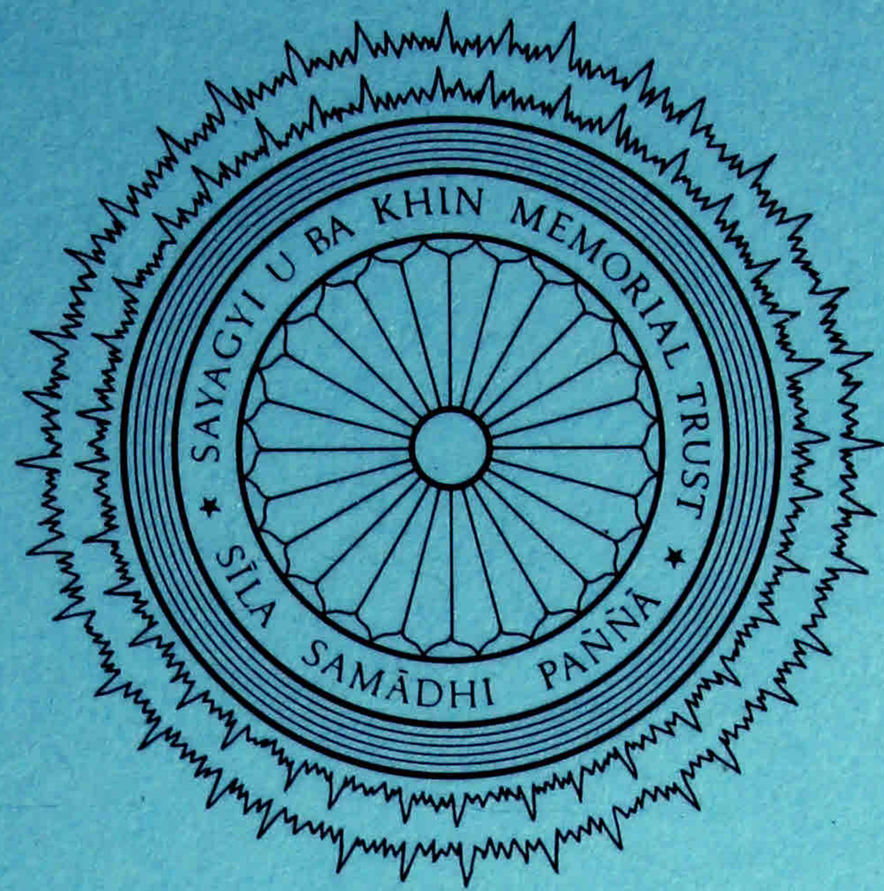
THE STORY OF MAHOSADHA
THE BIRTH STORY OF THE TUNNEL



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Mahosadha as a boy, a young man, and an older man.

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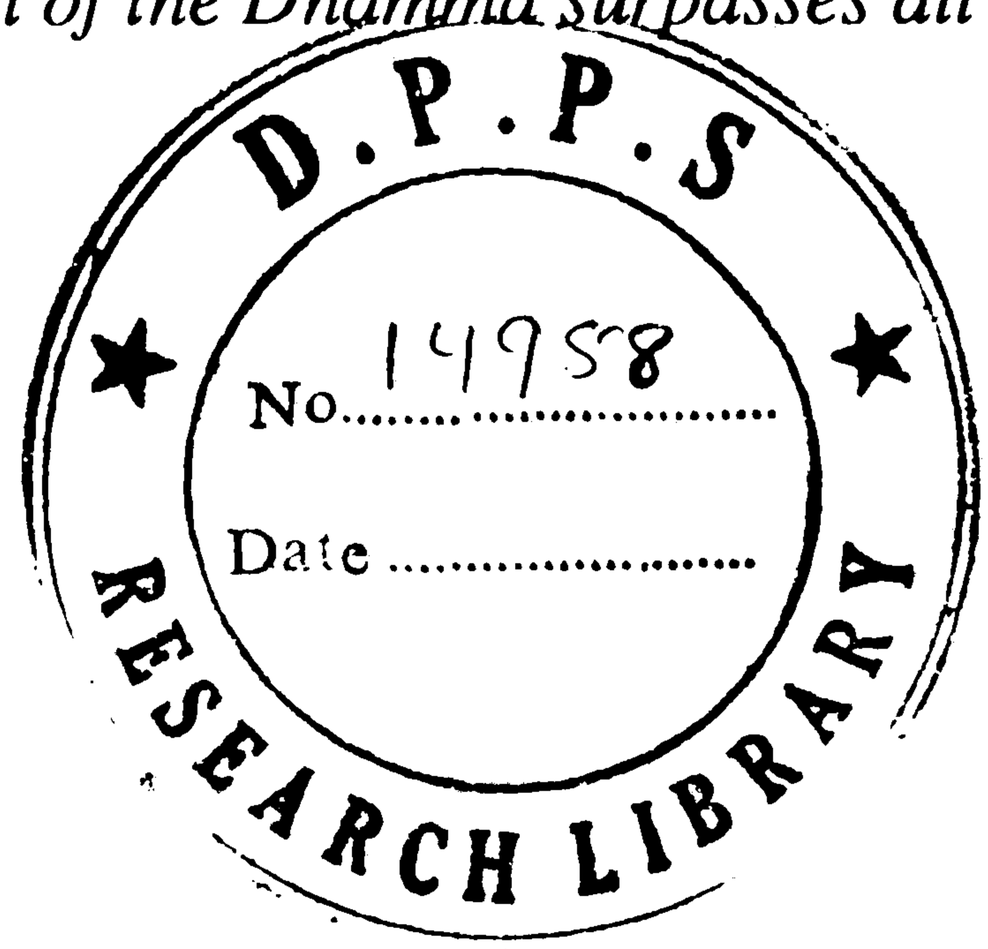
Dedicated to our much revered teacher, the late
Sayagyi U Ba Khin (Thray Sitthu)

The gift of the Dhamma surpasses all other gifts.



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THE TEN GREAT JĀTAKA TALES

The Jātaka stories give us accounts of past lives of the Buddha Gotama when he was a Bodhisatta, One who is intent on Awakening. He is often referred to as the Great Being *(Mahā-satta)* in these stories because not only was he working for Awakening, his goal was to become Self-Awakened, a Teaching Buddha. The Jātaka collection contains the stories of only a few of his lives during the time he developed the perfections *(pāramīs)* in order to become a Teaching Buddha.

The last ten Jātakas are especially well known in Theravāda Buddhist countries such as Maynmar (Burma). Children learn these stories from an early age. These stories are very useful for teaching the children many of the most important lessons of Buddhism. These stories will also be helpful to children (and adults) in Western countries today. The settings for these past lives of the Buddha may be exotic, but the guiding principles for conducting one's life, the insights into human nature, and the importance of working for release from all suffering are very timely and up-to-date.

When the Buddha taught, he always suited his discourse to his listeners. So the form his discourses take vary from entertaining stories like the Jātakas to the most difficult types of detailed analysis mind and matter found in the Abhidhamma texts. But even in the entertaining stories, the messages to be learned are clear. Only the poems in the Jātaka.stories are part of the Pāḷi Canon. The stories themselves are part of the commentary on the poems.

The stories of past lives are framed by an account of the occasion for giving the story, and, at the end, the identification of the people in the past lives with people associated with Buddha Gotama in his last life. The occasions are generally

when the bhikkhus are discussing some event or some characteristic of the Buddha. The Buddha uses the occasion to show how he was confronted with similar circumstances in the past, or he shows how he developed various qualities in the past. We can see from the identifications that many of those who were closely associated with the Buddha had been close to him in many of his past lives.

The new versions of the ten "Great" Jātakas that we are preparing are based on the translation originally printed by the Cambridge University Press and reprinted by the Pali Text Society. The stories have been condensed and a more modern English style is used. In a few instances, corrections of the translation have been incorporated.

We hope that these versions of the Jātaka stories will help young people learn about Buddhism.

THE STORY OF MAHOSADHA
THE BIRTH STORY OF THE TUNNEL
(Umaṅga-jātaka)[1]

THE OCCASION FOR TELLING THE STORY. The birth story of the tunnel tells the story of when the Bodhisatta was named Mahosadha and reached the height of the perfection of wisdom *(paññā)* as a Bodhisatta. The Buddha told this Jātaka to a group of bhikkhus at the Jetavana monastery. One day, a group of bhikkhus were discussing the Buddha's great wisdom. He had defeated the teachers of false doctrines. He had opened the eyes of brahmans, ascetics, thieves, Yakkhas, Devas, and Brahmās, establishing many beings in the Paths and Fruition States. The Buddha came into the Dhamma Hall where the bhikkhus were talking and asked them what they had been saying. When they answered, he told them the story of how he had also been of very great wisdom in the past.

KING VEDEHA'S DREAM. Long ago, there was a king named Vedeha who ruled in the city of Mithilā in the country of Videha. He had four wise men named Senaka, Pukkusa, Kāminda, and Devinda. One night the king had a dream. He saw columns of fire in the four corners of the royal court. In the middle, there was a tiny flame that flared up as high as the Brahmā world and lit up the whole world so that even a tiny grain of mustard seed could be seen. Both men and Devas worshipped the central flame, and even though many of them went through it, it did not burn them.

When the king woke up, he was very frightened. Finally the dawn came, and his four wise men came to see him. They

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[1]The title in the Fausbøll edition is Mahā-ummagga-jātaka.

asked if he had slept well. "How could I sleep well," he answered, "when I've had such a dream?" But the head wise man, Senaka, said, "Don't be afraid, o king, this was an auspicious dream. A fifth wise man will be born and he will be wiser than all four of us."

That very day, the Great Being went from the Deva world of the Thirty-three and was conceived in the womb of Sumanādevī, the wife of a rich merchant named Sirivaḍḍhaka who lived in the town to the East of Mithilā. At the same time, a thousand other Devas departed from the Deva world and were conceived in other families in the same town.

When the Bodhisatta was born, the Deva king Sakka wanted to make it known to everyone, so he went to him and placed a medicinal herb in his hand. When his mother saw it, she asked, "My child, what is this that you have in your hand?" And the Bodhisatta was able to speak right from birth. He answered, "It is a medicinal herb, mother. Take it and give it to all who are ill." As it happened, his father had suffered from a headache for seven years. He ground up the herb and put a little on his forehead, and his headache disappeared. The news of the medicine spread and people came from all over and were given some of the medicine. The child was named Osadha (Medicine), and before long everyone called him Mahosadha (Mahā + Osadha = Mahosadha, Great Medicine).

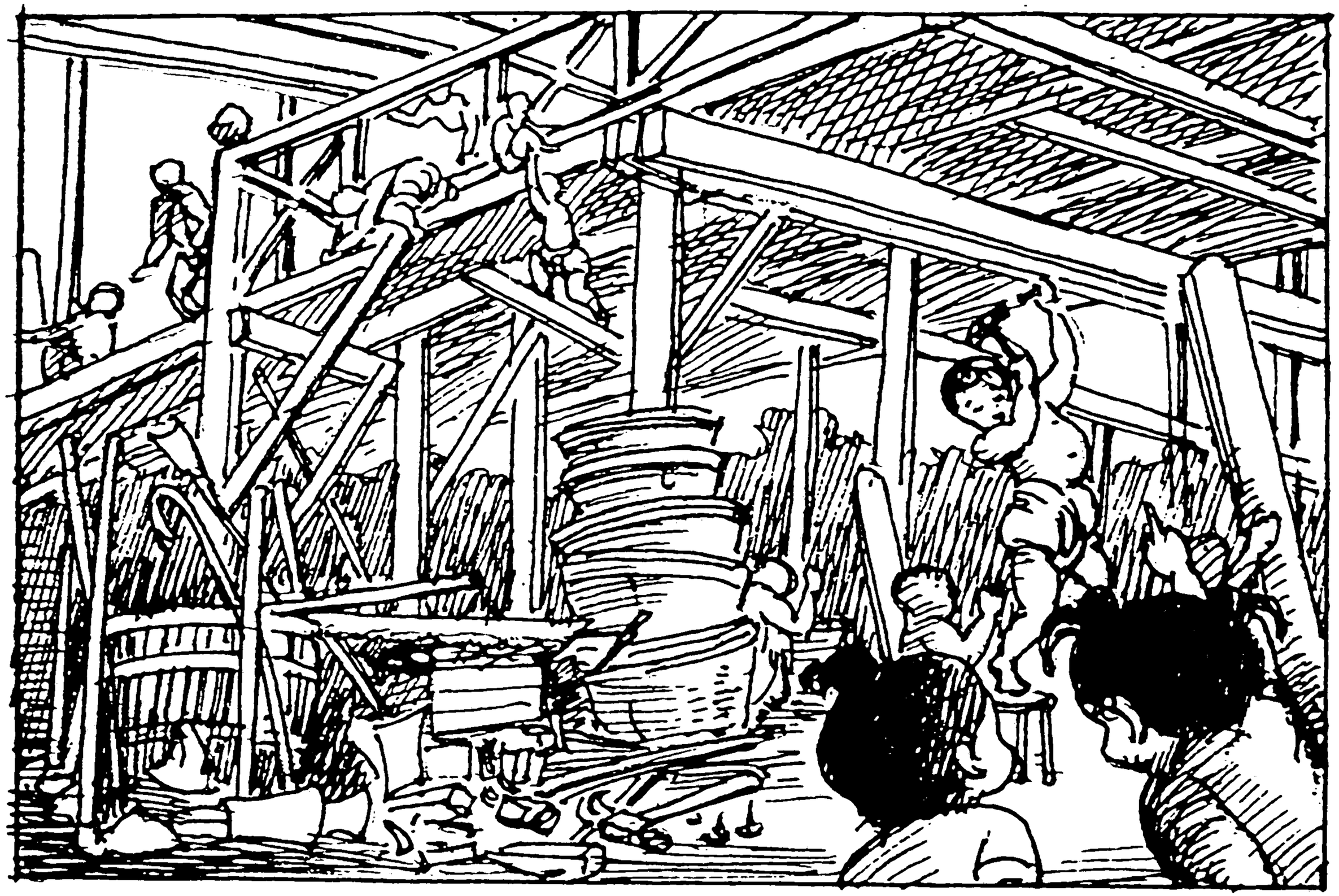
Mahosadha's father knew that such a son would not be born alone. He made enquiries and found that a thousand other boys had been born the same day. He sent nurses and clothes to the other boys, and they became the Bodhisatta's attendants. They grew up playing together every day. When he was seven years old, he was as handsome as a statue.

MAHOSADHA'S HALL. When he was playing with his friends, the Bodhisatta found that they were sometimes

bothered by elephants and other animals passing by, or by the rain, or the hot weather. One day, they had to run for shelter when a storm blew up. Several of the other children fell over each other and were hurt. As a result, Mahosadha decided they should build a hall to play in, so he told the other boys to each bring some money. They all did as he asked, and he sent for a master carpenter. But it turned out that the carpenter was not able to build the sort of hall Mahosadha asked for, so Mahosadha drew the plan for the building and helped the carpenter lay out the building site. Mahosadha supervised every step of the building. When he finished, it looked as though the architect of the Devas, Vissakamma, had prepared the site.

The building itself was much more than a hall for children to play in, though. It included a section for people from out of town to stay in. There were no hotels back in those days, so towns usually provided rest houses for travellers. The hall also had a section to house poor people, a maternity section for poor women, a section for bhikkhus or brahmans to stay in, a section for other sorts of men, and a section for visiting merchants to store their goods. There was a public place for sports and a court of justice as well as a hall for religious assemblies. He had artists paint beautiful pictures in the hall; he had a pond dug and put the five kinds of lotuses in it. Trees were planted on the banks and there was a park as beautiful as the Nandana Park in the Deva world.

Near the hall, Mahosadha had alms distributed for bhikkhus and brahmans, and for strangers and people from the neighbouring villages. Crowds of people came to see, and Mahosadha used to sit in the hall and discuss petitions brought to him so that he could give his judgement. It was like the happy time when a Buddha appears in the world.



Mahosadha directs the building of the hall.

THE TESTS OF MAHOSADHA'S WISDOM. King Vedeha remembered how his wise men had predicted that there would be another wise man. It had been seven years since he had his dream, so he sent out four councillors to investigate. When they went out through the eastern gate, they saw the hall, the pond, and the park. When they learned how they came to be there, they were sure they had found the one they were looking for. They sent a message to the king and asked, "Shall he be sent to you?"

The king was delighted and sent for Senaka to ask his advice. But Senaka was envious and wanted to keep his title as the head wise man, so he said, "O king, a man is not wise just because he has had a hall and things of that sort built. Anyone can have things like that made. This is not anything important."

So the king sent a message to one councillor to stay there and observe Mahosadha. There were nineteen tests carried out before the king was thoroughly convinced of Mahosadha's wisdom, mainly because, after the successful outcome of each test, Senaka would play down the significance of the wisdom Mahosadha displayed and say it was not important.

TEST 1. One day, when Mahosadha was going to the hall he had built, a hawk took a piece of meat from a slaughter-house and flew off with it. Some boys chased the hawk and tried to make it drop the meat by throwing things at it, but they were unsuccessful. Mahosadha told them he would get it. He ran after the hawk as fast as the wind, stepped on its shadow, clapped his hands, and gave a loud shout. The shout frightened the hawk so much that it dropped the meat. Mahosadha could tell by looking at the shadow that the meat was falling, so he caught it before it touched the ground.

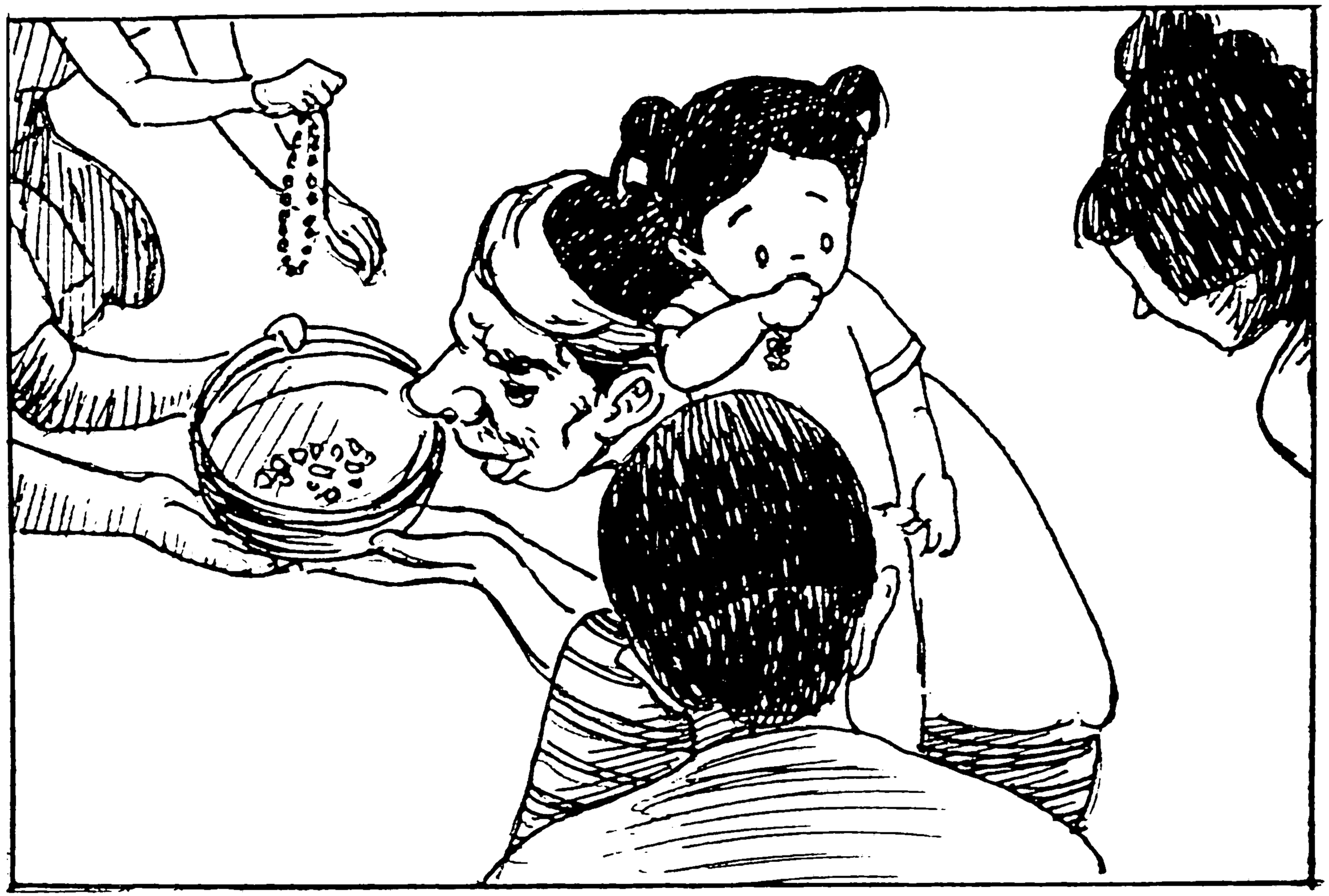
TEST 2. There was a man who bought some cattle and took them home to his own village where he let them feed on grass in a field. As he was tired, he lay down and went to sleep. While he was asleep, a thief came and took the cattle away. The man woke up and discovered his cattle were gone. Then he saw the thief taking away his cattle. "Where are you taking my cattle?" he shouted. But the thief said, "These are *my* cattle. I'll take them where I like."

