

The Life of Buddha

1. KING SUDDHODANA AND QUEEN MAHA MAYA

Long ago, there was a king called Suddhodana. He married a beautiful Koliyan princess named Maha Maya. The couple ruled over the Sakyas, a warrior tribe living next to the Koliya tribe, in the north of India. The capital of the Sakya country was Kapilavatthu.

Since King Suddhodana was a very good king and Queen Maha Maya was equally good, everyone in the kingdom loved them. But they did not have children and they were longing for a son for a long time.

One full moon night, in the palace, the queen had a dream. She felt herself being carried away by four devas (angels) to Lake Anotatta in the Himalayas. After bathing her in the lake, the devas clothed her in heavenly cloths, anointed her with perfumes, and decked her with divine flowers.

Soon after a white elephant, holding a white lotus flower in its trunk appeared and went round her three times striking her on her right side. Finally the elephant disappeared. She woke up and found it was all a dream.

The next day, early in the morning, the queen told the king about the dream. The king was puzzled and so he sent for some wise men and asked them the meaning of the dream.

The wise men said, "Your Majesty, you are very lucky, the devas have chosen our queen as the mother of the Purest-One and the child will become a very great being." The king and queen were very happy when they heard this.

They were so pleased that they invited many of the noblemen in the country to the palace to a feast to tell them the good news. Even the needy were not forgotten. Food and cloths were given to the poor people.

2. THE BIRTH IN LUMBINI PARK

About ten months after the dream, the queen was expecting her child and so she went to the king and said, "My dear, I have to go back to my parents. My baby is about due now." Since it was the custom in India, for a wife to have her baby in her father's house, the king agreed, saying, "Very well, I will make the necessary arrangements for you to go."

The king then sent soldiers ahead to clear the road and some were retained to guard the queen as she was carried in a decorated palanquin. The queen left Kapilavatthu in a long procession of soldiers and retainers, for the capital of her father's kingdom.

On the way to the Koliya country, they passed a garden called Lumbini Park. This garden was near the kingdom called Nepal, at the foot of the Himalayan Mountains. The beautiful park with its sala trees and scented flowers and busy birds and bees attracted the queen. Since the park was a good resting-place, the queen ordered the bearers to stop there for awhile. However, as she rested underneath one of the sala trees, her baby boy was born. It was an auspicious day. The birth took place on a full moon (which is now celebrated as Vesak, the festival of the triple event of Buddha's birth, enlightenment and death), in the year 623 B.C.

According to the legends about this birth, the baby began to walk seven steps forward and at each step, a lotus flower appeared on the ground. Then, at the seventh stride, he stopped and with a noble voice shouted:

"Aggoḥamsmi Lokassa
Jettho Lamasmi Lakassa
Settho Hamasmi Lokassa
Aya mantima jati
Natthi dani punabhavo."

["I am chief of the world,
Eldest am I in the world,
Foremost am I in the world.
This is the last birth.
There is now no more coming to be."]

After the birth of her baby son, Queen Maha Maya immediately returned to Kapilavatthu. When the king learnt of this he was very happy and there was rejoicing all over the country.

3. THE NAMING CEREMONY

King Suddhodanna had an old teacher who was known to be very wise, and was called Asita the Sage. Asita lived in the jungle. While sitting he heard the devas singing and saw them dancing. "Why are you so happy?" he asked. "Because the most excellent of all beings has been born at Lumbini Park to Queen Maha Maya," replied the devas. When he heard this, Asita went quickly to see the king and queen and their newborn son.

The king was very happy to see his wise old teacher again. In the palace, after the sage was seated, the king brought the prince before him and said, "Teacher, my son was born only yesterday. Here he is. Please see if his future will be good."

As the king said this, he lowered the infant prince before the sage so that he might examine him properly. However, the baby turned his feet on to the sage's head. Thus surprised, Asita took hold of the baby's feet and examined them very carefully finding some marks on them. He got up and said, "This prince will become a very great Teacher in this world." The sage was very pleased and putting his palms together, paid due respect to the baby prince. The king seeing this also did the same. This was the first salutation of the king.

