



Gautama

THE STORY OF LORD BUDDHA

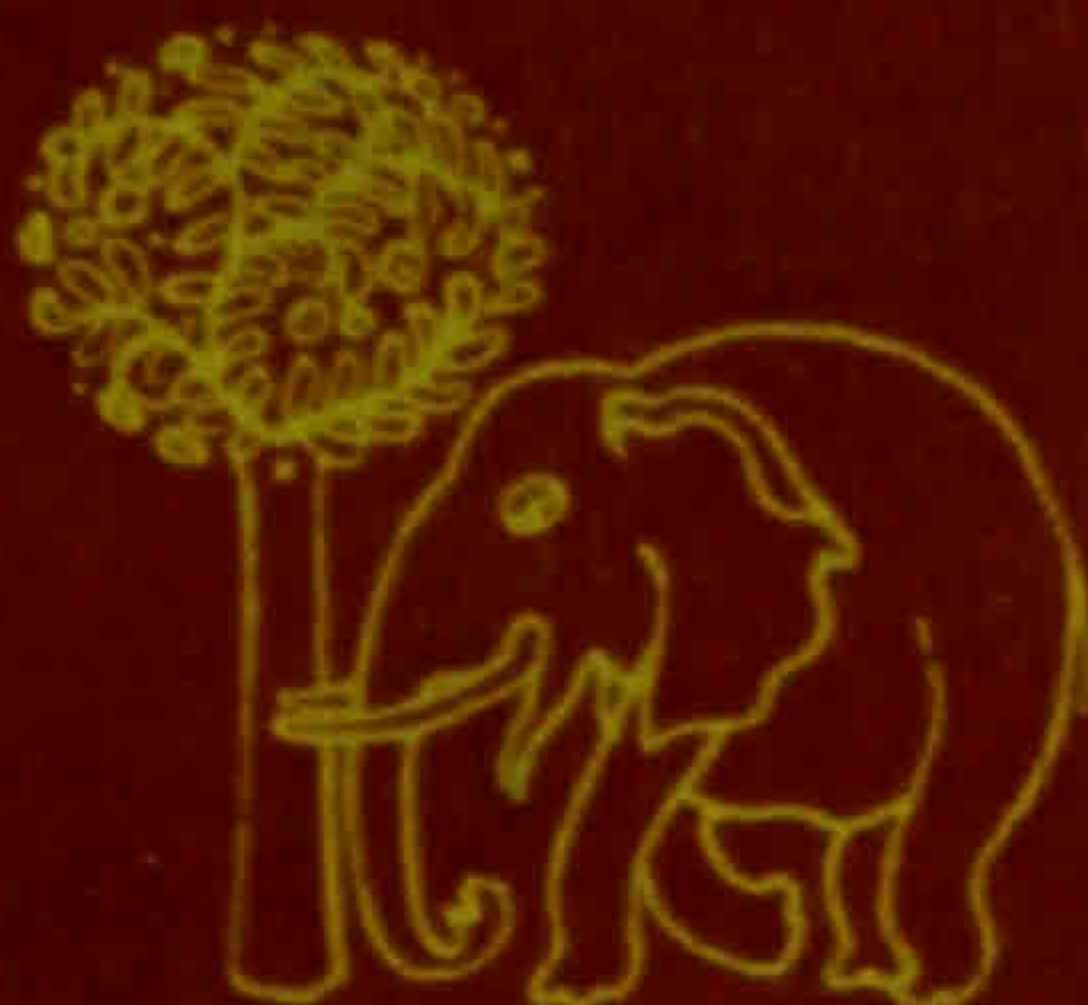
AS TOLD BY

SHAKUNTALA MASANI

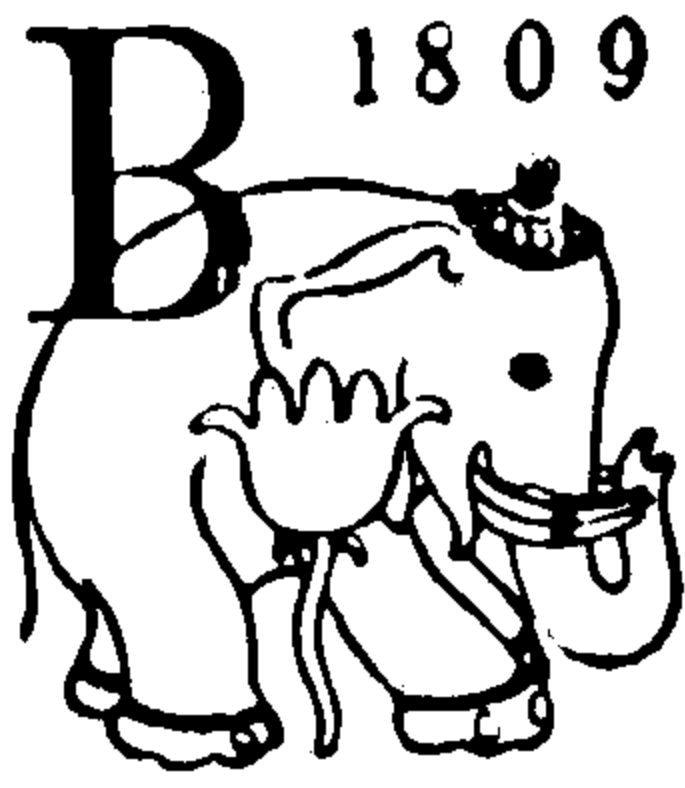


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NENA VON LEYDEN



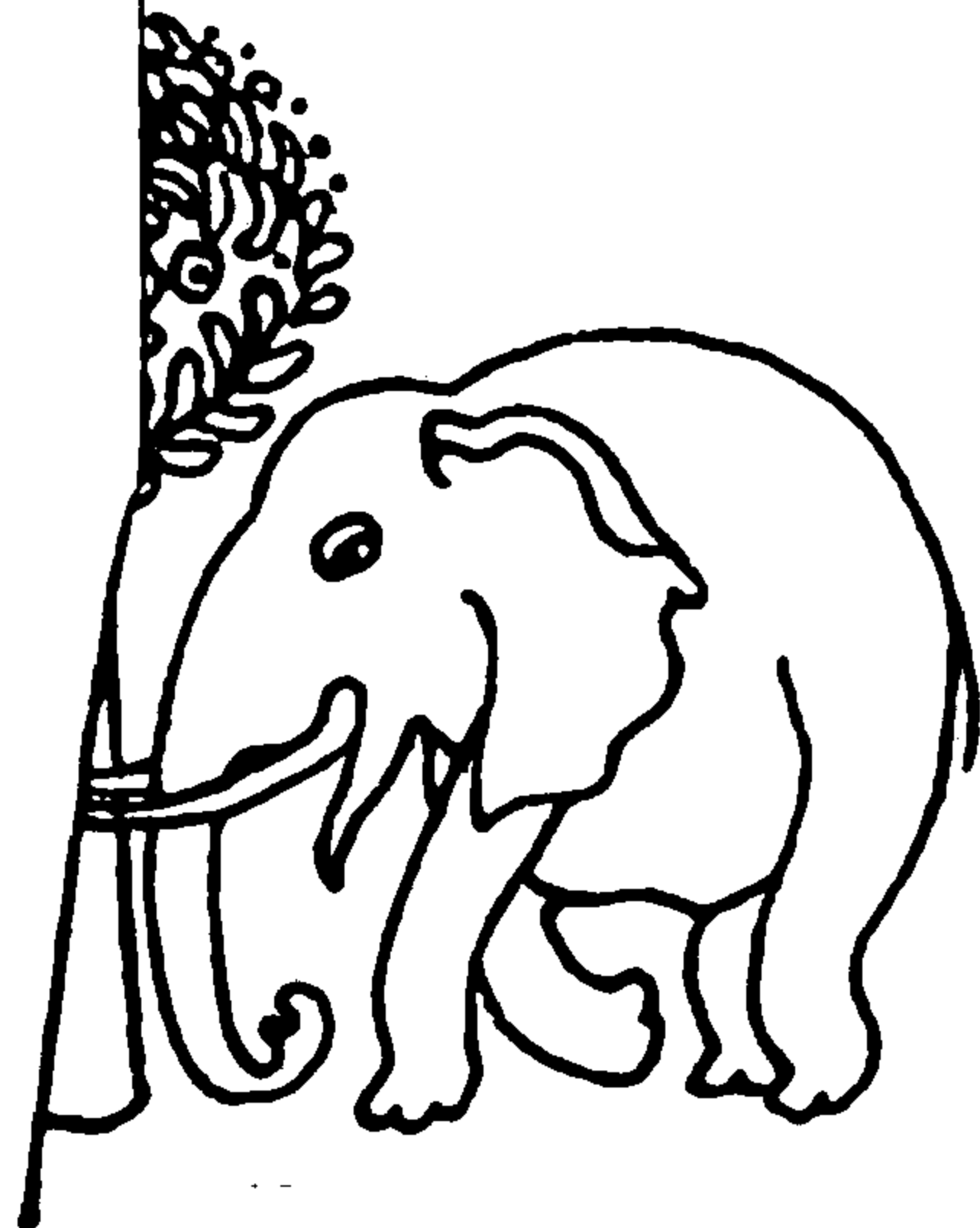
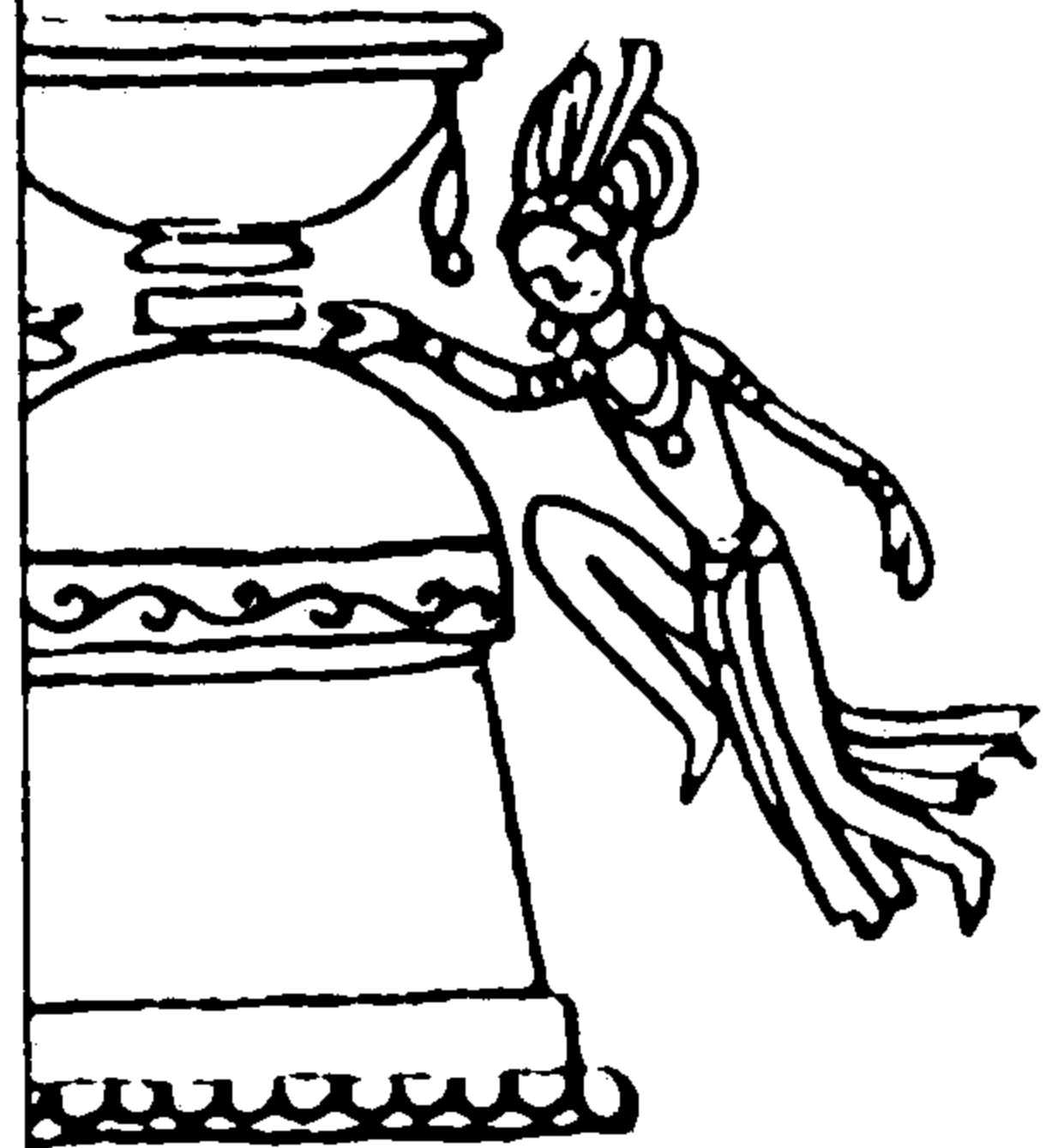
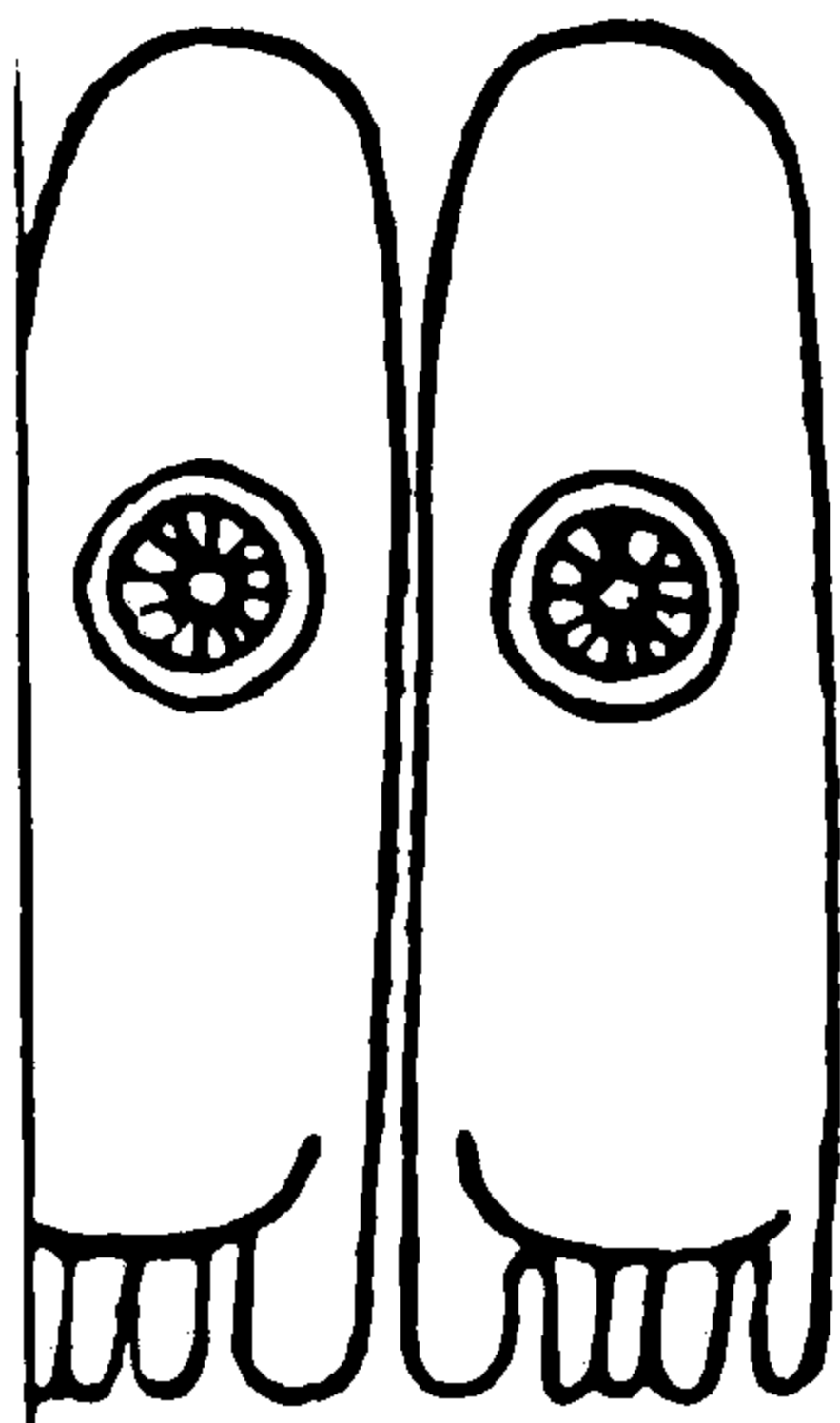
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Two thousand and five hundred years ago was born a Prince who renounced his throne and the world and preached the Divine Law. His name and His teachings still endure.

This is His story as told by Shakuntala Masani who is well-known as a narrator of the lives of illustrious men.

The decorative illustrations are by Nena von Leyden.



Gautama

to
My father



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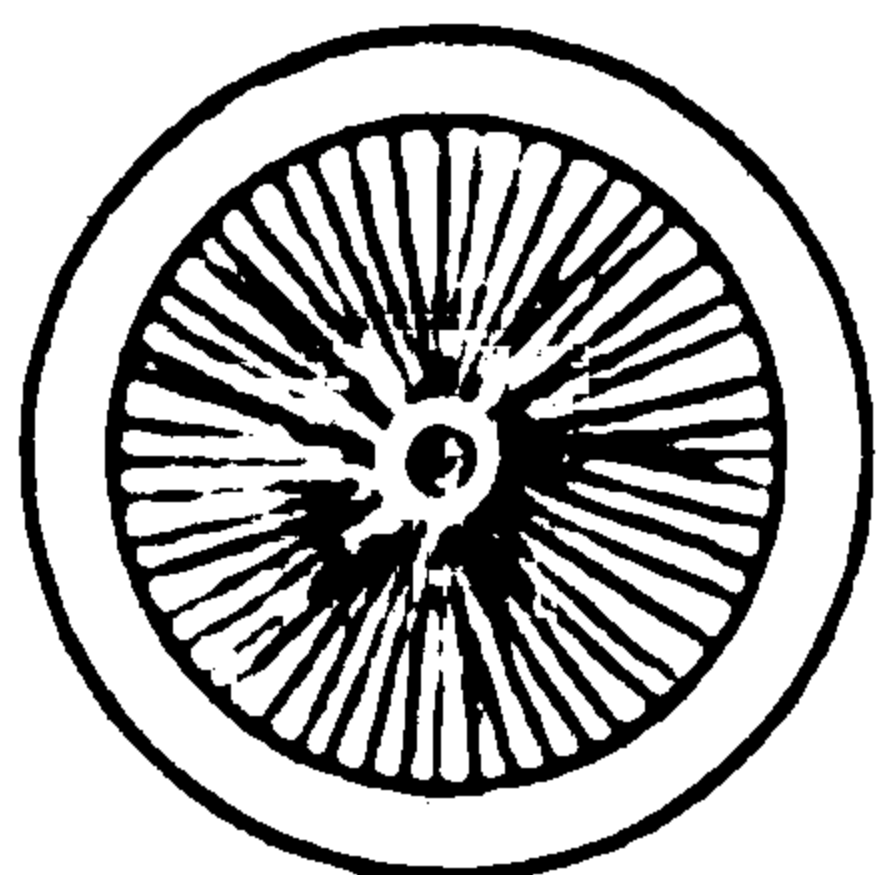
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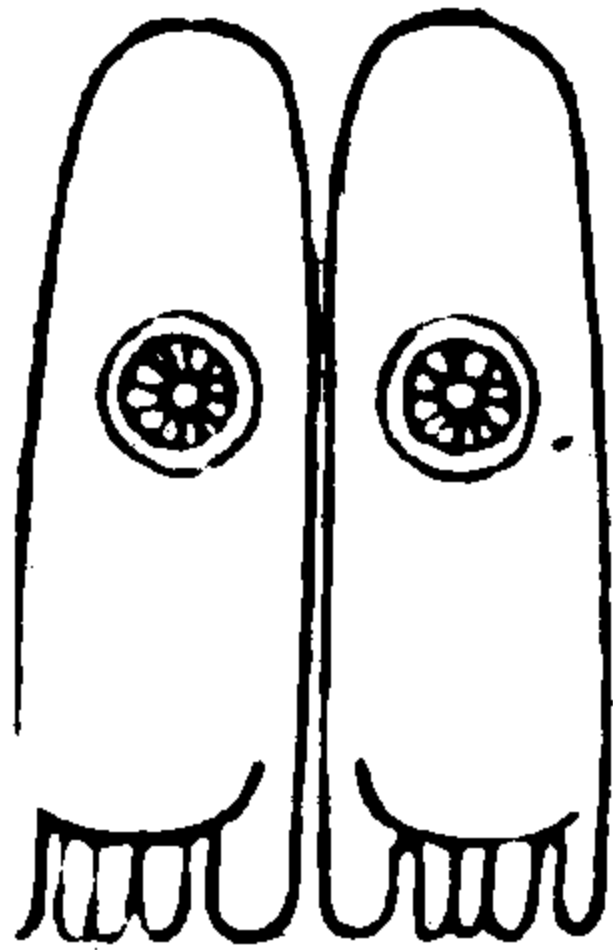
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prefixed to each chapter.

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in GAUTAMA



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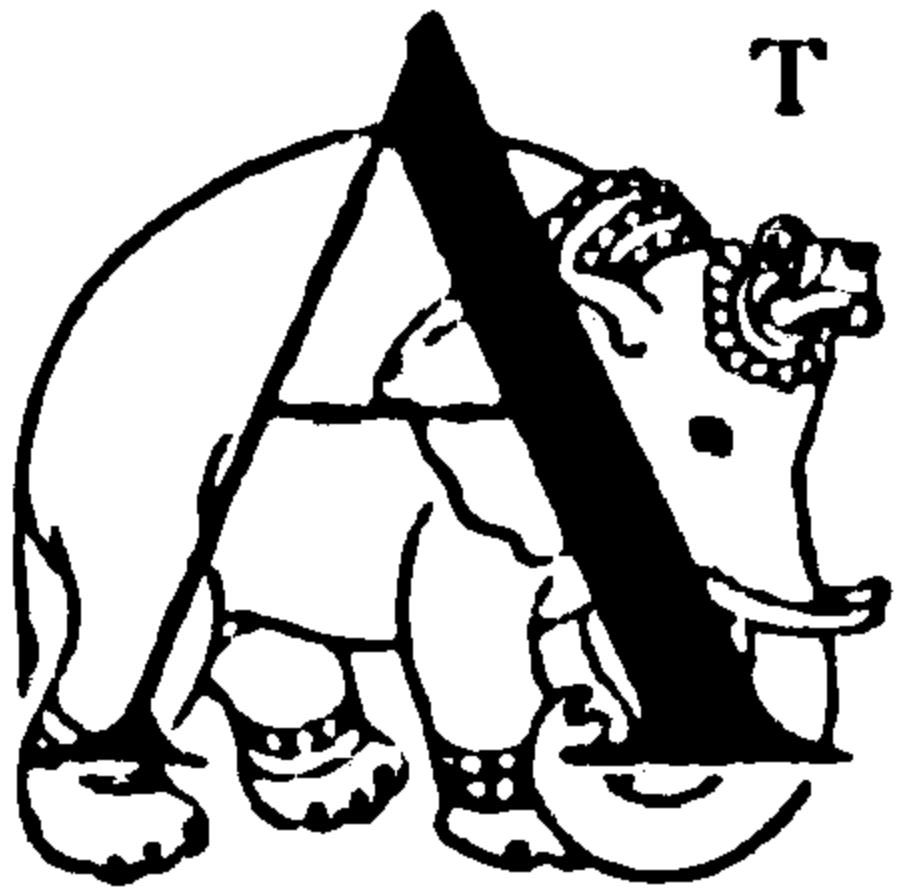
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*I will go down among the Sakyas
Under the southward snows of Himalaya.
Where pious people live and a just King.*



AT THE FOOT OF THE SNOW-CAPPED peaks of the lofty Himalayas, two thousand five hundred years ago, there ruled a wise and good King. His name was Siddhodana, and he belonged to the clan of the Sakyas—a people known for their bravery and valour.

