the Buddha-Dhamma. After that the Buddha returned to the monastery.



188. In the monastery, the Buddha used to sit quietly in the rest hall or under a nearby tree, waiting until all the bhikkhus had returned from their alms round and had finished eating. Then he went for a while into his room to rest. When all the bhikkhus had assembled in the discussion hall, the Buddha would give a talk that suited the particular occasion. Or he would encourage the bhikkhus during their

discussions to learn and practice the Buddha-Dhamma so that they can attain the Nibbana in this present life.



189. When the Buddha had finished explaining the Dhamma, some bhikkhus often asked the Buddha to outline the main points of the Dhamma, so that they could practice and recite the Dhamma in a way that suited their particular natures and development. The Buddha would then consider the nature and the degree of advancement of the individual and give an easy or a deep verse that was suitable for that particular person. After that the bhikkhus dispersed, each bhikkhu would find a quiet place in the forest or under a tree or in a deserted dwelling, where he would sit down to meditate and recite the verses that the Buddha had given to him. The Buddha would also return to his own living quarters.

190. In summertime, if the Buddha stayed at certain places, the people in the neighborhood would come to visit him in the evening. Some came with offerings, some came to listen to his teaching. By various means and using a skillful language, the Buddha always made everyone understand what he said. Everybody - whether rich or poor, educated or uneducated - felt that the Buddha had explained the Dhamma for him. So, after the teaching, everybody was happy and satisfied and showed before the Buddha that he had confidence in the Buddha-Dhamma and would put it into practice throughout his lifetime.



191. After the people had left, the Buddha returned to the monastery to bathe, but if there was a suitable river or pond nearby, he might take a bath there in the evening. After his bath, the Buddha would enter into meditation to rest for some time, and then continue to receive bhikkhus coming from other places. The Buddha would inquire about

how they were, teach them, and explain to them the Buddha-Dhamma which was difficult to understand, bringing them to understand it and leave afterwards full of joy.



192. Being tired after sitting all day, the Buddha took his walk at dusk. He walked back and forth in one place within the monastery to get rid of his fatigue and to regain his freshness. Every evening, after his walk, the Buddha would talk again with the bhikkhus. Late that night important persons, such as kings might come to visit the Buddha and inquire about certain problems. The Buddha would answer their questions and they left afterwards feeling very happy.

193. After that it was time to go to sleep. The Buddha slept on his right side, his two legs slightly bent, the left one on the right one; his left hand was placed on his left thigh, and his right hand was placed under his right cheek. The Buddha went quietly to sleep and woke up

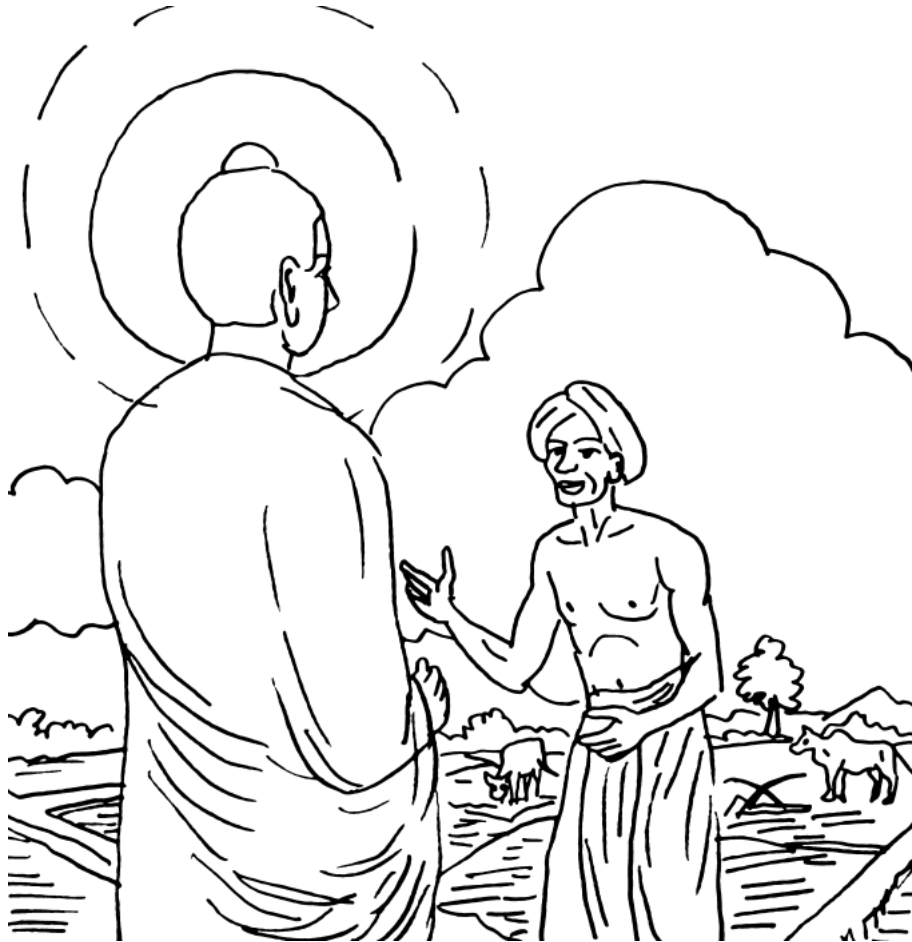
before dawn. Then he entered into meditation to explore the natures of his prospective audiences for the day, and then continued after sunrise to teach the Dhamma.