A large crowd gathered, and Mahosadha heard them arguing as they passed by his hall. He sent for the two men and found out what the dispute was about. "I will decide this case fairly," he said. "Will you both accept my decision?"

When the men agreed, Mahosadha asked each man what the cattle had eaten. The thief said, "They drank rice gruel and were fed on sesame flour and beans." But the real owner said, "My lord, how could a poor man like me get that kind of food for his cattle? I fed them on grass." Then Mahosadha had the cattle fed with a preparation that would make them throw up what they had eaten, and they vomited only grass.

The thief confessed what he had done, and Mahosadha told him, "Do not commit such wrong deeds in the future." But his attendants took the man and severely punished him. Mahosadha said to the man, "This great suffering has come to you in this life, but wrong actions will lead to great torment in the various hells, so you should abandon all such wrong actions." And he had the man take the five precepts.

TEST 3. There was a poor woman who made herself a necklace from threads of different colours. When she went to bathe, she took the necklace off and laid it on her clothes. A young woman saw it and decided she wanted it, so she said to the poor woman, "Mother, this is a very beautiful necklace, how much did it cost to make it? I want to make one for



The perfume seller helps determine who owns the necklace.

myself. May I put it on to try out the size?" The poor woman gave her permission, but as soon as the young woman put it on, she ran away.

The poor woman came out of the water, put on her clothes, and chased the young woman. When she caught up, she grabbed the young woman's dress and cried, "You are running away with the necklace I made." The young woman denied it was the poor woman's necklace, and a crowd gathered around them.

Mahosadha heard them as they passed his hall and sent for them. They agreed to accept his decision in the matter, so he asked each one what perfume they used on the necklace. The thief said that she used a perfume that blended many different scents, but the poor woman said she could not afford such perfume. She used only one scent.

Mahosadha had the necklace put in a bowl of water and then called a perfume seller. When the perfume seller smelled the water, he declared that there was only the one scent. So the guilty woman confessed she was the thief. From that time on, Mahosadha's wisdom became known to the people.

TEST 4. There was a woman who used to watch over cotton fields. One day, she took some clean cotton and spun a very fine thread from it and rolled it up into a ball. On her way home, she decided to go bathe in the pond dug out by Mahosadha. She put the ball of cotton on her clothes when she went in to bathe. Another woman saw it and wanted it.

She picked up the ball of cotton, saying, "This is a beautiful ball of thread. Did you make it yourself?" Then she walked off with it. Just as in the preceding case, Mahosadha became the judge of who owned the ball of cotton thread. When a ball of thread is rolled up, it is usual to use something in the centre to start off with, so Mahosadha asked the women

what they had used in the centre. The thief said she had used a cotton seed. The owner said a timbaru seed. When the ball of thread was unwound, the seed in the middle, of course, was a timbaru seed. All the people present were highly pleased and shouted their approval of the way Mahosadha had solved the case.

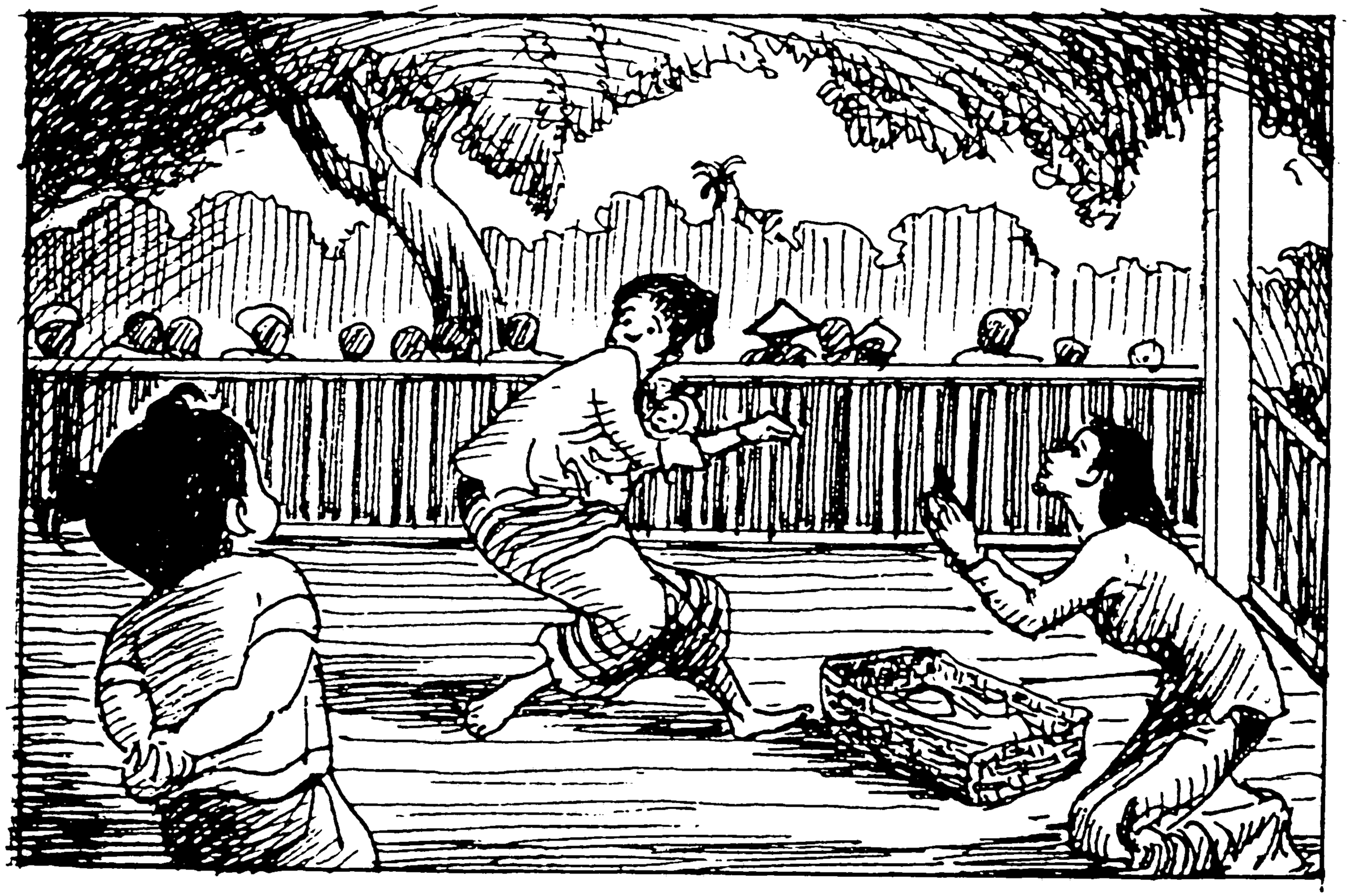
TEST 5. There was a woman who went to Mahosadha's pool with her young son. She bathed him, then laid him on her dress and began to take her own bath. A Yakkhinī (an ogress) saw the child and wanted to eat it. So she went up and said to the mother, "This is a fine child, is he your son?"

She asked if she could give the baby some of her own milk and the mother accepted. The Yakkhinī played with the child a little and then tried to run off with it. The mother ran after her, grabbed her and shouted, "Where are you taking my child!" But the Yakkhinī claimed it was *her* child.

As in the other cases, Mahosadha heard their quarrel and sent for them. He realized at once who the Yakkhinī was because her eyes were red and she did not blink her eyes. They agreed to abide by his decision, so he drew a line, laid the child on it, and had the Yakkhinī hold it by the hands while the real mother held it by the feet.

"Now pull," he said. "The real mother will be able to pull it over the line." They both pulled until the child was hurt and cried out in pain. This was too much for the mother who felt her heart would break, so she let go.

Then Mahosadha asked the people present there, "Is a mother's heart tender towards her child or is it the heart of one who is not the mother?" The people answered, "A mother's heart." Then he asked, "Is the one who let the child go the mother or is the other one?" The people answered, "The one who let go is the mother."



Mahosadha shows who's the mother of the baby.

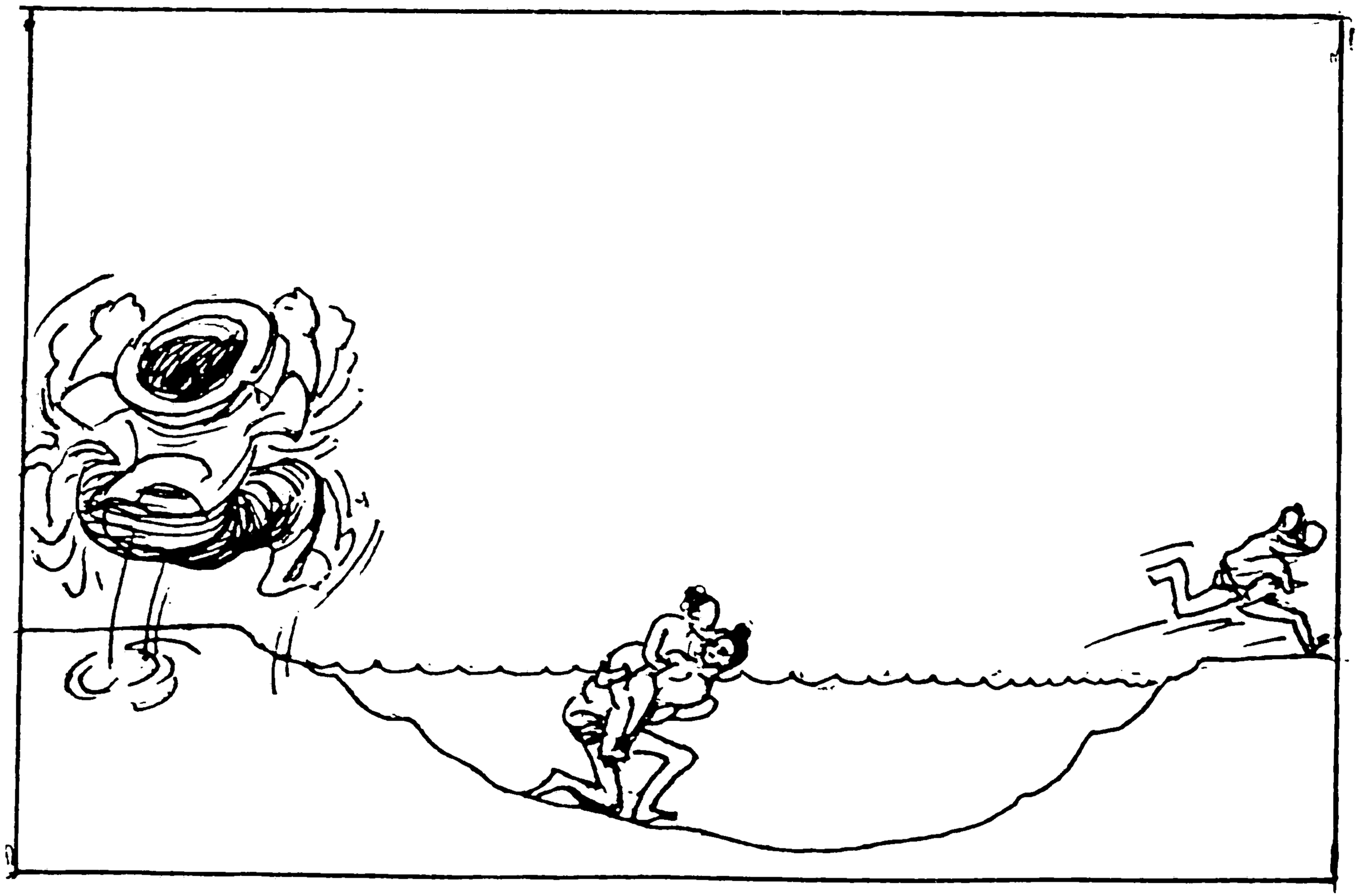
Then Mahosadha asked, "Do you know who the one who stole the child is?" They answered that they did not. "She is a Yakkhinī," he said. "She stole the child so she could eat it." Then the people asked how he knew this. "I recognized her because she has red eyes that do not blink, because she doesn't cast a shadow, because she has no fear, and because she showed no mercy." Then he made the Yakkhinī confess who she was and why she had stolen the child.

"You blind fool," he said to her, "it is because you did evil deeds in the past that you have been born a Yakkhinī, and now you go on doing evil deeds." Then he taught her the five precepts and sent her away. The grateful mother blessed Mahosadha and said, "May you live for a long time, my lord."

TEST 6. There was once a man named Golakāla who obtained a wife named Dīghatālā by working in a certain house for seven years. One day, he said to his wife, "Cook some food and we will go visit your parents." She did not wish to go, but he finally persuaded her. On the way, they came to a stream. It was not deep, but they were both afraid of the water and did not dare cross over.

A poor man named Dīghapiṭṭhi came along and they asked him if the water was deep. When he saw they were afraid of the water, he told them it was very deep and full of dangerous fish. When they asked him how he could cross it, he answered, "I am friends with the crocodiles and monsters living in the water; they do not hurt me." So the couple asked him to take them with him. They gave him food to eat, then he asked which one he should carry over first. Goḷakāḷa told him to take Dīghatālā first.

Dīghapiṭṭhi took the wife, their food, and the present they were taking to her parents and started across. He bent down



Dīghapiṭṭhi makes off with Goḷakāḷa's wife.

to make it look like the stream was very deep. Seeing him, Goḷakāḷa thought, "This stream must be very deep. I could never cross it alone."

When they were in the middle of the stream, Dīghapiṭṭhi said to the wife, "Lady, I am in love with you. I will give you fine clothes and jewels. You will have many servants. What good is that dwarf to you as a husband?" She listened to him and became infatuated with him. When they reached the other side of the stream, they ate up the rest of the food, told Goḷakāḷa to stay where he was and started off. This made him so angry he finally plunged into the stream.

He discovered it was not deep at all, got across, and ran after Dīghapiṭṭhi and his wife. "You wicked thief," he shouted, "where are you taking my wife?"

Dīghapiṭṭhi shook him off, saying, "What do you mean your wife? She's *my* wife." But Goḷakāḷa grabbed Dīghatālā's hand and they continued arguing.

Mahosadha heard the noise and had them sent for. They agreed to abide by his decision. Then Mahosadha had them brought to him one by one and asked each one their name, their parents' names, the name of the one supposed to be their wife or husband, and the parents-in-law's names.

Dīghapiṭṭhi did not know Dīghatālā's name, much less her parents' names. And Dīghatālā did not know Dīghapiṭṭhi's name or his parents' names. In this way, Mahosadha established that Goḷakāḷa was Dīghatālā's husband. Then Dīghapiṭṭhi confessed that he had tried to steal Goḷakāḷa's wife.

TEST 7. Sakka, the Deva king, decided that he would make known the power and wisdom of the Bodhisatta Mahosadha, so he took on the form of a normal man and went to where a man had descended from his chariot to wash his face. Sakka

offered to serve the man and followed him in his chariot, holding on behind.

After a while, the man needed to go to the toilet, so he stopped in an appropriate place and got out of his chariot. As soon as he was gone, Sakka jumped in the chariot and made off at top speed. The man came back and saw Sakka going off.

"Stop!" he shouted. "Where are you taking my chariot!" But Sakka claimed it was his chariot. Mahosadha heard them arguing and sent for them. As soon as they came, he recognized Sakka because he was fearless and did not blink his eyes. But he still asked about why they were arguing and offered to settle the case if they would accept his decision.

When they agreed, Mahosadha said, "I will have someone drive the chariot and you will both hold on behind and follow. The owner will not let go. The one who is not the owner will let go."

But as they followed the chariot, the owner soon grew tired and let go, while Sakka continued to run behind. Mahosadha called them back and said to the people assembled there, "This man ran a little way and then let go, but the other one ran all the way out and back with the chariot—but there is not a drop of sweat on his body, he is not panting, he doesn't blink his eyes, and he is fearless. This is Sakka, the Deva king."

Mahosadha then put the question straight to Sakka, who admitted who he was. "Why did you come here?" Mahosadha asked. "I came to spread your fame, o wise man," Sakka replied.

Mahosadha told Sakka he should not do that sort of thing in the future. Then Sakka revealed all his power by standing up in the air and proclaiming the praises of the wise Mahosadha. After that, he returned to the Deva world.

The councillor who had been reporting back to King Vedeha was so impressed by this case that he went to the king without being called for. "Why do you not recognize such a superior man?" he asked the king. The king, as usual, checked with Senaka, who said, "This is not what makes a wise man. Wait a little longer. I will test Mahosadha."

TEST 8. A pole was sent to the eastern town where Mahosadha lived with the following message: "The people in the eastern market town are said to be wise. Let them find out which end of this pole is the top and which end is the root. If they fail, they will be fined a thousand pieces." The people in the town tried, but they could not tell which end was which, so they had their leader send to the playground of Mahosadha.

"The king has no need to know which end of this pole is which," Mahosadha thought to himself. "This is surely sent to test me." So he sent for the pole. When he held it in his hand, he knew the answer, but to satisfy the people, he sent for a pot of water. Then he tied a string around the middle of the pole and lowered it into the water.

"Which is heavier," he asked the people, "the top of a tree or the root?"

"The root, wise sir," the people answered.

"So you see how this end sinks first," Mahosadha said. "That is the root end."

So the people sent the pole back to the king with the right answer. The king was pleased and asked who had found the answer. "The wise man Mahosadha, the son of the headman Sirivaddhi," the people answered. But still Senaka wanted to try another test.

TEST 9. For the next test, two heads were sent. One was a man's head and the other was a woman's. There would be a

Mahosadha's solution to the riddle of the "bull."

fine of a thousand coins if the villagers did not find out which was which. Mahosadha showed them the answer, pointing out that the sutures joining the bones together in a man's head are straight and those for a woman crooked.