King Siddhodana was indeed the greatest of the Sakya kings. His people were prosperous and happy, and under his rule they enjoyed every freedom. The capital of his kingdom, Kapilavastu, stood on the banks of the river Rohini. It was a resplendent city, with colourful parks and gardens, and buildings of rich splendour. The domains of King Siddhodana extended far and wide. The holy city of Banaras to the west, lay within his kingdom and to the north, its frontiers went as far up as the mountains of Nepal. To the south-east of its borders lay the powerful kingdom of Magadha, and at that time, these two kingdoms vied with each other to see which would rule supreme in India.

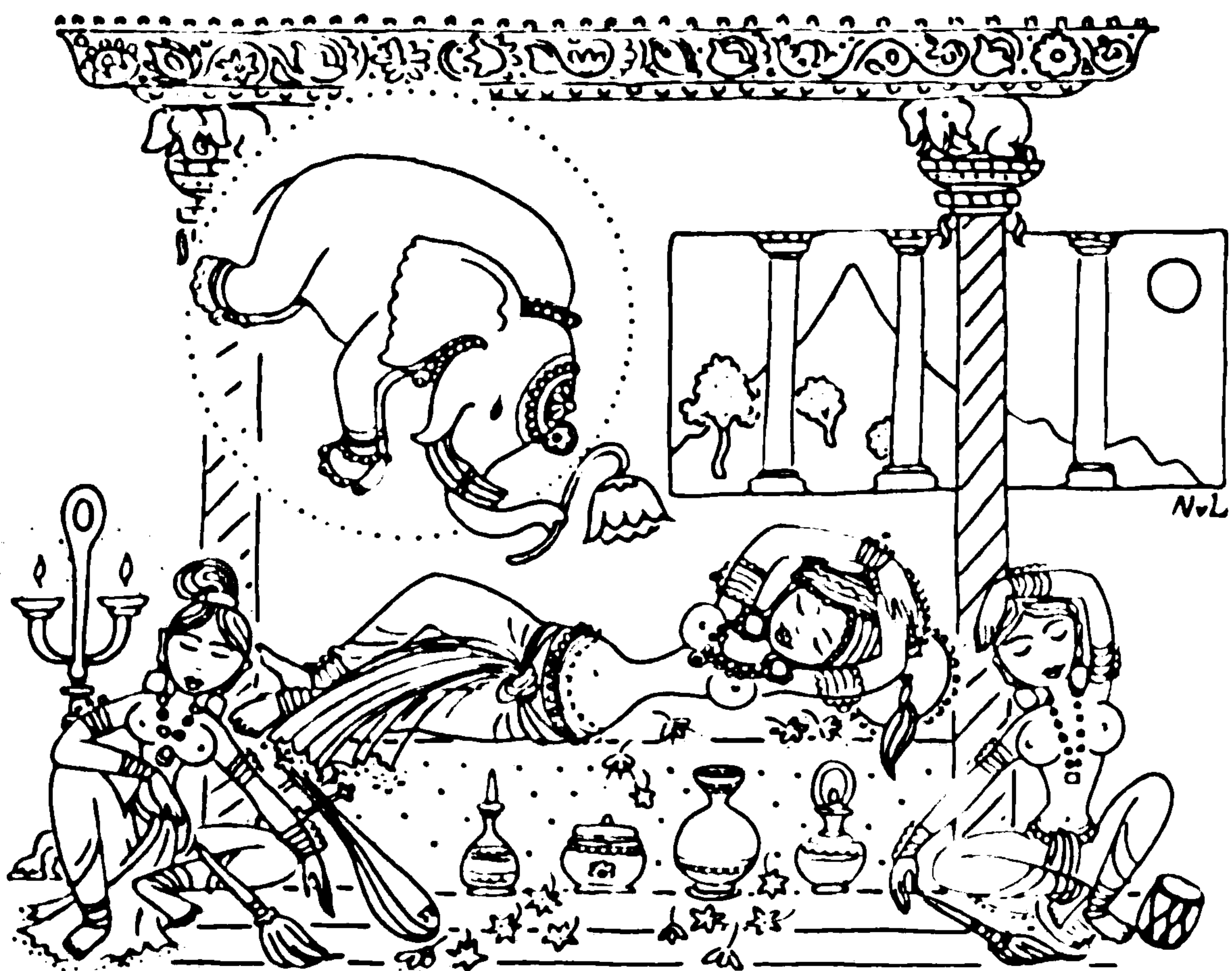
The greatness of King Siddhodana's reign lay not only in the material prosperity of his people, but

also in the field of culture, religion, and learning. The King invited to his capital masters and teachers from all over India, and right in the heart of his beautiful city, he built a royal hall where these men-of-learning could hold discussions.

King Suddhodana had two queens—the sisters, Maya and Prajapati—whom he loved dearly, especially the eldest, Maya. The Maharani Maya had everything that would endear her to her King and his people. She was as beautiful as a nymph from heaven, and her external beauty was surpassed only by the loveliness and purity of her character. She won the hearts of all with her goodness and sweetness.

There was but one sorrow that cast its shadow over the lives of this noble family. Maharajah Suddhodana had no child, and his heart longed for a son and heir. The soothsayers had prophesied that the King would have a son whose glory would spread to the four corners of the world, and who would be the King of Kings, the ‘Saviour of the World’. But this prophecy had not yet come true and there was sorrow and longing in the heart of the King.

One night when the moon was high up in the sky and the gentle breezes laden with the scent of night blossoms, Queen Maya, after bathing in sweet perfumes, and dressed richly in fine clothes, lay down on her royal bed and slept. As the night advanced, the Maharani had a dream. She saw four



The Dream

Devas lift her couch and carry it to the summit of a high mountain. They placed the couch under the rich foliage of an enormous tree growing on a rock of magnificent colours. Four Devis, the wives of the Devas, then appeared and gently led Maya to a silvery, mountain-lake, where they bathed her in its pure waters, thus washing away all mortal taint. They clothed her in divine robes and carried her to a palace built on the peak of a mountain of silver. Here they laid her on a divine couch strewn with flowers from heaven, and left her to rest. Just opposite the silver mountain on which Maya lay,

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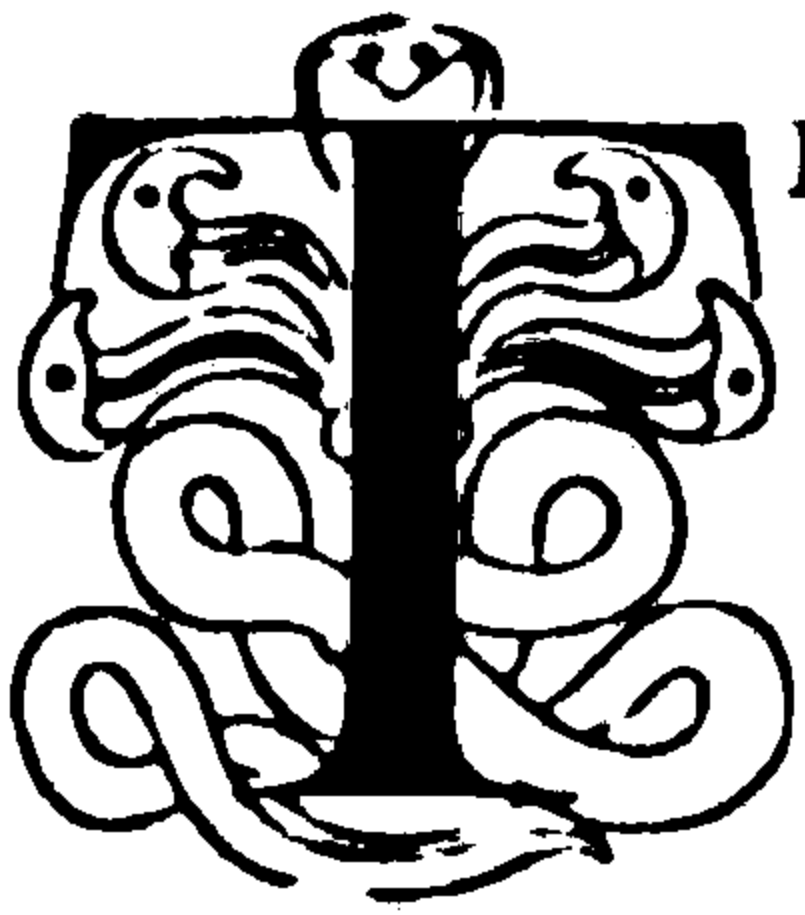
there stood a mountain of bright gold where a snow-white elephant was wandering. The elephant descended the mountain of gold and came up the silver mountain. In his trunk he carried a white lotus, and as he approached, he trumpeted, and his voice resounded through the air. He came near Maya's couch and walked round three times and then striking her on her right side dissolved into a vapour and entered her womb.

The next morning the Maharani related her dream to the Maharajah. The dream-readers were immediately sent for to explain the dream.

'O King,' they said, 'the dream is auspicious. A son who shall be the glory of this world will soon be born to you. Two ways will lie before the child. If he does not behold a sick man, an old man, a dead man, and a monk who has renounced the world, he will live to rule as the greatest mortal King, full of power and glory. But if these four signs are beheld by him, greater still will be his kingdom, but not of this world for he will become, a Buddha, the Enlightened One.'

'We are a clan of noble warriors,' replied the King confidently, 'and no son of mine—no Sakya prince can be a monk. I shall do everything within my power to prevent my child seeing these four signs and he shall live to be a great and valorous King, bringing glory to his people and his race.'

Thus came he to be born among men.



THE DREAM OF MAYA WAS TRULY interpreted, but how was it that these things would come to pass, and that the Prince of the Sakyas would become a Buddha, the knower-of-all-things?

It is believed that the universe is divided into three spheres. In its innermost depths are the regions of hell, where the souls of men suffer torments to atone for their wicked deeds on earth. In the middle is the world, where the soul enters a body which is born and which dies. This world is a testing ground and place of trial for the soul. According to the manner in which a man lives his life on earth, his soul goes to heaven or hell, and then later is born again. Above the world are the heavens—the abodes of bliss, where the divine spirits or Devas live. They are men who did good and virtuous deeds during their life on earth and are enjoying the fruits of their actions in heaven. But after they have exhausted the store of happiness which they had accumulated through their virtuous deeds, they will be reborn on earth for further trials and tests, and will suffer once again the pangs and sorrows of birth, disease, old age and death.

In the heavenly world, too, there are different spheres of divinity; the highest being the dwelling-places of those great souls who after many, many, births and rebirths on earth, have attained high perfection, and would soon realize everlasting peace—the state of Nirvana or perpetual bliss.

Next to this high sphere dwell the four Devas who are the guardian spirits of the world, and below them, spirits of lesser divinity. The ethereal form of the heavenly spirits makes it possible for them to move with ease from their world to ours, and thus it is that the Devas keep a watch over the actions of men and take an active interest in their lives.

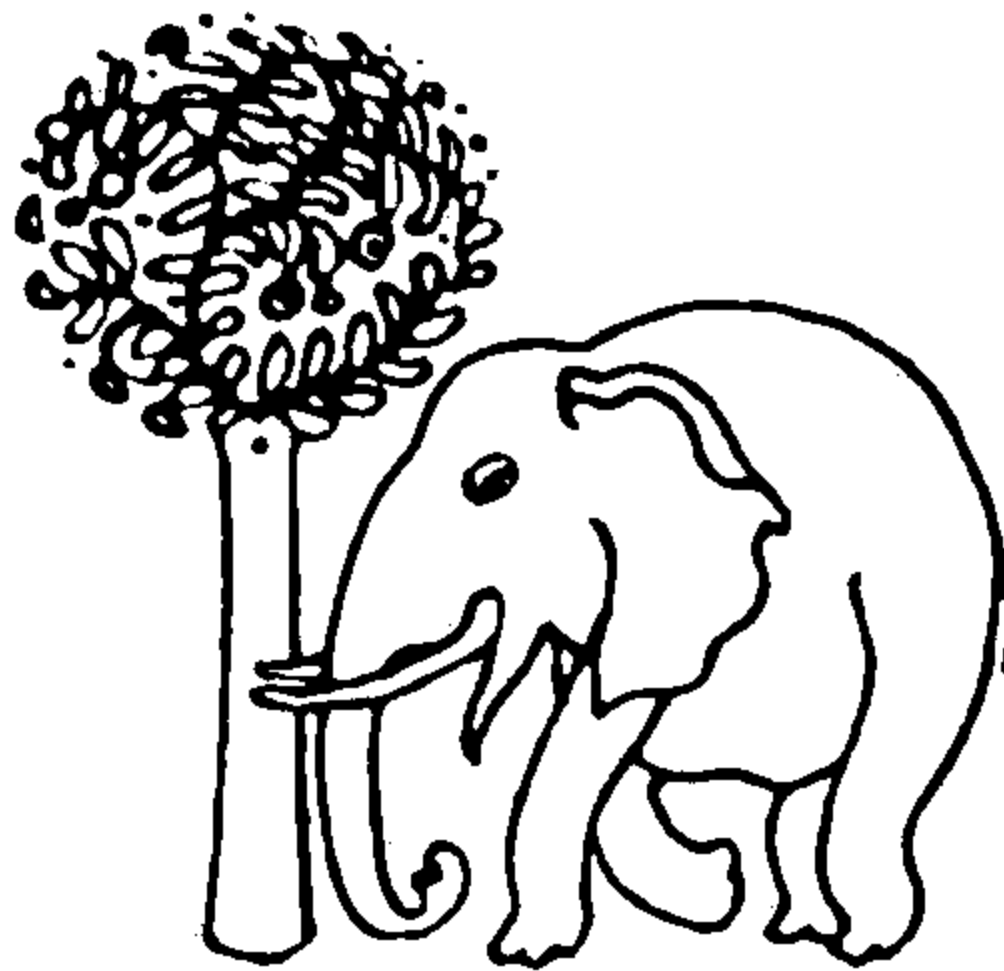
Now, it is said that once in an age, a spirit from the very highest heavens is born into the world and during that life-time attains supreme knowledge. Blessed are those who live at that time and who come into contact with such a great soul for by listening and being with him, their own salvation is hastened.

And so it was with the spirit who came to be born of Queen Maya. Dwelling in the highest sphere as the Bodhisatva or the Buddha-to-be, he turned his gaze downward to the world, for the time had come for him to return to it. In his previous life, the Bodhisatva was Prince Visvantra, born of a noble family. He was known far and wide for his generosity and large-heartedness. So great was his

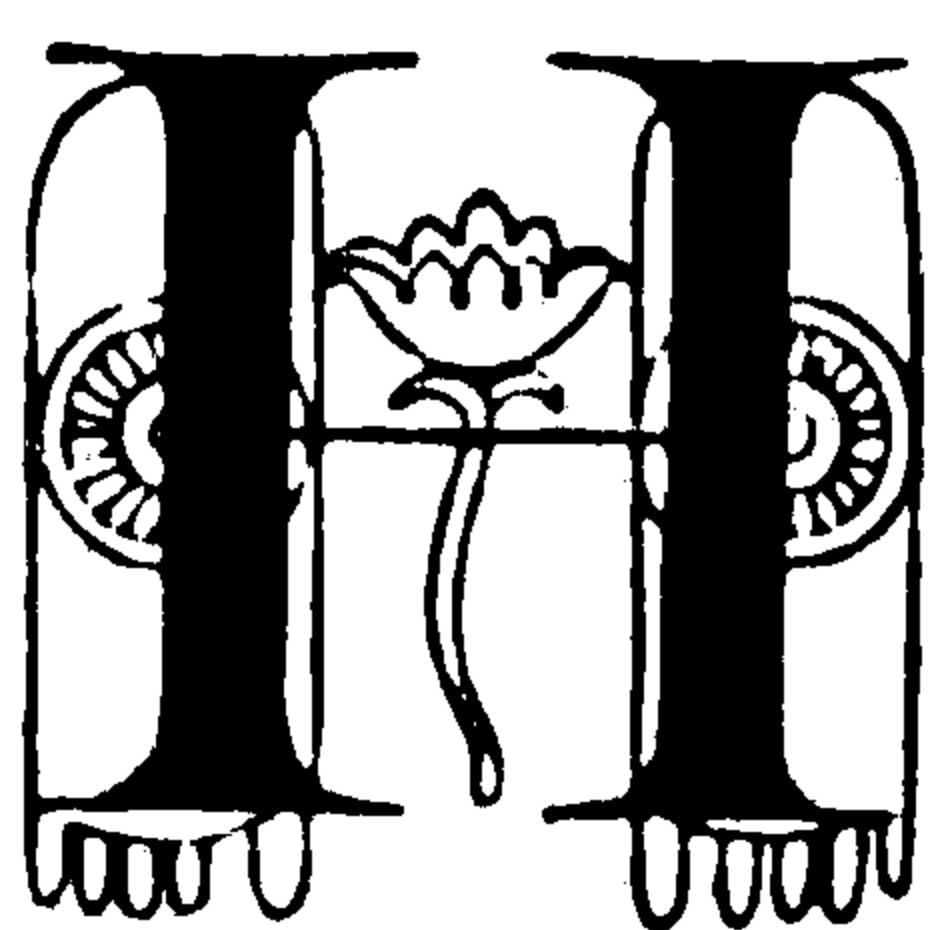
virtue that he once gave away as a gift a white elephant which had the power of making rain. To test him the gods sent a period of droughts, and hard times followed for his people. The Prince was banished to the desert as a punishment for his rash generosity. The Princess Madri, his wife, insisted on accompanying her husband, and so did his little son Jalin and his daughter Krishnajina. Together they travelled to the desert land suffering many hardships and trials on the way. The gods wished to test the Prince still further—disguising themselves as Brahmins they came to him one by one as he journeyed and asked him for alms. First Visvantra gave to these Brahmins his chariot, his clothes, his wife's jewels; then his children and last of all even his wife. The gods now saw the great virtue of this noble Prince and returned him his children and his wife. The King, his father, realizing how much he had wronged his son, begged him to come back home and his people welcomed him back with great joy.

After his death Prince Visvantra went to the highest heaven and there dwelt enjoying ethereal joys. In the midst of the happiness of heaven, the Bodhisatva longed for Nirvana and perpetual bliss for the joys of heaven were not sufficient for they too were temporary. He resolved that he would return once again to the world and that in this lifetime he would become the Buddha and the mystery

of life would be explained to him. When the Devas heard of his intention, there was rejoicing and celebration. Looking down from his seat in heaven, the Bodhisatva selected the monarch of the Sakya clan, the greatest and noblest of all the kings, the King Suddhodana, as his father; and as his mother, the Queen Maya, whose virtue and purity were unsurpassed. Having selected the place of his birth, he entered the womb of Maya as she lay asleep that lovely night of the full moon.



*. . . And the world's heart throbbed, and a wind blew
With unknown freshness over lands and seas.*



HAPPY DAYS WENT BY FOR THE Maharajah Suddhodana and his Queen. Never had Nature seemed so kind nor the earth more beautiful. There was even more abundance and prosperity in the kingdom, and the people all rejoiced at these auspicious signs.

Spring came and the air was filled with the song of birds. In the green woods and mossy glades young blossoms burst forth in a riot of colours. How gay was spring that year!

Queen Maya went to King Suddhodana. She said: 'My time has almost come, my Lord! Give me permission now to go to my father's house as is the custom.'

King Suddhodana replied that he would immediately give orders to make arrangements for his Queen to travel in comfort and in luxury. Roads were levelled out, and men went ahead to see that no unpleasant or ugly sight should appear before the Queen on her journey.

When all preparations were made, the Maharani bade King Suddhodana good-bye, and taking her sister Prajapati with her, stepped into a golden



The Birth and the Seven Steps

palanquin. She had not gone very far when they passed the Lumini gardens, where under the shade of sal trees were little brooks and winding streams. Queen Maya, when she saw this charming grove, alighted from her palanquin and wandered down its cool, shady paths enjoying the beauty of the flowers and the song of the birds. She came to a sal tree laden with blossoms and as she stretched out her hand to hold a bough, the branch bent down with reverence and at that moment the Maharani gave birth to her son, without agony or pain.

The four Devas, the guardians of the world, descended from heaven, and received the child from his mother on a golden net and then handed him over to men. The sal tree threw down its blossoms making a carpet of pure white for the Prince, and the air was filled with divine melodies. In homage to the child, heavenly spirits alighted among men on earth. To the astonishment of all, the newly-born babe leapt from the hands of those who held him and stood firm on his feet. Slowly he turned in all four directions and the entire universe was revealed to him and all the worlds of men and gods and of evil spirits were visible to his gaze. And having seen all beings and himself as the greatest of all, he took seven steps into the air and exclaimed: 'This is my last birth'.

While he stood thus the Devas attended on him. One held a white umbrella over his head and

others carried the royal insignias. Throughout the world there was joy and happiness. At that moment the sick and the ailing were healed and no person felt any pain or sorrow whatsoever.

King Suddhodana heard of the birth of his son and hastened to the Lumini groves. He embraced his Queen and taking the child in his arms was amazed to see the extraordinary beauty of his face. A golden light surrounded his body and there was the sweet scent of flowers about his presence.

The Maharajah escorted his Queen and son back to the palace and throughout the kingdom there was rejoicing and celebration at the birth of the little Prince. The child was named Siddhartha, which means—one who has fulfilled his purpose.

There came to Kapilavastu, to see the child, a renowned ascetic whose name was Asita. The Maharajah received the sage with reverence and sent for the babe. Maharani Maya entered carrying the Prince in her arms, and as she bent down to lay him at the feet of the master, Asita stopped her, saying, 'He is greater than I and it is I who must do him homage'. As the great sage looked on the face of the babe, tears trickled down his wrinkled cheeks. The Maharajah, when he saw the ascetic weep, became alarmed and falling at Asita's feet implored: 'O holy yogi, tell me why you are weeping. Is it because my child is doomed? Am I going to lose my treasure? If any misfortune

awaits him, I beg of you, tell me quick.'

The yogi seeing the Maharajah so troubled replied: 'Fear not, O King. I weep, not because of any ill-omen for the child for he is indeed blessed, but for myself—that I shall die before he becomes the Buddha and preaches the Divine Law.' Saying this with his head bowed in grief, the yogi left the palace still weeping, and all who saw him marvelled at what they had seen and heard. The Maharajah and Maharani trembled with fear at the strange behaviour of the yogi and at the thought of the great future that awaited their child.



*And happy hours he knew, for life was rich,
With youthful blood at quickest; yet still came
The shadows of his meditation back . . .*



NOW, SLOWLY BUT SURELY, THE strength of Queen Maya was fast failing, and day by day she grew weaker. Prajapati watched anxiously over her beloved sister, and never left her side for a moment. One day as Queen Maya lay on her couch with the babe in her arms, she turned to Prajapati and said in a soft voice: 'Take my son as your own, dear sister, for I shall soon breathe my last. Grieve not for me. My place is prepared in heaven for on the seventh day I must die as this has always been so with the mothers of the Buddhas.' That night, the Queen passed away in her sleep, and her sister Prajapati took the child and nursed him as if he were her son.