On the fifth day, the king invited five wise men to witness the naming ceremony and to suggest a good name for the prince. The wise men examined the birthmarks of the prince and concluded that, "The prince will be King of kings if he wants to rule. If he chooses a religious life then he will become the Wisest – the Buddha."

The youngest of the five wise men, Kondanna then said, "This prince will be the Buddha and nothing else."

Then the wise men gave him the name Siddhartha meaning "wish-fulfilled" or "one who has accomplished his goal".

4. HIS EDUCATION

On the seventh day after his birth, Prince Siddhartha's mother died. The king had another Queen called Prajapati Gotami. She was the younger sister of Queen Maha Maya, and she had given birth to a son on the same day that Queen Maha Maya died. Prajapati Gotami gave her own son to a nurse and brought up

Prince Siddhartha, whom she loved very much, as her own son. Prince Siddhartha could not remember his own mother.

When Prince Siddhartha was only a few years old, King Suddhodana sent him to school. There were many children in his class, all of them were from noble families. His teacher was called Sarva Mitra.

He learnt languages, reading, writing, mathematics, history, geography, science, and many games like boxing, archery, wrestling and many others. He learnt all these subjects faster than any other pupil in his class. He was the cleverest in the class and the best at games. He gained distinction in every subject and became cleverer than his teachers. He was the wisest and the only one who asked many questions from his teachers and elders. He was the strongest, the tallest and the most handsome boy in the class. He was never lazy, never misbehaved and never disobedient to the teachers. He loved everybody and everybody loved him. He was a friend to all.

5. PRINCE SIDDHARTHA'S KINDNESS

Prince Siddhartha was very kind to people, animals and other living things. As a very brave horseman he won many prizes in the country. Although he did not have to suffer any hardships and difficulties as he had everything, he always thought of the poor people and living things who were working hard to make him happy. He felt sorry for them and wanted to make them happy too as he always was.

One day he was walking in the woods with his cousin Devadatta who had his bow and arrows with him. Suddenly Devadatta saw a swan flying and shot at it. His arrow brought the swan down. Both the boys ran to get the swan. As Siddhartha could run faster than Devadatta, he reached the bird first and found, to his surprise, that the swan was still alive. So he gently pulled out the arrow from the wing. He then got a little juice from cool leaves, put it on the wound of the birds to stop the bleeding and with his soft hand, stroked the swan which was very frightened. When Devadatta came to claim the swan, naturally Prince Siddhartha refused to give it to him. Devadatta was very angry to see his cousin keeping the swan away from him. "Give me my bird, I shot it down," said Devadatta.

"No, I am not going to give it to you. If you had killed it, it would have been yours. But now since it is only wounded and alive it belongs to me because I saved its life," said Siddhartha.

Devadatta still did not agree. Then Siddhartha suggested, "Let us go to the court of the Wiseman and ask him who really owns the swan."

Devadatta agreed so of them went to the court of Wiseman to tell them about their quarrel. The Wiseman said, "A life certainly must belong to him who tries to save it, a life cannot belong to one who is only trying to destroy it. The wounded swan by right belongs to Siddhartha."

6. PRINCE SIDDHARTHA'S WEDDING

Now the five wisemen who had come before Prince Siddhartha at the naming ceremony, had warned the king,

"When your son sees a sick man, an old man, a dead body and a monk, he will want to leave the palace and become a monk himself." Thus the king worried that his son would see these four sights and leave the palace. Therefore, he gave him many young servants and did not allow any sick or old people or monks to

go into the palace. He built Siddhartha three palaces, one for winter, one for summer and one for the rainy season, as well as enclosed parks and hunting grounds.

Siddhartha hunted and played in a sunny world of gardens and groves attended by dancing girls and musicians. He lived in a world of plenty and beauty, he could have whatever he wanted, yet he was not happy.