LAST YEAR

194. The Buddha had been teaching and converting people for forty-five years. He always worked very hard, never slackening, in his Dhamma-propagating work. When he was not traveling on the road, he spent his time not only teaching the Dhamma, but also, because of his vast knowledge and great wisdom, solving problems for those people whom he met, and directing them to realise the true meaning of life. He always showed his willingness to help when someone

approached him with a problem or question, whether he was a farmer, a gardener, a blacksmith, or a cart-maker.



195. The Buddha was never reluctant to answer different questions or explain complicated problems; nor had he even been irritated by any inquirer, or unable to answer a question. The Buddha always taught the Dhamma in a way most suitable to the nature of the people, whether they came to learn out of sincerity or whether they were there only to disrupt. Those who came to ask about the deeper aspects of the Dhamma were warmly welcomed and offered perfect and complete explanations. And those who came to challenge or test the Buddha were always defeated by his wisdom, and would finally express their desire to be the Buddha's loyal disciples for the rest of their lives.



196. In the forty-fifth year of his traveling and teaching career, the Buddha had reached his eightieth year. He realised that his traveling around was about to end, for he felt his physical strength was declining even though his mind was as strong as ever. Knowing that he could not remain in the world much longer, the Buddha decided to travel north to the foothills of the Himalayas, the region most familiar to him in his younger years. His intention was to enter Nibbana, in which no element of clinging remains (Parinibbana), in that place. So he left Rajagaha with Ananda and a group of bhikkhus.

197. On the way north, the Buddha went through the kingdom of Patali and then turned northward passing Vesali. The Buddha had stayed in Vesali before, where he received the offering of Amravana Garden from the loose girl Ambapali, who had competed with the princes of the country in making offerings to the Buddha. When the Buddha arrived at Bamboo Grove Village, he told his bhikkhus to take up residence for the rainy season anywhere they liked, but both the

Buddha and Ananda decided to remain for the rainy season there in the village.



198. During his stay for the rainy season at Bamboo Grove Village, the Buddha became seriously ill, but later on he gradually recovered and his pain completely disappeared. One day at noon, Ananda prepared a cushion for the Buddha so that he could sit in the shade of the monastery. Ananda said: “Buddha! I am so happy to see that you have recovered your normal health. I was very sad before to see you so seriously ill. But I always hoped that you would not pass away until you had given some last instructions relating to the community of bhikkhus.”

199. The Buddha said: “Ananda! What can the bhikkhus still expect of me? I have told you everything there is to know about the Dhamma; there is nothing else left. By this time, the bhikkhus should know the way to practice, to check their practice and to attain Nibbana; I do not

keep any secret. With all my heart I wish the very best for all the bhikkhus and have high expectations for them. I have told them everything they should know up to the time of their final deliverance from suffering. Ananda! I am an old man now, my strength is declining and my time is close to its end. I am eighty already. Therefore, you should depend on yourselves, and not seek external refuge. The Dhamma is what you should rely on, and nothing else.” Finally the Buddha repeated: “Ananda! Any bhikkhu who is determined to practice is to be considered the most progressive one in the Sangha!”