Time passed, bringing with it happiness and peace in even greater measure for the people of the kingdom. The day of the feast of the ploughing-season came, and joyously the farmers, dressed in their gayest clothes, went to the palace to fetch their King and take him into the country. Out in the fields stood a thousand ploughs decorated with silver ornaments, and beside them a thousand pairs of

bullocks ready to draw the ploughs. For the King there was a plough of gold and gladly did he set his hand to it and furrowed deep into the soil. The nobles then took up a plough each and followed behind the King, and it was indeed a happy and a goodly sight to watch the ploughing of the fields, and the silver and gold shining in the brilliant sun. The baby Prince was also taken to this festival and the nurses who attended on him put his cot with tender care under the shade of a sal tree. In the excitement of the ploughing of the fields which the nurses went to watch, they forgot the little Prince. Seeing nobody around him, Siddhartha immediately got up, and sitting cross-legged in his cot went into a trance. Some time passed and the nurses hurried back to the Prince, anxious and worried about him for they had only just noticed that the sun had gone high up in the skies and the shadows of all the trees had changed their position. Great was their surprise when they saw the Prince sitting up in his cot which was still in the shade, for the shadow of the sal tree had not moved at all. They ran and told the King about this and King Suddhodana hurried to the Prince's cradle and when he saw this miracle he knelt down and saluted his own son.

Siddhartha grew older and King Suddhodana decided that it was now time to start his education. He consulted his ministers and it was the opinion

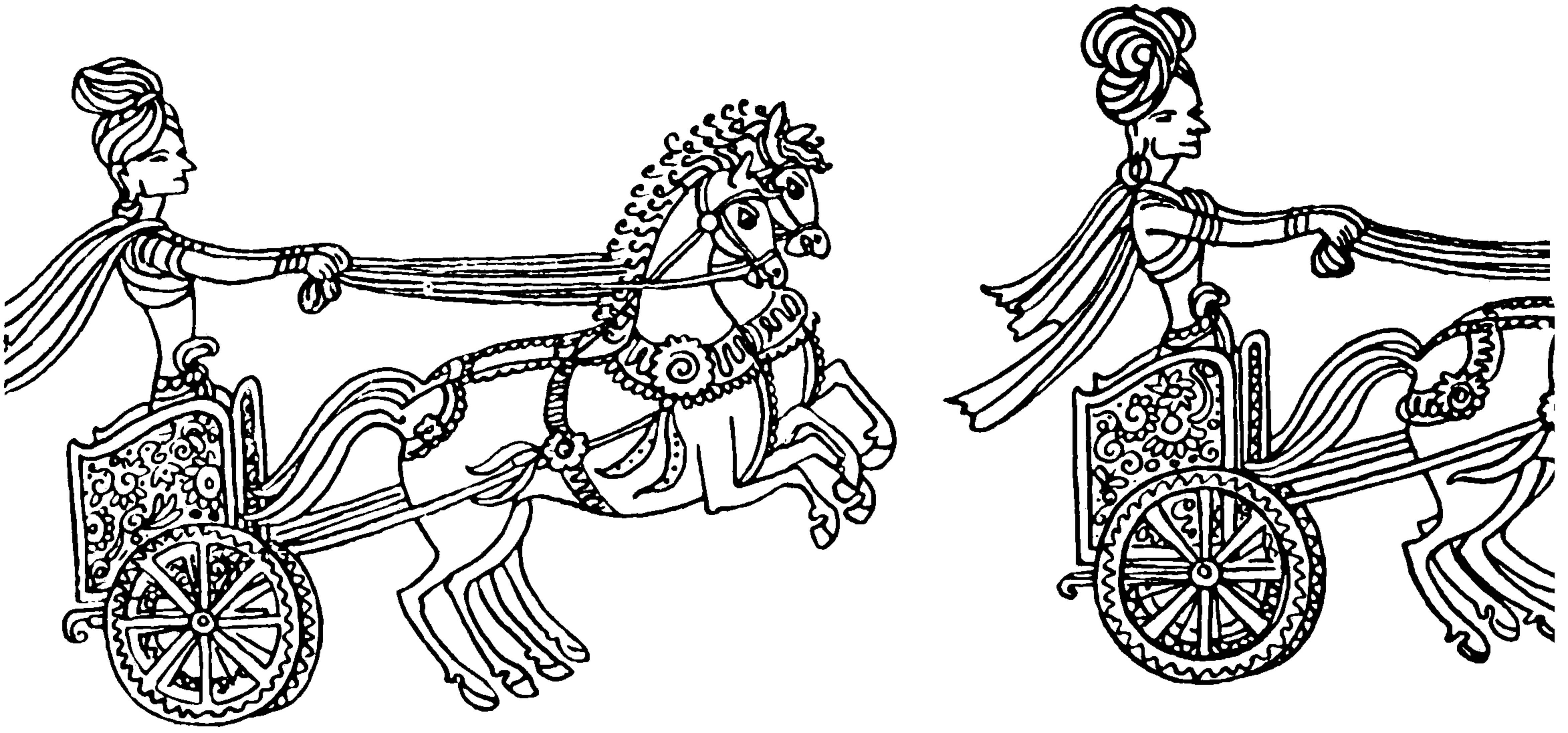
of all that the great sage Vishwamitra, the teacher of teachers, should instruct the young Prince in the sciences. With humility, and with great reverence, King Suddhodana requested the learned master to do this and Vishwamitra agreed. The Prince sat at the feet of the sage with his jewelled slate and writing-stick in his hand, and as the lesson commenced Vishwamitra soon found that there was nothing that he could teach the child, for in the scriptures, in mathematics, in history, in geography, and astronomy, and in all other arts, the Prince knew more than the great master himself. Amazed at this, the sage knelt down at the feet of the Prince and saluting him, said: ‘ You—not I—are the Guru, sweet Prince. You have no need of books and teachers, for you know all. Great is your knowledge and greater still your humility and meekness.’

Prince Siddhartha grew into manhood, surrounded with all that was beautiful and good. The Maharajah had not forgotten the words of the soothsayers, and he was determined that Siddhartha should only know of the joys and pleasures of life, and not its sorrows. He chose as companions for his son, young and beautiful men and women, and he built magnificent palaces and pleasure-houses where the Prince could live with his friends. There was a palace for the summer made of cool marble, with rivulets and mountain-streams meandering through its rooms. It had strangely-devised windows

and balconies, which caught the cool breezes from the mountains. And when the summer heat was great this palace remained fresh and cool. And for the winter, there was another palace with cedar-panelling and thickly-carpeted with rich rugs. The sunlight flooded its rooms bringing with it a warmth and glow. Surrounding these palaces were spacious gardens with unique trees and flowers, stretching for miles and miles, where the young Prince could roam with his companions and practise all the sports in which princes delight. The air would resound with music, gaiety and the laughter of young people.

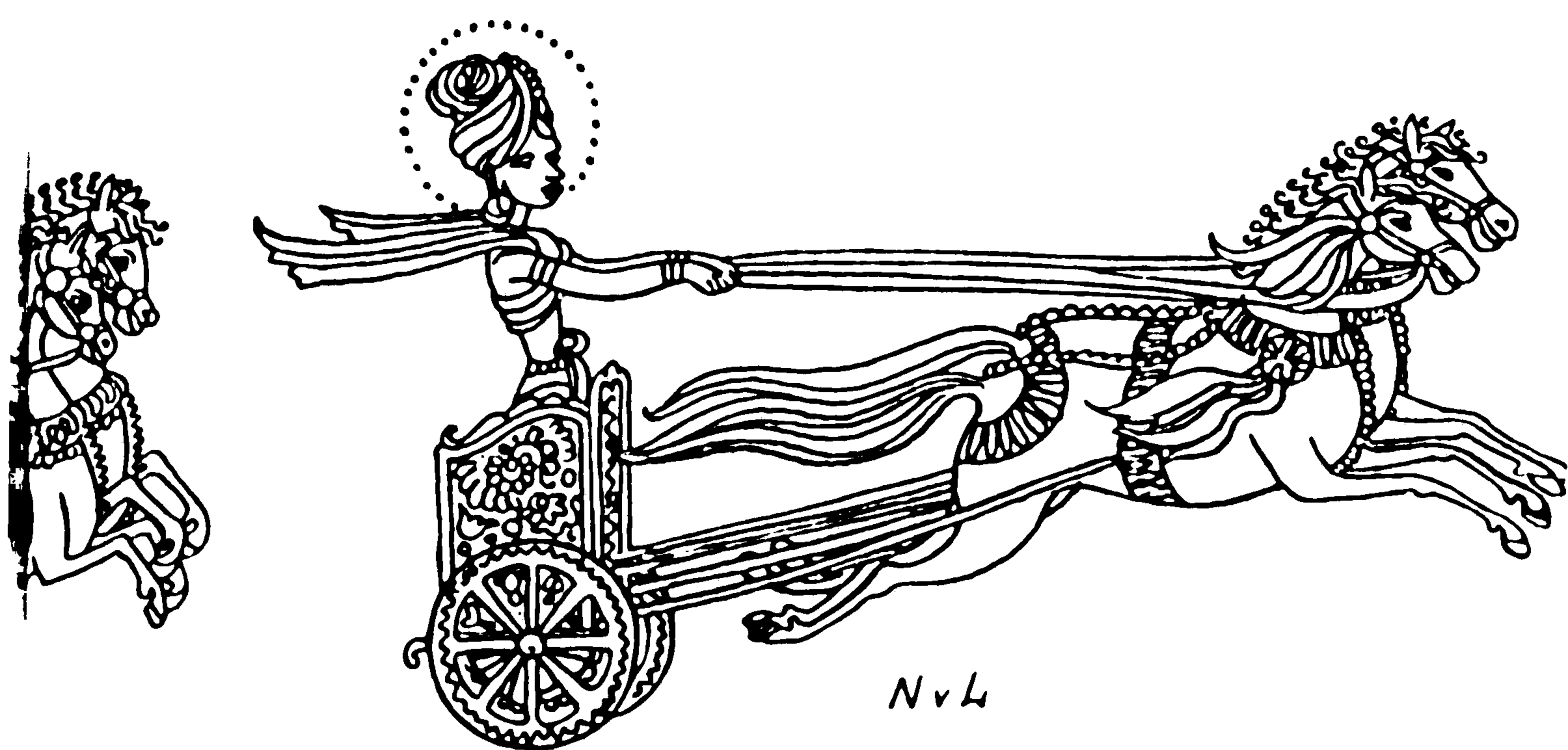
Thus did Prince Siddhartha live in a world of his own, which shut out all that was ugly and repulsive. Once only did he see suffering and that too not long-lived. When Devadatta, his cousin, shot a swan with his bow and arrow, Siddhartha found that wounded bird, and his heart filled with compassion. He nursed it tenderly and when its wounds had healed, he set it free and saw it joyfully rejoin its companions. But of deeper pain he had no knowledge, nor of old age and death and the sadness of life. For life to him was endless in its pleasures of youth and beauty.

But suddenly in the midst of merry-making, feasting and revelry, the Prince would break away from his companions, and wander down the lonely garden paths lost in deep thought. Something



troubled his soul but what it was he knew not. King Suddhodana watched him with an anxious gaze, and wondered what it was that absorbed his son and made him shun the company of friends and beautiful women. One day the King sent for his chief minister and said: 'I have filled Siddhartha's life with every kind of pleasure and yet he seems not satisfied. O Minister, there is an aloofness and detachment about him which worries me, for in the midst of revelry and fun his thoughts seem not to be there but somewhere far away. I ask you to guide me as to what else can be done to hold our Prince.'

'My lord,' replied the Minister, 'Fear not. Let us find a befitting bride for him, and when he has a family of his own we shall have bound him to this world with fetters of steel.'



The Race

The King smiled at the wisdom of his Minister and agreed to look immediately for a bride for Siddhartha.

A day was fixed when all the loveliest maidens of the kingdom were invited to the palace. Prince Siddhartha sat on a throne at the far end of a stately hall, and one by one the damsels came up to him and accepted from him the gift of a jewel. So great was the beauty of the Prince, so divine the light that shone from his face that, dazzled by it, no maid could look at him and each one lowered her gaze as she approached the throne. The last to come was the loveliest of all, the lily-like Yashodhara, daughter of a brave warrior. She alone held her head high and with her large blue-black eyes looked on the face of the Prince. Siddhartha had given away all the jewels and there was none

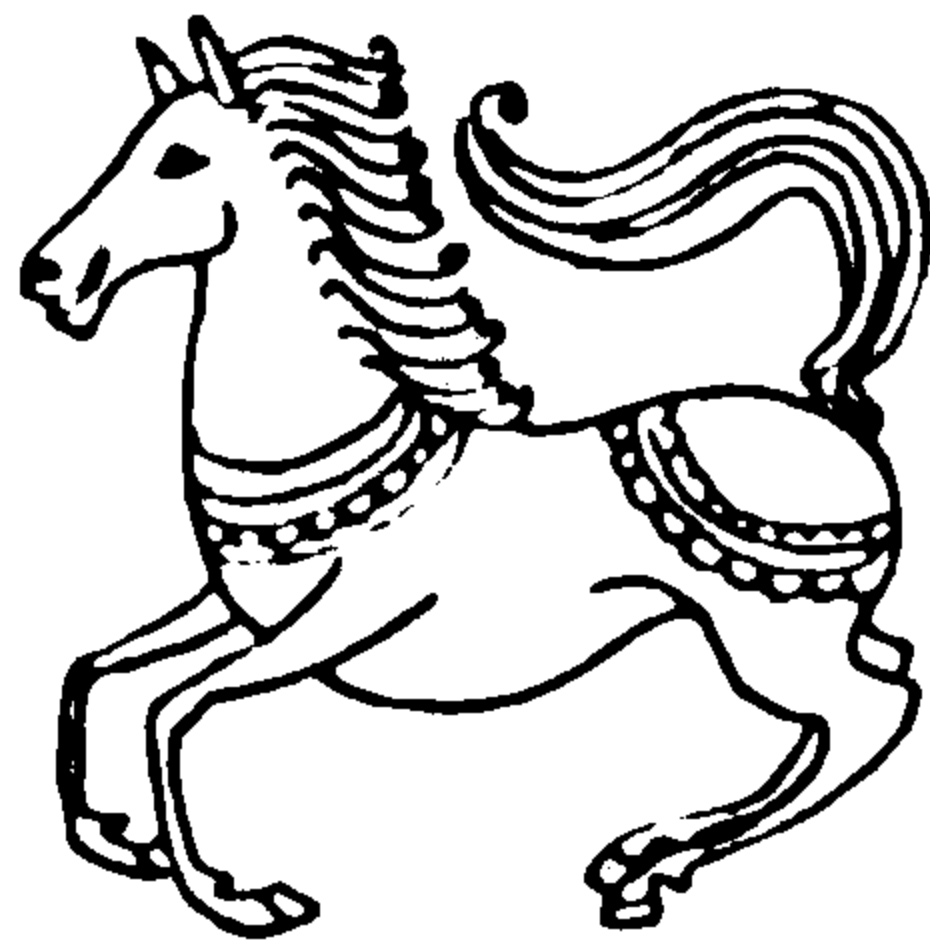
left to give to Yashodhara. He removed the necklace which hung round his own neck and clasped it round her slender waist and as their eyes met, their hearts were filled with a great love for each other, and Siddhartha chose Yashodhara as his bride-to-be.

Yashodhara came from a family of great warriors and her father had decided that his daughter's hand in marriage would go to him who was the bravest and the best knight of all.

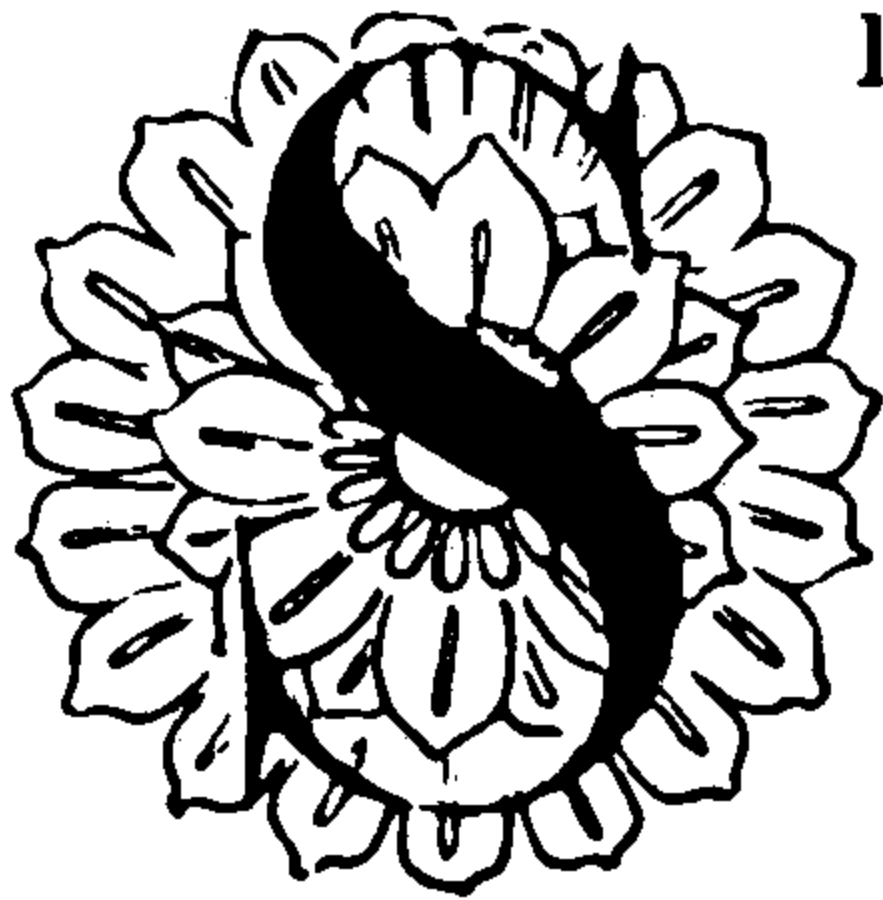
A tournament was arranged and on that day the Sakya princes came in large numbers to show their skill with the bow and win the fair Yashodhara as their bride. King Suddhodana was anxious about Siddhartha—how would his young and tender son with no experience of battle-fare compete against the prowess of warriors of such high calibre? But Siddhartha remained calm and unperturbed. Sitting astride his snow-white steed Kantaka, he looked like the sun-god as he entered the arena and challenged the Sakya princes one by one in each form of fighting. So great was his skill that none could beat him, not even his cousin Devadatta, who with face dark with anger and jealousy, challenged Siddhartha over and over again, and was defeated. And exciting, indeed, was the display of skill in arms by each of these warriors, and most thrilling of all was the chariot race when Kantaka harnessed to the golden chariot of Siddhartha leapt ahead and flew like the wind and none could come within reach

of him. The spectators applauded and shouted with joy to see the valour of their Prince and Maharajah. Suddhodana was indeed a proud father.

Prince Siddhartha was acclaimed the victor. The lovely bride clad in silvery white was led to him and as they stood close to each other even greater was the people's applause for it was as if the sun and the moon stood side by side.



*Look we have found a lure; take counsel now
To fetch therewith our falcon from the clouds.*



IDDHARTHA WAS WEDDED TO Yashodhara. Tender and sweet was the Princess and devotedly did she love her lord, the Prince. But why was it that Siddhartha, enjoying the happiness of having as his companion a lovely girl whose joy and happiness lay in pleasing him, still yearned for an unknown world and was haunted by strange dreams? Often would his soul escape somewhere, far away, while his body remained behind and he would sit for hours absorbed in his thoughts, unaware of the world around him.

The fair Yashodhara saw this and knew not what it was that took her Prince away. Desperately did she try to bind Siddhartha and hold him fast but all was in vain. Still she hoped, for soon, she would be the mother of his child, and surely the babe's hands would hold him even if her's had failed. And as time passed and her confinement drew near, Yashodhara grew more confident in Siddhartha's love. For in the past few months a change seemed to have come over Siddhartha and it were as if he had forgotten his cold world of dreams. Never had he shown such tender care and affection as

now and Yashodhara was happy. King Suddhodana saw his son wrapt in domestic happiness and he too breathed a sigh of relief. At last he thought, the bird had been caged.

One day the Prince went to King Suddhodana and asked for permission to go out of the palace grounds and drive round the city. The King now fearing no danger agreed and it was decided that the next day Siddhartha would ride forth in his chariot and that Channa the ever-faithful would be his charioteer.

King Suddhodana commanded that the town should be cleaned and decorated and wear a festive air, and that only young men and women should be seen on the streets. He ordered the sick, the old and the infirm to remain at home on that day so that no unseemly or ugly sight should appear before the Prince. The morning came and Siddhartha stepped into his golden chariot studded with precious stones and drawn by six horses. Golden was the morn and of still brighter gold was the light that enveloped the Prince as he stood tall and handsome in his chariot. The gates were unbarred and flung open and the Prince drove out into the streets.

The King's orders were obeyed by all and it was a goodly sight to see happy men and women dressed in their best clothes standing on either side of the street. Their joy, as they beheld their hand-

some Prince, knew no bounds and they shouted and applauded him and showered flowers on him as he went past. Siddhartha was happy to see the prosperity and well-being of his people and he waved gaily to them.

‘How fair is the world,’ he thought. ‘And how good is life in its endless joys and pleasures.’

And as he was thinking in this manner, there suddenly appeared amidst all this youth and beauty, from where nobody knew, in the centre of the road, a tottering old man, clad in filthy rags. His body was doubling over with age and his hands and legs shook, with fever. His cheeks were wrinkled and sunken and his eyes blood-shot and deep in their sockets. The Prince had never beheld anything so ugly and he recoiled with horror. The chariot came to a stand-still and all stared at this loathsome figure and wondered where it had come from. And it is believed that this was really a divine spirit which had taken on this form and appeared before the Prince.

‘Channa,’ cried Siddhartha in astonishment, ‘who and what is this? Can it be that men are sometimes born so ugly and horrible?’

‘My Prince!’ replied Channa trembling with fear and yet helpless against a force which made him speak in spite of himself. ‘This is an old man. Once he too was gay and handsome but age has shrivelled and bent him and made him repulsive.’

p. thirty

‘ Does this happen to all men? ’ further asked the Prince. ‘ Will it happen to you and me, Yashodhara and my beloved father and all these beautiful and happy people? ’

‘ Yes, my Lord,’ replied Channa. ‘ It is the lot of all.’

Stricken with grief at Channa’s answer, Siddhartha said: ‘ Then turn back the chariot. Let us ride back to the palace for I have no joy to ride today.’

Silently, Channa turned the horses back and in a hushed silence the people watched their Prince return to the palace, his head bowed with sorrow. And it was as if their sun had been darkened at noon by an eclipse.

With a heavy heart the Prince sought the solitude of his palace and there he sat alone in a vast hall lost in sad thoughts and no one dared to disturb him.

The courtiers told the Princess and King Suddhodana of what had happened and they came in haste to comfort Siddhartha. But bitter were his words when they called his name softly.

‘ You have fed me with lies,’ he rebuked, ‘ and by surrounding me with all this shallowness you had lulled me into a false sense of happiness. You knew the truth all the time and yet you deceived me. You made me believe that the world was beautiful and everlasting in its joys and pleasures. I trusted

you and you lied to me.' And at these words, King Suddhodana and the Princess stood silent for they knew not what to say.

Some days went past and all the time Siddhartha brooded on what he had seen and life weighed heavily on him.