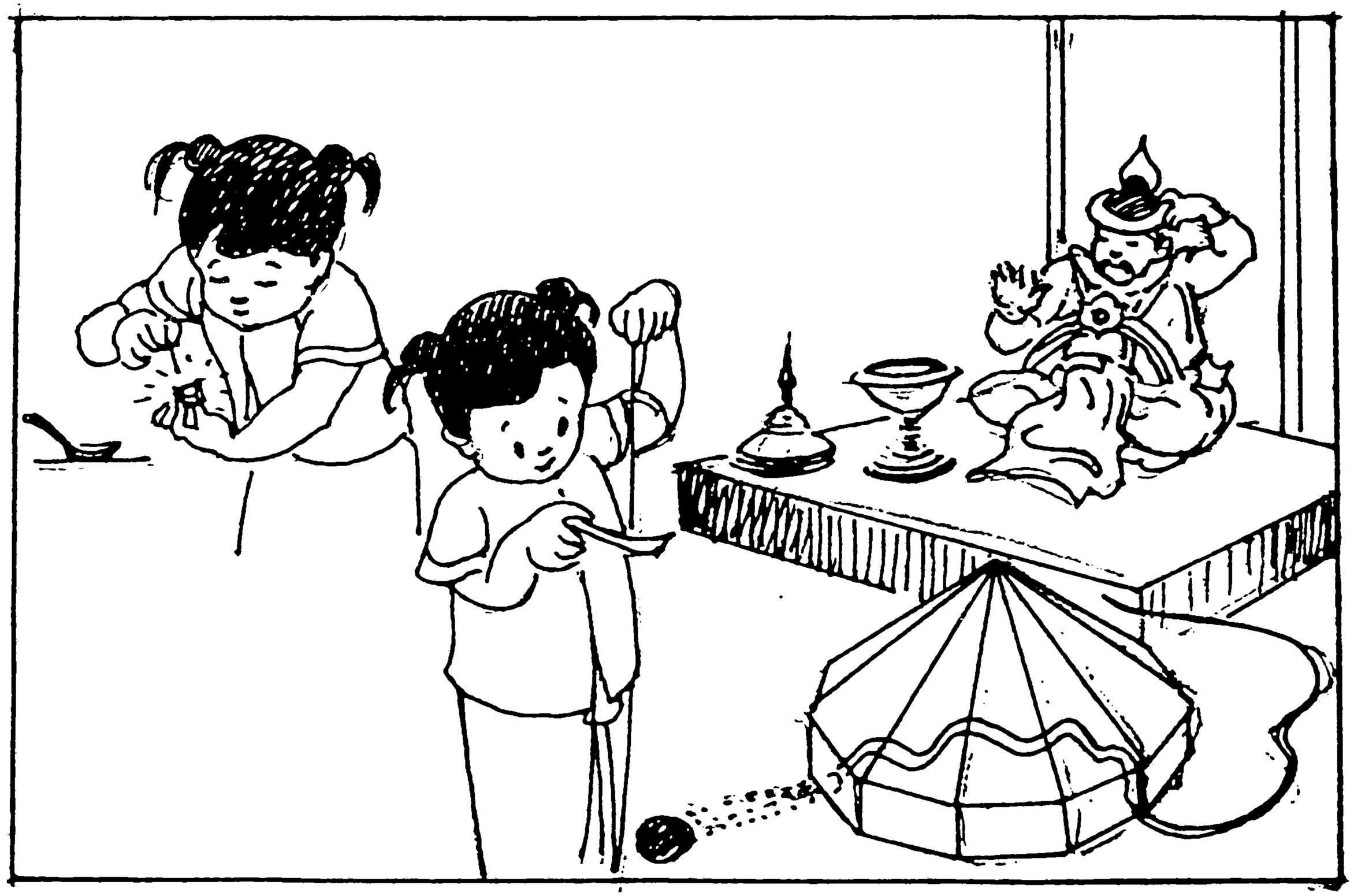
TEST 10. Next, the villagers were asked to find out which of two snakes was the male and which was the female. Mahosadha pointed out that the tail of the male snake was thick, the female's tail was thin; the male snake's head was thick, the female's head was thin; the male snake's eyes were big, the female's eyes were small; the male snake's head was rounded, the female's head was blunt.

TEST 11. Then a message was sent to the village: "You must send a bull that is white all over, with horns on his legs, a hump on his head, and he must cry out without fail three times a day. Otherwise, there is a fine of a thousand coins."

The villagers knew of no such bull, so they went to Mahosadha. "The king wants you to send a rooster," he said. "A rooster has spurs on his legs that are like horns, a cock's comb is a lump on his head; and a rooster crows three times without fail. So you should send a rooster like the one the king described."

TEST 12. King Vedeha had the magic gem named the Verocana gem, the gem that shone like the sun. Sakka had given it long before to King Kusa. This octagonal gem usually hung by a thread, but the thread was broken and no one could remove it.

The king sent the gem to the villagers, telling them to take out the old thread and put in a new one. The villagers turned to Mahosadha. He took honey and put it into both holes in the gem. Next, he put honey on the end of a thread of wool and



Mahosadha rethreads the king's jewel.

pushed it a little way into one of the holes. Then he put the gem near some ants.

The ants smelled the honey, ate the old thread, bit the end of the new thread with honey on it and pulled it through. So the people were able to send the newly threaded gem back to the king.

TEST 13. The royal bull was given a lot to eat for several months until he became very fat. Then its horns were washed, it was anointed with oil and bathed with tumeric and sent to the village with the following message: "The royal bull is expecting a calf. Deliver the calf and send the bull back with the calf or you will be fined a thousand coins."

Again, the villagers turned for help to Mahosadha. "Can you find a man who is very bold and who will be able to speak to the king?" he asked. The villagers answered that they could. So Mahosadha instructed the man as follows: "Let your hair fall down over your shoulders as if you were distressed and go to the palace gate with loud weeping and lamenting. Do not talk to anyone but the king. If he sends for you and askes you why you are lamenting so, tell him, 'My son has been in labour trying to give birth to a child for seven days now without success. Please help me. Tell me how I can have him give birth.' The king will say to you, 'This is crazy. It's impossible. Men do not have children.' Then you should say to the king, 'If what you say is true, how can the people in the eastern market town deliver your royal bull of a calf?'"

The man did as Mahosadha instructed and the king asked who had thought up this reply to his instructions. When he learned that it was Mahosadha, he was pleased.

TEST 14. Then the following instructions were sent: "The people of the eastern market town must send the king boiled

rice cooked under the following eight conditions: it must be cooked without rice, without water, without a pot, without an oven, without fire, without firewood, without being sent along a road, without being sent by a man or a woman."

Mahosadha told the puzzled villagers they should not worry. "Take broken rice," he said, "for that is not rice." In their language, different words were used for broken rice and rice. Then he said they should cook it using snow, which is not water. It should be cooked in an earthenware vessel rather than a pot, on top of wooden blocks rather than on an oven, using a fire started by rubbing sticks together rather than the usual type of fire, using leaves for fuel rather than firewood, and it should be carried to the king along a footpath rather than along the main road, by a eunuch, who is neither a man nor a woman. The people did as instructed, and the king was pleased when he heard who had solved the conundrum.

TEST 15. For the next test, the king sent this message: "The king wants to play on his swing, but the old rope is broken. You must make a rope of sand for the swing or pay a fine of a thousand coins."

Mahosadha saw that this should be answered with a question, so he sent for two or three people from the village who were clever and told them to tell the king this message: "My lord, the villagers do not know if the rope of sand should be thick or thin. Send them a piece of the old rope about four fingers long so they can twist a rope of the same size."

If the king replied, "I have never had a rope of sand," then the villagers could say, "If your majesty cannot make a rope of sand then how will we be able to?" In this way, the villagers were successful, and the king was pleased to learn that the solution to the problem came from Mahosadha.

TEST 16. The next test required a similar tactic. The king sent a message saying, "The king wishes to play in the water. You must send a new tank covered with the five kinds of lotuses or pay a fine of a thousand coins."

Mahosadha told several clever men, "Go play in the water until your eyes are red. Then go to the palace door with your hair and your clothes wet. Cover yourselves with mud and take ropes and sticks and lumps of earth. When you are taken to the king, tell him, 'Sire, the people of the eastern village were bringing you a tank, but it was used to living in the forest. As soon as it saw the walls and moats and watch towers of the city it was frightened. It broke our ropes and returned to the forest. We hit it with sticks and threw lumps of earth at it, but we could not make it come back. Give us the old tank that your majesty is said to have brought from the forest, and we will be able to tie it to our tank and bring it back."

This was a reference to the usual way in which a wild elephant was tamed by tying it to a tame elephant. The king, of course, had no such tank. When he admitted as much, the villagers could say, "If that is so, then how can the villagers send you a tank?" Again, the villagers were successful, and the king was pleased that Mahosadha had found the solution.

TEST 17.The next test was to ask the villagers for a new park filled with trees and flowers. Mahosadha had several villagers use a similar tactic to the one used for the water tank.

TEST 18. Even after all these tests, Senaka kept telling King Vedeha to wait rather than send for the Bodhisatta.

"Mahosadha is wise, even as a child," the king thought to himself. "With all these difficult tests, he has given answers worthy of a Buddha. But this wise man Senaka won't let me

send for him. What do I care about Senaka? I will bring him here myself."

So King Vedeha started out on his royal horse for the eastern village, but on the way his horse stepped in a hole and broke its leg, so the king went back to the palace. Senaka told the king he should have listened to his advice.

Later on, the king asked Senaka again if he could send for Mahosadha. Senaka said, "If you send for him, you should send a messenger with another test. The message should be, 'O wise man, my horse broke its leg when I was coming to bring you back to my palace. Send us a better kind of horse and a most excellent one.' If Mahosadha sends a better kind of horse, he will come himself. If he sends a most excellent one, he will send his father."

When Mahosadha received the message, he understood that the king wished to see him and his father. He told his father to go first with a present for the king, accompanied by a thousand merchants. And he told his father what to do when he himself arrived later.

The father went to the palace and told the king that his son would be coming after him. On the way to the palace, Mahosadha saw a donkey and had some strong men tie up its mouth so it would not make a noise and then put it in a bag and carry it along with him. All along the way to the palace, the crowds of people sang his praises.

Mahosadha entered the palace with his attendants, paid his respects to the king and stood to one side. The king was delighted to see him at last. He spoke to him very kindly and then told him to select a seat and sit down.

Mahosadha looked at his father, and as they had arranged before, the father got up and said to his son, "O my son,

Mahosadha the wise, take this seat." Mahosadha took his father's seat.

The king's four wise men—Senaka, Pukkusa, Kāvinda, Devinda—clapped their hands and laughed aloud. "So this blind fool is the one they say is so wise!" they cried. "He makes his father get up and takes his seat. Surely this is not wise." They said this because, in those days, children were always very respectful to their parents. Mahosadha's intention, of course, was not to be disrespectful to his father. He was taking his father's seat to act out the answer to the message from the king about "a better kind of horse and a most excellent horse." The king, however, thought that Mahosadha was simply being disrespectful and looked very disappointed.

"My lord, why are you sad?" Mahosadha asked the king.

"I was happy about all the things I heard about you." the king replied, "but I am not happy to see you."

"Why is that?" Mahosadha enquired.

"Because you made your father get up from his seat and you sat down there yourself."'

"My lord, do you believe that the father is always better than the son?" Mahosadha asked the king.

"Yes," answered the king.

"My lord," Mahosadha said, "you sent me a message to bring you a better kind of horse and a most excellent horse." Then he said to the young men with the sack, "Bring in the donkey."

Once the donkey was brought, Mahosadha asked the king, "Sire, how much is this donkey worth?" The king answered that it would be worth only eight coins. "If this donkey breeds with a thoroughbred horse, how much will the colt be worth?" Mahosadha asked.

"It would be priceless," answered the king.

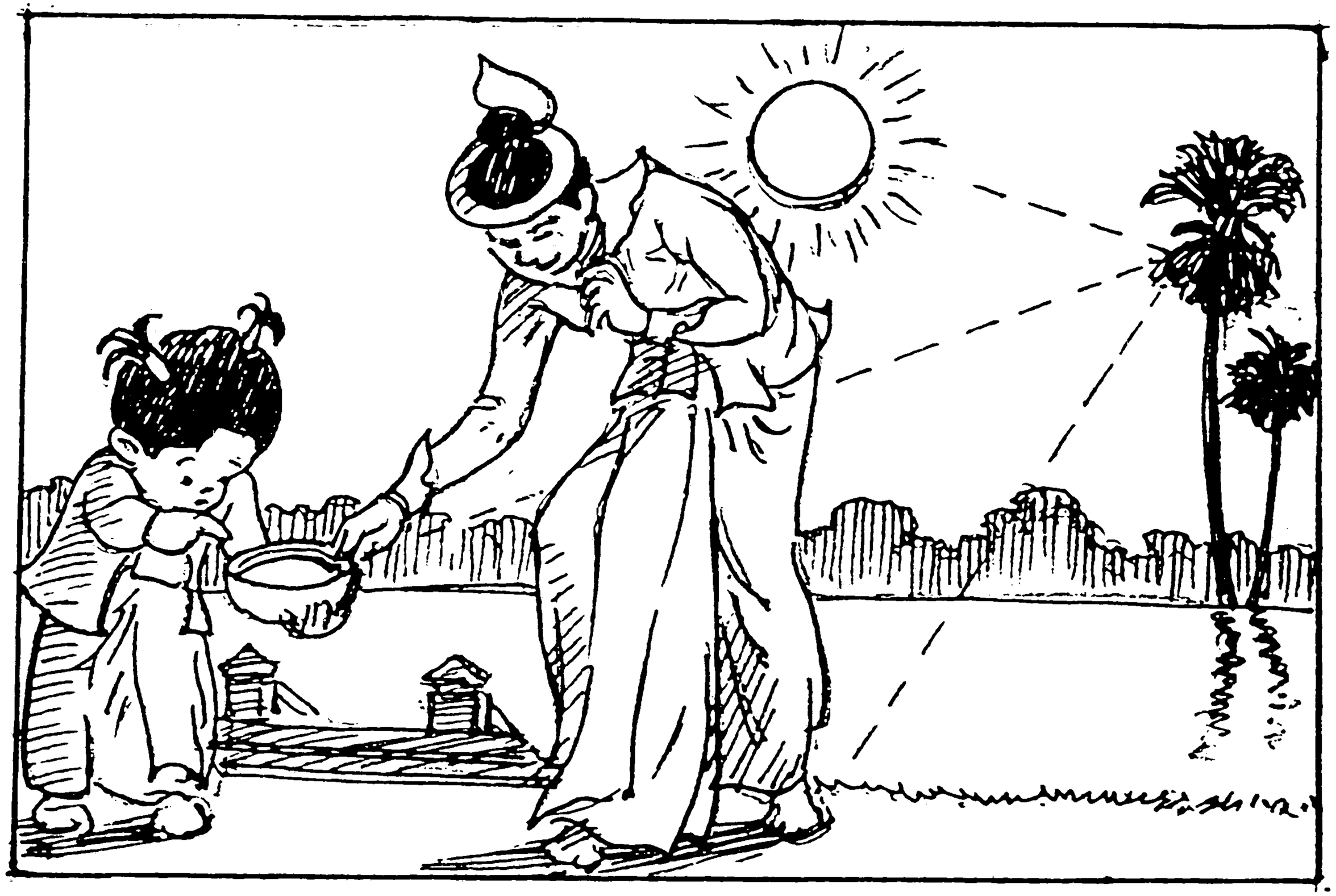
"But this answer does not agree with what you just said, o king. According to what you said, the donkey would be worth more than the colt. It is because they did not know better than that that these wise men of yours clapped their hands and laughed at me. Where did you find these wise men? If you think that the father is always better than the son, then take my father into your service. If the son can be better than the father, then take me."

The king was delighted with Mahosadha's solution to the test, and there was a great snapping of fingers and waving of scarves to show approval, but the king's four wise men were very dejected.

The king sent for a golden bowl filled with perfumed water and poured some water on Sirivaḍḍhi's hand as the symbol of a gift. "The eastern market town is given to you as a gift from the king," he said, "and the thousand merchants there will be under you." He also had all kinds of ornaments sent to Mahosadha's mother. Then he said that Mahosadha was to be his adopted son. Sirivaḍḍhi tried to protest, saying Mahosadha was too young, but the king insisted. So the father and son said goodbye to each other and Sirivaḍḍhi returned to the eastern village.

The king asked Mahosadha if he would stay in the palace or outside it. Mahosadha had his thousand friends with him, so he thought it would be best to live outside the palace. The king gave him a house and provided everything he and his friends needed.

TEST 19. The king then made another test of Mahosadha's wisdom. There was a precious jewel in a crow's nest in a palm tree that grew on the bank of a lake near the southern gate. The jewel was reflected in the water of the lake and



Mahosadha shows the king that the jewel is not in the lake.

people reported to the king that there was a jewel in the lake. The king first asked Senaka how to get the jewel. Senaka said they should drain the water from the lake. The water was drained, the mud was taken out of the lake bed and the ground beneath was dug up, but no jewel was found. When the lake was filled up again, the jewel reappeared. So Senaka repeated all that had been done before.

The king sent for Mahosadha and presented the problem to him. "This is not difficult," Mahosadha said to the king. "I will get the jewel for you." The king went with him to the lake, followed by a great crowd. As soon as he looked at the lake, Mahosadha realized the jewel was not in it. "Sire," he said, "the jewel is not in the lake."

"What?" the king exclaimed. "But can't you see it there?"

Mahosadha sent for a bucket of water and showed the king that the jewel could be seen both in the bucket and in the lake. "This is the reflection of the jewel, sire," he said. "The jewel itself is in a crow's nest up in this palm tree. Send a man up the tree to get it."

All the people there applauded Mahosadha for his wisdom and made fun of Senaka who had dug up the pool twice. The king was so delighted, he gave a pearl necklace he was wearing to Mahosadha and had all his thousand friends given necklaces too.

After these, there were many occasions when Mahosadha was able to demonstrate how wise he was.

THE PROUD CHAMELEON. One day, the king went with Mahosadha into his park, and a chameleon that lived over the gateway came down when he saw the king coming and lay flat on the ground. The king asked Mahosadha why the chameleon was doing this.

"He is paying respects to you, sire," Mahosadha explained. "He should be given a penny's worth of meat."

So the king gave a man orders to regularly give the chameleon a penny's worth of meat. Now on the Uposatha days, the Observance days, no animals could be killed. On one of these days, the man could not find any meat, so he bored a hole in a coin and tied it around the chameleon's neck.

The coin made the chameleon feel very proud of himself. When the king came to the park that day, the chameleon thought to himself, "You may be very rich, Vedeha, but so am I." Instead of coming down, he lay above the gateway, stroking his head.

The king asked Mahosadha why the chameleon did not come down as usual. Mahosadha understood what had happened and explained it to the king. The king sent for the man to verify what Mahosadha said and found it to be true.

The king was very pleased to find that Mahosadha's wisdom was so great it was as if he could read the chameleon's thoughts without asking a question—wisdom like the supreme wisdom of a Buddha. As a reward, he gave Mahosadha the income earned at the four gates of the city. It was customary then to tax things brought into the city. But the king was angry with the chameleon and thought he would stop the gift he had been giving it. Mahosadha persuaded the king that it would not be right for a king to act like that.

QUEEN UDUMBARĀ. At that time, a young man named Piṅguttara went to Takkasila and studied under a famous teacher. The teacher had a daughter who was old enough to marry, and it was the custom in that family to give such a daughter in marriage to the eldest student. This daughter was very beautiful and very lucky, but the student was very unlucky. He did not want to marry his teacher's daughter, but

he could not refuse when his teacher said he was making her his wife.

The brahman teacher married them, but for a whole week the student refused to even share his bed with his wife. Then they left Takkasila. As they travelled on the road, the husband did not even speak to his wife. Both of them were unhappy because a lucky person and an unlucky person cannot be partners. When they came near to Mithilā, they saw a fig tree full of figs. Piṅguttara was hungry, so he climbed in the tree and ate some figs. His wife called to him, "Throw me down some of the figs."