200. At the daybreak, the Buddha felt more comfortable and was able to go for alms in the city of Vesali. After eating, the Buddha left for Pava Stupa and told Ananda to bring a cushion so that he could take a rest at midday. While the Buddha was sitting alone under the shade of a tree, he investigated with his mind the cause and the condition of his passing away and concluded that he would enter Parinibbana after

three months. When Ananda came over to him, the Buddha said: “Ananda! On the fifteenth day of the Visakha month the Buddha will enter Nibbana, in which no element of clinging remains. It is only three months away.”



201. Ananda begged him: “Please do not enter Parinibbana, Buddha. Please stay and continue to help people to end suffering!” The Buddha said to Ananda: “Ananda! The Buddha has completely finished his kamma, and will attain Parinibbana three months from now. Further, death is unavoidable, as nothing can exist forever. Ananda! Do not think about this now. Come, let us go to Mahavana Monastery, and ask the bhikkhus of Vesali to assemble there.” At the Buddha’s request, Ananda left. When the bhikkhus had gathered at Mahavana, Ananda went to inform the Buddha.

202. The Buddha went to the place of the assembly and there gave the bhikkhus many important instruction. He also expressed the final expectations he had of the bhikkhus, encouraging them to observe all the Buddha’s teaching, for the benefit of people in the world, helping beings to learn and practice the Buddha-Dhamma, and serving as good examples for the people of the world. Finally he repeated: “All things are impermanent. You must learn and practice diligently. Guard your own minds, do not be heedless, so that you can be freed from all the suffering of the cycle of birth and death.”





203. One morning, to have a last look at the city of Vesali, the Buddha and Ananda went for alms there. The Buddha said to Ananda: “Ananda! This is the last time that I shall see the city of Vesali. Ananda! Let’s go to Bhandra Village.” At Bhandra, he took a rest and taught the people there. Then, together with his disciples, he passed through several other villages, finally arriving at the city of Bhoga, where he stopped at the Ananda shrine.

There the Buddha told his disciples that when anyone teaches them the Dhamma, they should carefully verify it against the Dhamma taught by the Buddha. And if it is not consistent with the Buddha’s teaching, they should reject it. Then the Buddha pointed out to the bhikkhus the four great references for the Buddha-Dhamma. After that they continued their journey to the city of Pava and rested at the Mango Garden which belonged to Cunda, the son of a goldsmith.

204. The Buddha taught Cunda and his family causing them to have confidence in and take refuge in the Buddha-Dhamma. He then accepted Cunda's invitation to receive offerings at his home the next morning. In the food that Cunda offered the Buddha there was a kind of fungus, which, when the Buddha ate it, made his former illness to flare up even more seriously than before. However, the Buddha endured the pain with all his strength and continued his journey towards Kusinara.



205. Taking a short rest every once in a while along the way, the Buddha and his disciples gradually approached Kusinara. While he paused under a tree, he met Pukkusa, a prince of the Malla Clan and the old Alara-Kalama's disciple, who was on his way from Kusinara to Pava. The Buddha then taught him the way to live in peace. The prince gained confidence in the Buddha-Dhamma and vowed to take refuge in the Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha all his life. Then he respectfully offered the Buddha two rolls of fine gold-colored cloth.

The Buddha accepted only one roll, and asked Pukkusa to offer the other roll to Ananda.

The Buddha and his disciples then crossed the Kakuttha River, took a rest for a while, and then went on to the Hirannavati River, which was within the boundaries of Kusinara.



206. After crossing the Hirannavati River, they arrived at Salavana, a holiday resort of the royal clan of Malla, which was outside the city of Kusinara. The Buddha felt he could go no further, and said to Ananda: “Ananda! Please prepare a place for me to lie down, between those two sala trees. I feel very tired.” Ananda took the Buddha’s big robe, folded it four times, and placed it on the bed between two big sala trees. The Buddha then lay down on his side with his head towards the north. The Buddha did not fall asleep, but only rested to relieve his pain and fatigue. His mind remained as tranquil as it had ever been.