Once more he decided to ride forth into the city and seeing his determination King Suddhodana reluctantly gave his consent. Again the loyal Channa was his charioteer and the people lined the streets as they had done before. This time they did not shout or applaud as the chariot went past for they saw the sad countenance of their Prince and they were afraid of what may happen next. And, lo and behold, there in the centre of the road lay a sick and dying man, his body writhing and tortured with pain. Channa drew up the chariot in front of this sad spectacle and again the Prince cried, 'Channa, what do I see now?'

Slowly Channa replied for he knew that it must be some divine power that had created this figure and made him speak thus:

'Sweet Prince, this is a sick man. With old age comes sickness and pain and suffering. And this is how it is with all men.'

'Go no further,' said the Prince, 'let us return to the palace for I cannot bear to see what I have seen.'

And once again the Prince came back home with

a heart even heavier and found no joy or peace in the pleasures that surrounded him. And as the days passed, still another time did Siddhartha go to his father and ask for permission to ride out and King Suddhodana was forced to agree.

This time the Devas created a funeral procession and made it pass in front of Siddhartha's chariot. On a bier carried by four men lay a corpse, cold and stiff in death, and following it were mourners who beat their chest and rent the air with their wails and lamentation.

Again Siddhartha asked of Channa what it was he saw for never had he seen death before and Channa replied that this was death, the end of life.

'All who live, O Prince,' he said, 'must die and this is the face of death which you behold.' Siddhartha sank down into the chariot overwhelmed with sorrow. Channa watched the Prince distraught with grief and slowly he turned the horses back home.

King Suddhodana got word of what had happened and bemoaned at his own helplessness to prevent these sights appearing before Siddhartha.

'Close the palace gates, and put a double lock,' he commanded angrily. 'Increase the guards by twice their number and build another wall round the palace of the Prince. See that no man, woman or child enters there without my permission.'

All this was done.



The Musicians

Thus did King Suddhodana again tried to shut out the world and imprison the Prince in his golden cage. But sorrowful was Siddhartha—his heart drowned in a sea of hopelessness. He took no part in the festivities of the palace nor did he pay any heed to the inviting looks of the beautiful dance-girls whom his father, in his desperation, ordered in still greater numbers for his pleasure. From all parts of the kingdom came musicians and beautiful girls to entertain the Prince and bring a smile to his lips. But all their efforts were in vain.

And then one day Siddhartha went to his father yet again and said: 'Dearest Father, I have seen the misery and sadness of life on earth and it has

broken my heart and made me very sad. Let me ride out into the city yet a fourth time, and maybe this time I shall see some happy sight which will restore my faith in living and help me understand the injustices and cruelties of this world.' King Suddhodana pondered over the words of his son and decided to give in to his request.

Having got his father's permission the Prince made another request.

'On this occasion, dear father, do not inform the people of my visit nor order the streets to be decorated. It is my wish to see my people as they really live and toil, and to find some joy in the simplicity of their lives.'

And to this also, did King Suddhodana agree for he saw the grave sadness of his son's face, and he longed to lighten the weight which rested so heavy on Siddhartha's heart.

The following day the Prince drove through the streets for the fourth time and everywhere he went he saw his people sweating and toiling. And he wondered why it was that people clung to life when the world seemed full of misery and pain. The joys of living were short-lived and transitory and in no way compensated the injustices and cruelties of life.

'Nothing is permanent here,' he cried. 'Everywhere I go and look, there is change and decay. O cruel gods! To create a world so wretched and

so full of ills! Where in this world can I find peace and everlasting happiness? My heart is full of despair, for I see no answer.'

Siddhartha asked Channa to stop the chariot as they were driving past a sal grove, and alighting from it he went and sat under the shade of a sal tree, lost in thoughts of life and of death. And as he sat there thinking thus, he went into a trance and he beheld clearly all the misery and sorrows of the world. He also saw that neither heaven nor hell answered the craving of his soul for endless peace and eternal truth. But he knew that somewhere this peace and changelessness were to be found and that he must find the way.

Slowly Siddhartha came out of his trance and as he turned his eyes downwards he saw coming towards him a man clad in saffron robes and in his hand he carried a bowl. The Prince wondered who this man was, for he marvelled at the peace and calm of the expression of his face. Never before had he seen such serenity of expression or such nobility of bearing. And when the man came nearer, Siddhartha asked him who he was and the stranger replied:

'I am a sanyasi. I have seen the pain and suffering of life. I have left my home and everything that belonged to me to wander in solitude in the forests and mountains, searching for true happiness, which is everlasting; for the joys of this



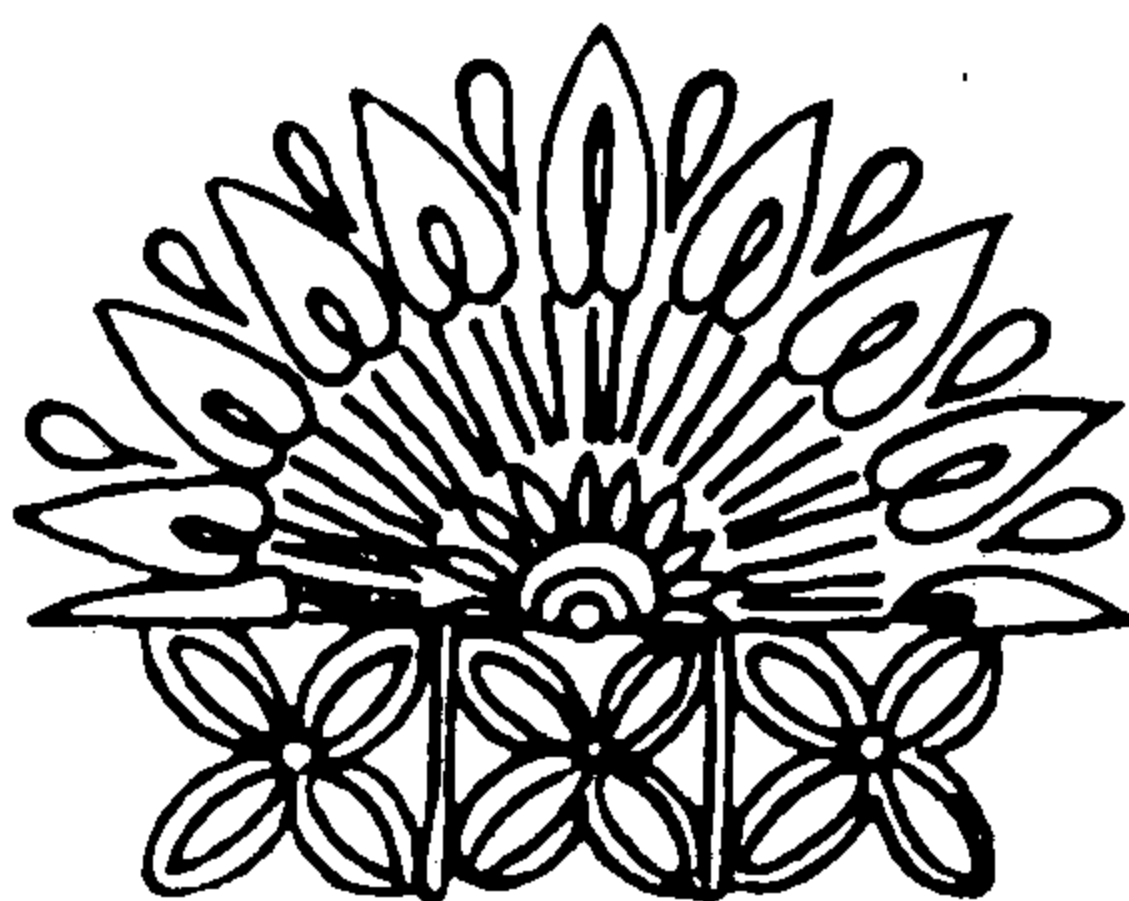
The Four Encounters

world are like crumbs thrown to us and do but cheat us of the real joy and abiding peace.' Saying this the sanyasi disappeared and it is believed that he too was a divine spirit in disguise.

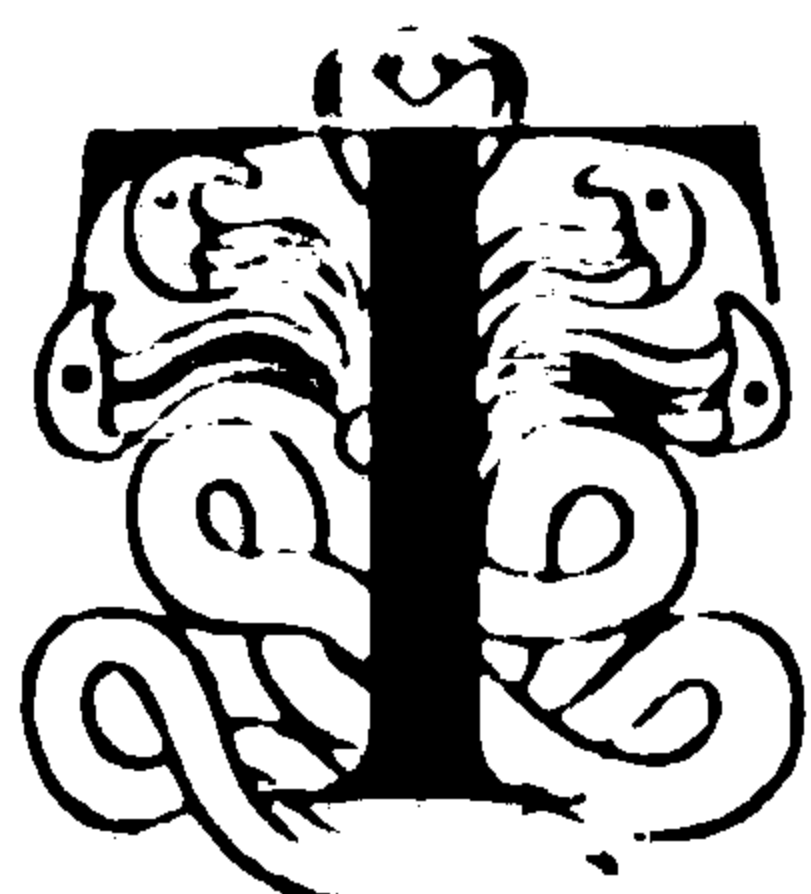
The Prince was astonished to find someone who like himself yearned for peace and who searched for permanent happiness. And Siddhartha returned to the palace thinking of the words of the sanyasi.

As he drew near the palace gates he was met by messengers who told him that the Princess Yashodhara had given birth to a son. Siddhartha showed his joy on receiving these glad tidings.

'He is but another fetter to bind me to this world,' he said. 'Let him, therefore, be called Rahula.' And the babe was named Rahula which means, 'fetter'.



*And none hath sought for this as I will seek
Who cast away my world to save my world.*



THAT NIGHT WHEN EVERYONE IN the palace celebrated the birth of the new prince and there was music and dancing, Siddhartha wandered alone in the palace gardens. And all the time he thought of the words of the sanyasi. He resolved that he too would leave this world of riches and empty pleasures and like the sanyasi wander in the forests and lonely places in search of truth and peace. And having decided this he felt happiness.

When morning came he went to the King. Suddhodana was delighted to see his son's face untroubled and calm. 'O my son,' he said, 'I see the cloud has passed.' And smiling Siddhartha replied: 'Father, the cloud has indeed passed and the way is clear before me. Give me your permission to go in solitude and seek in the forests and the lonely mountain-sides that abiding peace and everlasting happiness for which I crave.'

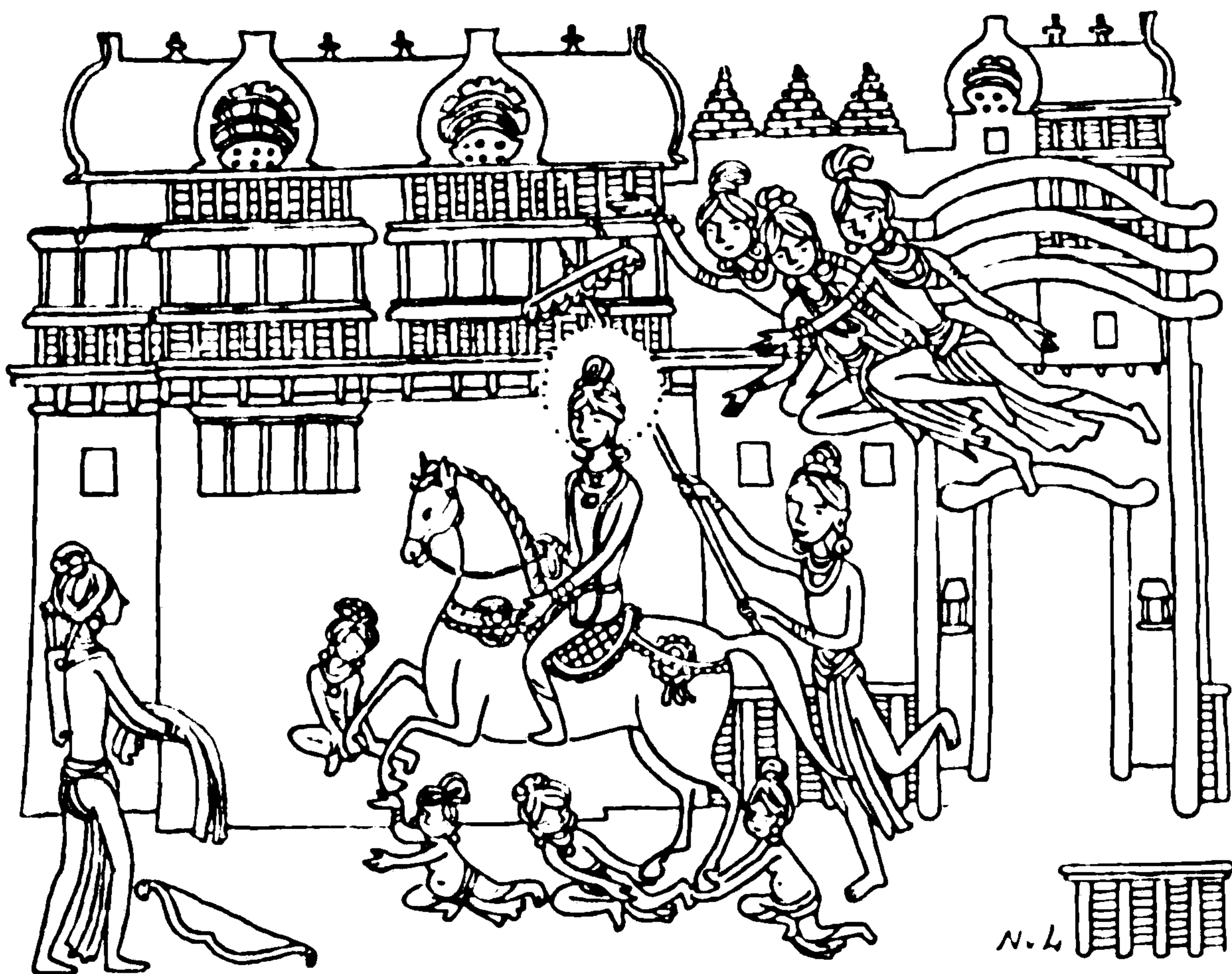
At the words of his son a trembling seized King Suddhodana and the fatal prophecy of the soothsayers flashed back to his mind. Shaking with anger and with fear he ordered his son to return to his palace and to never broach the subject again.

Siddhartha left the presence of the King but he knew that, much as he loved his father he could not obey his orders. A power far stronger than himself had shown him what he must do. One night when the feasting and dancing were over and the tired revellers abandoned themselves to sleep, Siddhartha entered the hall of revelry and saw lying before him the dancers deep in their sleep. These maidens who had been so beautiful when they were awake and dancing, now looked ugly and distorted in their sleep. And watching them Siddhartha was even more convinced in his decision to give up this life of vain and empty pleasures and to leave the palace immediately. He went to the stables and waking Channa, his charioteer, from his slumber ordered him to saddle Kantaka.

‘ O Prince, what is your intention? ’ asked Channa. ‘ I beseech you do nothing rash and thus cause pain to those who love you.’

But he saw from the expression on Siddhartha’s face that his words were of no avail and silently he went to saddle Kantaka.

The moment for departure had come and Siddhartha softly tip-toed into Yashodhara’s chamber to say good-bye. Asleep on her couch, the fair Princess lay and beside her the baby, Rahula. The thought of leaving his loved ones filled Siddhartha with sadness. He stretched out a hand to touch them but withdrew it for he knew if he tarried



The Flight

longer in the chamber his resolve to go away would weaken. And so without even bidding Yashodhara farewell or holding his child in his arms for the last time, Siddhartha left the chamber and went out of the palace.

Outside stood Channa with Kantaka. Siddhartha leapt on the horse's back and bade Channa farewell. But Channa the devoted and faithful implored of him. 'My Prince, give me permission to go with you some distance,' and Siddhartha agreed. And thus it was that in the dead of night when all slept Siddhartha rode out

of the palace gates on Kantaka and with Channa his faithful attendant. And it is said that the divine spirits deadened the sound of the hoofs and put the guards to sleep so that Siddhartha could leave without the knowledge of any one else.

As they left the palace behind them, Prince Siddhartha turned back and looked at his home and said: 'Until I have conquered old age, disease and death I shall not return to this palace.'

And hearing these words, the gods and divine spirits in the heavens applauded and praised him for his resolve and as he rode they strew flowers on him and the path was soon covered with blossoms. They travelled all night and when morning came they came to a forest where dwelt some hermits. Prince Siddhartha dismounted from Kantaka and turning to Channa said:

'I shall say farewell, O faithful Channa, for from here onwards I shall go on foot. You have been a true friend and served me with loyalty and for your devotion take this necklace.'

And saying this, Siddhartha removed his golden necklace studded with precious stones and gave it to Channa. Channa saw that the time for parting had come and tears filled his eyes and trickled down his cheeks.

'Sweet Prince,' he begged, 'return yet to the palace, for how can you forsake those that love you. Think of the grief of your father and of your foster-

mother, Prajapati, and of the Princess and your young son. Imagine their sorrow and their distress when they learn the sad news of your departure. Have pity on your loved ones and return with me to Kapilavastu.'

And saying this Channa prostrated himself before the Prince and tenderly did Siddhartha lift him up but firm was his reply.

'Good and faithful Channa, there comes a time in life when one has to part in any case from those one loves, for death comes to all and separates us from those we love. Then why should we grieve at breaking these human ties which we have known all along as not permanent. Go back and console my father and tell him that I have gone in search of a happiness that will never leave me. Explain this to him, my faithful servant, and blessed indeed are you for you have come with me this far knowing that this may bring the wrath of my father on your head. For this and for all your devotion in the past, your place is prepared in the heavens.'

And saying this, Siddhartha removed all his other ornaments and gave them to Channa to take back to King Suddhodana. Next he drew his sword of gold and with one lash cut off his hair. 'These long locks are not befitting an ascetic, Channa,' he said.

Sadly, Channa watched him and the tears never

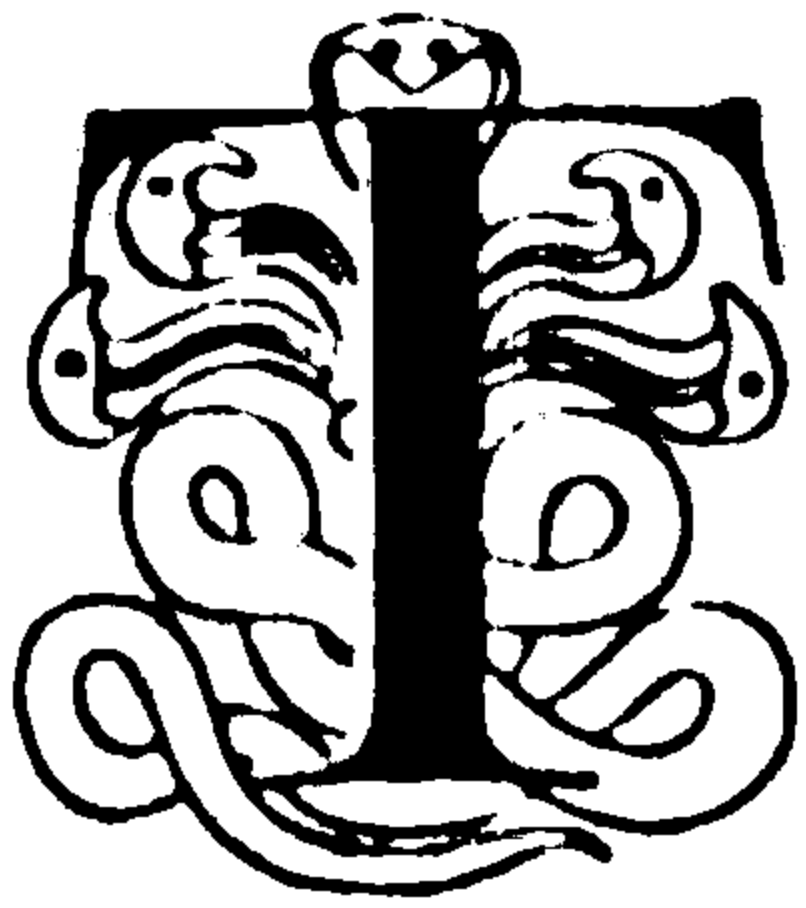
stopped streaming down his face. And having done this, the Prince tossed the sword into the air and cried, 'If I am to become the Buddha let this sword remain suspended in the air.' And it is believed that a divine spirit caught the sword as the Prince threw it up and held it in the air.

Next, the Prince looked down at his robes and saw that his costly attire was not suitable for the humble life of a monk. Just then, a hunter clad in a coarse saffron robe passed by and Siddhartha asked him to exchange attires. And it is said that the hunter too was in truth a divine spirit.

Clothed in the saffron dress of the hunter, Siddhartha decided to enter the forest. And now he turned to Kantaka and embracing him, said:

'O noble steed, you have served me well and soon you too will be free of birth and death.' Kantaka bowed his head in grief and licked the feet of his master. And thus having said farewell to both Channa and Kantaka, Siddhartha disappeared into the forest and when he could be seen no longer, Channa, drooping with sorrow and blinded with tears, turned back towards Kapilavastu leading Kantaka by the reins. But the horse's heart broke, when he saw his master depart and he had scarcely gone a few steps when he crumbled to the ground and died. Thus Channa alone returned to Kapilavastu bearing the sad news of Prince Siddhartha's renunciation.

*For never here among the Rishis comes
That Light, nor from the Shastras, nor from fasts.*



THE PRINCESS YASHODHARA started in her sleep and awoke in the early hours of the morning with an uneasy feeling of fear. She leapt from her couch and ran to Siddhartha's chamber, calling to him, but the Prince was not there. She ran out into the hall and quickly waking up the dancers and the musicians, asked them if they had seen the Prince. They went from room to room and from chamber to chamber, calling out to him and looking for him everywhere, but he was nowhere to be found.

The attendants went quickly to the palace of the King, and informed him that Prince Siddhartha was missing. King Suddhodana came with haste, not even waiting to throw a cloak round his shoulders. The palace guards were sent for and questioned, but none had seen Siddhartha leave the premises. 'He must have wandered out into the city,' said the King. 'Close the city gates and search every nook and corner for the Prince,' commanded King Suddhodana. 'Hurry, for there is no time to be lost.' The soldiers and the guards went out into the city looking for the Prince in every street and

in every house. The news of the disappearance of Siddhartha soon spread like wild-fire, and the people all joined in the search. But, nowhere, could they find the Prince.