"You have hands and feet," Piṅguttara replied. "Climb up and get your own figs."

As soon as she had climbed up in the tree, Piṅguttara climbed down and piled thorns all around it so she could not get back down. Then he left, thinking to himself, "At last I've gotten rid of that miserable woman."

That evening, the king was coming back from the forest, riding on his elephant. He saw the woman sitting in the fig tree. He fell in love with her on the spot and sent a man to ask if she was married. "My family married me to a man," she said, "but he has gone off and left me here alone." When the king heard her answer, he said, "Treasure trove belongs to the crown." So he took her to the palace and with the traditional ceremony of sprinkling on water, she was made his chief queen. She was given the name Queen Udumbarā, meaning Queen Fig Tree, because that was where the king found her.

One day, the queen and king were out riding in their chariot when they passed a spot where work was being done on the road. Piṅguttara was among the men doing the repairs. When Queen Udumbarā saw him, she thought of how she had won

King Vedeha sees the woman in the fig tree.

in the end, and she smiled. The king saw her smile and was angry.

"Why do you smile?" he asked. The queen explained everything, but the king did not believe her. When he drew his sword, the frightened queen pleaded with him to consult with his wise men.

The king asked Senaka what he thought. Senaka did not believe the queen. "Who would leave such a woman if she was his wife?" Senaka said. Fortunately for the queen, though, the king decided to ask the Bodhisatta his opinion. Mahosadha told the king, "Sire, it is possible for a man not to love a woman who is virtuous and beautiful. This will happen if the man is unlucky. A lucky person and an unlucky person can never be partners."

The king was very relieved to have his anger calmed down and to keep his chief queen. He rewarded Mahosadha with a thousand coins. And Queen Udumbarā said to King Vedeha, "Sire, this wise man saved my life. Please grant me the following boon: May I be allowed to treat him as my younger brother." The king granted her request. "My lord," she continued, "from this day forth, allow me to send any special food I have to my brother, whether it be daytime or nighttime." And the king granted this request too.

THE GOAT AND THE DOG. On one occasion, the king was taking a walk after having had his breakfast. Through a doorway, he saw a dog and a goat making friends. He was very surprised to see two animals that were usually enemies being friendly with each other. Here is what had happened: The goat had been beaten by the elephant keepers for taking some of the grass given to the elephants, and the dog had been beaten by the cook for stealing meat from the dishes in the kitchen.

Mahosadha teaches verses to the four wise men.

When they ran into one another, the goat said to the dog, "My friend, why are you humping your back? Are you ill?"

"You're hump-backed, too," the dog said. "Are you ill?" And so they told each other their stories.

Then the goat came up with a plan. "You can go to the elephant stables," he said to the dog. "The trainers won't take any notice of you, because dogs don't eat grass. In that way, you can bring me grass to eat. I'll go to the kitchen and get you some meat to eat since the cook will not bother about a goat that doesn't eat meat."

The day after seeing the goat and the dog making friends, the king decided to put a question about them to his wise men in the form of a puzzle. If any of them could answer the question, he would be honoured, but those who failed would be banished from the kingdom. The question he asked was: "Two natural enemies who would never come close to one another are inseparable friends. Why? If you cannot answer this question before noon today, you will all be banished. I don't need ignorant men."

Mahosadha thought to himself, "The king is not smart enough to think up such a question on his own. It must be based on something he saw. If I can have an extra day to figure this out, I will solve the riddle. Senaka will be able to get us extra time."

Senaka and Mahosadha looked at each other, and Senaka understood from the look Mahosadha gave him that he needed extra time.

"That is a very difficult question, o king," Senaka said. "We cannot solve this riddle in such a crowd. We need to think it over later on. Please give us some time. The king reluctantly agreed to give them another day.

After the audience with the king, Mahosadha went to Queen Udumbarā and asked her where the king had been the day before. She told him where he had gone for his walk and the Bodhisatta thought, "Aha, he must have seen something there." He went out and saw the goat and the dog together and understood the answer to the riddle.

The other four wise men had no idea how to solve the riddle, so they went to Mahosadha for help. Mahosadha knew that he could keep the answer to himself and see the others banished from the kingdom, but he decided to help them. So he taught each of them a verse to tell the king the next day. The four wise men did not understand what the verses meant, but it would seem to the king that they had found the answer.

The next day, the four wise men recited their verses for the king. Senaka's verse was:

> Young beggars and young princes love ram's meat, but they do not eat dog flesh. Even so, a ram and a dog can be friends.

Pukkusa's verse was:

> A goatskin is used to cover a horse's back, but a dog's skin is not. Even so, a ram and a dog can be friends.

Kāvinda's verse was:

> A ram has twisted horns, a dog has none. One eats grass, the other eats meat. Even so, a ram and a dog can be friends.

Devinda's verse was:

> A ram eats grass and leaves. A dog eats a hare or a cat. Even so, a ram and a dog can be friends.

Then the king asked Mahosadha if he understood the riddle. "Sire," he answered, "who else could understand it but me, from Avīci, the lowest hell, to Bhavagga, the highest heaven." And Mahosadha explained the riddle with two verses:

> The ram, who has eight half-feet on his four cloven hooves, brings meat to the other one without being noticed. The other one brings him grass.
>
> King Vedeha, the lord of men, saw this exchange of food from his terrace.

The king did not realize that the other four had gotten their answers from Mahosadha, so he rewarded them all equally.

THE POOR AND THE RICH. Queen Udumbarā knew that the other four wise men had answered the king's question thanks to Mahosadha. She told the king and said that it was not fair for the others to get a reward equal to Mahosadha's. The king was even more pleased with Mahosadha because he had not let on that the other wise men got their answers from him. "Never mind," he told the queen, "I will ask my son another question, and when he answers it, I will give him a great reward."

So one day, when the five wise men came to wait on him, the king posed his question. First of all, he asked Senaka:

> Who is the better man, the one with wisdom but no wealth or the man with wealth but no wisdom?

This was a question that had been handed down from one generation to the next in Senaka's family, so he had an answer ready. He gave this verse in reply:

O king, both wise men and foolish men, both educated men and uneducated men serve the wealthy man, even if they are of noble birth and he is of low birth. So I say: The wise man is lower, the rich man is better.

The king passed over the other three wise men and asked Mahosadha to give his answer. And Mahosadha answered with this verse:

The fool does evil because he thinks he is better. He looks at this world and not at the life to come. Because of this, he gets the worst of both worlds. So I say: The wise man is better than the wealthy fool.

The king turned to Senaka and said, "Well, you see that Mahosadha says the wise man is best."

"Your majesty," Senaka replied, "Mahosadha is just a child. You can still smell his mother's milk on his breath. What does he know?" And Senaka gave another verse:

Neither study nor family nor physical beauty will give riches. The idiot named Gorimanda was very prosperous because the lowly man can be lucky. The wise man is lower, the rich man is better.

In answer to this, Mahosadha said to the king, "My lord, Senaka is like a crow scratching for scattered rice or a dog lapping up milk. He sees himself, but he does not see the stick that is about to fall on his head." Then Mahosadha gave this verse:

When the man of little intelligence gains wealth, he becomes intoxicated. Then, when misfortune comes his way, he is struck dumb. Good luck or bad luck come to him by chance, and he twists and turns like a fish laid out

in the hot sun. The wise man is better than the wealthy fool.

The battle of wits was on, and Senaka and Mahosadha continued to give answers justifying their solution to the riddle. Senaka said:

In the forest, birds flock to a tree with sweet fruit. Crowds flock to the rich man for their own profit. The wise man is lower, the rich man is better.

Mahosadha replied:

A powerful fool is wrong to take wealth by violence. He can cry out as much as he likes, but he will be dragged off to hell. The wise man is better than the wealthy fool.

Senaka tried again, saying:

Just as all the streams that empty into the Ganges lose their names and the Ganges itself loses its name when it empties into the ocean, so too is the world devoted to wealth. The wise man is lower, the rich man is better.

Mahosadha answered:

Just as this ocean can beat on the shore without ceasing, but even with all its might it cannot overcome the shore, so too the fool's meaningless talk cannot overcome the wise. The wise man is better than the wealthy man.

Senaka tried yet again:

Even though a wealthy man in high position may lack control over himself, his family will give great weight to what he says. The same is not true for the wise man's words. The wise man is lower, the rich man is better.

Mahosadha answered:

The fool will lie for his own sake or for the sake of someone else. Because of this, he will be put to shame in public, and in his next life he suffers. The wise man is better than the wealthy man.

Then Senaka said:

Even though a man is wise, if he is poor, without rice or grain, his family will give no weight to what he says. His knowledge will not bring him prosperity. The wise man is lower, the rich man is better.

Mahosadha answered:

A man of great wisdom does not lie for his own sake or for the sake of someone else. Because of this, he will be honoured in public, and in his next life he enjoys happiness. The wise man is better than the wealthy man.

Senaka tried again:

The rich man, even without supernormal powers, enjoys elephants, cattle, horses, jewels, and women. The wise man is lower, the rich man is better.

Mahosadha answered:

Good fortune throws off the fool who speaks foolish words and commits thoughtless actions, just as a snake sheds its old skin. The wise man is better than the wealthy man.

Senaka finally spoke a verse that he thought would silence the wise Mahosadha:

Sire, we are five wise men here who attend you, who are respectful to you. You are our lord and master, just as Sakka, the king of the Devas, is the lord over all creatures. The wise man is lower, the rich man is better.

"What Senaka has just said is very clever," the king thought to himself. "I wonder if Mahosadha will be able to answer that." So he said aloud, "Well, wise man, now what?" And Mahosadha answered once more:

When questions like this one are raised, the wealthy fool is the slave of the wise man. The fool is totally confused while the wise man gives the answer. The wise man is better than the wealthy man.

Senaka sat without answering after this was said, like a man with no more grain in his granary. But Mahosadha continued with yet another verse:

Wisdom is truly held in high regard by those who are good. Wealth is loved because men are devoted to their own enjoyment. The knowledge of the Buddhas is beyond compare, and wealth can never surpass wisdom.

The king was so pleased with Mahosadha's answers that he rewarded him very richly with cattle, an elephant, chariots, and villages.

MAHOSADHA FINDS A WIFE. When Mahosadha was sixteen, Queen Udumbarā thought to herself, "My younger brother has grown up now. His glory is very great. We must find him a wife." When she mentioned this to the king, he gave his approval. So she told Mahosadha.

"If they choose my wife," Mahosadha thought, "I will never be satisfied with her. I will find my wife myself." So he said to the queen, "Madam, don't mention this to the king for a few days. I will find a girl who suits me and then I'll tell you."

She gave her approval, so he returned home, told his companions about his plans, and got hold of a tailor's outfit. Then he went to the northern town. A young woman named Amarā, who came from a poor family, was coming along the same road Mahosadha took, taking food to her father who was ploughing in a field. She was very beautiful, wise, and had all the marks of a lucky person. When the Bodhisatta saw her, he thought, "If she is not married, she will become my wife." When she saw Mahosadha, she thought, "If I could marry such a man as this, my family would be restored to its former glory."

Mahosadha wanted to find out first if she was married. At the same time, he tested how intelligent she was. He first clenched his fist. She understood what he meant and answered by holding out her hand spread open. Mahosadha then asked her her name and she answered with a riddle.

"My name is something that does not exist now, has never existed, and never will exist," she told him.

"Nothing in this world can escape death," Mahosadha said. "Your name must be Amarā, the undying."

Mahosadha asked her where she was taking the food she was carrying. "To the old Deva," she answered.

Mahosadha asks Amarā directions.

"Old Devas are one's parents," Mahosadha said. "You must mean your father." Then he asked, "What is your father doing?"

"He is making two out of one," Amarā answered. Mahosadha understood that this meant he was ploughing—splitting the ground.

"Where is the ploughing?" Mahosadha asked.

"Where you never return from, once you go there," answered Amarā.

"Do you mean he is ploughing near a cemetery?" Mahosadha asked. "Yes sir," she replied.

"But will you return today?" Mahosadha asked. And Amarā said, "If it comes up, I will not come. If it doesn't, I will."

"Your father must be ploughing near a river," Mahosadha said. "If it floods and blocks the way, you will not return. If there is no flood you will."

Amarā offered Mahosadha some of the food she was taking her father. He accepted and thought to himself, "If she doesn't wash the pot and give me water to wash my hands before she gives me the food, I will leave her and go my own way." But Amarā made all the right preparations. When Mahosadha saw the food, he exclaimed, "But there is very little rice here!"

"We had no water, sir," Amarā told him.

"Do you mean you did not get water on your field when the rice was growing?" Mahosadha asked. Amarā said that was what she meant. Then she saved a little of the food for her father and gave the rest to the Bodhisatta.

When he finished, he said, "I will go to your house. Please show me the way."

Amarā told him another riddle:

Go by the cakes and the rice and the tree in bloom. Then go by the hand I eat with and not the one I don't eat with. You must find that secret path to the town.

Mahosadha followed her directions, going past a shop selling cakes, a shop selling rice, and turning right when he came to a tree with flowers on it.

When he arrived at the house, Amarā's mother gave him a seat and offered him something to eat. "Thank you," he said, "but Amarā gave me some." The mother realized that he must have come because of the daughter. Mahosadha saw how poor the family was, so he said, "I am a tailor. Do you have anything that needs mending?"

"Yes," the woman said, "but I cannot pay you anything."

Mahosadha assured her that she would not need to pay and repaired all the clothes she brought. Then he told her to let other people know about him, and in one day he earned a thousand coins. He stayed with the family for several days, observing Amarā, who was very diligent in her duties to her parents and to their guest.

One day, he decided to test her patience. He told her to make him some rice gruel, a rice cake, and some boiled rice. She made the gruel with large grains of rice, boiled rice with the medium-sized grains, and a rice cake with the small grains, adding all the right ingredients.

When he tasted the gruel, even though it was very delicious, he spat it out and said to her, "If you don't know how to cook, why do you spoil my rice?"

She did not become angry. She simply asked him to try the rice cake. But Mahosadha did the same with it and with the boiled rice. Finally, he pretended to be angry, mixed all three kinds of cooked rice together and smeared it all over Amarā. Then he told her to go sit by the door. "Very good, sir," she

said and did as he told her. When he saw that she was not a proud person, he said, "Come here." And she came as soon as he spoke.

The Bodhisatta had a thousand coins and a dress with him, and he gave the dress to Amarā, telling her to go bathe and put on the dress. He gave her parents all the money he had brought with him as well as all the money he made as a tailor. In this way, he took Amarā back to Mithilā. There, he tested her once again. He had her stay at the gatekeeper's house and explained his plan to the gatekeeper's wife. He went back to his own home and sent men to try to tempt her with money. They went three times, but she told them, "Your money is not worth the dust on my husband's feet."

The fourth time Mahosadha sent the men, he had them bring her to his house by force. Amarā did not recognize Mahosadha dressed in all his fine clothes. When she saw him, she smiled and cried, both at the same time. Mahosadha asked her why she did this.

"Sir," Amarā replied, "I smiled when I saw all your splendour, because this splendour is not yours without a reason. You must have done some good deed in the past to deserve all this. But I cried because I thought of the evil deed you are doing in taking another man's wife and how you will suffer in hell in the future for this."

After this test, Mahosadha was sure his wife was virtuous, so he sent her back to the gatekeeper's, put on his tailor's disguise, and went to spend the night with her.

The next morning, Mahosadha told Queen Udumbarā all about what had happened. She told the king, then dressed Amarā in all kinds of ornaments and took her to Mahosadha's in a great chariot. There was a wonderful celebration. The

Mahosadha sends men to test Amarā.

king and all the citizens of the city sent them presents. Amarā divided each gift in half and sent half of it back to the giver, and in that way, she won the hearts of all the people. The marriage of Mahosadha and Amarā was a very happy one.

SENAKA TRIES TO RUIN MAHOSADHA. One day, Senaka said to the other three wise men, "Mahosadha always gets the better of us, and now he has a wife who is smarter than he is. Let's see if we can't find a way to make him lose favour with the king."

"How could we know what to do, teacher?" the others said. "You must find the way."

"There is a way," Senaka said. "I will steal the jewel from the royal crest. Pukkusa, you take the king's golden necklace. Kāvinda, you take his wool robe. And Devinda, you take his golden slipper."

The four men managed to steal the four items. Then Senaka told the them, "Now we have to find a way to get these things into Mahosadha's house without him knowing about it."

Senaka put the jewel he had stolen into a pot of dates. Then he sent a servant girl to pretend she was selling dates. "You should only give these dates to someone from Mahosadha's house," he told her. "If anyone else asks for them, you should refuse. But if someone from Mahosadha's house asks, give them free of charge, pot and all."

The servant girl went up and down in front of the Bodhisatta's house, calling, "Who wants dates?" Amarā noticed that the girl did not go in front of anyone else's house and realized there was something suspicious. She sent her servants away. Then she called to the girl to come and sent her to find her servants.

While the girl was gone, Amarā felt around in the jar and found the jewel. When the girl came back, she asked her

whose servant she was. The girl told her, and Amarā asked what her name was and the name of her mother. Then she said, "Give me some dates."

"You can have the pot and the dates if you like," the girl said. "There is no charge."

Amarā wrote down on a slip of paper all the important information, the day, the month, the name of the servant girl, that she brought the king's jewel and that it came from Senaka.

In the same way, she noted down that Pukkusa sent the golden necklace in a box of jasmine flowers, that Kāvinda sent the robe in a basket of vegetables, and that Devinda sent the golden slipper in a bundle of straw. She told Mahosadha all that had happened, of course.

The four wise men then asked the king why he was not wearing the crest with the jewel, or the robe, and so on When the king discovered that they had been stolen, the men said, "Your ornaments are in Mahosadha's house. He is using them."

Some of Mahosadha's friends told him what had happened, so he went to the king to straighten out the affair, but the king refused to see him. Mahosadha went back home, and when friends warned him that the king was sending men to take him prisoner, he told Amarā it was time for him to leave. He disguised himself as a potter and went to the town to the south of Mithilā. The news spread all over the city that Mahosadha had run away.

When Senaka and the other three wise men heard of this, they sent Amarā letters, each one proposing that she become his wife now that her husband was gone. She answered each letter, saying she would come to them at a certain time. Then, when they met up, she had them seized, had their heads

shaved, and had them thrown into a cess pool. Finally, she had them rolled in mats and took them to the king along with the things they had stolen.

She turned them over to the king in the courtyard of the palace and told him, "Mahosadha is not a thief. See this leaf on which I have marked all the information of how these four men sent the jewel, the robe, the necklace, and the slipper to us. Take back what belongs to you and throw out these thieves." And she went back home.

The king was puzzled by all of this. The Bodhisatta was gone, and since there was no other wise man, he told the four men to bathe and go home.

THE DEVĪ OF THE ROYAL PARASOL FRIGHTENS THE KING. The Devī that lived in the royal parasol missed hearing the sound of the Bodhisatta's voice. When the Devī found out why he was gone, she decided to bring him back. So one night she appeared to the king and asked the first of four questions that the king could not answer. He said he would ask his wise men and tell her the answer the next day. But when he sent for them, they said they were ashamed to come out since their heads had been shaved. So the king sent them skullcaps to wear.

Senaka and the other three wise men were not able to answer the Devī's question, however. Three more times the Devī asked questions, and when the king confessed that his wise men could not find the answers, the Devī said, "What do they know? Only Mahosadha can find the answers. If you do not send for him and have him answer my questions, I will split your head in two with this flaming sword. When you want to make a fire, you don't blow on a firefly. When you want milk, you don't pull on the cow's horn. Don't ask Senaka about these questions, o king. He and the others are

Amarā has the wicked wise men thrown in a cess pool.

like fireflies compared to the great flame of Mahosadha, whose wisdom blazes forth. Find the answers or you are a dead man."