One day the king asked some wise people, "What shall I do to make my son happy? He seems to be depressed and sad always." They answered, "Now your son is sixteen years old. Shall we get a beautiful girl for him to marry?"

The king agreed and sent for all the beautiful girls in the country to come to the palace. When all of them came the king asked the prince to choose one to be his wife.

Among them there was a most charming and kind girl by the name of Yasodhara. When Prince Siddhartha gave her a present more valuable than what he had given to the other maidens, the king saw that the prince had chosen his love. The king happily accepted Yasodhara and allowed his son to marry her.

7. AN OLD BEGGAR

After what he had done for the prince the king was satisfied that his son would follow his footsteps and become a king later. He ordered a high wall to be built round the palace including the park but the prince was not happy living like a prisoner. One day he told his father, "I must go out of the palace gate and see how other people live."

"Very well my son," said the king, "you shall go outside the palace wall to see how people live in my city. But first I must prepare things, so that all would be good and proper for my noble son's visit."

When the people had decorated the city the king said, "Now you can go, my dear son, and see the city as you please."

As the young prince was going through the streets, all of a sudden, from a small old hut beside the road, out came an old man with long silver grey hair, wearing very old torn, dirty rags. The skin of his face was all dried up and wrinkled. His sunken eyes were dim and he was almost blind. There were no teeth in his mouth. He stood up trembling all over almost bent double holding a stick and he did this with two skinny hands to save himself from falling. The old beggar dragged himself along the street paying no attention to all the gay people around him. He was speaking very feebly, begging people around him to give him food as he would die that very day if he had nothing to eat. When the prince saw the old man, he didn't know what he was looking at, as it was the first time in his life that he had seen an old man of this type.

"What is that, Channa?" he asked his driver. "That really cannot be a man! Why is he all bent? What is he trembling for? Why is his hair silver grey, not black like mine? What is wrong with his eyes? Where are his teeth? Is this how some people are born? Tell me, O, good Channa, what does this mean?"

Channa told the prince, that it was an old man and he was not born like that. "When young he was like us and now due to his old age he has become like this." He told the prince to forget this man. But the prince was not satisfied. "Everyone in the world, if he lives long enough becomes like this man. It cannot be stopped," said Channa.

The prince ordered him to drive back home at once, as he was very sad and wanted to think carefully about that terrible thing called old age.

That night there was a grand royal treat for the prince but he was not interested or happy at all during the dinner and dance. He was thinking all the time, "Some day you will all grow old, everyone of you, even the prettiest."

He could not sleep when the time came. He was in bed thinking that one-day, everyone would grow old, grey, wrinkled, toothless and ugly like the old beggar. He wanted to know if anyone had found a way to stop this horrible thing - old age.

The king, when he heard this story, was very sad and worried that his son would leave the palace. So he told his attendants to put on more dances and dinners. But the prince begged his father to allow him to see Kapilavatthu on an ordinary day without the people being told of his visit.

8. A SICK MAN

The king very unwillingly allowed the prince to visit the city. He thought it would not do any good trying to stop him now and would only make him unhappy. On this occasion the prince and Channa dressed up as young men from noble families so the people didn't know them.

This time the city was quite different. No more joyous crowds of people hailed the prince, no flags, bunting, flowers and well-dressed people, but simple people doing their daily work to earn a living. A blacksmith was sweating and pounding to make knives. The jewellers and goldsmiths were making necklaces, bangles, earrings and rings out of diamonds, gold and silver. The cloths-dyers were dyeing cloths of lovely colour and hanging them up to dry. The bakers were busily baking bread, cakes and sweets and selling them to the customers who ate them still hot. The prince looked at these simple common people. Everyone was very busy, happy and pleased in his work.

Then he saw a man on the ground, twisting his body, holding his stomach with both hands and crying out in pain at the top of his voice. All over his face and body were purple patches, his eyes were rolling, and he was gasping for breath.