Now, Channa the charioteer, weary and with faltering steps, approached Kapilavastu. His head was bowed with grief, and in his hands he carried the jewels worn by Siddhartha. The guards led him to the King, and when he stood before his monarch, he related in a broken voice Prince Siddhartha's departure into the forest. When King Suddhodana heard Channa's words, so great was his grief that he fainted, and when he came to himself, he called piteously for his son.

‘ O, Siddhartha,’ he moaned, ‘ my only son, why were you given to me if you were to be taken away from me in this cruel fashion, and when I needed you most? Ye gods, in what way have I offended you that you have inflicted this harsh punishment on me? ’

A wail of lamentation was heard in the palace of the Prince, when the sad news reached the Princess Yashodhara and the Queen Prajapati. Her hair dishevelled and her face pale and stained with tears, the fair Princess clasped her child Rahula to her breast, and piteous moans escaped her lips, whilst, by her side, the Queen lay prostrate and helpless in her grief.

Then putting the babe aside, Yashodhara rose to

her feet, and said, 'Since my Lord has left the luxuries of the palace and now endures the hardships of a hermit's life, I too have no more use for these pleasures.' Casting aside her gorgeous robes, the Princess Yashodhara put on the coarse garment worn by sanyasis, and from her person she removed all her jewellery and handed it to her attendants. She then entered her luxurious chamber and said: 'Take away this couch which was my bed, and all these other lovely things. I have no further use for them, for, like my Lord, from henceforth, I too shall sleep on the hard floor.'

The beautiful chamber of the Princess, shorn of all its furniture and rich rugs, looked bare and cold, and here, praying and meditating, and eating only one meal a day, the fair Princess spent her days living only for her infant son.

In the meanwhile deep into the forest went the Prince. The hard, rocky ground cut his tender feet, and the thorns scratched his body and made him bleed. The sun rose high in the sky, and Siddhartha hot and tired, paused to eat the wild berries of the forest, and to quench his thirst beside a woodland stream.

And then it was that the evil spirit Mara came to tempt the Prince as he sat by the stream, tired and exhausted. The voice of Mara was soft and pleasant to listen to, and he awakened in the heart of the Prince memories of his luxurious home, his

dear father, his devoted wife and his adorable son.

‘O, foolish Prince,’ he whispered, ‘turn back home, it is still not too late. The life of a mendicant is not for you. Power and glory can be yours. The future holds great promise for you. You are destined to be a mighty King, and your fame will spread to the four corners of the earth. If you insist on becoming a sanyasi, here, in this dense forest, you will live and die and nobody will have benefited from your sacrifice. On the other hand, think of the great good you could do to the world if you became a powerful monarch and ruled wisely and justly.’

In this manner, Mara talked and it is true that his words were most persuasive, but Prince Siddhartha recognized these promptings as of the evil spirit, and turned a deaf ear to them, and drove them out of his heart.

Mara, however, was not to be defeated so easily, and he waited yet for other chances to tempt the Prince, and make him fall into sin.

After travelling for a long time, Siddhartha came to the beautiful country of Rajagriha. In the mountains of this kingdom lived a renowned and respected ascetic by the name of Arata Kalana, and it was to his ashram that Siddhartha went—to learn from the great sage the religious truths and the holy way of life. Arata Kalana and his disciples ate wild fruits and berries only and slept under

the trees. And Siddhartha who wished to do the same, became an inmate of the ashram. Arata Kalana explained the Vedas and the Upanishads and interpreted the great philosophies of famous ascetics. Siddhartha soon mastered the great sage's teachings. And here, in this ashram he became known, not as Prince Siddhartha but as the disciple, Gautama.

It was a custom of the ashram that the disciples went once a day into the city of Giribaja, the capital of the kingdom, to ask for alms. Along with the other disciples went Gautama, and as he walked from street to street with his bowl, the people of the city noticed his noble bearing and his extraordinary beauty. Never had they beheld a mendicant so kingly in his bearing. They went to their King Bimbisara, and told him that a mendicant who had the appearance of a god, had entered the city, and was going round asking for alms. As Gautama passed by the palace, King Bimbisara stepped out onto his balcony to see who it was that had created such a stir in his city. And when he beheld Gautama he too was struck by the mendicant's noble and regal bearing.

The King, along with his attendants, followed Gautama back to the ashram, and addressed him: 'Why do you, who are so young and handsome, live the life of a mendicant?' he asked. 'Come with me for I have no son, and I will make you my heir.'

Gautama with great humility thanked the King for his generous words, and said: 'O King, know that my father is King Suddhodana. I have already given up a throne to lead the life of a mendicant, and I have forsaken the joys of this world for the simple life in an ashram. I search for peace and everlasting happiness and it is in quest of these that I wander in this world.'

'May your endeavours bear fruit, O noble one,' he said, 'and promise me this one request, that you will return and tell me about your experiences when you have found what you search for.'

Gautama gave this promise to the King, and Bimbisara returned disappointed to his palace, but full of praise for the disciple, Gautama.

Soon after this, Gautama took his leave of Arata Kalana, and went to another great sage, Uddaka. From both these masters Gautama acquired much knowledge and wisdom but their teachings brought him no nearer the truth—his quest for eternal joy and peace remained unfulfilled. At times he was assailed by doubts, and he wondered if he had sacrificed his wife, his family, and his throne, for something that did not exist. But these doubts disappeared when he looked around him, and saw that Nature did not suffer from the slings and arrows of fortune in the way that men did. He was convinced that the trees, the flowers and the birds who lived life gaily, and with delight,

knew the Divine 'Secret' which made them contented with their lot on earth. And watching the branches waving in the breeze, and the flowers offering their fragrance to the air, and the chirruping of birds in the trees, Gautama was determined to find this secret. And he thought of yet another way of finding it.

'I shall go now to the woods and live by myself, and I shall do severe penance, and perhaps by denying the needs of my body and conquering my desires for the pleasures of this world, I shall discover the way which will lead me to eternal truth and everlasting happiness.'

And having thought in this manner, Gautama entered a dense forest, and when he had gone far in, he found a stream, and he decided that he would stay there, and make that his dwelling place. He stayed in that spot for six long years, practising great severities and penances. He inflicted unimaginable hardships on himself, and soon he became known far and wide for his austerities. People came from all over to see him and marvelled at his endurance. Five Brahmins, who had been in search of a master, heard of the great Gautama, and came to the forest. Never before had they seen an ascetic who had so mastered his body, and they became his disciples.

As time went by, Gautama increased his penance: and now he scarcely ate anything at all, and he cut his food down to one grain of rice or wheat a day.

He was changed beyond all recognition. His, once youthful and beautiful body, now became just skin and bone. His eyes sank into their sockets. His cheeks were shrivelled and hollow like a dried fruit, and every rib and bone of his body could be seen. He looked like a skeleton, and those who saw him felt sure that he would soon die. He was so weak that his legs could not bear the weight of his body, and the slightest wind knocked him over. One day as he sat meditating and lost in divine thoughts, he fainted, and rolled over, and fell by the side of the stream. His five disciples who were sitting a little distance away watching him thought that he must have died, but slowly Gautama came back to consciousness and managed to crawl to the edge of the stream and drank a few drops of water which refreshed him. He then rested his head against the trunk of a tree which grew by the side of the stream and as he lay thus, weak and exhausted, he thought to himself:

‘For six years I have denied my body everything and practised unheard-of penance, for I wished to master my passions. I believed that by doing so I would find Divine Peace, but it has not been so. No man could do greater penance than I have done. Inflicting pain on my body has not brought me any nearer the truth.’

And he further thought, ‘These six years I have meditated a great deal on the meaning of life and

I am even more convinced that what I search for is not in vain: behind all this change and decay of our world there is a power and a law which is changeless and eternal, and man's real nature belongs to this changeless Principle. And this too I know that by hurting my body and inflicting pain on myself I cannot find this Principle. The men who do this believe that by doing so they ensure for themselves the happiness of heaven after their death. But I have seen in the course of my meditations and penances that the pleasures of heaven too are not everlasting and permanent—I have no use for these pleasures. I search for the permanent happiness and peace that I know exists somewhere, and till I have found that I shall not rest, nor be bought off by lesser joys.'

Now, nearby this forest, lived a young woman by the name of Sujata. Sujata had made a promise to the tree spirit of the forest that if she should marry a worthy husband, and her first-born child should be a son, every year she would make an offering to the divinity, of a milk dish prepared from the milk of 80 cows, which had been nourished on the milk of 1000 cows.

It was now the time of the year for Sujata to make her offering. Whilst preparing the dish, Sujata noticed that all the signs were most auspicious. The fire burned without a flicker, and as the milk bubbled and frothed not a drop spilt over.



Rice-offering

When the dish was ready, Sujata poured it into a golden bowl and covered it with a cloth of gold. Then, she sent her maid-servant, Punna, to go and prepare the place under the tree near the stream where every year she left the offering. Punna obeying her mistress' instructions went down to the stream and great was her surprise when she saw Gautama lying on that very spot, his head

resting against the tree-trunk. She ran back and told her mistress that the tree-spirit himself had come to receive the offering. Sujata was overjoyed at the news. 'Take these jewels of mine, Punna,' she said, 'for you have brought me good news and henceforth you will be like my daughter, and not my servant any longer.'

Quickly Sujata adorned herself in beautiful ornaments and clothes and taking the golden bowl went down into the forest.

When she saw Gautama sitting under the tree, she realized that he was not the Tree-Spirit, but a holy man. Doing obeisance to him, she offered him the food in the bowl. Gautama accepted Sujata's offering, and after blessing her, ate the food.

Now the five disciples of Gautama who sat a little distance away and who had given him up for dead saw him eat the food offered by Sujata, and they said amongst themselves:

'The ascetic Gautama has weakened in his high resolves, and has fallen into temptation by accepting the food offered by this woman. We have no use for such a weak master, and no longer shall we be his disciples.'

And saying this they departed, and took the way to the city of Banaras, where they dwelt, leading a religious life. Gautama ate the food that Sujata had prepared, and when the bowl was empty he threw it into the stream saying:

‘ If I am to become the Buddha, may this bowl float on the waters, and be carried upstream,’ and, lo and behold, the golden bowl floated for a while on the surface of the water, and then it ascended upstream with great speed. It then dropped into a whirlpool which dragged it down to the bottom of the Universe where it fell clattering against the bowls of the other Buddhas-who-had-been. And the sound of it banging against these sent reverberations throughout the world.

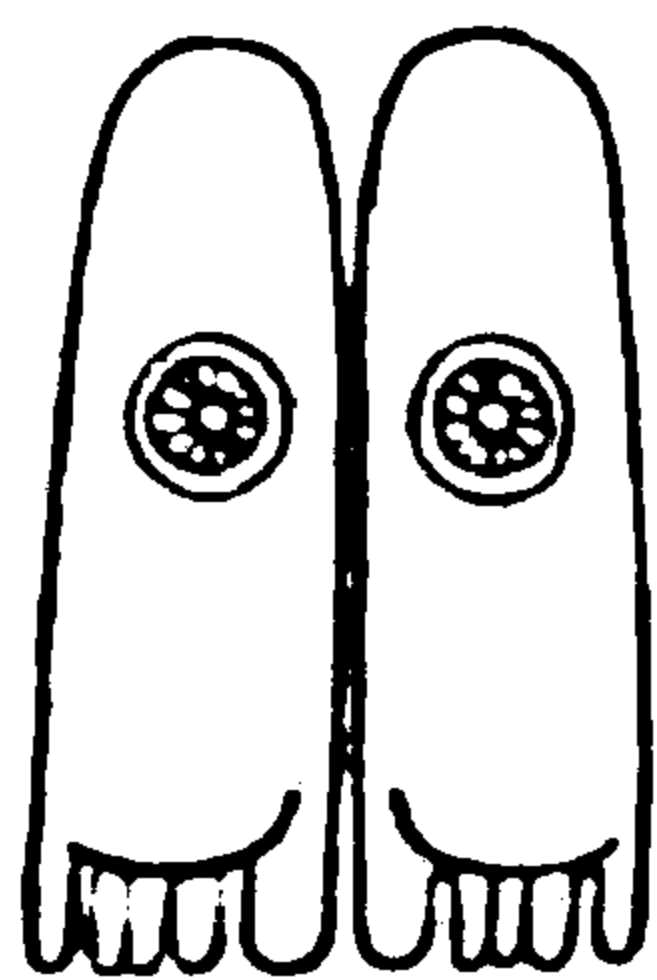
Refreshed and strengthened by Sujata’s offering, Gautama stood up and slowly walked to a Bodhi tree nearby. He gathered some grass and spread it under the tree and sitting down on it he said: ‘ I shall not arise from this place until I have attained supreme knowledge of the Law.’

And, saying this, he went into meditation. The divine spirits heard his words, and they rejoiced, and celebrated in the heavens. The air was filled with sweet sounds and divine music, and flowers rained over the Bodhi tree.

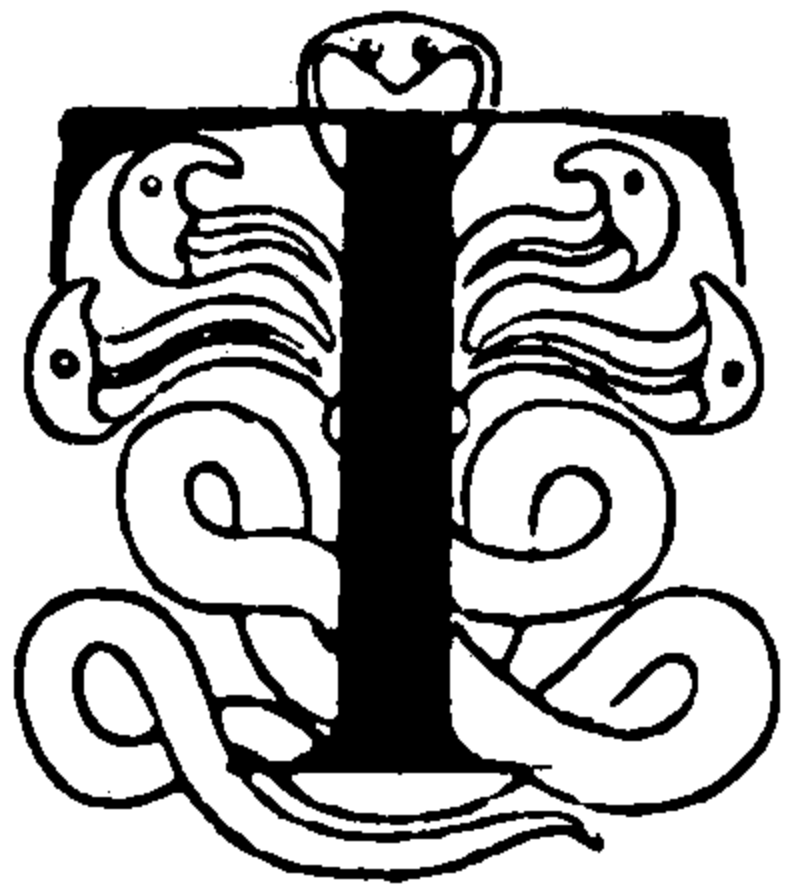
Mara, the evil spirit, also heard these words, and became really afraid that Gautama would become the Buddha, and destroy his empire of darkness and ignorance and suffering. He tried to waken in the heart of Gautama thoughts of his life as Prince Siddhartha, and memories of his family who waited for his return. And when these failed to lure Gautama from his meditations he offered to make

him into a powerful monarch whose sway would extend to the whole world. But, once again, Gautama brushed aside these thoughts, and defeated Mara. Failing in all these endeavours to tempt Gautama, Mara now decided to wage a war against him, and kill him. First, he raised a terrible storm which uprooted trees and blew away houses, but when these furious winds lashed against the Bodhi tree, they lost their violence and gently blew around Gautama. Next, Mara hurled enormous rocks and boulders at Gautama but as these struck him they became changed into blossoms.

Mara then assembled his terrifying army of hideous demons and evil spirits who released a volley of arrows, missiles, and deadly weapons on Gautama as he sat, peaceful and calm, in his meditations; but, instead of piercing the body of Gautama, these weapons turned back, and struck the demons who aimed them. Tired and defeated, Mara and his hosts fled in confusion and they left Gautama, in peace under the Bodhi tree, surrounded by perfect stillness, and by a heavenly light.



*Broken Thy House is, and the ridge-pole split!
 Delusion fashioned it!
 Safe pass I thence-- Deliverance to obtain.*



HE ARMIES OF MARA HAD departed and all was quiet. Gautama sat under the tree, lost in meditation.

And when the first watch of the night came, all his previous existences and lives were made known to him. He saw how he had gradually through many lives, accumulated good deeds and slowly purified his soul, and how in his present life he would reap the benefits of his past, and become a Buddha. For it was made clear to him that all beings reap in this life what they have sown in their earlier existences, and also that if a man does good deeds he is rewarded for them by happiness, whilst evil deeds bring unhappiness. He now saw life as a complete picture, and not in bits and pieces as others see it for they have not the vision to see the past, the present and the future, and they mistake the part for the whole.

And as the night advanced, and it became the middle watch, the entire Universe was unfolded before His eyes. He now beheld the three

worlds: the heavens, the earth and the regions of hell, and all the beings that lived in them—the gods, the men and the evil spirits—from the smallest to the greatest, He saw them all—their sufferings and their joys, their selfish cravings and their foolish desires, that never-satisfied ‘ I ’ that always remained hungry and thirsty, demanding more and more. He saw that men lived on earth in the hope of being rewarded, for their good acts, in heaven. But how short-lived were these joys, and how foolish it was to seek fulfilment of them?

Then He examined the sufferings and torments of hell—the punishments that were inflicted on men for their wicked deeds and actions, and He saw how useless was this suffering too, for it did not help men to realize their true nature. Returning from heaven or from hell, men came back to earth, and again got caught in the wheel of birth and rebirth.

And now it was the third watch of the night when an awful stillness hung over the Universe, and then suddenly, in a blinding flash, the Truth was made known to Him, and He understood the Divine Law of everlasting peace and joy which is the true nature of all things. He saw why human beings had got separated from this, their true entity. They thirsted for existence and for the worthless and temporary things of this world, and thus were born and reborn on earth, and got caught in the endless

wheel of birth and rebirth. Most unsatisfactory.

Birth in this world means sorrow and pain, for when men are born they have to go through the cycle of birth, old age, disease, and finally, death. They suffer because they start demanding of this transitory and changing world, things which it has not in its power to give them. They ask for themselves and for their loved ones, eternal life, joy and peace in terms of the values of this world, and when they see death, old age, and disease around them, and those whom they love stricken by misfortune, they suffer pain. Frustrated in their own quest for happiness, they in turn act and behave in a way which inflicts pain on others, and thus it becomes a vicious circle: each striving for his own selfish cravings and desires, and hurting those around him.

The cure for this sad state of affairs was, that first of all, men must be made aware of their true nature. They have lost sight of their divine selves and identified themselves with vain illusions and false dreams. This darkness must be dispelled.

And Lord Buddha meditated on how that could be done.

First, He decided that man must not ask the impossible from life.

Next, he must order and live his life in such a way that he will gradually arrive at his divine nature and enter Nirvana and put an end to birth and rebirth.

Thus it was that the Lord Buddha arrived at the four great truths which were the Law of the Wheel of Life:

- These were pain, the cause of pain, the destruction of pain and the way leading to that destruction.

And He saw that the way was eightfold and that for him who treads that path and firmly resolves that in every action, effort, thought, speech and conduct he will strive towards the goal, the joys of endless bliss and Nirvana were his reward.

When these divine truths were revealed to the Lord all the worlds quaked with a terrible violence, and the words, 'Most excellent Being, the Divine Buddha,' resounded throughout the Universe. Gorgeous flags and banners were unfolded in the heavens, and wonderful ornaments decorated the skies as the divine spirits celebrated the hope of their own salvation. A celestial light shone through the sky and illuminated all things. Its rays penetrated to hell's darkest abyss. All was Light.

The earth put on her most magnificent dress, and looked like a colourful garden. The trees were laden with fruits, and flowers blossomed all over, even on rocks. The blind, the deaf, the crippled, and the sick were healed, and many other wondrous signs were seen, and miracles happened. The Enlightened One remained seated under the Bodhi tree for seven days after enlightenment, and a beautiful light shone from His body, the radiance

of which filled the forest, and never was a brighter light than this seen on earth.

And whilst He sat thus He said to Himself:

‘ In the whole world, I alone know of this divine wisdom and Holy Law which will save all living beings from the whirlpool of existence, and which will still their restlessness and suffering.’

And as the Enlightened One thought thus a great compassion filled His heart for the pain and suffering of mankind, and He decided to proclaim the Law to all.

Whilst the Buddha sat under the tree thus meditating, and lost in the deep bliss of Nirvana, there came into the forest two young men by the name of Trapusla and Bhallika, bringing in their train 500 chariots full of merchandise. As they neared the spot where the Lord sat, the horses and mules which drew their chariots stopped and refused to go any further, and the wheels of the chariots got embedded in the mud, and would not move. Trapusla and Bhallika, along with their attendants, tried to raise the wheels and persuaded the horses to move onward, but their efforts met with no success.

And then it was that a divine spirit appeared to them and said:

‘ Nearby sits a holy man, the greatest of all beings. Go and do homage to him.’

Trapusla and Bhallika listening to the words of

the spirit, approached the Lord, and when they saw Him deep in meditation, and His empty bowl beside Him, they filled the bowl with the choicest foods they carried in their chariots. The Lord accepted their offering of food, and after He had eaten, He blessed them. Trapusla and Bhallika saw the greatness of the Enlightened One, and the Divine Light that surrounded His person. Kneeling before Him they did obeisance to Him and accepted Him as their Lord, and rejoicing went their way.

Now, after Bhallika and Trapusla had departed, Mara returned again to tempt the Blessed One, and by false words, to persuade Him not to proclaim the Law to the world. To the Buddha, he said: 'O, Enlightened One, why do you tarry in this world. You have attained supreme and everlasting happiness. Why do you not enter Nirvana now, and put an end to your life on earth?'

But the Blessed One saw why Mara wanted Him to leave the world, for Mara feared that if the Law was proclaimed, men would find salvation through it, and his empire built on ignorance and illusion would crumble.

So the Blessed One replied to Mara: 'No, Mara, I shall not enter Nirvana just now. I shall labour for the welfare of mankind by proclaiming the Law, and release countless beings from the trammels of existence, and lead them to a state of perfect rest, for my heart is filled with compassion and love.'

And when Mara heard these words he departed, defeated and crestfallen. His three daughters saw him sitting dejected and helpless, and when they learnt the reason for his fears they consoled their father saying: 'Despair not, Father. We are more beautiful than the nymphs of the heavens, and we shall go to this Holy man and charm Him, and make Him fall into temptation.'

They went to where the Buddha sat, and tried to bring Him under their power by their seductive looks and glances, but all their attempts were in vain. The Blessed One, interrupted in His divine thoughts, cast an angry glance at them, and the three lovely daughters of Mara were immediately transformed into old hags. Distressed at what had happened to them, they ran to their father, and asked him for his help, but Mara said to them: 'Go back to the Blessed One, for He alone can help you.'

So they returned to the Buddha, and flinging



themselves at His feet implored His mercy. The Enlightened One, seeing that they had repented for their follies, forgave them, and made them even more beautiful than before.