The king was terrified, and the next day, he sent out four men from his court to find his (adopted) son, the wise Mahosadha.

Now Mahosadha had disguised himself as a potter for a reason. He wanted to show the king that he had no desire to take over the throne. By doing such humble work, he would prove that he was not hungry for power.

As soon as he saw the courtier that came to the southern town, Mahosadha knew why he had come and that he would return to his former prosperity and enjoy the best of food. As it happened, he was having his meal just then, eating balls of rice dipped in a little soup. He dropped the rice, stood up, and rinsed his mouth.

The courtier looked at the Bodhisatta all smeared with clay, and since this courtier was on Senaka's side, he spoke to him sarcastically: "Is it true what they say, that you possess profound wisdom? What good has all your intelligence done you, sitting on a heap of straw, covered with clay, and eating food like that?"

"Foolish man," Mahosadha answered him, "I will be able to restore my prosperity with my wisdom. I will know when it is the right time to act."

When the courtier told him why he had come searching for him, Mahosadha said, "Do you not see the power of wisdom? In a case like this, prosperity is useless. Only a wise man can help."

The courtier had brought a thousand coins and some clothes sent by the king, so he gave these to the Bodhisatta, expecting him to bathe and change his clothes. But the Bodhi-

satta gave the coins to the potter he had been working under. That potter was very frightened to find that the wise Mahosadha had been his worker, but Mahosadha reassured him and said the potter had been of great help to him. Then he got in the chariot sent for him, still covered in clay.

When they got to the palace, the courtier reported to the king that Mahosadha had been working for a potter, and that as soon as he heard the king had sent for him, he came without even washing off the clay he was covered with.

"If he were my enemy," the king thought, "he would have come with great ceremony and many followers. He is not my enemy." Then the king gave orders for Mahosadha to return to his home, bathe, and come back dressed for court.

When Mahosadha came, the king tested him with a question: "Some people do not do evil because they are wealthy. Others do not do evil because they are afraid they will be criticized. If you wanted, you could have great wealth. Why do you not harm me?"

Mahosadha answered: "Wise men do not do evil in order to obtain the pleasure wealth can provide. Good men may be unfortunate and reduced to humble circumstances, but even so, they will not turn away from what is right, whether it be for the sake of friends or against an enemy."

Then the king repeated an old saying of the ruling Khattiya clan, "A man who raises himself from a lowly position through either a great or an insignificant action should live righteously."

The Bodhisatta recited another saying, "It is treason to cut a branch off a tree that has given you shade. We detest false friends." And he added, "Sire, if it is treason to cut a branch off a tree that has been useful to you, how much more so it would be to kill a man. Your majesty has given great wealth

to my father. You have shown me great favour. How could I be such a traitor as to harm you?"

In this way, the Bodhisatta made it clear that he had never thought of overthrowing the king. Then he added some remarks to show the king how unwise he had been in believing what the four wise man had said without first listening to what Mahosadha had to say for himself:

> Men who are lazy and indulge in sensual pleasures are not good. It is not good for one who goes forth not to be self-controlled. Kings who act without considering are not good. An angry wise man is not good. A warrior prince should act after consideration. For such a king, his fame will grow.

THE DEVĪ'S QUESTIONS. The king now had the Great Being sit on his throne while he himself took a lower seat, thus showing the Bodhisatta's superiority over him. The king explained that the Devī of the royal parasol had asked four questions that the other four wise men could not answer.

QUESTION 1. Then the king submitted the first question: "He strikes with his hands and feet. He beats the face. And yet, he is dearer than a husband." As soon as Mahosadha heard the riddle, the answer was as clear to him as the moon in a cloudless sky.

"Listen, o king," he said. "When a child is on its mother's lap, it may playfully hit her with its hands and feet, it may pull her hair and beat her face, but she will only say, 'You little rascal, why are you hitting me?' And she will hug him and kiss him. At that moment, the baby is dearer to her than her husband."

Hearing him make the answer as clear as the sun shining in the sky, the Devī showed half her body and said, "The riddle

is well solved." And she presented the Bodhisatta with a precious casket full of divine perfumes and flowers. Then she disappeared. The king also gave him presents.

QUESTION 2. Then the king recited the second riddle, "She yells at him. Even so, she wishes he were near. And he is dearer than a husband."

"Sire," Mahosadha said, "a seven-year-old boy can run errands for his mother. She may tell him that if he will go to the field or to the market she will give him some candy. But after eating the candy, he may say, 'You want me to do your work while you sit in the shade.' And he makes faces and makes fun of her and refuses to go. She picks up a stick and scares him so much he runs away too fast for her to catch him. Then she yells, 'Get out of here! I hope thieves catch you and chop you up in little pieces.'

"But of course she does not really wish what she says. She still wants him near her. The child plays all day long, and still afraid to go home, he goes to a relative's. His mother watches the road for him, and when he doesn't come, she goes looking for him, tears streaming from her eyes. When she finds him, she hugs him, kisses him, and says, 'Did you really believe what I said?' At that moment, she loves him more than ever, and he is dearer than her husband."

The Devī made a second offering to Mahosadha.

QUESTION 3. Then the king asked the third riddle: "She abuses him without cause. She find fault with him without a reason. And yet, he is dearer than a husband."

"O king," Mahosadha said, "when a couple is alone and enjoying themselves, one may tease the other with words like, 'You don't care for me. You love someone else.' But what they say is not based on anything real. And in teasing each

other, they grow fonder of one another. That is what the riddle means."

The Devī gave a third present.

QUESTION 4. Then the king asked the last riddle: "The good men take away food and drink, clothes and lodging. And yet, they are dearer than a husband."

"Sire," Mahosadha said, "this riddle refers to offerings given to righteous brahmans and ascetics. People who believe that good deeds done now result in good in future lives are happy to give to those who lead a good life. That is what this riddle means."

The Devī was delighted with all the answers and presented the Bodhisatta with a casket full of the seven kinds of jewels. The king made him his Commander-in-Chief.

SENAKA TRIES AGAIN. The four wise men were jealous of Mahosadha's success. Senaka devised a plan. "We will ask Mahosadha to whom you should tell a secret. If he says no one, we will be able to make the king think he is a traitor."

The four wise men went to Mahosadha's house and Senaka asked the questions.

"Wise sir," Senaka asked, "What should a man be firmly established in?"

"In the truth," Mahosadha answered.

"Then what?"

"He must tell no one his secret."

"Thank you, sir" the four men said. They went away very happy, thinking "Now we've got him." They went to the king and said, "Sire, that man is a traitor."

"I don't believe you," the king said. "He would never be a traitor to me."

"If you don't believe us, just ask him to whom you should tell a secret," they told the king. "If he is not a traitor, he will mention someone to whom you can tell your secret. If he is a traitor, he will say that you should not tell a secret to anyone, that you should wait until you have what you want, and then speak."

So one day, when all five wise men were with the king, Senaka asked the question, "To whom should a secret be told, whether it be good or bad?" And he turned first to the king and asked him how he would answer.

"A secret, whether good or bad should be told to your wife," the king said, "if she is virtuous, faithful, serving her husband well, and affectionate."

When he heard this answer, Senaka was very pleased because he thought the king would be on his side. Then Senaka gave his answer, "A secret, whether good or bad, should be told to a friend who protects you when you are in trouble and who is your refuge and support."

The king asked Pukkusa for his answer, and Pukkusa said, "A secret, whether good or bad, should be told to a brother. It doesn't matter if he is the oldest, younger, or the youngest of all, as long as he is firmly established in morality."

Next, the king asked Kāvinda for his answer, and he said, "A secret, whether good or bad, should be told to a son, if he is obedient, wise, and a true son."

Then the king asked Devinda, who said, "A secret, whether good or bad, should be told to your mother, if she truly loves you."

Finally, the king asked for Mahosadha's answer. He replied, "It is good to keep a secret secret. You should not speak in favour of revealing a secret. The intelligent man will

keep his secret to himself until he has done what he is going to do. Once it is done, then he may speak."

When he heard this answer, the king was displeased. Mahosadha noticed how the king and Senaka looked at each other, and he understood that this question was probably another attempt by the four wise men to get him into trouble. "It's hard to know what a king is going to do," Mahosadha thought. "I must leave right away." So he got up, paid his respects to the king, and left. "Each of those four men gave a different answer to the question," he thought. "They must have done something or seen something, or they've heard something. I'll find out today what their secrets are."

He knew that they usually stood talking near a stone bench when they came from audience with the king, so he lifted up the stone, put a rug in the hollow under it, and told his men to come get him out after the four men left. Then he hid himself under the stone.

Meanwhile, the king had already forgotten the lesson he had learned from Mahosadha the last time he had doubted him. When Senaka told the king that Mahosadha had to be killed, the king accepted it without further investigation. He said to the four men, "Wait by the door in the morning, and when Mahosadha comes to see me, split open his head with a sword." And he gave them his own sword.

"Very good, my lord," Senaka said, "Don't be afraid. We will kill him."

The four men left the king and stood talking beside the stone bench as usual. Mahosadha, of course, could hear everything they were saying.

"We've seen the last of Mahosadha," they said and decided that Senaka should be the one to kill him.

Then they started to talk about what they had said concerning secrets. Senaka asked the other three why they said a secret should be told to the people they mentioned. But the other three begged him to tell them why he had said a secret should be told to a friend. "If the king should find out my secret," Senaka said, "I'm a dead man."

"Don't worry, teacher," the others said. "There's nobody here that would give away your secret. Tell us what it is."

"What if that good-for-nothing scoundrel is under here?" Senaka said, tapping on the stone.

"O teacher," the others exclaimed, "a man with all that glory would never go into a place like that. He's too full of himself for that. Tell us your secret."

So Senaka told his secret. "Do you remember the prostitute named so-and-so?" he asked. When the others said they did, he asked, "Have you seen her recently?" The others admitted they had not. "I had relations with her in a grove of sal trees. Afterwards, I killed her to get her jewels. I tied them up in a bundle and hung them from an elephant tusk in my house. I will have to wait until she is completely forgotten before I can use the jewels. I told this secret to a friend, and he has never told another person. That is why I say a secret can be told to a friend."

Pukkusa told his secret next. "I have a spot of leprosy on my thigh," he said. "Every morning, my younger brother washes it, puts a salve on it, and wraps a bandage around it. He has never mentioned this to anyone. When the king wants to relax, he lays his head in my lap. If he knew about this spot, he would kill me. Only my brother knows this secret. That it why I said a secret can only be told to a brother."

Then Kāvinda told his secret. "On the day when the moon is dark, a Yakkha named Naradeva takes possession of me

and I bark like a dog. I told this to my son, and he shuts me up when he sees I am possessed and drowns out the noise I make by inviting a big crowd of people. That is why I say a secret can be told to a son."

Finally, Devinda told his secret. "I am the inspector for the king's jewels. I stole a gem that brings good luck and that was given to King Kusa by the Deva king Sakka. I gave this gem to my mother. Whenever I go to court, without saying a word to anyone, she gives it to me so that I am lucky when I go to see the king. He always speaks to me before he does to you, and he always gives me some money. If the king knew I had the gem, he would kill me. That is why I say a secret can be told to a mother."

The Great Being noted all these secrets. After the four men left, Mahosadha's men let him out and he went home. He knew his sister Queen Udumbarī would send him a message, so he had a man he could trust keep a look out. Then he went to bed.

The king was lying in bed, thinking of all the virtues Mahosadha possessed, and how the Bodhisatta had saved his life when the Devī of the parasol posed the riddles, and he bitterly regretted giving the order for him to be killed. Sweat began to pour from his body. Queen Udumbarī saw what a state he was in. "Have I done anything to offend you, my lord? Or do you grieve for some other reason?"

"They told me Mahosadha must be killed," the king said. "I have condemned him to death. Just thinking of this weighs me down. You have not done anything."

Queen Udumbarī was very upset by what she heard, but she decided to use a trick to help Mahosadha. "Sire," she said, "it is thanks to you that he has risen to be Commander-in-Chief. They say he is your enemy and there is no such

thing as an insignificant enemy. He must be killed. Do not grieve for him."

The king calmed down and went to sleep. Queen Udumbarī got up, put a message inside a cake, tied it up and put it inside a jar. Since the king had given her the boon to send food to Mahosadha whenever she wanted, she was able to send this jar to him. Her message said, "Mahosadha, the four wise men have slandered you. The king has given orders for you to be killed at the gate tomorrow. Do not come to the palace tomorrow morning, or, if you do come, bring enough power to hold the city."

The next morning, the four wise men waited by the gate, ready with the sword, but Mahosadha did not come. When they got tired of waiting for him, they went in to the king and told him that Mahosadha had not come. Meanwhile, Mahosadha got the whole city in his power and posted guards. Then he went to the palace gates in a chariot, surrounded by a great crowd of men. The king looked out a window and saw him coming. Then the Great Being got down out of his chariot and saluted the king. "If he were my enemy," the king thought, "he would not salute me." So he sent for him to come in and sat down on the throne.

The king pretended not to know anything and asked Mahosadha why he was so late in coming. "Sire," Mahosadha said, "you took the four wise men's advice and ordered that I be killed. That is why I did not come earlier. You told this secret last night to your wife, but the secret is out and I know it."

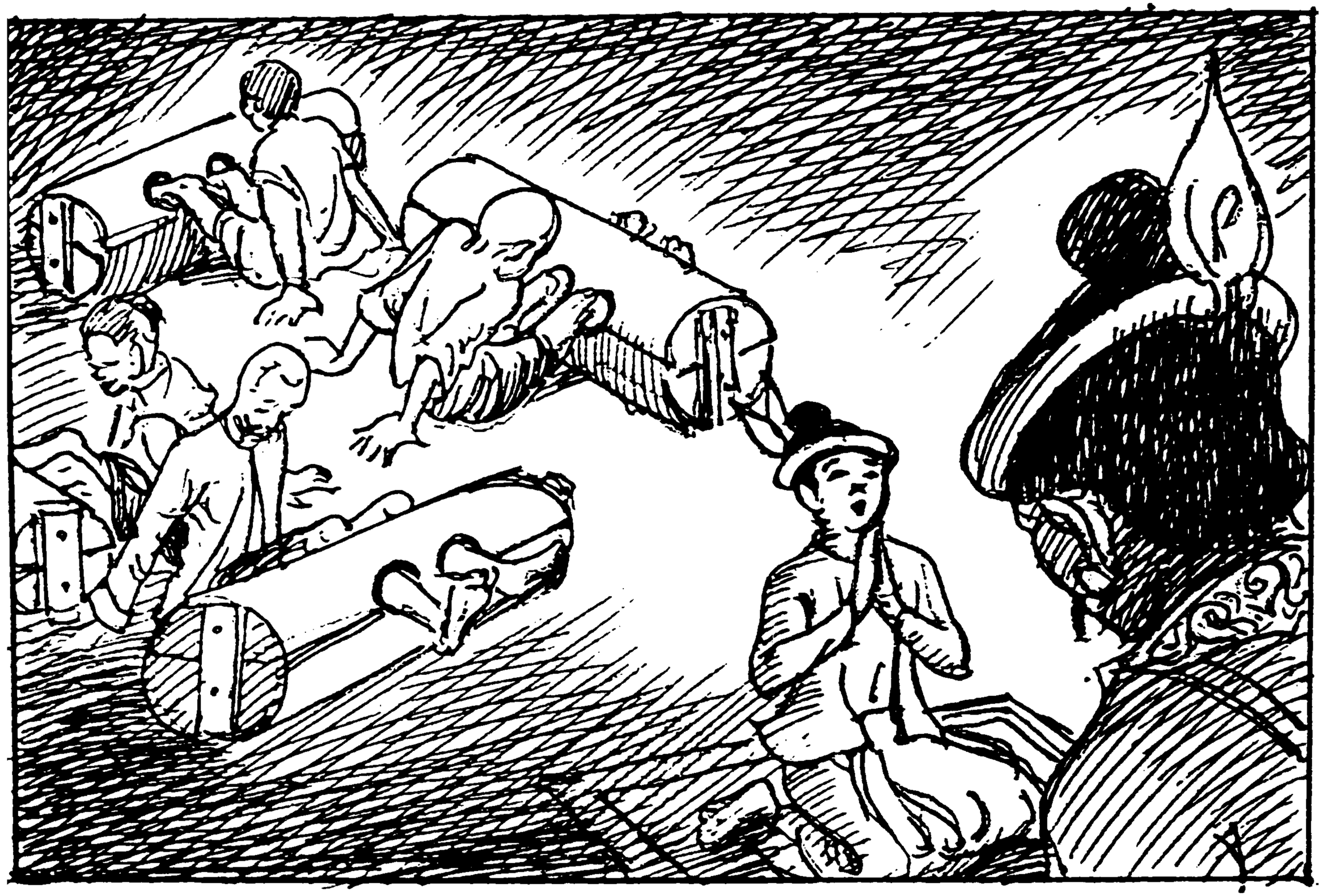
The king gave the queen a look, but Mahosadha said, "Why are you angry with the queen, my lord? I know the past, present, and future. But even supposing the queen told me your secret, who told me the secrets of the four wise men? I know all their secrets too." And Mahosadha proceeded to tell

the other secrets. The king threw the four men into prison. The king was so angry when he thought of how the four men had betrayed him and then pretended it was Mahosadha who was the traitor that he gave orders they be executed. But as they were being dragged through the streets and beaten, Mahosadha pleaded with the king to pardon them. The king released them and gave them to Mahosadha to be his slaves. Mahosadha freed them immediately. Then the king said they should be banished from the kingdom, but the Bodhisatta persuaded the king to give them back their former positions.

The king was pleased by what Mahosadha did. If he showed so much mercy to his enemies, how much more he must have for other people. From that time on, none of the four wise men tried to make trouble for Mahosadha. They were like snakes who had had their fangs drawn and poison drained.

MAHOSADHA RE-ENFORCES KING VEDEHA'S KINGDOM. After overcoming these attempts to betray him, Mahosadha taught the king how he should act as a king and what he should do to ensure he would be happy in future lives. It was Mahosadha who managed the kingdom, and he was determined to be vigilant. He had a big rampart built around the city, with watch towers at the gates and three moats between the watch towers. There was a water moat, a mud moat, and a dry moat. He also restored the old houses in the city, built water reservoirs, and had the storehouses filled with grain. He also found out from travelling merchants what the kings in other countries liked.

Then Mahosadha sent for a hundred and one soldiers. "Take these gifts," he said to the men, "and give them to the kings of the hundred and one royal cities. Then live there in their service and send me reports of their plans. I will take



Mahosadha asks the king to pardon the wise men.

care of your wives and children." He gave various gifts such as earrings, golden slippers, and golden necklaces, and on them, he wrote letters that would become visible when it was the right time. The men did as they were told and took up service in the hundred and one cities, but they said they came from some place other than Mithilā.