207. Ananda felt that the Buddha was really about to leave him this time, and he could not hold the grief in his heart. So he left the Buddha and went to an isolated place among the trees to cry. He thought aloud: “Unlike other bhikkhus, I have not yet attained the stage of arahant. I have to continue to learn and practice, but now my teacher will pass away and leave me behind. I shall lose my compassionate master forever and be left all alone!” his face became flooded with tears.



208. When the Buddha opened his eyes and did not see Ananda, he asked the bhikkhus who were at his side: “Where did Ananda go?” The bhikkhus replied: “Ananda is weeping in a hidden place. He says that he has not attained the stage of arahant and has to keep on learning and practicing, but that his ever-compassionate teacher is going to leave him!” The Buddha said: “Bhikkhu! Please go and tell Ananda that the Buddha is looking for him.” The bhikkhu then did as

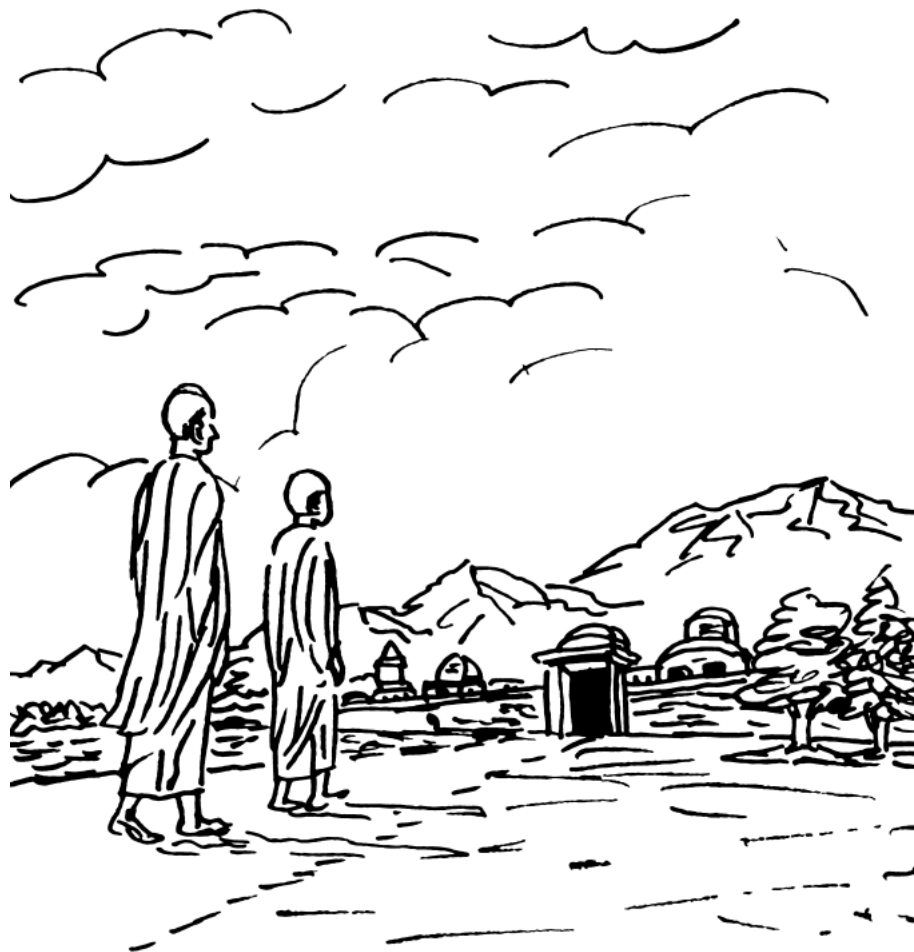
he was asked. When Ananda came back, the Buddha comforted him very kindly and compassionately.

209. The Buddha praised Ananda in front of the other bhikkhus, saying: “All the Buddhas in the past had excellent and devoted attendants, such as I have in Ananda. All the Buddhas in the future will have excellent attendants, and they will not surpass what Ananda has done for me. Ananda knows how to arrange just the right time for me to meet with visitors. Ananda has always treated them pleasantly and spoken well with them. Every visitor has found only the highest satisfaction in the way Ananda has received and treated him. When Ananda tells a person something, he always listens so attentively, as to surpass all the expectations of Ananda. Ananda has, at all times, been my most excellent attendant!”