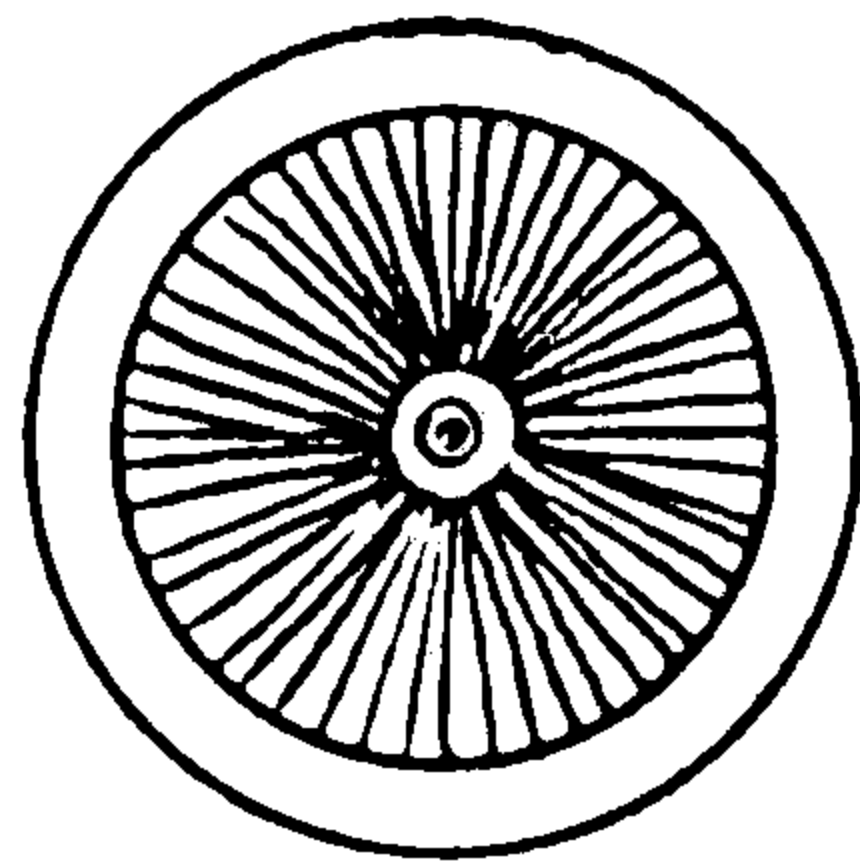
. Now, suddenly, a bitter wind sprang up and the rain came down in torrents. It rained incessantly for several days, and when the Serpent King saw the rain pouring down in sheets, he left his palace and came to the spot where the Blessed One sat. He coiled round the body of the Buddha, and spread his hood over His head so that the Holy One would be sheltered from the rain. The King of the serpents remained thus till the storm had passed.

The Blessed One had decided to proclaim the Law, but now His thoughts turned to those to whom He should first preach this knowledge. He thought of the two great sages, Arata Kalana and Uddaka but turning His gaze in the direction of their ashrams he knew they had both passed away. Then it was

The Temptation



that the Enlightened One decided He would go and find the five disciples who had left Him in disgust when they saw Him eat the food offered by Sujata. By His Divine Power He saw that these disciples now dwelt in the holy city of Banaras in the Deer Park of Sipatan. And the Holy One said: ‘To the sacred city of Banaras I shall now go, and find the disciples who left Me, and these shall be the first to know the Divine Law.’



U'prise, and learn and hope! Buddha is come!



ORD BUDDHA NOW JOURNEYED to Banaras. After many days He arrived at the sacred city. As He approached the Deer Park of Sipatan, He saw His five former disciples performing harsh austerities. They too saw the Lord approaching them and recognized Him from a distance.

‘There comes the ascetic Gautama,’ they said to each other. ‘He weakened in his high resolves, and we left him for we had no more respect for him. Let us pretend we have not seen him and continue with our meditations.’ So they pretended to ignore the Lord, but as He drew nearer they knew not what it was which attracted them to Him, and one by one, they got up and went to receive Him, and welcome Him in their midst. They bade Him be seated, and washed His feet with water, and offered Him refreshments. The Lord then spoke to the five ascetics in this manner:

‘I have found the most Holy Law for which I searched and I have come to preach it to you.’

The Holy One then observed that these men still doubted Him and were not prepared to listen to Him. The Buddha rebuked them sternly and bade

them listen to His teachings. And then the Enlightened One expounded the Law to these five ascetics explaining to them the Four Noble Truths and the Eightfold Path of Deliverance.

As these five men listened to the words of the Lord, the curtain of illusion fell from their eyes, and the way lay clear before them. Thus it was in the Deer Park of Sipatan that the Lord first gave expression to the Divine Law, and the way to Nirvana. The day gradually melted into night, and as darkness fell with a hush, the Lord finished speaking, and arose. The five ascetics prostrated themselves at the feet of the Master, in adoration and in worship, and declared their belief in the Buddha, and again became His disciples.

The Enlightened One remained in the Deer Park for sometime, preaching and explaining the Law. People came to listen to Him in large numbers, and became His disciples. And then it was that the Lord, seeing the number of His disciples growing larger and larger, decided to found an Order of monks. These would consist of men, who renouncing the worldly life, wished to dwell in monasteries, leading a life of solitude and contemplation of the Higher Truths. The Buddha set down ten rules which all those who joined the Order of monks would have to accept and practise. Others who continued to lead their normal lives, but believed in the Law and strove for Nirvana in their everyday

life, the Enlightened One accepted as His lay followers, and amongst these were many women. Now, the Holy One, after explaining the meaning of life and death to these followers, bade them follow the middle way, and to abstain alike from a life of pleasures and desires, as also from doing penance, and inflicting pain and suffering on the body, so as to arrive at Higher Truths.

‘It is the middle way,’ said the Lord, ‘that will lead you to Nirvana.’

At that time there lived in the city of Banaras the son of a very wealthy merchant. The name of this young man was Yasas. Yasas had everything that money could buy. His parents loved him dearly and they surrounded him with all kinds of luxuries and comforts. One night, whilst everybody slept, Yasas, sleepless and tossing about restlessly in his bed, felt that he could no longer endure this useless existence. He got up and decided to go for a walk. As he walked aimlessly, not knowing where he was going, his steps were guided by an unknown force towards the Deer Park of Sipatan.

Now the Enlightened One, knowing that Yasas would be coming to Him, had awakened earlier than usual and was strolling in the Deer Park. He saw Yasas coming towards Him with his head bowed and murmuring to himself: ‘How vain are the pleasures of this world, and yet where is it that I can go, to find a deeper meaning to this life.

O my heart! Surely it will break if I do not find a way.'

And the Lord understood the wretchedness that Yasas felt, for He too had been a rich man's son and knew how heavily the world rested on one burdened with riches and wealth. The Blessed One came towards Yasas, and Yasas looking up, beheld the radiance of His Divine Presence, and wondered who it was that came to meet him. The Lord addressed Yasas, saying: 'You find your life unbearable to live. Come with me, Yasas, and I shall teach you a Law which will free your soul and bring you infinite peace and joy. You are tired of the pleasures of this world, Yasas, but I shall open your eyes to joys which you will never tire of.'

And Yasas, drawn by the extraordinary beauty and presence of the Lord, sat down beside Him and listened to His words. And the Lord spoke to Yasas revealing to him the great truths, which had so far remained hidden from his eyes, and as the dawn broke in the eastern sky, a new light flooded the soul of Yasas, and a peace and joy, the sweetness of which he had never known before, filled his being. 'My former life is dead to me,' he cried, 'and O most beloved of Masters, I can never return to it, therefore admit me into your Order of monks, and let me find Nirvana.'

The Holy One seeing that the seed had been sown in the heart of Yasas, accepted him as a monk.

Now when Yasas' father learnt of the strange disappearance of his son, he set out in a frantic search for him. After searching all over, he came to the Deer Park to ask the Lord if He had seen his son anywhere. The Divine One, by His power, made Yasas who sat at His feet invisible to his father, and He then bade the father be seated. And to him too the Lord expounded the Law, and the father of Yasas sat listening to it spellbound. After the Buddha had finished, the father arose and respectfully requested the Enlightened One to accept him as a lay follower. Then it was that the Lord revealed Yasas to his father, and said: 'Is it possible that you can ask your son Yasas to whom I have also explained the Divine Law of Deliverance, to return to his life of luxury and comfort and find satisfaction in it?'

The father of Yasas replied: 'Nay, Lord, I cannot.'

Thus the father returned home leaving Yasas behind with the Buddha.

As time passed, the Buddha had sixty monks to whom He had given the complete teachings, and who had understood perfectly the world of illusion which sows birth and rebirth and which breeds suffering. And the Lord wished that His monks should impart to others the way to enduring happiness that He had revealed to them. He decided to send them forth to the four corners of the world so

that they could carry His message to others. The Buddha sent for these trusted disciples, and said: 'In you, O monks, I have complete confidence, and I know that you have understood fully, my teachings, and have followed steadfastly in the path of righteousness. I send you into the world so that you can reveal the Truth to others, and help them to find salvation.'

Then blessing these sixty monks, the Lord also gave to them the power to accept new monks into the Order. The disciples travelled far and wide, carrying with them the Lord's teachings, and bringing peace and joy to many. The Buddha himself decided to leave the Deer Park and travel, and wherever He went, people flocked to hear Him speak, and many broken hearts were healed and many found comfort and happiness in the Law.

In the course of His travels the Enlightened One came to a monastery belonging to the three Kasyapa brothers who were renowned for their asceticism, and had many followers. The Lord asked the eldest of these brothers if He could rest for awhile in their monastery. Kasyapa welcomed Him, but said: 'I have no space, but if you wish you can stay in the kitchen. I must warn you that there is a poisonous Naga who is the guardian spirit of this place. He dislikes strangers and has a vile temper.'

The Buddha smiled and answered that He was

not afraid of the Naga, and putting His few belongings down on the floor, the Lord sat cross-legged and went into meditation. Soon the Naga came and was livid with anger to see a stranger in the house. He determined to terrify Him and get rid of Him immediately. First, he blew clouds of smoke into the Lord's face to frighten Him. The Lord, not willing to hurt the Naga, made a column of smoke so dense and thick that the Naga was blinded. Flying into a rage, the Naga spat out flames at the Lord and sought to burn Him into cinders. The Enlightened One, however, created flames far stronger than those of the Naga, and these soon chased him away. Tired and defeated, the Naga departed and left the Buddha in peace. During the course of the night, many Divine Spirits visited the Lord, and He expounded the Holy Truths to them.

The Kasyapa brothers, although they could not behold Divine Spirits, saw the bright light shed by their presence, and were amazed. They asked the Holy One to stay on in the monastery. The Lord remained with the brothers and their followers for sometime, and He wrought many miracles and wonders. And when the brothers beheld the power of the Buddha, they accepted the Law and became His disciples. The eldest of them, however, was the last to be converted for he was jealous of the Compassionate One, and for sometime he did not accept His superiority. The Buddha was patient

with him. He proved to him over and over again the greatness of the truths He taught. At last, the eldest Kasyapa brother also, accepted the Holy One and His Teachings.

While the Buddha dwelt with the Kasyapa brothers, from time to time the Devas visited Him and listened to His Teachings, and all the disciples marvelled at the bright lights they saw at night when the Lord conversed with the Devas and gave them the Law.

The Lord once again decided to journey further, and He took with Him the eldest Kasyapa brother along with the other disciples. They went first to Gaya where the Buddha sat down on the Elephant Rock and addressed the crowds that had come to receive Him. And this time He talked to them of the false 'I' in men which leads them into temptation. This wicked 'I' was forever demanding for itself pleasures of the world and was the root cause of all selfish cravings and desires. He proved to those that this 'I', like the rest of the world, was an illusion, and made of the stuff of which dreams are made. He warned the people not to forget their true selves by getting lost in the false 'I'.

Next, the Buddha went to Rajagriha, the kingdom of King Bimbisara, and the King received Him with respect and reverence and thanked Him for not forgetting His promise. The Enlightened One

expounded the Truth fully to the King and his people, and many were converted and joined the Order.

King Bimbisara asked the Buddha to eat a meal with him in the palace, and graciously the Lord accepted the invitation. But when the Holy One entered the city, the crowds pressed to see Him and touch His robe. So much so, that the Lord could not move forward. Then it was that a young Brahmin appeared and walked ahead of the Lord, clearing the way for Him and praising His great wisdom, till they reached the palace. And then leaping into the sky, the Brahmin disappeared and was seen no more. And all knew that a god had descended to the earth to respect the Buddha and to be of service to Him.

King Bimbisara begged of the Lord to stay for sometime in Rajagriha and he gave to the Holy One the Bamboo Grove where He and His disciples could dwell and follow their way of life without disturbances.

There dwelt in Rajagriha at that time two friends by the name of Sariputra and Moggallana who were believers of the great ascetic, Sanjaya. These two friends had promised each other that if either of them came to know of how to obtain deliverance from death, he would immediately tell the other.

One day Sariputra happened to see a disciple of

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the Lord asking for alms in the city, and he was struck by the calm and beautiful expression on the face of this disciple. Sariputra asked him what was the philosophy he believed in, and who was his master. The disciple briefly explained to Sariputra the four Truths, but said to him: 'I have but imperfectly explained to you the Law that my Master teaches. Come to the Bamboo Grove and listen to the Lord yourself, and He will deliver you from the fears of death.'

On hearing this, Sariputra went in search of Moggallana, and together, the two friends entered the Bamboo Grove to hear the teachings of the Lord. The Buddha saw them coming and He said to His disciples: 'Here come two men who will in time be amongst my best and dearest disciples.'

Sariputra and Moggallana joined the Holy Order and, as the Lord had predicted, became His truest disciples.

The numbers, of believers and converts, kept increasing and there were some in Rajagriha who grew jealous of the Lord and of the great love and esteem the people had for Him. They started saying that if the Lord remained longer in Rajagriha everybody would become a monk and all normal life would stop. They also spread all kinds of rumours and gossip about the Buddha and His disciples, hoping thus to turn the people against Him. The disciples came to the Enlightened One

and asked Him what course of action they should take against these false stories which were being spread all over the country-side.

The Lord replied: 'Pay no heed whatsoever to them, and remember one thing, O beloved disciples, that hatred cannot be silenced by lies but by truth.'

The disciples obeyed the Lord and ignored all the malignant rumours. Soon by their right conduct and goodness they silenced the evil tongues' of their enemies.

*Crowning his head that majesty which brought
All men, so awed and silent, in his steps.*



ING SUDDHODANA HEARD THAT his son had become a Buddha and the King longed to see Him again. He sent a messenger to the Bamboo Grove where the Holy One dwelt but when the messenger reached the grove and heard the Lord speaking, he forgot all about his mission and became a monk. Thus nine times did King Suddhodana send messengers to the Enlightened One and none of them returned but stayed on in the Bamboo Grove and joined the Holy Order.

King Suddhodana next summoned the noble Udayin and he said to him: 'Good Udayin, I am old now and shall soon die. Before I leave this world it is my only wish to see my son. Nine messengers have I sent to Him but not one of them has returned. When you were a child, you were His playmate and He had always great affection for you. Go now to Him, kind Udayin and implore Him to come and see me.'

Readily Udayin left for the kingdom of Rajagriha and went straight to the Bamboo Grove where the Lord dwelt. And Udayin too listened to the teachings of the Holy One and joined His

Order. But Udayin had not forgotten the mission he had been sent on. One day he went to the Enlightened One and with great humility said: 'Lord, Your father is aged and longs to see You. This is a good time of the year for travelling for it is neither too hot nor too cold. Therefore, O Lord, in Your infinite mercy go to him.'

And the Holy One replied: 'I shall do so, Udayin. Ask the monks to prepare for the journey and let us go to Kapilavastu to see My father.'

Immediately Udayin by the power of the Lord flew through the air and in a trice arrived at the palace of the King. Maharajah Suddhodana's joy knew no bounds when he heard that his Son was already on His way to see him.

In the meantime the people of Kapilavastu along with the King and the Sakya princes made preparations to receive the Buddha and to welcome Him in their midst. The city was decorated with gay flags and banners and the streets cleared. After many days the Lord arrived at Kapilavastu.

King Suddhodana along with the Sakya princes and his subjects went to receive the Lord and to welcome Him in the grove which the King had prepared for His abode. The Lord entered the beautiful grove with His disciples and the rays that shone from His body dazzled all who looked on Him. The King stepped forward and did homage to his Son. When some of the Sakya princes saw the King



The Miracle

kneeling in reverence before the Lord they said amongst themselves:

‘ King Suddhodana should not do obeisance to his son for surely it is customary for the son to pay respect to his father.’

The Buddha sensed the annoyance of the princes and so as to silence their resentment the Lord leapt into the sky and flames shot out of His shoulders. The Sakya lords, when they beheld this magnificent sight, were ashamed of their thoughts and saw that the Enlightened One was the greatest and that all should do Him homage. The Buddha then descended to the ground and as He spoke to His people He made a light refreshing rain fall from the skies. And the drops fell only on those who liked it whilst those who did not want it remained quite dry.

The princes and the people of Kapilavastu went away from the grove marvelling at the sights they had seen and praising the greatness of the Enlightened One.

The next day, as was His custom, the Lord went to the city with His bowl asking for alms. Once again the Sakya people were astonished to see their Prince begging for alms and they went hurriedly to the King to tell him of it. King Suddhodana too was upset when he heard this. He went with haste to the Lord and said to Him: ‘ Most Excellent One, You have no need to beg for food. In the palace

the tables are groaning under the weight of the delicacies and tasty dishes which have been specially prepared for You.'

To this the Lord replied: 'Despise not this custom of asking for alms, for this is the duty of all monks and should never be neglected. It teaches humility and charity and is a part of My nature. I work for the salvation of all.'

And King Suddhodana seeing that his objection to his Son begging for alms was just pride and an unworthy sentiment, bowed before the Lord and then led Him to the palace where the Lord sat down to His meal. After the Buddha had finished, the ladies of the palace came to pay their respects to Him. But the Lord noticed that the Princess Yashodhara was not amongst them. And the Enlightened One knew that the Princess expected Him to show her special treatment by going to her chamber where she awaited Him.

The Buddha said to King Suddhodana: 'Lead me to the Princess' rooms.' As He entered her chamber, He saw the Princess clad in coarse yellow robes standing at the far end. And the Lord looked at the Princess with eyes full of compassion and the Princess Yashodhara forgetting her pride and her hurt ran forward and fell at His feet and heart-rending sobs shook her entire frame. The Buddha gently bade her arise and to all who stood by He praised the Princess Yashodhara for her



The Return

purity and for renouncing the life of ease and comfort.

‘Great has been her virtue,’ He said. ‘and greater still will be her reward.’

That evening the Lord gave the teachings of the Divine Law to His own people, and the town of

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Kapilavastu emptied out to hear the Buddha. To this assembly also came King Suddhodana, the Queen Prajapati and the Princess Yashodhara. As they listened to the preachings of the Lord their fears and doubts were expelled and all was Light. In the heart of the Princess the words of the Lord penetrated deep down, and dispelled the bitterness of all these years of having been without the Master.

The people of Kapilavastu accepted the Holy Law and all returned home rejoicing in their new joy and praising the Lord.

Now Nanda, the second son of King Suddhodana, by his Queen Prajapati, was to wed within the next few days, and by a ceremony that very day was also to be made the heir to the throne. The day before this was to take place, the Lord, after partaking of His meal in the palace, got up to leave and turning to Nanda, handed him His bowl and bade him follow. Carrying the bowl of the Buddha, Nanda walked back behind the Holy One all the way to the monastery. Now, although Nanda had been greatly moved by the teachings of the Lord, he had no intention whatsoever of joining the Order. But when he entered the monastery, he asked permission to become a monk and the Lord silently gave His consent.

One day the Princess Yashodhara dressed her son Rahula in lovely robes and embracing him bade

him go to the Lord who had just finished His meal and was leaving, to ask Him for His rights as His son. Rahula did as his mother told him and going to the Lord said: 'Father, give me my inheritance.' The Buddha ignored the child but Rahula followed the Enlightened One all the way back to the grove and kept repeating: 'Father, give me my inheritance'.

Then the Lord said to His disciples: 'Monks, this is My son and he asks Me for his inheritance. Surely there is no greater inheritance that I can give him than the teachings of the Law and, an admission into the Order.'

The disciples said: 'Yes, Lord.'

And thus Rahula, too, became a monk and dwelt in the monastery with the Buddha.

King Suddhodana heard that both Nanda and Rahula had embraced the life of ascetics and joined the Order of monks. And this news grieved the King for there was none other to succeed him after his death. He went to the Lord and said: 'Enlightened One, I sorrow for after me there is none who will sit on the throne of my kingdom. This thought has caused me great pain and I humbly request of You for one thing. Spare the suffering of other parents by making it a rule that no son can join the Holy Order without first getting the permission of his parents.'

And the Lord said: 'Be it so.'

When the cousins of the Lord heard of the conversion of Nanda and Rahula, they too, decided to join the Buddha and become His disciples.

Amongst these princes were Ananda and Devadatta. Having resolved this, they set out for the monastery. They were richly clad in their princes' robes and ornaments and as they neared the monastery they decided to remove their jewels. A barber by the name of Upate was passing by that way and the princes handed their costly ornaments to him. When he asked them where they were going they told him that they were joining the Lord. Upate, too, decided to go with the Sakya princes and leaving the jewels under a tree followed them.

As they were thus walking, a hawk swept down and carried away the ornaments which Devadatta had hidden in his hair and the princes laughed to see Devadatta's vanity. They knew that although Devadatta was becoming a disciple of the Buddha, the teachings of the Lord had not borne fruit in his heart and that there was still in him hatred and jealousy against the Holy One.

The Enlightened One received His cousins with joy, and, in particular, Ananda, whose simplicity and goodness endeared him to the Lord. Often as this faithful disciple listened to the teachings of the Master, he could not understand or perceive their meaning but his heart overflowed with love for the

Lord and the Buddha knew that the path of love also led to the supreme truth and Nirvana. As time went by, Ananda's devotion to the Master won him an honoured place amongst the monks and he was later chosen by the Lord to serve Him and wait on His personal needs. And to the close of His life, Ananda was nearest to the Master and inseparable from Him.

Now the Buddha perceiving that the seed had been well sown in the hearts of King Suddhodana, the Queen Prajapati and the Princess Yashodhara, departed from Kapilavastu leaving behind immeasurable peace and calm.

The Lord returned to Rajagriha. Here he met a rich merchant from Sravasti by the name of Anathapindika who came to the Master to invite him to Sravasti. The Lord accepted the invitation and Anathapindika hurried back home to prepare for the coming of the Lord. He wondered what would be the best place for the Lord to stay in and he decided that the park belonging to Prince Jeta would be the most suitable. Anathapindika went to Prince Jeta and asked if he could buy the park. Prince Jeta replied: 'Yes, if you give me enough gold coins to cover the entire park.'

Anathapindika had a great deal of money and he thought that there was no better way of spending it than giving it to the Lord. He agreed and cart-load after cart-load of gold coins were sent to the

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park and spread on its ground. Soon the whole park, apart from a small strip, was covered with shining gold sovereigns. Prince Ieta was amazed to see the devotion of Anathapindika and he said to him, 'this part of the park is yours but that which still remains uncovered will be my small gift to the Lord. There, I shall build here a house for the Buddha to dwell in.'

The Buddha came to Sravasti. Anathapindika with great joy escorted Him to the Park Jetavana. This beautiful abode became a place of refuge and peace for the disciples.