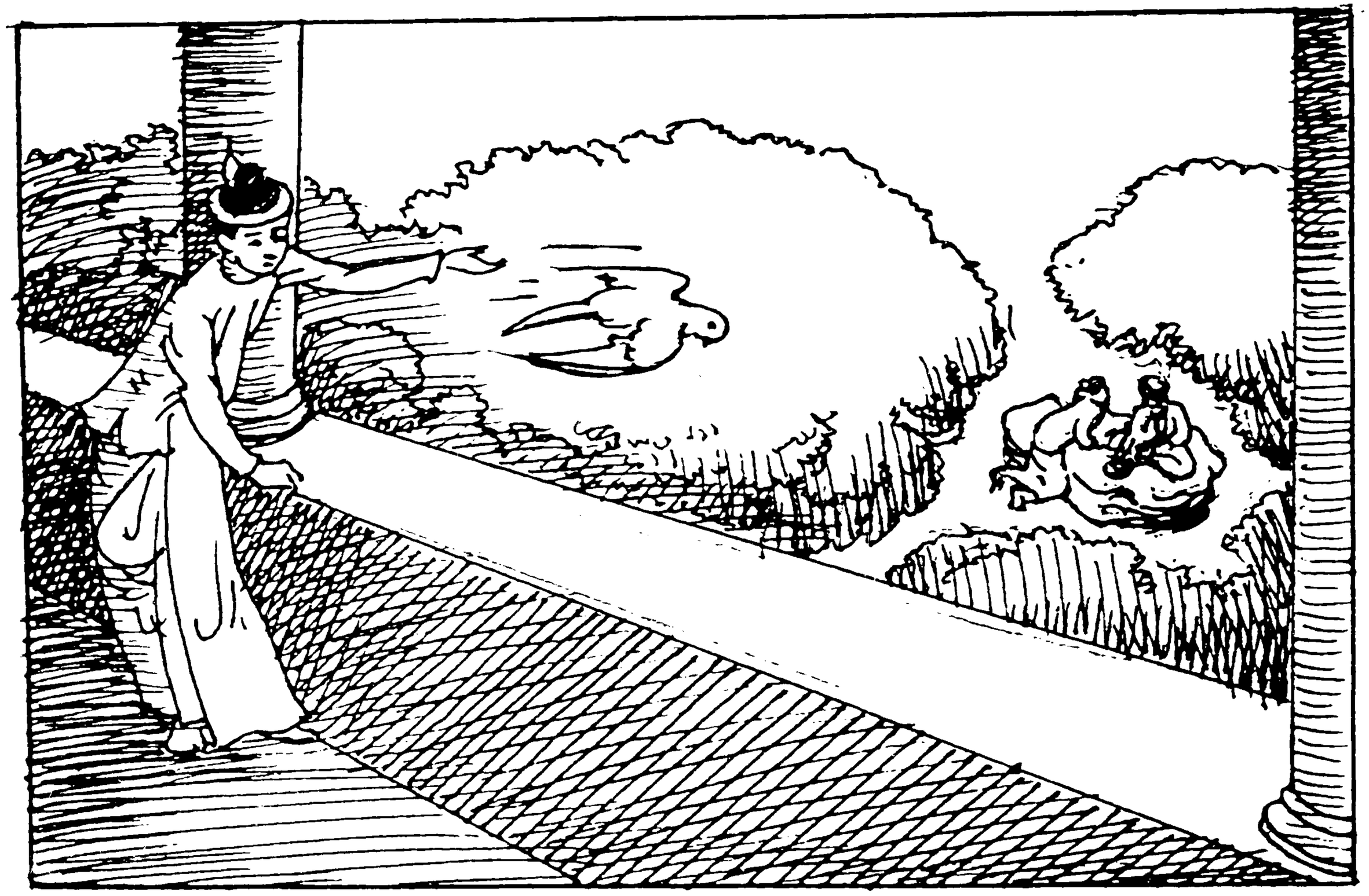
KING CŪḶANI-BRAHMADATTA SETS OUT TO CONQUER INDIA. One day, Mahosadha sent a parrot on a mission to find out what was happening in the kingdom of Ekabala after he received a report from his man stationed there. On the way back, the parrot passed through the city named Uttarapañcāla in the kingdom of Kampilla. The king of that country was named Cūḷani-Brahmadatta. His wise man Kevaṭṭa thought to himself, "A king who possesses such splendour should be the chief king over all India—and I should be his chief adviser." So he went to the king early in the morning and said he had something to tell him. "Tell me what it is, teacher," the king said.

"My lord," Kevaṭṭa said, "a secret should not be told in town. Let us go to the park." So they went to the park where the king's retinue was left outside. A guard was set up and the king sat down on the royal seat. The parrot saw what was going on and decided to investigate. He flew into the park and perched in a sal tree.

"Sire," Kevaṭṭa said, "this plan of mine is for four ears only. If you will do what I advise you to, you will be the chief king all over India."

"Tell me, teacher, and I will do whatever you say," the king said, listening greedily to his adviser.

"My lord," the brahman said, "we should raise an army and attack a small city. I will enter the city through a secret gate and tell the king that he can keep his city if he will join



The parrot overhears Kevaṭṭa's plot.

forces with us. Otherwise, we will destroy him. If he joins us, so much the better. If not, we will destroy him, then join his army with ours. Then we will attack another city, then another, until we have conquered all of India. Then we will bring the hundred and one kings of India here and give them all a poisoned drink. In that way, we will kill them all and throw their bodies in the Ganges."

The king agreed to the plan. But just as Kevaṭṭa was saying they must act at once and keep the plan a secret, the parrot let a ball of dung drop on his head. "What's that?" cried Kevaṭṭa, and he looked up, his mouth gaping wide open.

The parrot let another ball of dung drop—this time right in the brahman's mouth, and he flew off crying out, "Cree cree! You think your plan is only for four ears, Kevaṭṭa. But now it is for six ears. And soon it will be for eight, and then for hundreds."

"Catch him, catch him!" they cried but the parrot flew away back to Mithilā and entered Mahosadha's house.

When the parrot had something to tell to Mahosadha and no one else, he would perch on his shoulder. If the news could be shared with Amarā, it would perch on his lap. If everyone could hear the news, the parrot would land on the ground. This time, of course, he perched on Mahosadha's shoulder, so Mahosadha took it up to the top storey.

"My lord," the parrot reported, "I have found only one king in all of India who presents a danger, and that is Cūḷani-Brahmadatta." And he explained the brahman's plan that he had overheard.

Mahosadha accordingly took steps to fortify King Vedeha's city. He moved all the poor people outside and had all the rich and powerful citizens who lived in the surrounding areas settle in the city.

King Cūḷani-Brahmadatta did as Kevaṭṭa had proposed. In seven years, seven months, and seven days, he had conquered all of India except for Vedeha. He wanted to attack Vedeha, but Kevaṭṭa said, "Sire, we will never conquer his city as long as Mahosadha is alive. The kingdom of Mithilā is very small. Ruling over the rest of India is enough for us." This satisfied the King, but the other kings he had conquered wanted to continue on to Mithilā. Again, Kevaṭṭa persuaded them to be satisfied with what was already won. Mahosadha's men sent word that there was going to be a great celebration in King Bramadatta's park where all the kings would drink a toast to their victory. Mahosadha knew that this would be the occasion for the poisoned drink to be given to the kings. "It is not right that so many kings should be killed when a wise man like me is alive," he thought. "I will help them."

Mahosadha sent ten thousand warriors to the park on the day fixed for the festival and had them claim the seat of honour next to Cūḷani-Brahmadatta for King Vedeha. He told them to raise such a fuss that the celebration would not take place. This made Brahmadatta and the other kings so angry, they decided they would attack King Vedeha and kill him. Kevaṭṭa tried in vain to make Brahmadatta change his mind, but without success.

Mahosadha's men kept him posted concerning the preparations and the advance of king Cūḷani-Brahmadatta and the other kings with their armies. They arrived at Mithilā one evening and surrounded the city. They lit a hundred thousand torches and posted rows of elephants, chariots, horses, and soldiers. The whole place was lit up, and the four wise men in King Vedeha's palace heard all the noise made by the animals and soldiers. But they did not know what it was all about. King Vedeha opened a window and looked out. When he saw

the surrounding armies, he cried "We are lost! Tomorrow they will kill us all!"

Meanwhile, Mahosadha set guards throughout the city and went to reassure the king. When he saw him, the king thought, "No one can save me but the wise Mahosadha." And he asked the Bodhisatta how they could be saved.

Mahosadha thought, "The king is terribly afraid he will be killed. Just as a sick man's refuge is a physician, a hungry man's refuge is food, a thirsty man's refuge is water, I alone am the refuge for the king. I will console him." So he said to the king, "Don't be afraid. I will chase away that army as easily as I would scare a crow with a lump of dirt or a monkey with a bow and arrow."

Mahosadha had the festival drums beaten all around the city and sent out a proclamation that all the people hold a week-long festival. The attacking army heard the people inside the city celebrating with singing and music. When this was reported to Cūḷani-Brahmadatta, he demanded to know what was going on. The men serving Mahosadha told him they had slipped into the city by the secret gate and had asked the people what was going on. "They told us, 'When our king was a boy, he made a wish that he might be able to hold a festival one day with all the kings of India besieging his city. Now his wish is fulfilled.'"

This made the king angry, and he gave orders for a division of his army to attack. But the men at the gates and the towers beat them back. Then they made fun of the attacking soldiers. "Have something to eat, have something to drink," they yelled down from the walls and walked up and down in full view, eating and drinking.

The attacking soldiers returned and told Cūḷani-Brahmadatta, "Sire, only a magician could get in that city." Four or

five days later, when he could not find a way of taking the city, the king asked Kevaṭṭa for advice. He said, "The city gets its water from outside. Cut off the water supply. Once the run out of water, they will open the gates themselves."

Mahosadha's spies wrote a warning on a leaf, tied it to an arrow, and shot the arrow into the town. Orders had been given for any arrow with a leaf on it to be delivered to Mahosadha. When he learned what was happening, he took bamboo poles that were sixty yards long, had them cut in half, then had the knots removed. They were put back together, covered with leather and smeared with mud. He then took some soil and lotus seeds that he had hermits bring from the Himalaya mountains long before. The seeds were planted by a pool and the bamboo poles were placed over them. Then the pool was filled with water. Overnight, the plants grew up, sending their stalks through the poles and rising high above the tops in full flower.

Mahosadha had the plants pulled up and gave orders to send them to Brahmadatta. His men rolled up the stalks and threw the plants over the wall, calling down to the men below, "Hey, you servants of Brahmadatta! Don't go hungry. You can wear these flowers and eat the stalks."

One of the Great Being's spies took a stalk to Brahmadatta who had it measured. "Where did this grow?" asked the king. The spy made up a story of how he had entered the city where he had seen people in boats on a pond picking lotuses. "This one was growing on the edge of the pond," he said. "The stems of the ones in the middle must be much longer."

When Kevaṭṭa heard this, he suggested they try cutting off the food supplies to the city.

Mahosadha learned what their plans were in the same way as before. So he put some mud along the ramparts and planted

rice. A Bodhisatta always succeeds in what he wants to do, so the rice grew up overnight. The next day, King Brahmadatta asked, "What is that stuff I see above the rampart?"

One of Mahosadha's scouts answered, "My lord, Mahosadha is a farmer's son. When he saw danger coming, he collected grain from all over the kingdom and filled the granaries with it. That must be the leftover grains that he threw on the ramparts you see sprouting. I picked up some of that grain on the ramparts one day and the people told me, 'You seem to be hungry. Tie some of that rice up in a corner of your robe and take it home so you can cook it and eat it."

Kevaṭṭa now suggested they cut off the supply of firewood.

When he learned of this, Mahosadha had firewood heaped up so it showed over the rampart. The people in the city laughed at Brahmadatta's men, and they threw down some of the firewood, saying "If you're hungry, here's some wood to cook your rice with." When the king saw the wood he asked what it was, and one of Mahosadha's scouts said, "The farmer's son collected firewood and stored it in the sheds behind the houses. The wood that was left over was stacked by the rampart."

When the king told Kevaṭṭa this plan would not work either, the brahman said, "Never mind, sire, I have another plan."

"What plan!" the king exclaimed. "There seems to be no end to your plans. We can't conquer Vedeha. Let us return to our own city."

"My lord," the brahman answered, "We will be disgraced if we let it be said that Cūḷani-Brahmadatta and a hundred and one kings could not take Vedeha. Mahosadha is not the only wise man. I am one too. I will use a trick."

"What trick is that?" asked the king.

"We will have a Battle of the Law. The armies will not fight. The two wise men of the kings will meet together, and the one that pays respects to the other first will be the loser. Mahosadha does not know about this. He is younger than I am, so he will naturally pay respects to me when we meet. In this way we will defeat Vedeha, and we can return home without being disgraced."

The Bodhisatta learned about this trick as he had learned about the other tactics. Brahmadatta sent a letter to Vedeha saying, "Tomorrow there will be a Battle of the Law between the two wise men. A refusal will amount to defeat."

When Vedeha told Mahosadha about this, he said, "Very good. Have a place prepared for the Battle of the Law by the western gate."

The next morning, Kevaṭṭa went to the appointed place surrounded by the hundred and one kings. Mahosadha got up early in the morning, bathed in scented water, dressed in fine clothes, took his breakfast, and then went to King Vedeha. "My lord," he said, "I need the eight-sided gem in order to defeat Kevaṭṭa." "Take it, my son," replied the king. And Mahosadha went to the gate together with his thousand companions when it was time for the noon meal.

Kevaṭṭa kept thinking, "He should be coming now, he should be coming now." And he strained his neck as he looked until it seemed to grow longer. With the heat of the sun, he broke into a sweat. Finally, the Great Being, surrounded by his companions, had the gate opened and rode forth in a magnificent chariot pulled by a team of white thoroughbred horses. When the hundred and one kings saw him, they cried out, "Here is the wise man Mahosadha, the

son of Sirivaḍḍa. No one in all of India is equal to him in his wisdom."

Mahosadha descended from the chariot and stood there, looking like Sakka surrounded by the Devas, and in his hand he held out the precious gem. When Kevaṭṭa saw him he could not stay still, but went towards him, saying, "Wise Mahosadha, we are both wise men. And even though I have been living so near you all this time, you have never sent me a single gift."

"Wise sir," Mahosadha answered, "I was looking for a gift that would not be unworthy of you. Today I found this gem. Please take it, there is not another like it in all the world."

"Give it to me, then," Kevaṭṭa said, and Mahosadha let the gem drop on Kevaṭṭa's fingertips. It was too heavy for the brahman's fingers and fell to the ground, rolling over to the Bodhisatta's feet. Kevaṭṭa greedily stooped down to get the gem and Mahosadha forced him to stay down, holding his shoulder blades with one hand and his lower back with the other.

"Rise, teacher!" Mahosadha cried out as he held Kevaṭṭa down. "I am younger than you. I am young enough to be your grandson. You shouldn't pay respects to me." As he repeated this over and over, he rubbed Kevaṭṭa's forehead into the ground until it bled. Then he said, "You blind fool. Did you think I was going to pay respects for you?" And he took him by the throat and pushed him away.

Kevaṭṭa fell a long way from Mahosadha, who picked up the gem again. But Mahosadha's words, "Rise! You shouldn't pay respects to me," carried above the noise of the crowd. Everyone cried, "Kevaṭṭa paid respects to Mahosadha!" The hundred and one kings saw the brahman when he bowed at the Bodhisatta's feet. "We are lost," they all

thought. "He will do away with all of us." In a panic, they jumped on their horses and started running away. Mahosadha's scouts began to cry out that Cūḷani-Brahmadatta and the other kings were in flight. This frightened the kings even more, and all the attacking army took flight.

Kevaṭṭa chased them on horseback, calling out, "Hey! Don't run away! Stop! Stop!" But the army refused to stop and made fun of him. "You good for nothing, you wanted to hold the Battle of the Law, and then you bow to someone young enough to be your grandson."

"Wait," Kevaṭṭa said, "you must believe me. I did not bow down to him. He tricked me with a gem." Gradually, one by one, he convinced the kings and rallied the broken army.

The attacking army was so large, if each soldier had taken a handful of dirt and thrown it into the moat, the mound would have risen as high as the ramparts. But a Bodhisatta always succeeds in what he sets out to do, so not even one soldier threw any dirt.

The next scheme that Kevaṭṭa thought up was to block all access to the town, so that people could not even go in or out by the secret gate. "The people will become discouraged," he said, "and open the gates to us."

When Mahosadha learned of this, he thought, "We will never have any peace as long as they stay here. I will find a way to make them leave."

He selected a man named Anukevaṭṭa as the right person for the job, and explained to him what to do. "Stand on the rampart and wait until the guards aren't looking. Then lower some food to Brahmadatta's men and say to them, 'Here, eat this. Don't be discouraged. Before long the people will open the gates and you'll be able to take Vedeha and that farmer's son.' Our men will catch you in the act. They'll yell at you

Mahosadha wins the Battle of the Law.

and beat you, tie you up and lower you over the rampart on a rope, and yell, 'Get out of here, you traitor.'

"You will be taken to King Brahmadatta, who will ask you what you did. You will say to him, 'Great king, I was once a man of great honour, but that farmer's son denounced me to the king, calling me a traitor and taking away everything I had. I want to make him a head shorter. That is why I gave your men food and drink. And that is why they did this to me. Your own men know all about it.'

"When the king has confidence in you, tell him, 'Sire, with me on your side, Vedeha and that farmer's son are as good as dead. I know where the strong points and the weak spots are in the city ramparts. I know where there are crocodiles in the moat and where there aren't any.' Then the king will put you in charge of the army.

"Then you should take the army to a spot where there are snakes and crocodiles. They will be afraid and will refuse to advance. Then you say to the king, 'My lord, your army has been corrupted by that farmer's son. Even Kevaṭṭa and the kings have been corrupted by him. They talk about guarding you, but they all have been bought by the farmer's son. I am the only one you can depend on. If you do not believe me, assemble all the kings and have them wear their best clothes. Then examine their clothes and you will find that the farmer's son gave them ornaments and swords with his name inscribed on them.'

"The king will do as you say, and when he finds it is true, he will be very frightened and ask you for advice. Then you say to him, 'My lord, the farmer's son is very resourceful. If you stay here a few more days, he will win over your entire army and capture you. Let us escape on horseback tonight.' When he runs off, you tell my people."

Anukevaṭṭa agreed to the plan. "You will have to put up with being beaten," Mahosadha said. "Do whatever you want with my body," Anukevaṭṭa replied, "as long as you spare me my life and limbs."

Mahosadha showed great honour to Anukevaṭṭa's family and the plan was set in motion. Everything worked as Mahosadha had said. The soldiers were frightened. The marks on the gifts he had sent the kings became visible, convincing the king they had been bribed. Anukevaṭṭa easily persuaded Brahmadatta he should escape at midnight. Then he fixed the reigns on the king's horse so that no matter how hard he pulled to stop it, it would just run faster.

When they set out, Anukevaṭṭa followed the king on horseback for a little way and turned back. The king tried to stop his horse, but of course it only went faster. Anukevaṭṭa rode through the army crying, "Cūḷani-Brahmadatta has fled!" Mahosadha's scouts and their attendants joined in the hue and cry. The hundred and one kings thought Mahosadha must be attacking, and with just a glance at their possessions, they too fled. Mahosadha's men yelled all the louder, "The kings have run away!" The people at the city gate and on the towers heard the noise and began shouting and clapping their hands. Soon, the whole city sent up a mighty roar. And the whole army that was attacking the city fled.

The next morning, the soldiers of Mithilā opened the city gates and went out. When they saw all the things the fleeing kings and troops had left behind, they asked Mahosadha what they should do with it all. He said, "The things they left belong to us. Give our king the things that belonged to the kings. Bring me Kevaṭṭa's belongings and the possessions of the other private citizens. Let the people take the rest." Maho-

sadha gave great honour to Anukevaṭṭa. From that day on, the citizens of Mithilā had all the gold they needed.

KEVAṬṬA TRIES AGAIN. A year went by after Brahmadatta and the hundred and one kings returned to Uttarpañcālā. Then one day, Kevaṭṭa looked at himself in the mirror and saw the scar on his forehead that came from his encounter with Mahosadha. "How can I get rid of him?" he thought. "That farmer's son made me a laughing stock in front of all those kings." Angry as he was, he came up with a plan. "Our king's daughter, Pañcālacaṇḍī, is of great beauty. I will show her to King Vedeha and he will be caught with desire—like a fish that swallows a hook. I will land both the king and Mahosadha and kill them both."