For the second time in his life something made him very sad. At once the prince, being a very kind person and not liking to see people distressed ran forward and rested the man's head on his knee and said, "What is wrong with you, what is wrong?" The sick man could not speak but only cry.

"Channa, tell me why this man is like this?" questioned the prince, "What is the matter with his breath? Why does he not talk?"

"O, my prince," said Channa, "do not hold this man like that. This man is sick. His blood is poisoned. He has plague fever and it is burning all over his body. That is why he is crying loudly without being able to speak."

"But are there any other men like this?" asked the prince.

"Yes, and you may be the next if you hold the man as close as that. Please put him down and do not touch him or the plague will come out of him and go to you. You will become the same as he is."

"Are there any other bad things, besides this plague, Channa?"

"Yes, my prince, there are hundreds of other sicknesses as painful as this," replied Channa.

"Can no one help it? Will everyone be sick? Can it happen at any time by surprise?" asked Siddhartha.

"Yes, my dear prince," said Channa, "Everyone in this world. No one can stop it and it can happen any time. Anyone may fall ill and suffer."

The prince was even sadder this time as he returned to the palace dwelling on the man and his sickness.

9. A DEAD BODY

On returning to the palace after seeing the sick man, Siddhartha was very dissatisfied and depressed and was often seen in deep thought. The king seeing him so changed became very sad. Once again the prince asked for his permission to go out of the palace to see more life in the city. The king agreed as it was no use trying to stop his son.

This time again wearing the cloths of noblemen Siddhartha and Channa went out from the palace walking in many parts of Kapilavasthu. Then he saw a few people coming along the street crying while four men at the back were carrying a plank on which a very thin man lay flat and still. He was like a stone, never saying a word. The people then rested the person down on a pile of wood and set the wood on fire. The man did not move as the flames were burning the wood from all sides.

"What is this, Channa? Why does that man lie there so still allowing these people to burn him up?" "He does not know anything."

"He is dead," replied Channa.

"Dead! Channa does everyone die?"

"Yes, my dear prince, all living things must die some day. No one can stop death from coming," replied Channa. The prince was shocked he did not say anything more. He thought that it was terrible that such a thing called death should come to everybody, even kings and queens. Was there no way to stop it? He went home in silence to his own room in the palace and sat deep in thought the rest of the day. Very sadly he pondered, "Everyone in the world must some day die, no one has found out how to stop it. There must be a way to stop it. I must find it out and help the whole world."

10. THE MONK

Once again after many days Siddhartha visited the city for the fourth time. As he was driving to the park he saw a happy man wearing an orange coloured robe. He asked Channa, "Who is this man wearing an orange robe? His hair is shaved off. Why does he look so happy? How does he live and what does he do for a living?"

"That is a monk," said Channa, "he lives in a temple, goes from house to house for his food and goes from place to place telling people how to be peaceful and good." The prince felt very happy now. He thought, "I must become one like that," as he walked through the park.

He walked until he was tired and he sat down under a tree to think some more. As he was sitting under the cool shady tree, news came that his wife had given birth to a fine baby boy. When he heard the news he said, "An impediment ("rahula") has been born to me, an obstacle to my leaving has been born," and thus his son's name became "Rahula".

As he was returning to the palace he met the Princess called Kisagotami. She was looking out of the window and saw the prince coming and she was so taken in by the young handsome prince that she said loudly, "O! How happy must be the mother, and father, and the wife of such a handsome young prince!"

As he passed this woman, he heard this and thought to himself, "In a handsome figure the mother, father and wife find happiness and Nibanna (escape from suffering, a lasting liberation which is happiness and genuine peace). How does one escape obstacles and suffering! I must quit this household life and retire from the world in quest of nibanna. This lady has taught me a valuable lesson. I'll send her a teacher's fee." And loosening a valuable pearl necklace Siddhartha sent it to Kisagotami with thanks.