Anathapindika was praised far and wide for his generous gift but he thought to himself:

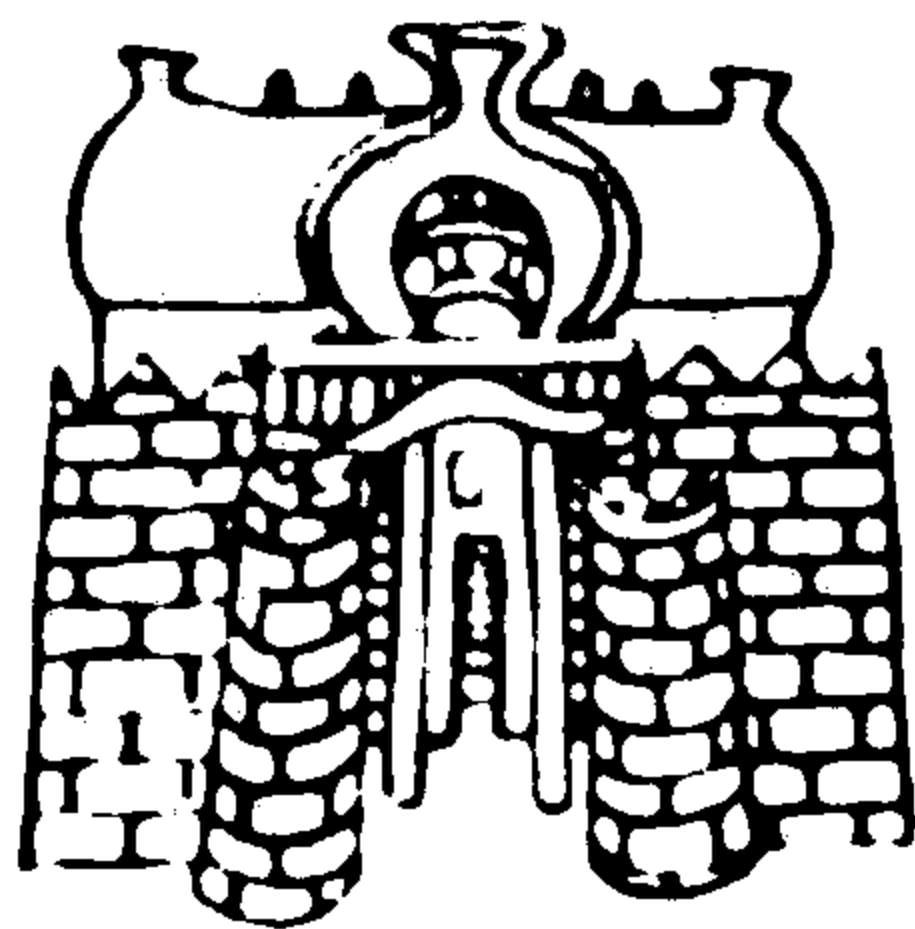
'What I have done has brought me great peace and joy. I would like others also to enjoy the pleasure of giving to the Lord.'

He decided to go round the city on his elephant asking for alms for the Lord. And as he went from street to street, the people gave generously to Anathapindika for the Buddha.

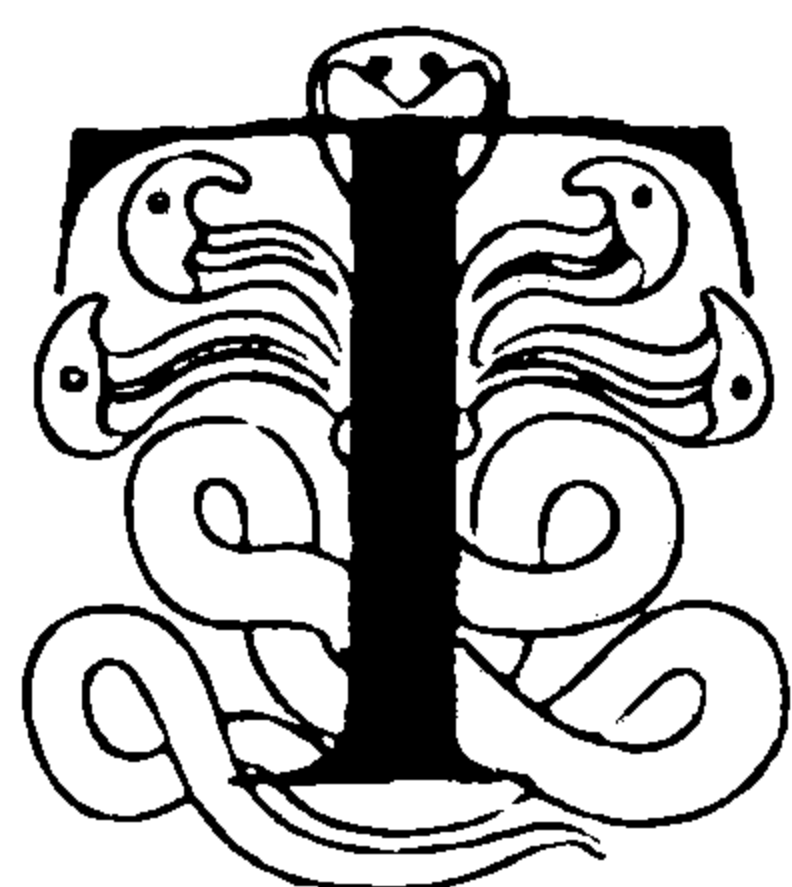
There dwelt in a ramshackle little house, a young girl who had nothing whatsoever that she could give to the Lord except a dress made of a coarse and cheap material which she had bought after saving up all she earned for many months. She decided to give this to Anathapindika. As he passed by, she threw it out of the window. When Anathapindika saw this dress, he said, 'the giver of

this must be very poor. Go, my servants, and find her'. The servants went and returned to Anathapindika saying that the girl who gave the dress had nothing else in the world. Then Anathapindika sent costly garments and jewels to clothe and adorn this poor little girl who had given so generously to the Lord.

The next day the girl died and went straight-away to heaven, but from time to time, she visited the Lord and listened to His teachings.



*Each man his prison makes.
Within yourself deliverance must be sought.*



THE LORD DWELT IN THE MONASTERY of Jetavana for some time and He spent His day thus.

Arising early in the morning, and in the solitude of His room, He meditated about the entire universe. He studied all creatures so as to decide who was ready to receive His instruction on the Divine Law, and what would be the best way to present the teachings to him. For the Lord, in His love and mercy, knew that men differed in their ways of thinking and feeling and He tried to present the Divine Truths to them as simply as possible, and in a manner which each one of them would be able to understand.

After meditation, the Buddha would go into the city to ask for alms. Sometimes, He would go alone and sometimes, with His disciples. Wherever His Divine Presence went, the path He trod on was covered with flowers and the breezes whispered soft musical notes. On returning to the monastery, the Lord would collect His monks around Him and talk to them of the deeper and more hidden meanings of the Truths.

Then the Holy One would eat His meal and

retire into His private room and once again He would turn His mind to those who would be coming to hear Him speak on the Divine Law in the evening and how He should address them.

The Lord would then rest awhile, and having done so, would go out and give the teachings to those who had collected at the appointed hour in large numbers to listen to Him.

After the assembly dispersed, the Buddha would stroll in the grove and then return to His monks: for this was the question-hour allotted to His disciples. They would ask questions and He would clear any doubts about the teachings of the Law which may have arisen in their minds.

And thus, darkness would fall—the Buddha sitting amidst His disciples and with patience and love answering their questions. As night approached, the monks would silently depart, leaving the Lord alone. Then, divine spirits of the heavens would visit the Lord, and in the still hours of the night, the Compassionate One would give the teachings to them.

Just before daylight the Buddha would retire to His chamber and rest till the dawn broke in the eastern sky, when He would arise and start His day.

One day whilst the Lord dwelt in Jetavana, there came to His monastery a woman carrying the body of her dead child. Her name was Kisa Gotami and she had heard of the greatness of the Buddha, his

miracles and of the wondrous things He could do.

Kneeling before the Lord she said: 'My babe is dead. O Merciful One! give him life again, I beseech You.'

The Buddha looked at Kisa Gotami and said to her: 'Go, Kisa Gotami, and bring me a handful of black mustard seed from any house where there has been no death and I shall breathe life into your babe's body.'

Happy at the words of the Lord, Kisa Gotami set out for the city, confident that she would soon return with the mustard seeds. But she went from house to house, and everywhere she asked, the reply was: 'Sister, you can take the mustard seeds but death has visited our family and we have mourned our loss.'

Nowhere could Kisa Gotami find a person who had not known the sorrow of losing a dear one. And then the Truth dawned on Kisa Gotami. The Lord had in this manner revealed it to her. Now she knew that death was common to all and that they who are born, must die.

Kisa Gotami went to the burning ghat and silently cremated the body of her dead child and then she returned to the Lord and said: 'Lord, there is none who has not known the sorrow of death and my suffering is shared by all.'

The Buddha said to Kisa Gotami: 'Come, sit near me, Kisa Gotami, and My words will remove

the curtain of illusion that clouds your wisdom. I shall teach you the Law and you will be freed of birth and death and the sorrows that are born of them.'

Then the Lord gave the teachings to Kisa Gotami and brought peace and joy to her grief-stricken soul.

It was the rainy season and the Buddha decided to go to Vaishali. The inhabitants of Vaishali rejoiced to have the Lord in their midst and they came in great numbers to listen to Him. The Buddha and His disciples dwelt at Vaishali in a beautiful mango grove belonging to a lovely dancing-girl whose name was Amrapali.

Amrapali had heard of the Lord and she desired to see Him and listen to Him. One day she set out in her carriage for the Mango Grove but when she reached there she was met by a monk, who knowing her to be a courtesan, refused to take her to the Lord. Feeling humiliated and insulted, Amrapali was turning back. Just then another monk came and said: 'Take her to the Lord, brother, for all are welcomed by Him. The Lord Buddha makes no distinction between the rich, the poor, the low-caste or the high-caste, the good or the bad.'

So the monks led Amrapali to the Buddha and the beautiful dancing-girl stood spellbound in the Divine Presence of the Lord. Her pride, in her own beauty which had humbled many kings and

princes, disappeared and she flung herself at the feet of the Master and worshipped Him.

The Holy One sat, with Amrapali by him, and turning to His disciples said:

‘ Listen, Monks. Once there was a pheasant who had lovely feathers, and she dwelt in a forest along with many other animals. One day a raging fire devastated the forest, burning and destroying everything. The animals, in great terror, ran frantically for safety. The pheasant, seeing the plight of the animals, determined to put out the fire. She dipped her feathers into a stream and jumped into the flames, sprinkling the water from her feathers on them. She did this several times. The gods in the heavens watched her with amusement and said:

“ You foolish bird, do you not see that a small creature like you can never hope to put out such a mighty fire, and that all your efforts to do so are in vain? ”

‘ The bird replied: “ It may be so, but since great beings like you are doing nothing whatsoever to help all these poor animals, I, although small, must try and do whatever little I can.” She leapt into the flames again, and was burnt to death in her attempts to extinguish the fire. The Devas, seeing the courage of the bird, were ashamed of their attitude of indifference. They put out the fire and the animals returned to the forest and dwelt in peace. But the pheasant,” added the Lord, “ was this lady,



Amrapali

Amrapali, and for her noble deeds she will in this life enter Nirvana.'

The Lord then spoke to Amrapali of the Divine Law and of the true meaning of real suffering. Before taking her leave of the Lord that evening, Amrapali invited Him to her home the next day and asked Him to honour her by taking His meal there. The Buddha consented and Amrapali left the Mango Grove rejoicing at her good fortune.

On her way back she met some princes who were going to meet the Lord and she told them that the Buddha had agreed to eat a meal at her place.

They were annoyed and jealous. They said: 'How is it that the Holy One has consented to eat at the home of such a woman? Surely she is lying to us.'

They went with speed to the grove and requested the Lord to eat with them the next day; but the Buddha replied: 'I have already accepted the invitation of Amrapali.'

The next day the Lord went to Amrapali's house and ate the food that the dancing-girl had prepared with love and adoration. After eating, the Buddha gave Amrapali further advice and Amrapali asked the Lord if He would accept the house she lived in as a gift to the Order of monks. And the Lord said: 'Yes'. For, He saw the generosity and goodness of the heart that gave it.

While the Lord was in Vaishali, His divine power revealed to Him that His father, King Suddhodana, lay on his death-bed. Flying through the air the Holy One reached His father's bed within a moment. He further expounded the teachings to King Suddhodana and brought the King peace and calm. Clear as daylight, the realization of the Truth came to King Suddhodana and before dying he attained the supreme knowledge and entered that everlasting state of being, Nirvana.

After performing the death ceremonies of His father, the Buddha returned to Vaishali.

Queen Prajapati, the Princess Yashodhara and other ladies of Kapilavastu who believed in the

Lord followed Him to the ashram at Vaishali in the hope that He would admit them into the Order.

So far the Lord had refused to accept women as inmates of the monastery for He feared that they would find the rules of life in the monastery too strict and would not be able to abide by them. But when the Queen and the Princess, along with their companions, arrived at the gates of the monastery, foot-sore and weary after their long journey the King Ananda saw them and had pity on them. He went to the Lord and pleaded for them. Very reluctantly, the Lord agreed to form an Order of Nuns, but He was not at all convinced that He was doing the right thing. Ananda returned to the ladies and gave them the good news. The ladies rejoiced at their good fortune.

Of all the nuns in the Order, the Princess Yashodhara proved to be, in thought and deed, the most deserving and noble. The Lord watched her with joy and saw that soon she would be freed from all her fetters and attain supreme peace.

The Buddha again returned to Sravasti with His monks. There lived in the forest of Sravasti some ascetics who scoffed at the teachings of the Lord and questioned His greatness. Their followers and disciples went around trying to belittle the glory of the Buddha, and boasted of the greater powers of their masters. Soon, in Sravasti, conflicts and disputes arose as to who was the supreme Teacher.

In order to put an end to this controversy, King Paranjitsingh of Sravasti decided to invite the hermits as well as the Buddha; each was called upon to prove, by wonders and miracles, the genuineness of his divine powers. In an enormous hall a large gathering collected for the occasion. The arrival of the Lord was awaited. At that moment, a dense cloud drifted in and slowly, as it evaporated, the Holy One was seen standing in the centre.

Next, the Lord made the great dome of the hall fly off, and then, with His gaze paved a path right across the heavens. The Lord raised His body in the air and slowly walked along this path whilst bright flames shot out of His shoulders and the purest streams of water flowed out of the lower part of His body. And sometimes the Lord made the flames come out of the lower half of His body while water gushed out of His shoulders. Amazement and awe gripped all those who beheld this marvellous sight. Having done this, the Buddha still continued to climb upward along the path and He created another being like Himself with whom He conversed as He walked.

The rival hermits and their disciples were silenced forever as they saw these wonders performed by the Lord, and they crept away quietly.

The Buddha having proved His greatness on earth, now decided to go to the highest heavens and teach the Law to His mother who waited patiently

for Him. Turning to the earth He announced His intention and promised His disciples that He would return to them after three months. The Lord then disappeared into the heavens and entered the house of Maya. He stayed there for three months explaining and teaching the Divine Truths to Queen Maya and the other gods.

At the end of the period, the Lord came down to Sravasti again and the gods of the heavens paid homage to Him and bade Him farewell. Three ladders were set by the gods for the descent. One of gold which was placed on one side. One of silver which was placed on the other side and one of precious stones which stood in the centre. The gods and divine spirits descended by the ladders on either side while the centre ladder was for the Lord. Slowly, and with majesty, the Lord came down and a divine spirit went ahead of Him playing melodious tunes on his harp while another held an umbrella of royalty over His head and a third fanned Him. The Buddha was revealed to the multitude who waited below watching this beautiful sight. And all looked on in wonder and amazement, and together, men and gods worshipped the Greatest One.

The Buddha returned to the monastery at Jetavana, and to His monks who were waiting patiently for Him.

On His way to the monastery, the Lord met a
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young slave-girl carrying a bowl of rice to her master who was working in the fields. When the girl saw the Lord she said: 'Here comes the Holy One and I would like to give Him this bowl of rice. I know my master will beat me for giving away his meal but I do not mind.'

And thinking in this manner the girl handed the bowl to the Lord. When her master saw her come empty-handed, he asked her what she had done with the food, and fearlessly the girl told him that she had given it to the Buddha. To her surprise, her master instead of getting angry and beating her, said: 'By doing so you have done right and have shown more wisdom than I, for my eyes have been clouded with ignorance till now. Go your way, my girl, and from now onwards you are no longer my slave; you are free.'

The girl rejoicing in her freedom went immediately to the park and became a disciple of the Enlightened One.

Now some of the monks began to quarrel amongst themselves over some petty and trifling matters. Ananda, Sariputra and other monks tried to make peace amongst them but failed, and the Lord had to intervene. Over and over again He sent for them and asked them not to waste time over squabbles but to occupy their minds with the higher truths. But they would not listen to Him either and the quarrel increased and spread. The Holy

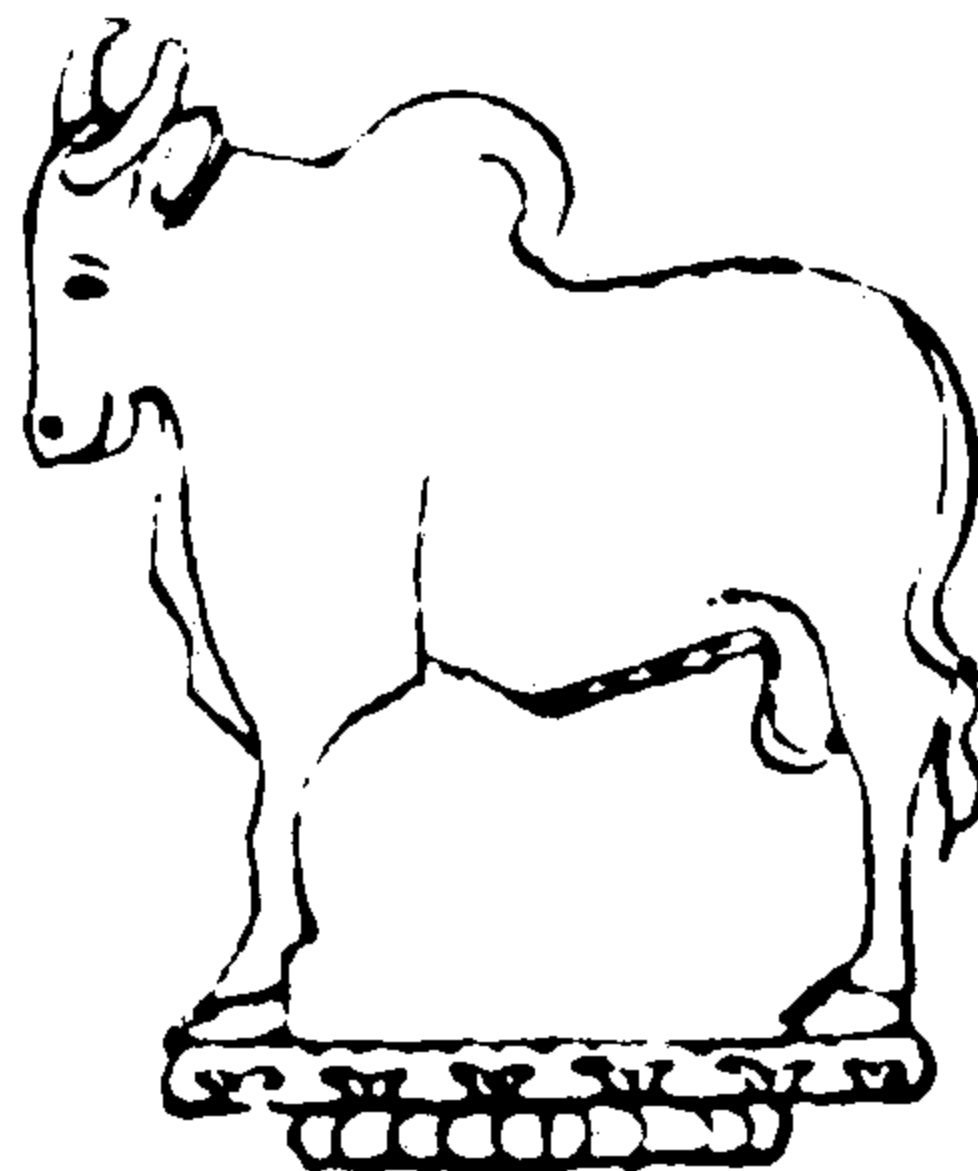
One seeing this decided to retire by Himself to a lonely place. He stayed in a forest by Himself and spent His time thinking about the great truths and how men's salvation could be worked out.

One day as He sat thus alone, He saw a herd of elephants go down to the water's edge. The leader of the elephants helped the herd to drink the water, filling his own trunk with water and spurring it out for the others. After he had quenched the thirst of all, they turned on him and beat him and trampled on him. And sadly the Lord thought to Himself: 'Surely, My disciples and monks are doing the same to Me. With unselfish love, I too quenched their thirst for birth and rebirth, and now, instead of following the Truth I taught them, they are quarrelling and fighting amongst themselves and causing Me such pain.'

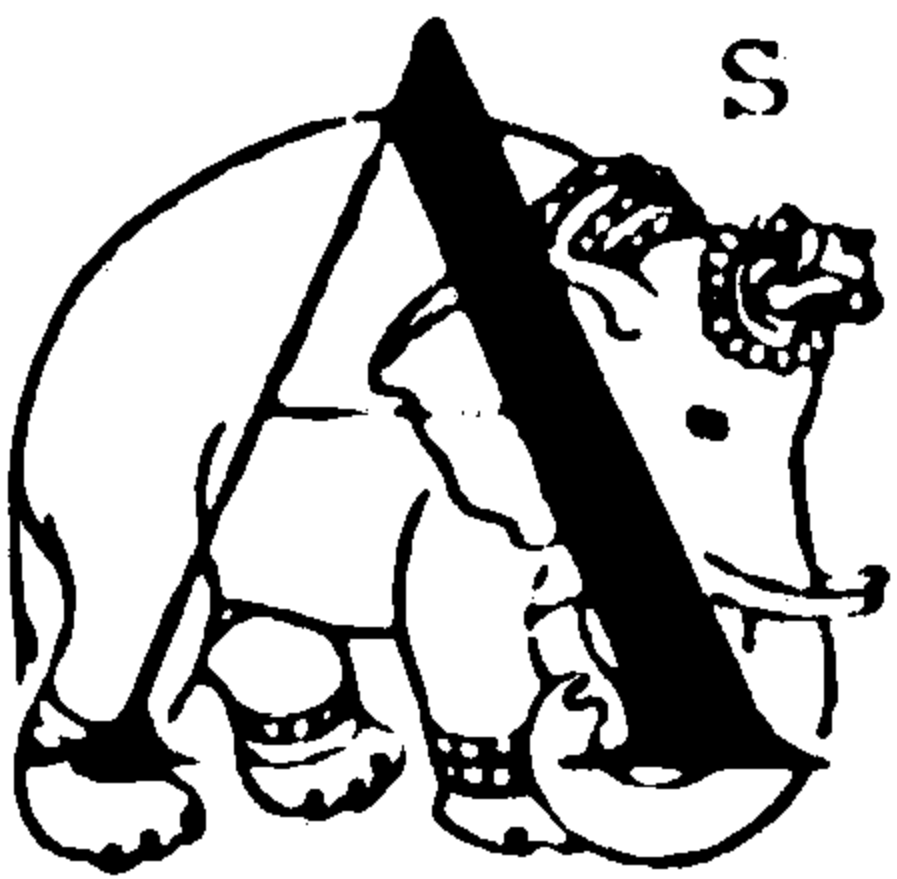
The leader of the elephants, after the others had departed, came to the Lord and asked Him if he could serve Him. The Lord gave His consent and the elephant looked after every need of the Buddha with love and adoration and the Enlightened One blessed the elephant for serving Him so devotedly.