210. Later, Ananda said to the Buddha: “Buddha! Please do not enter Parinibbana in such an improper, out-of-the-way, small place. Please select one of the large cities such as Rajagaha, Savatthi, Vesali, or some other city and enter Parinibbana there. In those places there are many rich and powerful persons who are your disciples; they can take the responsibility for your holy remains.”

211. The Buddha said to Ananda: “No! Ananda, don’t say that! You should not think of this as a small and insignificant place. Long ago this was a prosperous metropolis, a capital city and residence of a Cakkavatti King. Ananda! Go to Kusinara and tell the king and the people that tonight, during the last watch of the night, the Buddha will enter Parinibbana in this forest, and if they wish to, they should come to see me before this time.” So Ananda went to Kusinara with several bhikkhus, and told King Malla and his people what the Buddha had said.



212. When the king and people of Kusinara heard from Ananda that the Buddha was about to enter Parinibbana, they all wept sadly and said: “It is too early for the Buddha to enter Parinibbana. Too soon will the light of the world be extinguished!” Men, women, and children, lamenting loudly, flocked to Salavana, where Buddha was staying, hoping that they might see the Buddha once more and pay reverence to him. People visited the Buddha in groups in an orderly manner. Everybody was unwilling to leave him, however.



LAST DAY

213. A wandering young man from a heretical cult, whose name was Subhadda, happened to be in Kusinara. When he found that Buddha was about to enter Parinibbana, he decided to visit him in order to ask him some questions that had been bothering him. He believed that

only the Buddha would be able to give him a thorough explanation. Subhadda went to Salavana and asked Ananda for permission to see the Buddha, in order to have his questions answered before the Buddha passed away.



214. Ananda said to him: “No, No! Subhadda! The Buddha is very tired; you must not bother him with any questions now.” But Subhadda was very anxious to see the Buddha. He pleaded again and again, and Ananda rejected him again and again, holding to the fact that the Buddha was very ill and should not be bothered by anybody. But when the Buddha heard them both talking, he knew Subhadda’s intentions and told Ananda to let him come in.

215. The Buddha told Ananda: “Ananda! Do not stop Subhadda; let him come in as he wishes. What he wants is to ask me about some problems he has in practicing the Buddha-Dhamma; he does not mean to disturb me with meaningless trifles. My explanations will make him

understand immediately.” So Ananda permitted Subhadda to go in to see the Buddha and ask him questions.

216. Having listened to Subhadda’s questions, Buddha taught him until all problems in Subhadda’s mind were cleared up. Subhadda gained confidence in the Buddha-Dhamma and then requested the Buddha to accept him as a bhikkhu. The Buddha gave him that opportunity and asked Ananda to shave his head. So Subhadda became the last bhikkhu converted by the Buddha. Like Kondanna, the first bhikkhu converted by the Buddha at Isipatana, Subhadda learned and practiced the Buddha-Dhamma diligently, and attained the stage of arahant before long.



217. Later, the Buddha gave the bhikkhus at his side a chance to raise any questions, by asking if any of them still had doubts about the Buddha-Dhamma. But none of the bhikkhus had any doubt whatsoever about the Triple Gem - the Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha.

The Buddha then said to the bhikkhus for the last time: “Bhikkhus! This is the last occasion for me to talk to you. All compounded things are impermanent, strive on with heedfulness!”



218. The Buddha then entered samadhi, reaching the eighth meditation absorption (eighth jhana); from the deep eighth jhana he receded back to the first jhana and from that he again reached the fourth jhana. When he had emerged from the fourth jhana, the Blessed one passed away into Nibbana, where there is no basis for rebirth in any world.

So the Buddha, the perfectly enlightened one, at the age of eighty entered the Parinibbana, in the last watch of the night on the full moon day of the Visakha month in the Sala grove outside the city of Kusinara, where King Malla ruled. The brilliant lamp was extinguished! But the lamp of Dhamma, this is, the Buddha's

teaching, exists forever and will carry thousands and thousands of people in our world across the stream of life and death to Nibbana.



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