11. LEAVING HOME

The king arranged a grand dinner and dance for the prince to celebrate the birth Rahula. Invited were the best dancers and singers and musicians in the country. The king did this because he saw that the prince was depressed although he just had a son, and the king thought that the prince was going to leave the place for good. So for the last time he did his best to stop this from happening by distracting the prince.

The prince attended the party just to please his father. During the dinner the most delicious food was served, and the most enchanting, and beautiful dancing girls in the country performed before him. But he was so tired from thinking that he soon fell asleep.

When the singers and the dancers saw this they too stopped and fell asleep. Some time later that night the prince awoke and was shocked to see these sleeping people. What a sight! - All the prettiest, most charming dancing girls and singers in the country, who, hours ago, were trying to make the prince so happy, were now all over the floor of the room in the most ugly, shameful and loathsome positions. Some people were snoring like pigs, with their mouths wide open, some grinding and chewing their teeth like hungry devils. This alteration in their appearance made the prince even more disgusted and unhappy. "How oppressive and stifling this all is," he thought and his mind turned towards leaving the palace. So he got up quietly from the room and got Channa to saddle his horse Kanthaka.

As Channa was getting his horse ready Siddhartha went quietly to see his newborn son for the first time. His wife was sleeping with the baby besides her and her hand resting on the baby's head. He said to himself, "If I try to move her hand so I can take the child for one last cuddle I fear I will wake her and she will prevent me from going. No! I must go but when I have found what I am going looking for, I shall come back and see him and his mother again."

Siddhartha then quietly he left the palace at midnight on his white horse Kanthaka accompanied by Channa, his faithful servant, holding on to its tail. He came to the city's gate and nobody stopped him as he rode away from all who knew, respected and loved him. He took a last look at Kapilavatthu - sleeping so quietly in the moonlight. He was going away to learn to understand old age, sickness and death.

He rode to the bank of the river Anoma ["illustrious"] and dismounted from his horse. He removed his jewellery and princely cloths and gave them to Channa to return to the king. Then he took his sword and cut his long hair, donned simple cloths, took a begging bowl and asked Channa to go back with Kanthaka.

"It is no use living in the palace without you my master," said Channa very sadly, "I want to follow you." But Siddhartha wouldn't let him although Channa asked three times.

At last Channa started to go but the horse refused. The prince talked to the horse very kindly, "Please, Kanthaka, go with my friend. Don't wait for me." But Kanthaka thought, "I shall never see my master again." Tears rolled down from its eyes as it kept its eyes fixed on the prince until he was out of sight. As Siddhartha did so Kanthaka's heart burst and he died of sorrow.

12. KING BIMBISARA'S OFFER

From the Anoma River, dressed as a beggar, the young prince wandered from place to place. Eventually he came to Rajagaha City, where King Bimbisara lived. With his begging bowl in his hands Siddhartha walked round the streets begging for food from door to door like any other religious monk. People began to call him 'Sage', others called him 'Ascetic' or 'Ascetic Gotama', but nobody called him Prince Siddhartha any more.

He was most handsome, young, healthy, clean and neat. He spoke very kindly and gently. He did not ask people to give him anything but people were happy and pleased to put some food into his bowl.

Some people went and told the king. "Your majesty, there is a young man. Some people call him 'Ascetic Gotama'. He is very clean, neat, kind, polite and not like a beggar at all."

When King Bimbisara heard the name 'Gotama' he knew at once that this prince was the son of King Suddhodana, his friend. He went up to him and asked him, "Why do you do this? Have you quarrelled with your father? Why do you go about like this? Stay here and I shall give you half of my kingdom."

"Thank you very much Sir, I love my parents, my wife, my son, you and everybody. I want to find out a way to stop old age, sickness, worries and death. Therefore I am going thus," said Ascetic Gotama and off he went.