So Kevaṭṭa went to the king. "Sire," he said, "I have an idea."

"Yes, teacher," the king said, "One of your ideas left me without a rag to cover my back. What do you want now? Just keep quiet."

"But sire," the brahman insisted, "there was never an idea as good as this one."

"Very well," the king said, "tell me what it is."

Kevaṭṭa took the king to the top of the the palace where they could be alone and explained his plan. "Sire," he said, "Your daughter Pañcālacaṇḍī is of great beauty. We will have poets compose poems to praise her charms and then have these poems sung in Mithilā. When King Vedeha begins to feel that there is no point in being a king if he cannot have such a beautiful woman, when he is caught in that net of desire, I will fix a day for him to come marry her. That farmer's son will come with him, and we will be able to kill them both."

"Teacher, that is an excellent plan!" said the king.

Poets were called and paid handsomely to write poems about the beauty of the princess. Musicians learned the songs from the poets and sang them in public so they were heard far and wide. Then singers were engaged to climb the trees at night with the birds and sing the songs, and they tied bells around the necks of the birds. All this, so the people would say even Devas sang of the beauty of King of Pañcāla's daughter. Poets wrote songs saying that such a princess could only be married to King Vedeha, and these songs were sung in Mithilā.

King Vedeha sent for the poets and paid them well. When Kevaṭṭa learned of this, he told King Cūḷani that it was time for him to go fix a wedding day. He asked for a present and went to Mithilā with a large group of followers. A rumour ran through the city that he had come to establish friendly relations between the kings and to offer King Cūḷani's daughter to King Vedeha.

The Great Being was suspicious about all this and determined to find out more. His spies in Cūḷani's kingdom said they did not know the details, but that a mynah bird in the king's bedroom would have heard the king and the brahman discussing their plans.

Mahosadha decided that he would not let the enemy gain any advantage. So he decorated the roads from the city gate to the palace and from the palace to his house, putting up lattices covered with mats and pictures so the rest of the city could not be seen. Flowers were scattered on the ground, water jugs were put in place, flags and banners were hung, so Kevaṭṭa did not suspect the city was being hidden from his view, but thought all this was to honour him.

Kevaṭṭa went to King Vedeha, offered the present he had brought, and told the king that King Cūḷani wished to offer

his daughter in marriage and to establish friendly relations. Vedeha was pleased and told Kevaṭṭa that he should make up the quarrel with Mahosadha that dated from the Battle of the Law.

Mahosadha had decided that he would not talk with such an immoral man. So he drank a little ghee as medicine and had the floor smeared with wet cow dung, the pillars smeared with oil, and all the chairs and mats removed except for a narrow couch for him to lie on. Then he told his servants, "When the brahman tries to talk to me, tell him I have taken ghee and he should not talk to me. When I start to speak to the brahman, tell me I should not talk either, for the same reason."

When Kevaṭṭa came, Mahosadha was lying on his couch, covered with a red robe. The servants warned Kevaṭṭa not to talk to Mahosadha. The brahman could not find a place to sit or even a place to stand by the bed. The servants acted very discourteously, rubbing their eyes, raising their eyebrows, scratching an elbow. Seeing this, Kevaṭṭa said, "Wise sir, I am going."

"Hey, you wretched brahman," one of the servants threatened him, "don't make any noise or I'll break every bone in your body."

Kevaṭṭa was terrified, looking around. Then one of the servants hit him with a bamboo stick. Another one grabbed him by the throat and pushed him, and one slapped him on the back. So he left, like a fawn running from a panther, and returned to the palace.

The king thought that there had been a great reconciliation between the two wise men and that they would have a great discussion about the law. When he saw Kevaṭṭa returning, he

asked him, "How did your meeting with Mahosadha go? Was he reconciled with you? Was he pleased?"

Kevaṭṭa answered, "Sire, you may think he is a wise man, but he is the worst there is. He was disagreeable, obstinate, wicked, like a deaf and dumb man. He didn't say a word!"

The king was displeased with what he heard, but he made no criticism. He provided for Kevaṭṭa and his companions and told him to go rest. "My son is wise," he thought, "he knows perfectly well how to be courteous. If he did not speak to this man courteously and did not want to see him, there must be some danger that he has seen."

Just then, the four wise men came to see the king. "Well, Senaka," the king asked, "do you think I should go to the city of Uttarsapañcāla and marry King Cūḷani's daughter?"

"O sire," the Senaka replied, "how can you ask such a question? When good luck comes along, you shouldn't chase it away. If you marry this princess, no one in India will be your equal aside from Cūḷani, for you will be related to the chief king of India. He knows that you alone are his peer and the other kings are his vassals. This is why he proposed this match." The other three wise men agreed with Senaka.

As they were talking, Kevaṭṭa returned from where he was staying and begged leave to depart. Vedeha was respectful toward the brahman and gave him permission to go.

When Mahosadha knew the brahman had left, he bathed, dressed, and went to see the king. He greeted the king and sat down to one side. At first, the king thought Mahosadha would know best whether he should go or not. But then his passion clouded his mind, and he asked a loaded question instead: "The other wise men all say I should go. Tell me what you think, Mahosadha."

Mahosadha thought, "The king is extremely greedy because of his desire. Blind and foolish, he listens to what these four say. I will explain the danger in going to him and persuade him not to go." So he said to the king, "Great king, Cūḷani-Brahmadatta is strong and mighty. He wants to kill you as a hunter kills a deer by using a decoy. Because of the greed that comes of your desire, o king, you do not recognize that his daughter will bring your death if you go for her like a fish greedy for food grabbing the bait on a hook."

This strong rebuke made the king angry. "He thinks I'm his slave," the king thought. "He forgets I am the king." Then he said, "How foolish of me to consult you about this sort of thing. How could you understand affairs like this since you grew up hanging on to a plough handle?" Then the king said, "This country bumkin is getting in the way of my good luck. Get him out of here. Ban him from my kingdom!"

Mahosadha thought, "If somebody should seize me, following the king's orders, I will be disgraced until the day I die. I will leave of my own accord." So he paid his respects and left.

The king only spoke in anger, however, and his respect for the Bodhisatta kept him from giving orders to anyone to carry out what he had said.

"The king is a fool," the Great Being thought. "He does not know what is good for him or what is bad for him. He is in love. Because of that, he does not see the danger that lies ahead. But I should not pay any attention to what he said to me. He has given me many things and paid me great honour. I should have confidence in him. But first, I will send the parrot to find out what is happening. Then I will go myself." So he sent the clever parrot Māṭhara to get information from the mynah bird in King Cūḷani's bedroom.

The parrot went to visit the mynah bird. "If I say I come from Mithilā, she will not trust me," the parrot thought. So he told her, "I come from Ariṭṭhapura where I serve the king of Sivi."

When the mynah bird asked why he had come, he answered, "I once had a mynah bird as my wife, but she was killed by a hawk. When the king saw me weeping over the loss of my wife, he told me I should find another wife. I said I was better off alone than to wind up with a vicious, wicked wife. Then the king told me, 'My friend, King Cūḷani has a mynah bird that is as virtuous as your wife was. Go and ask her if she will be your wife. If the answer is yes, I will go or my queen will go to bring her back to you.' That is why I have come."

The mynah bird answered, "How can there be a marriage between a parrot and a mynah bird?" But the parrot saw that she was pleased with him and was only playing hard to get. So he said, "When it comes to love, all differences can be overcome."

"But the heart is not always faithful," the mynah bird said. "I am afraid I will be separated from my loved one."

"Well then," the parrot said, knowing how to get around her, "I will go away. If you refuse me like this, I'm sure you must despise me."

When he said that, the mynah bird felt her heart would break. So she spoke to him as though she had just fallen in love with him. "You won't be lucky if you act in haste, Māṭhara. Stay here until you have seen the king, until you have heard the drums and seen how magnificent our king is."

From then on, they lived together. "Now she will tell me the secret," the parrot thought. So he said, "I would like to ask you something."

"What is it, my lord?" asked the mynah bird.

"Never mind, today is a festival day. Maybe I should ask you some other time."

"If it is something that is suitable for a festival day, please feel free to ask."

"Certainly it is suitable to speak of this on a festival day. I have heard that the king's daughter, who is as bright as a star, will be married to Vedeha."

When the parrot said this, the mynah bird replied, "My lord, you have just said something that is very unlucky on a festival day." But she refused to answer when he asked why what he had said was unlucky.

"If you refuse to tell me your secrets, we are finished as a couple," the parrot told her.

"Māṭhara, I would not even wish for our enemies to have a marriage like the one you mention," the mynah bird said. "Our king wishes to attract Vedeha in order to kill him."

"This plan of Kevaṭṭa's is wonderful," the parrot said. "But what do we have to do with something so unlucky. It would be better for us to remain silent."

The next day, the parrot said he would go to tell the King of Sivi that he had found a wife. The mynah bird was very reluctant to see him go, but could not refuse. She agreed to let him depart for a week. "But if you do not return after seven nights, it will be the death of me," she said.

"What are you saying, lady?" the parrot replied. "How could I live if I didn't see you after a week had passed?" But in his heart, he thought, "What do I care if you live or die."

Then the parrot returned to Mahosadha and told him all he had learned. The Great Being thought to himself, "The king will go no matter what I do. I must not bear a grudge against him after all he has done for me. If I do not help him, I will be

disgraced." And he hit upon a plan to save the king. As he thought all this, joy pervaded his body, and he pronounced this verse: "A man should always work for the good of the one in whose house he is fed."

Mahosadha went to see the king and asked him if he still intended to go to the city of Uttarapañcāla. When the king said he did, the Bodhisatta said that he would go ahead of the king to build him a residence and then send word for him to follow when all was ready. The king asked him what he would need. "An army, sire," Mahosadha said. The king granted him his wish. Then Mahosadha said, "My lord, open up your four prisons, break the chains of the robbers in them, and send them with me as well." This wish was also granted. Mahosadha went with a great company, including eighteen groups of masons, blacksmiths, carpenters, painters, men skilled in the arts and crafts, and men with spades, hoes, and many other tools.

On the way, Mahosadha built a village at every league, and he left a courtier in charge of each village with the following instructions: "You are to get elephants, horses, and chariots ready for when the king returns with his bride Pañcālacaṇḍī so you can keep his enemies away and take him quickly to Mithilā."

When he came to the Ganges, Mahosadha called Prince Ānanda, and he told him to go up river, to build three hundred ships, load them with timber and return as quickly as possible. Then he crossed the Ganges and paced out the distances for building a town a half a league from the river. This would be where King Vedeha would reside. Between the town and King Cūḷani's palace, he would have a small tunnel dug. Between the town and the Ganges, he would have a large tunnel a half a league long dug.

Mahosadha then went to King Cūḷani and said he had come before King Vedeha in order to build a residence for him. Cūḷani welcomed the Bodhisatta, gave him a place to stay, and told him to do all that was necessary.

When Mahosadha entered the palace, he looked at the foot of the stairs and thought, "This is where the door to the little tunnel will be." He said to the king, "My lord, when I came, I noticed a fault in the base of the stairs. Please give me permission to have it repaired. The king, thinking Mahosadha was doing this out of good will, gave his permission. Mahosadha removed the stair and built a solid foundation in wood so the staircase would not collapse when the tunnel was dug.

Once the staircase was fixed, Mahosadha said to the king, "My lord, if you tell me where our king will have his residence, I can take care of everything." The king told him he could have any place in the city, aside from the palace. "Sire," the Bodhisatta said, "we are strangers here and you have many favourites. If we take one of their houses, your soldiers will quarrel with us." The king told him to pay no attention.

"My lord," Mahosadha insisted, "people will be constantly coming to you to complain. If you will let us post guards, they can turn the people away and save you all that trouble." The king agreed to this. So the Great Being placed guards all over and gave them orders to let no one pass.

He sent men to the queen mother's house and told them to pretend they were going to tear down the building. When the queen mother offered them the house as it was, they insisted it was not large enough and they would need to build a new residence.

"Do you know who I am?" the queen mother said. "I am the queen mother. I will go to my son."

Mahosadha has the tunnel built.

"We have the king's permission for what we are doing," the men replied. "Just try and stop us!"

Angry, the queen mother went to the palace gate, but the guards wouldn't let her in. When she returned home again, one of the men there treated her roughly and ordered her to go away.

"They must have the king's permission," she thought. "Otherwise, they would never dare to do this." So she decided to go see Mahosadha. He refused to talk to her.

One of the men with Mahosadha asked what she wanted, and when she was told her house was being torn down so a residence could be built for King Vedeha, she said to the man, "This is a big city. Can't you find some other place? I will give you a bribe of a thousand coins if you build somewhere else."

"Very good, madam," the man said. "We will not take your house. But don't tell anybody that you bribed us. Otherwise, they will all try to stop us with bribes."

"If people knew the queen mother needed to offer a bribe," she replied, "I would be the one who would be shamed. I won't tell anyone."

The men next went to Kevaṭṭa's house, and he too wound up giving a bribe of a thousand coins. Going from house to house in this way, they accumulated ninety million gold coins.

Mahosadha returned to the palace and told the king, "Sire, people are willing to give up their houses, but as soon as we take over, they are grief-stricken. We do not want to be responsible for such sorrow. Between the city and the Ganges, about a mile away, there is a place where we could build a residence for our king."

The king was delighted with this proposition. "It's dangerous to fight in this city," he thought. "You can't tell who's your friend and who's your enemy. But it will be easy to fight outside the city." So he gave permission for the residence to be built outside the city.

"Sire," Mahosadha said, "your people should not come around where we are building, looking for firewood or herbs, because if they do there is bound to be a quarrel, and this would be unpleasant for both of us. Also, our elephants like to play in the water, and the water may be muddy. They should put up with this." The unsuspecting king agreed to everything Mahosadha asked for.

So Mahosadha began to build a city on the spot for King Vedeha's residence, and his men began to dig a small tunnel from the palace to the city and a large one from the city to the bank of the Ganges. Across the river, he built a village called Gaggali, where he kept elephants, horses and chariots, and cattle.

Sixty thousand soldiers dug the great tunnel. They took the dirt in leather sacks and dumped it in the river. The elephants trampled it and the Ganges became very muddy. When the citizens complained, Mahosadha's spies said it was because the elephants were playing in the water. Through the power of the Bodhisatta, all the roots and stones in the tunnel sank and did not have to be carried out.

The great tunnel was entered from the city by a door eighteen hands high. The sides of the tunnel were built up out of bricks covered with stucco. The roof was made of planks. There were eighty big doors and sixty-four smaller ones. A machine was set up so that all the doors could be closed by pressing on one peg or opened by pressing on another one. On each side of the tunnel, there were hundreds of niches

with lamps, and these could also be opened or closed all at the same time.

On each side, there were a hundred and one chambers. In each of these, there was a bed of various colours, a large couch shaded by a white parasol, a throne, and a statue of a very beautiful woman. The statues were so life-like they had to be touched to find out they were not alive.

On both sides of the tunnel, there were all sorts of paintings: the splendour of the Deva king Sakka, the central mountain of the world—Mount Sineru, the sea and the ocean, the four continents, the Himalayas, Lake Anotatta, the Red Plateau—Manosilāta, the sun and the moon, the Cātummahārājikā Deva world, and so forth. The tunnel was also hung with garlands of flowers, and it looked like the Sudhamma Deva hall.

The small tunnel was dug by seven hundred men. They also brought the dirt out in leather sacks, but this dirt was used in the city to build a wall.

The three hundred ships arrived, loaded with articles ready for use in the city. Once they were unloaded, Mahosadha hid the ships. The city was surrounded by a water moat and a wall with a gate and tower. Inside were dwellings for the king and his people, stables for the elephants, and water tanks. All the work on the tunnels and the city was completed in four months.

When all was ready, Mahosadha sent word to the king that he could come. King Vedeha came to the city built by the Bodhisatta and sent word to King Cūḷani that he had arrived. King Cūḷani sent a messenger to say that Vedeha should find out which day would be auspicious for the wedding, and Vedeha replied immediately that that very day was the day for the marriage.

"I will send for her now," King Cūḷani said to the messenger. But he was lying. Instead of sending for his daughter, he told the hundred and one kings to prepare for battle and installed his mother Queen Talatā, his chief queen Queen Nandā, his son Pañcālaṇḍa, and his daughter Pañcālacaṇḍī in his palace.

Meanwhile, Mahosadha was entertaining the army that had come with King Vedeha. When he learned that King Cūḷani had surrounded the city he had built for King Vedeha, he sent three hundred of his own soldiers through the small tunnel to capture King Cūḷani's family in his palace. "Take them through the great tunnel," he instructed, "and keep them in there near to the entrance by the river."

The soldiers went through the small tunnel to the palace. There, they took all the guards and other people in the palace, tied them up, gagged them, and hid them away. The queen mother had gathered all her family in one room, waiting to see what would happen. Mahosadha's men went to the door of the chamber where they were and called to them.

"What is it?" the queen mother asked.

"Madam, our king has killed Vedeha and Mahosadha. Now all India is one kingdom. He sent us to bring you to where he is celebrating with the hundred and one kings," a soldier told her.

When the king's family was taken to the tunnel at the foot of the stairs, they said, "We have lived here all this time, but we never went down this street before." The soldiers told them it was a special street used only for rejoicing, and they believed them. Some of the soldiers took the family through the great tunnel, while others returned to the palace, broke into the treasury, and took all they wanted. Once the king's

family was installed in a chamber in the tunnel, Mahosadha was informed.

"Now I will fulfil what I wanted to accomplish," Mahosadha thought, and went in to see the king.

The king was restless, burning with desire. He kept thinking, "He will send his daughter now—now, now!" Finally, he got up and looked out the window. There he saw the hundreds of thousands of torches lit by the surrounding army. Afraid and suspicious, he cried out, "What is this?"

"Don't be afraid, sire," Senaka told him. "Those large numbers of torches must mean the king is bringing his daughter to you."

Pukkusa said, "He probably wants to honour you, so he has brought his guard."

But the king could hear the orders being given to the surrounding army: "Put a detachment here, set a guard there, be vigilant." And he could see that the soldiers were armed. Frightened to death, he turned to Mahosadha. "What are they going to do?" he asked.

The Great Being thought, "First I will terrify this blind fool a little. Then I will show him my power and console him." So he answered the king, saying, "Sire, Cūḷani is a traitor. In the morning, he will kill you."

When they heard this, all the others were frightened. The king's throat was parched. The spit dried up in his mouth. He felt as if he was on fire inside. Mahosadha thought, "This blind fool refused to follow my advice. I will punish him a little more." So he said to the king, "You are careless and unwise. You will not follow good advice. A king who will not follow the advice of a wise, faithful councillor and who is only interested in his own pleasure, is like a deer caught in a trap. I warned you that this princess was only the bait in a

trap. But you just called me a country bumkin and ordered that I be exiled. A country bumkin like me could never be as wise as Senaka and the other wise men. I'm just a farm boy who knows about farming. Let these wise gentlemen deliver you from the surrounding army."

The king thought, "He is giving me a list of what I have done wrong. He saw this danger coming long ago. Surely he has not wasted his time since then. He must have made some arrangements for my safety." So he said to Mahosadha, "Why are you bringing up these things from the past? If you see a way out, please show it to us."

The Great Being thought, "The king is very blind, very foolish. He cannot tell a good man from a bad man. I will make him suffer a little longer, then I will save him." So he said to the king, "It is too late. There's nothing a mere man can do now. There are elephants and horses with marvellous powers who can fly through the air. Birds and Yakkhas can fly. They would be able to escape. But for a mere man, it is too late."

When he heard this, the king sat still without saying a word.