The disciples soon realized how badly they had behaved and made peace among themselves. They then sent Ananda, Sariputra and the others to the Buddha to ask Him to come back to the monastery. These faithful monks came and requested the Lord to return and asked for His forgiveness. The Holy

One, happy to hear that His monks were united again, returned to Jetavana.



*That hath its Stages Four and Precepts Eight
Monarch or slave upon the Perfect Path.*



AS HE TRAVELLED BACK TO JETAVANA, the Buddha passed through the city of Atavi. The ruler of this city had once, while hunting, been caught by a wicked god called Alvaka who lived in a tree. Alvaka ate human flesh. As he held the King by the throat and got ready to devour him, the King pleaded of Alvaka to let him go. 'If you give me my freedom,' he said, 'everyday I shall send someone to you whom you can eat.'

Alvaka agreed and released the King. Returning to his city, the King first sent to Alvaka, men who had been thrown into prisons. Soon the jails were empty. Next, the King ordered that all old men should be sent to Alvaka, one by one. As time went by there remained no more old men in his kingdom. The King now became desperate, for, men and children would suddenly disappear from the city and none knew where they had gone, but in truth, they had been caught by Alvaka to be devoured.

Great was the sorrow of the people of Atavi, and the King, watching his people suffer, was beside himself. Still, he did not have the courage to free

himself of the promise to the wicked god by offering himself to be eaten.

The King appealed to the Buddha for help and the Enlightened One said:

‘ Today I shall go to the god Alvaka Myself.’

The god Alvaka, as he waited for his prey, saw the Lord coming to him and realizing that He was someone unusual, and not an ordinary person, said: ‘ I shall ask You four questions and if You can give me the correct answers to them You will be free, and the King released of his promise to me.’

And Alvaka asked: ‘ How can men free themselves of their passions? How can they silence their desires for ever? Thirdly, how can they guard themselves from other evils? Lastly, how can they put an end to all existences and births and rebirths? ’

To this the Buddha replied: ‘ He who believes in the Law and the four noble Truths, he who follows, never wavering, the eightfold path of right living, thinking and conduct, he can destroy all passions, desires and cravings born of evil, and thus attain Nirvana which is the end of life and future existences.’

When Alvaka heard the replies given by the Lord to his four questions, he knelt down and worshipped Him and became His disciple.

That day there was rejoicing and celebration in the palace of the King and in the city of Atavi, for the shadow of fear which hung over Atavi was gone.

Then, as time went by, the Holy One continued to travel from place to place, never pausing and never resting. Thinking only of the suffering of others and of sowing the seed of the Law in the hearts of men, the Compassionate One cast aside all thoughts of comfort and rest for Himself. To anyone who came to Him, He never said, 'nay' or turned him back saying, 'come some other time'. He welcomed all beings, and with a heart overflowing with compassion and love, gave them the teachings and showed them the way to free themselves of their fetters. And to His disciples, He explained in greater detail the truths and principles and with patience and understanding cleared whatever doubts they had. And slowly with the passage of time, age came upon the Holy One with grace and beauty and made His body lean and His hair grey.

Now Devadatta, cousin of the Lord, who had always been envious and jealous of Him, could no longer suppress his hatred, and he sought ways and means of harming the Lord. The Buddha seeing that in the heart of Devadatta the seed He had sown with endless patience and love, had borne no fruit whatsoever, banished Devadatta from the Order of monks.

However, Devadatta had managed to win the regard of Prince Ajatshatru, the son of King Bimbisara of Rajagriha, and he incited the Prince

against his father, for he knew that while King Bimbisara lived and ruled, he would not allow the Lord to be harmed in anyway.

Devadatta persuaded Ajatshatru to imprison his father and to torture him to death. In vain did his mother, the Queen, plead with her son Ajatshatru, to be merciful to his father; Ajatshatru turned a deaf ear to her piteous entreaties. King Bimbisara died a slow and cruel death in the dark dungeons of the palace.

Having brought about the death of King Bimbisara, Devadatta next persuaded Ajatshatru to close the temples which King Bimbisara had built for the Lord and the people of Rajagriha were told not to go and worship there if they valued their lives.

At that time, the Buddha had returned to Rajagriha, and Ajatshatru, issued an ordinance forbidding his subjects to listen to the teachings of the Lord, under penalty of death. Now Devadatta hired some assassins to slay the Lord and sent them fully armed with dangerous weapons to the grove where the Lord was dwelling. But when these men saw the Divine Presence of the Buddha they threw away their weapons and became His disciples. This made Devadatta more furious and one day as the Lord was going round the city asking for alms, Devadatta released a rogue elephant along His path. The elephant had been put into an even more vicious mood by being teased and tortured. He



The Surrender

stampeded down the road in a wild fury destroying anything that came in his path and making straight for the Lord. But as he came within a few feet of the Master he stopped, and kneeling down, worshipped Him. And the Lord smiled at the villainy of Devadatta.

In the meanwhile Ajatshatru was troubled by his conscience and was haunted by dreams of his dead father and he could neither eat nor sleep. Soon he fell very ill and doctors from all over the land came to see him but found that no medicine could cure his malady. They said that the Buddha alone could save Ajatshatru from dying. Ajatshatru went

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to the Lord and asked for forgiveness and the Holy One in His mercy forgave Ajatshatru and informed him that his father King Bimbisara had gone to the highest heavens after his death and that he had forgiven his son for all his unkindness. At last peace and calm came to Ajatshatru and his fever left him. He listened to the teachings of the Lord and became a believer. He banished Devadatta from his kingdom. Once again the inhabitants of Rajagriha could pay their respects to the Enlightened One and worship in His temples.

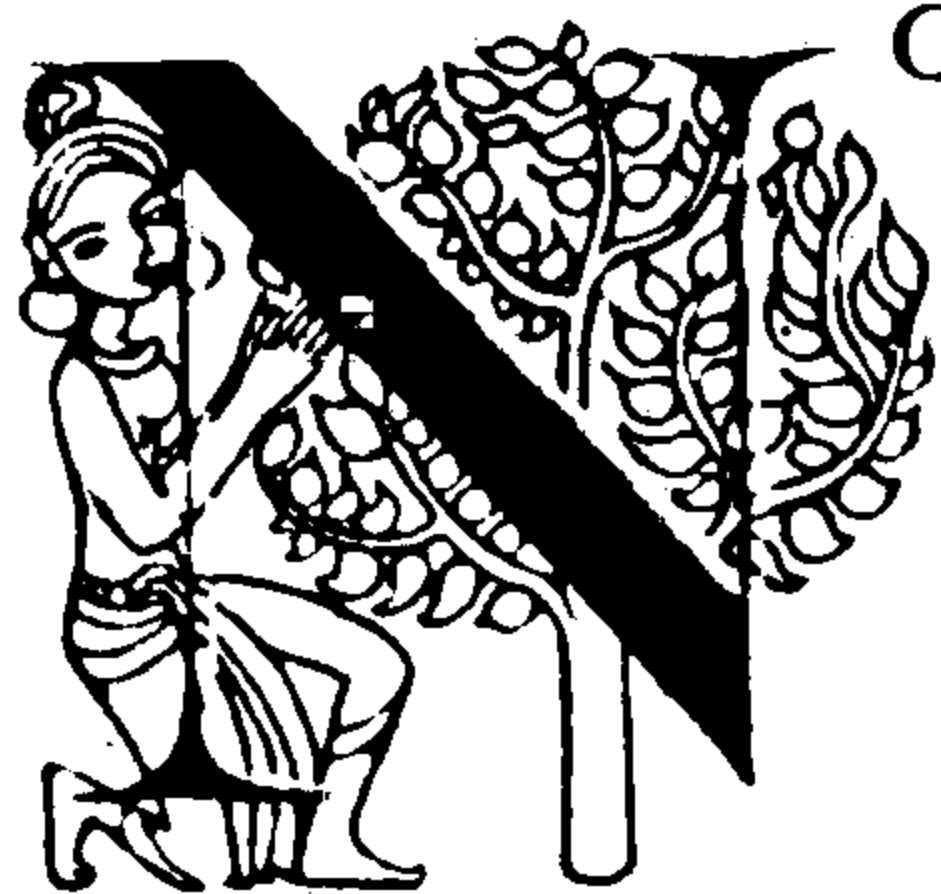
Devadatta now became desperate and he decided to kill the Lord, himself. One day as the Buddha walked down a slope, deep in thought, Devadatta rolled an enormous boulder down the slope and it came crashing down towards the Buddha, but just as it was about to strike Him it split into two and rolled away on either side of Him. One of the splinters from the rock however struck the Lord's feet and made His toe bleed. And the Holy One said to Devadatta: 'Foolish Devadatta! For shedding these few drops of My blood your soul will suffer the torments of the darkest depths of hell.'

Finding all his attempts to kill the Buddha unsuccessful, Devadatta pretended to repent, and he came to the Lord and kneeling down beside Him, asked for forgiveness. But he had dipped his nails in a deadly poison and as he knelt at the feet of the Master, he began clawing at His ankles with

his nails. The Buddha knew the cunningness of Devadatta and He pushed Him away with His toe. There was so much power and strength in one toe of the Lord that Devadatta rolled right over and then a terrible thunder shook the world and the ground where Devadatta lay, split open and spat out flames which devoured him. And thus, Devadatta, enemy of the Lord, died, destroyed by his own hatred, and his soul went to hell.



at the turning.



NOW THE LORD SEEING THAT IT was almost time for Him to leave the world, collected His monks and disciples round Him and exhorted them never to fail in their duties and never to lose faith in the Law. He instructed them on any point on which they were confused.

By and by, relating to them stories of His previous existences, He showed them which qualities they too should cultivate in themselves. And it was indeed a sweet sight to see the Lord sitting with His monks and relating to them His past experiences with love and gentle humour.

‘Listen, monks,’ He said, ‘about the time when I was the leader of a clan of monkeys. We dwelt in the boughs of a magnificent mango tree which grew by the river Ganga. Well, the fruit of this tree was so delicious, that we, monkeys, feared that if anyone tasted it he would want the tree for himself. So, we never let any of the fruit drop on the ground. Once, however, a mango fell into the waters of the river and was carried all the way to Banaras.

‘The King of Banaras who was bathing in the river saw it and took it to his palace. When

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he tasted the fruit he was struck by its delicious flavour and at once sent his guards all over the country to find the tree that bore it. Then, the King himself set out in search of the tree, taking with him an army of his soldiers. They came to the spot where the mango tree—our home—stood, and the King was delighted. He ordered his men to shoot all the monkeys that lived on it, so that he could reserve it for himself. As the archers got ready to shoot, my monkeys ran to me for protection. They had no way of escape, as on one side was the river and on the other, the soldiers of the King.

‘I asked them not to be afraid, and leaping to the other side of the river I got hold of a long bamboo which I thought of using as a bridge for the monkeys to cross over. I tied the bamboo to myself and swam back with it, but I found that it was just a little too small to bridge the river and the only way this could be done was for me to let it remain tied to me so that my back also could be used as a bridge whilst I hung on to the tree with my arms.

‘I told the other monkeys to quickly cross over and make their escape. One by one, the monkeys stepped on my back and crossed over to safety. I was tired and exhausted by the weight I had to bear and my strength was fast giving way. There remained now only one more monkey to
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cross over, but this one, as he stepped forward, deliberately jumped on me with such violence that he broke my backbone. After he too had crossed over safely, I died of the hurt he had inflicted on me.'

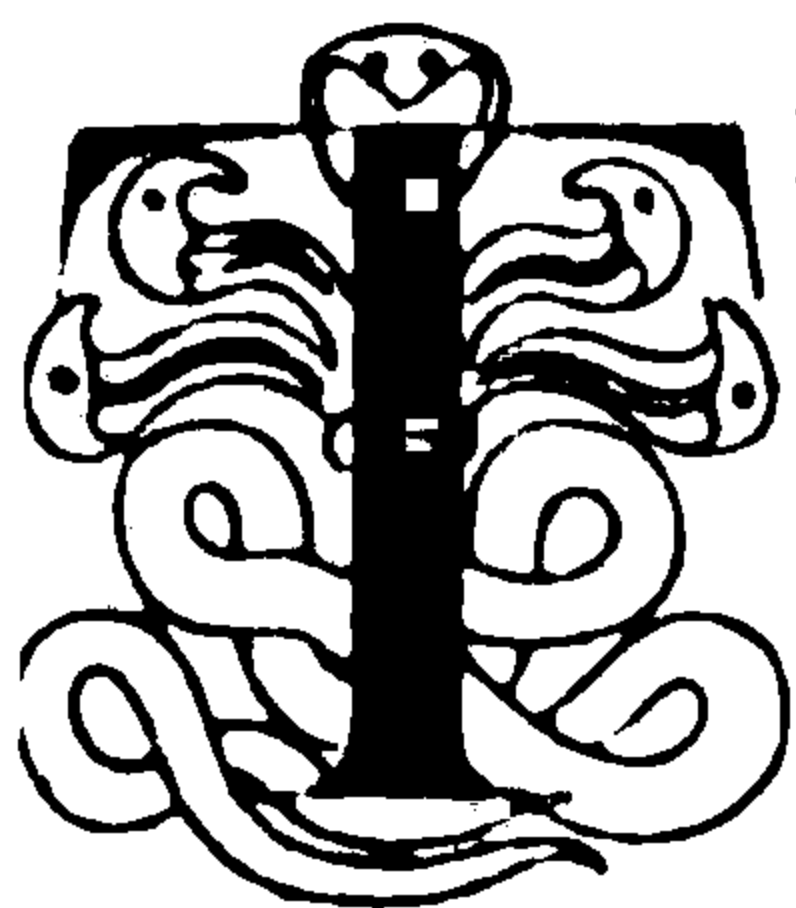
The Lord paused and then went on to say: 'That monkey, dear monks, was Devadatta in one of his former lives.'

'Therefore, O disciples,' continued the Lord, 'believe in yourselves and in that changeless everlasting you, and if your faith is steadfast in yourself, the world will no longer exist for you, and all its fires will be stilled.'



An Episode

The Heart of Being is celestial rest.



HE LORD WAS NOW NEARLY eighty years old and as He travelled from place to place, Ananda, whose eyes never left the Lord and who watched over Him with loving care, saw how painful and tiring were these journeys for Him and how the Lord grew weaker and frailer day by day.

Once He paused to rest beside a green field, and admiring the rich pastures where cattle grazed, and the fertile country-side, the Lord said to His disciples: 'The man who owns these fields and pastures must be very contented.' Now, the owner was standing nearby and he heard the Lord speak in this manner and coming up to the Buddha, he said: 'I am Dhaniya, the herdsman, and the owner of this land. You are right, Master, to say that I am contented. I have worked hard all day in the fields and taken care of my cattle and now after finishing the day's work I am on my way back to my hut which has a strong roof and where I know my wife has lit the fire and prepared the meal for the evening.'

And the Enlightened One replied to Dhaniya saying: 'I have no cows or rich fields but I too

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am contented for I have banished anger and ignorance and I have freed my soul from births and rebirths.'

Then Dhaniya recognized the Lord and bowing to Him asked Him to come and share his evening meal. And the Lord went with Dhaniya and after they had eaten, the Lord gave the Divine Law to Dhaniya, and his wife and they became His followers.

In the course of their journey, the Buddha and His disciples came to a river and they could find no boat to carry them across. The disciples were looking around for a boat when the Lord swiftly walked over the waters and stood on the other side. And He told His disciples that they too could do the same provided they had the faith.

Now the Lord was taken ill but He curbed His illness for He knew that the disciples still needed Him and that it was not time for Him to go into Nirvana. And the Holy One suffered great pain but He hid it from His monks and did not let them see it. But Ananda who loved the Lord dearly and administered to His every need was quick to see that the Holy One was in pain. And Ananda's head was smitten with fear at the thought of what would happen to all of them after the Master left them.

One day as the Buddha sat meditating, Mara, the tempter, came to Him. He tried to persuade

the Lord to leave the world and become a part of the everlasting joy and peace.

The Lord said to Mara: 'Go, Mara, and leave Me alone. I shall not die just now for there are many who have need of Me. But after three months I shall leave this world.'

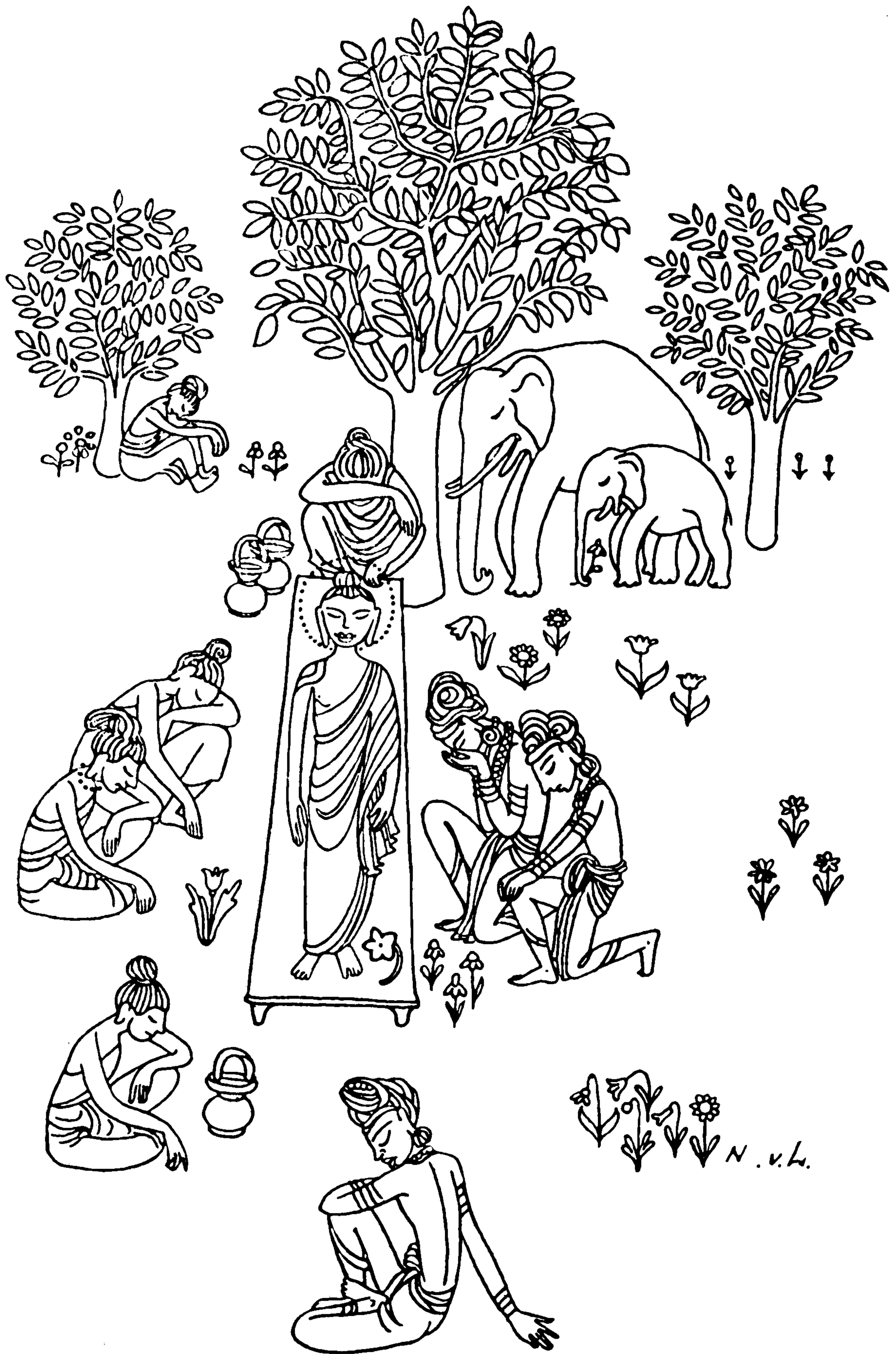
And the earth, when it heard these words, trembled and quaked for the Lord had rejected His normal span of life and fixed the date for His departure.

The Holy One now came to Pava and took His abode in a mango-grove belonging to Cunda, the smith. Cunda received the Lord with great joy and requested Him to eat His meal at his home and when the Buddha accepted his invitation, Cunda went back home to prepare the feast. All night long in Cunda's house, tasty dishes were cooked and there was a great deal of excitement and activity.

The next morning Cunda went to the Lord and said that the meal was ready and the Buddha came to Cunda's house and sat down in the place which had been set for Him. The Lord filled His bowl with the pork and rice whilst His disciples ate of the other dishes. After the Buddha had finished eating He asked Cunda to bury what remained of the dish of pork in the ground, for nobody else should eat of this food. And Cunda did as the Lord told him.

The Buddha then left Cunda's house to go to the

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Mahanirvana

city but on the way He felt very ill and had to lie down and rest under the shade of a tree. He asked Ananda to fetch some water from a nearby stream but Ananda said: 'Lord, several carts just passed through this stream and it has become very muddy.'

But the Lord said three times to Ananda: 'I am thirsty, fetch Me water.'

Then Ananda went down to the stream with the bowl and was surprised to find that as he filled the bowl the muddy waters became crystal clear. Filling the bowl with water, he came and gave it to the Lord to drink. The Lord then asked Ananda to take His cloak and spread it on the ground under the shade of the tree, and the Lord lay down and rested for awhile. Then arising He continued His journey till He came to a forest. 'Go, Ananda, into this forest and you will find twin sal trees growing there. Prepare a couch for Me between these two trees and see that the head is to the North.'

With tears streaming down his face, the faithful Ananda left the Master to prepare the couch, for Ananda saw that the Lord was in great pain and that the end was near. Ananda was angry with Cunda for giving such rich food to the Master, but the Lord said: 'Feel no anger against Cunda, good Ananda. Great rewards are in store for him for the food he gave Me, and blessed indeed is he.'

Ananda prepared the couch and the Lord entered the forest and lay down on it. As He lay under

the shade of the sal trees, they were covered with white blossoms although this was not the time of the year for their blossoming. As the Lord lay on His couch, the blossoms drifted down and gently fell on Him whilst the air was sweet with perfume and soft melodies. Around the couch of the Lord, His disciples sat lost in grief. And Ananda sat at the foot of the couch and wept, and he thought to himself: 'What shall I do without the Lord, and who will help me to find that everlasting peace and joy for which I search? Indeed I am lost without Him and my soul will never be freed of its fetters.' And Ananda moved away from the couch so that the Lord would not see his tears.

But the Lord called him back and said: 'Do not lose heart, dearest disciple. Follow in the eightfold path of righteousness and you will reach the goal.' And with sweet and gentle words, the Lord comforted Ananda in his grief.

The Buddha then entreated His monks never to lose faith in the Law and to spread His message to all mankind. As the Lord lay dying, an aged hermit by the name of Subhadra came to see the Lord, for he wished to understand more clearly the Holy Law. The monks told him that it would not be possible for him to meet the Lord for He lay very ill. But the Buddha knowing that Subhadra had come, asked him to come closer to the couch. And then the Lord explained to Subhadra what

he did not understand, and cleared all his doubts.

Night came, and with it a radiant light, the brightness of which blinded mortal eyes, shone from the presence of the Lord and on His face there was an expression of great serenity and calm. Over the world there hung an awful hush as Nature waited sorrowfully for the end to come. The breeze died out and the birds stopped twittering. With soft steps the animals of the forest approached the spot where the Holy One lay and kneeling down did Him reverence. The flowers hung their heads in grief and the branches of the trees drooped as if the burden of their grief was too much for them. And never had the world looked so beautiful as at this moment of its sorrow at the passing away of the Lord. And then the Lord said farewell to His monks, and closed His eyes and departed from this world into the state of endless peace and joy which is Nirvana.

And all was shantih.





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