13. ALARA AND UDDAKA

At this time in India there were many religious teachers. One of the best and most well known one was Alara Kalama. Ascetic Gotama went to study under him. He stayed and was taught many things including meditation. He worked hard and eventually equalled his teacher in learning. Finally Alara Kalama could not teach Gotama any more and he said, "You are the same as I am now. There is no difference between us. Stay here and take my place and teach my pupils with me."

But Gotama was not interested in staying. Despite what he had learnt he could see that he was still subject to old age, sickness, and death and that his quest was not over.

Thus, Gotama left Alara Kalama and went in search of a new teacher. At last he found another great teacher who was famous for his cleverness called Uddaka. Again, Gotama learnt very quickly and soon knew as much as his teacher. He also found that Uddaka too, could not teach him how to stop suffering, old age and death and he had never heard of anyone who could solve these problems. Once again Ascetic Gotama was disappointed and left Uddaka making up his mind to struggle by himself until he found the cause of all the suffering of life.

14. TORTURING THE BODY

After leaving Uddaka, Ascetic Gotama met his five friends - Kondanna, Bhadduya, Wappa, Mahanama and Assaji - who had also left the palace and a life of luxury to become ascetics. They went to Uruvela and for six years he struggled and tortured his body while his five friends supported and looked after him.

"I will carry austerity to the uttermost," thought Gotama, "and this way acquire wisdom." He practised fasting which was thought to be one of the best ways to acquire wisdom. Thus, he would live on a grain of rice a day, and later, nothing at all. His body became so thin that his legs became like bamboo sticks, his backbone was like a rope, his ribs chest were like an incomplete roof of a house, his eyes sank right inside, like a stone in a deep well. His skin lost its golden colour and became black. In fact he looked like a living skeleton - all bones without any flesh! He suffered terrible pain and hunger yet continued to meditate.

Another way of torturing his body was to hold his breath for a long time until he felt violent pains in the ears, head and whole body. He would then fall senseless to the ground. During the full moon and new moon he went out into the forest or cemetery to meditate wearing rags from graveyards and rubbish heaps. He became frightened at first, especially when wild animals came, but he never ran away from them. He stayed behind bravely in these dreadful places meditating all the time.

For six long years he did these practices and in spite of the great pain and suffering he did not find wisdom or the answers to his questions. He finally decided, "These austerities are not the way to enlightenment." So he went begging through the village for food to build up his body. When the five friends saw this they felt disappointed. They took their bowls and robes and wanted nothing more to do with him.

15. SUJATA GAVE HIM MILK-RICE

Now at the time in a nearby village called Senani there lived a young, very beautiful and rich girl called Sujata who wanted a husband of equal rank and a son. She had waited for many years and she was not successful. The people told her that she must go to certain banyan tree near Neranjara river and pray to the tree-god to give her a husband and son. She did as the people told her and later on she got married to a young man and they had a lovely son. She was extremely happy and decided to fulfil her vow to the tree-god for giving her all that she had asked for.

Sujata had a thousand cows and she fed them with sweet creepers called valmee so that the cow's milk was sweet. She milked these thousand cows and fed that milk to five hundred cows, and then their milk to two hundred and fifty cows and so on until she fed only eight cows. She did this to get the sweetest and most nourishing milk to make the delicious rice milk as an offering to the tree-god. As she was doing this she was surprised to see her servant running back from cleaning and preparing the area at the foot of the banyan tree. Very happy and excited the servant said, "O! My lady Sujata the Banyan god is editing at the foot of the tree. How lucky you must be to have the god in person to accept your food."

Sujata too was happy and excited and danced with joy with the servant. They then took even more pains to prepare the milk-rice, pouring it into a golden bowl. Taking the delicious milk-rice both of them went to the Banyan tree and Sujata saw what she perceived to be a holy man. He was handsome and golden looking and sat serenely in meditation. She did not know that he was in fact Ascetic Gotama. She bowed with respect and said, "Lord, accept my donation of milk-rice. May you be successful in obtaining your wishes as I have been."