Then Senaka pleaded with Mahosadha to save them, but he replied it was too late and that there was nothing he could do.

In desperation, the King asked Senaka what they should do. "We should set the door on fire," Senaka replied, "and taking our swords, mortally wound each other so that we die and escape being tortured to death." This was not what the king wanted to hear, so he asked the other wise men. Pukkusa suggested they take poison, Kāvinda suggested they hang themselves, but Devinda thought, "What is the king doing? Instead of using real fire like Mahosadha, he is blowing on fireflies like me and the other three wise men.

Why does he ask us what to do? Only Mahosadha can save us." So he told the king they should all ask Mahosadha what to do, and if he could not save them, they should resort to the plan proposed by Senaka.

When the king heard what Devinda had to say, he remembered the way he mistreated the Bodhisatta in the past, and he could not bring himself to speak to him directly. Instead, he continued to lament about how dry his mouth was and how his heart was pounding.

"Now the king is extremely upset," Mahosadha thought. "If I don't comfort him, his heart will burst, and he will die." So he finally told the king, "Don't be afraid, o king. I will set you free, you and your chariots and your army. It will be like setting the moon or the sun free from the jaws of Rāhu when there is an eclipse, or like freeing an elephant that is caught in the mud, or a snake shut up in a basket, or a fish in a net."

On hearing this, the king and the other men were delighted. "Wise sir," Senaka asked, "how will you get us out of here?"

"We will escape through a tunnel," Mahosadha said, and they got up to leave. When the door to the large tunnel was opened, the light in it was shining like in a Deva hall. Senaka took off his headdress, but the Great Being told him, "Don't think you'll have to crawl through this tunnel on your hands and knees. You could go through this tunnel riding on an elephant. Dress up in all your finery and go through first."

The Bodhisatta came last, because the others lingered in the tunnel, gazing at all the marvels there and eating and drinking all the provisions that had been placed along the tunnel. Mahosadha urged them on.

When they arrived at the end of the tunnel by the Ganges, they came to a great courtyard prepared there, and King Cūḷani's mother, wife, son, and daughter were brought on.

When they saw King Vedeha and Mahosadha, they were frightened. "We are in the hands of our enemies!" they cried. King Cūḷani, who was with his army surrounding the city where he thought he had King Vedeha trapped, heard their cry and thought, "That sounds like Queen Nandā." But he did not dare say anything, because he was afraid the others would laugh at him.

At that moment, Mahosadha sat Princess Pañcālacaṇḍī on a pile of treasure and married her to the king with the ceremony of pouring water over their joined hands. Then the three hundred ships were brought out of hiding and King Vedeha went on board one of the ships, taking his bride and her family with him. Mahosadha told the king to treat them all as he would his own family.

The king said, "Why are you standing there on the shore? Come on the ship, Mahosadha, and let us go."

Mahosadha replied, "It would not be right for me to leave my army. I will stay here and save the army in the city from Brahmadatta. Some of these men are tired after their long journey. Some are still eating and drinking. Others are sick after working hard for four months. I cannot leave one man behind. I will bring them home safe and sound, with Brahmadatta's consent, and without striking one blow." Then he told the king to go back to his own city, explaining that he had set up the relays of transport along the way.

"But how can your small army manage against such a large one? The strong will destroy the weak," the king said.

The Bodhisatta replied, "A small army that has wise counsel will conquer a large army that has none. One king can conquer many others. The rising sun conquers the darkness."

Both the king and Senaka praised Mahosadha for his great wisdom and the king returned home using the relay stations set up by the Great Being.

Mahosadha took the sword that hung over his shoulder and buried it in the sand at the entrance to the tunnel. Then he went through the tunnel to Upakārī, the city he had built for the king, and retired for the night.

The next morning, King Cūḷani ordered his army to attack. The Bodhisatta came up onto a terrace, dressed like a Deva, and let the king see him. Then he said to the king, "Why are you in such a hurry, riding up on your elephant? You look very happy. You must think you have what you want. But you should throw down your bow, put your arrow away, and take off your shining armour with its jewels and coral."

The king, angry with the way the Bodhisatta was making fun of him, said, "You look very pleased with yourself. But it is when the hour of death comes that such beauty is seen."

"You do not know that I am the wise man Mahosadha. I will not let you kill me. What you planned with Kevaṭṭa has not worked out. What you promised with your lips, that has worked out."

"This good-for-nothing farm boy speaks very boldly," the king thought. "Vedeha must have escaped. I was left without even a rag to cover myself with on account of this man, and now my enemy has slipped through my fingers thanks to him. I will have my revenge!" Then the king gave orders that Mahosadha's hands, feet, ears, and nose be cut off, that his flesh be cut off and cooked, and that he be pegged to the ground with spikes like an animal skin.

The Great Being smiled when he heard the king's orders. "He does not know that all his family have been transported to Mithilā," Mahosadha thought. "But angry as he is, he might

shoot me with an arrow. I will tell him something that will give him pain and sorrow." So he said to the king, "If you cut off my hands, feet, ears, and nose, then Vedeha will do the same with your wife and children. Vedeha and I have arranged for him to give them any punishment you give me."

The king thought, "What is he talking about? I have stationed guards to protect my family. He is saying this because he is afraid of dying. I don't believe him."

Mahosadha knew what the king must be thinking, so he said, "Sire, look in the chamber in your palace and see for yourself. Your family has been carried away through a tunnel by Vedeha."

Mahosadha spoke with great confidence, and the king remembered his wife's voice the night before. Realizing that it all might be true, he suddenly felt very sad. But he pretended not to be sad, and sent a courtier to see about his family. When the messenger reached the palace, he and his attendants found the guards tied up with gags in their mouths and hanging from pegs. They saw the treasury had been robbed and the royal chamber was empty except for some crows that had come in the open window. The courtier returned and told the king that what Mahosadha said was true.

The king trembled with grief over losing his loved ones. And like a snake that was hit with a stick, he was very angry at the Bodhisatta.

Mahosadha looked at the expression on the king's face and thought, "The king may hurt me because his pride is hurt. I will speak to him about the beauty of Queen Nandā. When he thinks of her, he will understand that if he kills me, he will never see her again. His love for her will stop him from harming me." So Mahosadha pointed toward the way the king's family had been taken the night before and said, "This

is the way the woman with the beautiful limbs, with golden lips, and with the voice like music went." And he went on to describe her in glowing terms. When the king heard Mahosadha describe his wife, it was like he was seeing her for the first time and he felt a great longing for her. Then the Bodhisatta said, "But you desire for Nandā to die, glorious king. Now both Nandā and I will go before Yama, the lord of the dead."

Hearing this, the king looked sad, but Mahosadha said, "Don't worry, o king. Your queen, your son, and your mother will all come back to you. The only condition is that I be returned to my home."

"How did you do this?" the king asked the Bodhisatta. "Do you know a magic spell?"

Mahosadha said that his magic had been the tunnels and invited the king to see. So he gave orders that the city gate be opened and the king and the hundred and one vassal kings went in. The king and Mahosadha led the way through the tunnel, and as soon as they came out the other side, before the kings following them could come out, Mahosadha pressed the peg that caused the eighty great doors, the sixty-four small doors, the doors of the hundred and one bed chambers, and the doors on the hundreds of niches with lamps to close. The tunnel was dark as a hell and all those caught in it were terrified.

Then the Great Being took the sword he had hidden in the sand the day before. He leapt up in the air, then caught the king's arm, and waving his sword he said, "Sire, who is lord over all the kingdoms of India?"

"Please spare my life, wise sir," the king pleaded.

"Don't be afraid," Mahosadha said. "I did not lift my sword because I wanted to kill you. I did so only to show my

Mahosadha shows King Cūḷani-Brahmadatta that he is the stronger.

wisdom." Then he handed the sword to the king and said, "If you want to kill me, kill me. If you want to spare my life, then do so."

"I promised you safety, wise sir." the king replied. "Never fear."

And Mahosadha and the king became sincere friends from that moment on.

"Wise sir, since you have such wisdom, why have you not seized the kingdom you live in long ago?" the king asked Mahosadha.

"Sire," Mahosadha replied, "if I wanted to, I could conquer all of India and kill all the kings. But a wise man does not act in this way. A wise man does not kill others."

Then the king reminded Mahosadha that there were many people suffering in the closed tunnel. So he opened the tunnel and it blazed with light again. The kings and their followers all came out and approached Mahosadha. "You have saved our lives," they said. "If the door had remained shut much longer, we would have died in there."

"My lords," Mahosadha said, "this is not the first time I saved your lives." And he explained how the drinks for the victory toast had been poisoned years before, following the plan devised by Kevaṭṭa, and how he saved them by sending soldiers who created a great fuss and broke all the cups.

Afraid, the kings asked Cūḷani if this was true. "Yes," he told them, "I did that following Kevaṭṭa's advice."

All the kings were very thankful to Mahosadha and rewarded him with gifts.

Then Mahosadha said to King Cūḷani, "Sire, you were wrong to associate with such a wicked friend. Ask these kings to pardon you."

The king said, "I did what I did because of an evil man. It was my fault. Pardon me. I will never do such a thing again." All the king's forgave him, and they became true friends.

Then the king ordered that there be a celebration and it lasted for a week. He tried to persuade Mahosadha to stay with him, but Mahosadha said, "It brings disgrace to leave a patron just to make more profit. As long as Vedeha lives, I cannot live in another kingdom."

The king begged him to come back then after Vedeha's death. "If I live that long, I will do so," Mahosadha promised.

Mahosadha reassured the king about his family and said he would send back his mother, wife, and son, The king gave a dowry for his daughter and sent Mahosadha back to Mithilā. King Cūḷani and the hundred and one kings all gave Mahosadha gifts, and he went back surrounded by the spies he had sent and his army.

Senaka had posted a man to watch in case King Cūḷani tried to attack again. Seeing Mahosadha returning with a great company, he reported it to the palace. When the king looked out the window and saw the size of the company coming, he was afraid. "Mahosadha's following is small," he said. "Could this be Cūḷani coming himself?"

But Senaka said, "What you see is only cause for joy, sire. Mahosadha is safe. King Cūḷani was, no doubt, pleased with him and gave him this large company." And for once, Senaka was right.

Mahosadha was welcomed back with great rejoicing. He told the king how he saved himself and his men and about all of the gifts King Cūḷani had given him. King Vedeha praised the Bodhisatta, saying, "Truly, happiness comes by living with a wise man."

After Mahosadha's safe return was celebrated for a week, the Bodhisatta told the king he should send back King Cūḷani's mother, wife, and son. They were sent home with all honours and reported that they had been treated very well by King Vedeha. This pleased King Cūḷani, who sent a gift, and from that time on, the two kings were friends.

MAHOSADHA GOES TO THE KINGDOM OF KING CŪḶANI. Two years after being married to King Vedeha, Pañcālaṇḍī had a son. Ten years after their marriage, King Vedeha died. The Bodhisatta consecrated the young boy as king by raising the royal parasol over him, and then asked permission to go live with the boy's grandfather, King Cūḷani. Both the young king and his mother tried to dissuade Mahosadha, but he said he had to keep his promise. So, with everyone in the city lamenting his departure, he left with all his servants and went to Uttarapañcāla.

King Cūḷani greeted him with great pomp and gave him a large house.

AN ASCETIC CAUSES MAHOSADHA TO BE PRAISED. At that time, there was an woman ascetic named Bherī who was fed at the palace. The ascetic had never met Mahosadha and Mahosadha had never met the ascetic, but they knew each of each other by reputation.

Queen Nandā bore a grudge against Mahosadha and wanted to make trouble for him, so she sent five women to watch for a pretext to make trouble between him and the king. One day they saw an encounter between Mahosadha and the ascetic. The ascetic was leaving the palace after having eaten. Mahosadha was on his way to see the king, and he saluted the ascetic and stood to one side.

The ascetic decided to test Mahosadha's wisdom by asking a question through a gesture. So she opened wide one hand, meaning, "Is the king opened handed? Is he generous toward you?"

Mahosadha answered by closing his fist, which meant, "Now that I am here, fulfilling my promise, the king is tight-fisted and doesn't give me anything."

Then the ascetic rubbed her head, meaning, "If you are unhappy, why don't you shave your head and become an ascetic like me?"

In answer, Mahosadha stroked his stomach, which was his way of saying, "I have many people to support. That is why I don't become an ascetic."

After this conversation through gestures, they both went on their way. The women spying on Mahosadha saw them from a window and reported to the king that the Great Being and the ascetic were plotting to seize the kingdom. Their version of the conversation was very different. "The ascetic held out an open hand," they said, "meaning, 'Can't you crush the king as flat as the palm of your hand?' And Mahosadha held out his fist like he was holding a sword, as if to say, 'In a few days, I will cut off his head and take over.' Then the ascetic signalled, 'Cut off his head,' by rubbing her own head. But Mahosadha answered 'I will cut him in half,' by rubbing his belly."

The king decided to investigate by asking the ascetic. The next day, when Bherī came for her meal, the king asked if she had talked with Mahosadha. "We have not talked together," Bherī answered, "but since I had heard of how wise he was, I wanted to test him. So I asked questions through gestures." And Bherī described all the gestures and explained what they meant.

"Is Mahosadha a wise man?" the king asked.

"There is no one in the world who is equal to him in wisdom," the ascetic answered.

The king was so pleased, he made Mahosadha his Commander-in-Chief. He was second only to the king. It occurred to the Bodhisatta that kings sometimes give promotions when they want to kill someone. So he went to the ascetic Bherī to ask her what the king's real intentions were.

THE WATER DEMON QUESTION. The next day, as Bherī was going to the palace, she thought of the water demon question. After she had her meal, she remained seated and the king paid respects to her and sat down to one side. Then she thought, "If the king bears ill will toward the wise man, he will declare it in front of all the people here when he answers my question. That will not do. I must ask him in private." So she asked to speak to the king in private. When they were alone, she said, "I wish to ask your majesty a question."

"Please ask," the king said, "and if I know the answer, I will tell you."

Then Bherī asked the water demon question: "If you are with a group of seven people on an ocean voyage, and a demon seized the ship and demanded a human sacrifice, which person would you give?"

The king answered in all sincerity, "First I would give my mother, then my wife, next my brother, fourth my friend, fifth my brahman, sixth myself, but I would not give up Mahosadha."

Now that she knew the king's feelings about Mahosadha, she decided to ask the question again with many people present, so that the Bodhisatta's merit would be widespread. So she had all the people in the inner palace assembled, then

she asked the same question and the king gave the same answer.

"Sire," Bherī continued, "why do you say you would give your mother first? She gave birth to you, she brought you up, and she saved you when Chambhī, your step-father, wanted to kill you. What has she done wrong so that you would give her to the water demon?"

The king answered, "I admit that she has many virtues. But her faults are more numerous. She wears ornaments that should only be worn by young women. She mocks the servants. She sends messages to rival kings without asking me. That is why I would give her to the water demon."

Then Bherī asked why he would turn over his wife. "She is the first among women, of gracious speech, devoted, virtuous, attached to you like your own shadow, and she does not get angry. She is prudent, wise, she sees what is good for you. What has she done wrong so that you would give her to the water demon?"

So the king described his wife's faults: "She has been a bad influence by using her physical charms. She asks for things for her sons that it is wrong to ask for. Because of my passion for her, I give her many things and afterwards regret it. That is why I would give her to the water demon."

"But why your brother Tikhiṇamantī?" Bherī asked. "Thanks to him, the people gained great prosperity, and he brought you from abroad and set you on your throne."

And the king spoke of his brother's faults: "He thinks of how he gave the people prosperity, of how he made me king. He considers himself to be the best archer, a hero, and of wise counsel. He no longer pays deference to me as he used to do. That is why I would give him to the water demon."

Next, Bherī asked about the king's friend. "You and Prince Dhanusekha were born on the same night. He has followed you throughout your life. Your joy and pain have been his joy and pain. He has been zealous and careful in serving you night and day. What has he done wrong so that you would give him to the water demon?"

The king answered, "He has joked and made fun of me all my life. Even now, he goes too far with his jokes. And he walks in unannounced when I am talking in private with my wife. He acts shamelessly and disrespectfully at the slightest chance. That is why I would give him to the water demon."

Then Bherī said, "Your brahman is very useful to you. He is clever. He knows omens and can interpret sounds, signs, and dreams. He knows when to come and when to go. He can make predictions based on what is seen in the world, in the sky, in the stars. What has he done wrong that you would give him to the water demon?"

So the king described the brahman's faults: "He rudely stares at me, even in public, so I would give this rascal with his puckered brows to the water demon."

"Sire," Bherī concluded, "you say you would turn these five people over to the water demon and that you would sacrifice yourself, but that you would not give Mahosadha. What merit do you see in him that makes you say this?"

"Since Mahosadha came here," the king said, "I have not seen him do anything wrong, not even the most insignificant wrong action. If I die before he does, he will make my sons and my grandsons happy. He knows all things, past and future. This man, free of immorality, I could not give to the water demon."

Bherī thought, "The wise man's merits should be made more public still. I will broadcast them to the whole city, like

perfumed oil spreading over the sea." So she took the king to the palace courtyard, and gathering the people from all over the city, she asked the water-demon question again and the king answered as before.

Bherī told the people to take notice of how the king would sacrifice those nearest and dearest to him and would give his own life in order to protect the wise man. "This is the marvellous power of wisdom," she said. "It makes for good in this world and for happiness in the next."

THE IDENTIFICATION OF THE PEOPLE IN THE PAST LIFE. As always when he told the story of one of his past lives, the Buddha identified the people associated with him in that past life who were with him when he became the Buddha. He himself, of course, was the wise man Mahosadha. His parents and wife were the same in the past life and in his final life. Queen Udumbarā was the Buddha's step-mother, Mahā-Pajāpatī Gotamī.

Several of the leading disciples were associated with him when he was Mahosadha: Sāriputta was King Cūḷanī. Ānanda was the parrot. Kassapa was the wise man Senaka. King Vedeha became the bhikkhu Kāḷudāyī, who carried the message of the Buddha's father that he wished for the Buddha to come see him. The woman ascetic Bherī became one of the two leading women disciples, the bhikkhunī Uppalavaṇṇā, who was foremost among the women in the supernormal powers. Princess Pañcālacaṇḍī became the bhikkhunī Sundarī, who was foremost among the bhikkhunīs in meditation.

Several other people in the Jātaka became followers of the Buddha: Kāvinda became the young brahman Ambaṭṭha, Pukkusa became Poṭṭhapāda, and Devinda became Pilotika. The mynah bird became Mallikā, the chief queen of Pasenadi.

Not everyone benefited to the full from being associated with the Bodhisatta, however. Mahosadha's chief rival, Kevaṭṭa, was to become his cousin Devadatta, who caused a schism in the Saṅgha. The mother of King Cūḷanī became the bhikkhunī Thullanandā, who was well-versed in the Buddha's Teachings, but who unfortunately was also very greedy.

So, this story of one of the Buddha's past lives has many people who serve as examples to be followed and other people who show us the kinds of mistakes we should avoid.

A Note About This Version of the Birth Story of the Tunnel

Although this retelling of the Birth Story of the Tunnel is not a straight translation from the Pāḷi, we have made several changes in the version as translated by E.B. Cowell and W.H.D. Rouse (*The Jātaka or Stories of the Buddha's Former Births*, VI, pp. 156-246, first published by The Cambridge University Press in 1895, and reprinted several times since by The Pali Text Society). We have especially gone over the passages in verse. The edition in Myanmar by the Chaṭṭha-saṅgāyana (1959, pp. 263-332) was consulted. This edition was especially important for the identifications at the end of the story. We have included, however, some additional identifications in the English edition (edited by V. Fausbøll, *The Jātaka*, VI, pp. 329-478).