Ascetic Gotama ate the sweet thick milk-rice and then bathed in the river Neranjara. This was the last food and bath he would have for seven weeks. When he finished he took the golden bowl and threw it in the river saying, "If I am to succeed in becoming a Buddha today, let this bowl go upstream, but if not, let it go downstream." The golden bowl went upstream all the while keeping in the middle of the river.

16. ENLIGHTENMENT - BUDDHAHOOD

In the evening after Sujata's lovely meal Gotama went to Gaya and looked for a suitable place to sit down and meditate. He found a bodhi tree and sat on its east side, the side that was believed to be stable and free from trembles and quakes. After sitting cross-legged with his back towards the tree, he made a resolution that, "Though my skin, my nerves and my bones shall waste away and my life blood go dry I will not leave this seat until I have attained the highest wisdom called supreme enlightenment that leads to everlasting happiness."

So he meditated on his breathing in and breathing out on a full moon eve. In the first part of the night many evil thoughts, often described as being like the evil god Mara and his army, began to come into his mind. Thoughts of desire, craving, fear and attachment arose in his mind. Yet he did not allow these thoughts to disturb his concentration and he sat more firm than ever. He began to feel calm and brave as he let these thoughts go and in the first part of the night he found the power of seeing his own past lives.

In the second part of the night he realised the impermanence of life and how living beings die only to be reborn again. In the third part of the night he realised the cause of all evil and suffering and how to be released from it. He understood how to end sorrow, unhappiness, suffering, old age and death. With this Enlightenment he found real peace, happiness, freedom and Buddhahood.

17. THE SEVEN WEEKS AFTER THE ENLIGHTENMENT

1. Under the Bodhi Tree

During the first week after Enlightenment, Buddha sat under the bodhi tree experiencing the happiness of freedom and peace. He was free from disturbing thoughts, calm and blissful.

2. Gazing at the Tree

During the second week, in thanks and gratitude to the bodhi tree that had sheltered him during his struggle for Buddhahood, the Buddha stood gazing at the tree without moving his eyes as He meditated on the bodhi tree.

Following this example, it is the custom of Buddhists to pay respect to not only the original bodhi tree, but also to the descendants of the bodhi tree that still thrive today.

3. The Golden Bridge

In the third week, Buddha saw through his mind's eye that the devas in the heavens were not sure whether he had attained enlightenment or not. To prove his enlightenment Buddha created a golden bridge in the air and walked up and down it for a whole week.

4. Jewelled Chamber

In the fourth week, he created a beautiful jewelled chamber and sitting inside it meditated on what was later known as the 'Detailed Teaching' (Abhidhamma). His mind and body were so purified that six coloured rays came out of his body - blue, yellow, red, white, orange and mixture of these five. Today these six colours make up the Buddhist flag. Each colour represented one noble quality of Buddha. Yellow for holiness, white for purity, blue for confidence, red for wisdom, orange for desirelessness and the mixed colour represented all these noble qualities.

5.Three Girls

During the fifth week, while meditating under a banyan tree, three most charming girls called Tanha, Rati and Raga came to disturb his meditation. They danced in a most seductive and charming manner and did everything to tempt the Buddha to watch their dance. Yet he continued to meditate unperturbed, and soon they tired and left him alone.

6.Mucalinda Tree

Buddha then went and meditated at the foot of a mucalinda tree. It began to rain heavily and a huge king cobra came out and coiled his body seven times around Buddha to keep him warm and placed his hood over Buddha's head to protect him from the rain. After seven days the rain stopped and the snake changed into a young man who paid his respects to Buddha. Buddha then said:

"Happy are they who are contented. Happiness is for those who hear and know the truth. Happy are they who have good will in this world towards all sentient beings. Happy are they who have no attachments and have passed beyond sense-desires. The disappearance of the word "I AM " is indeed the highest happiness."

7.Rajayatana Tree

During the seventh week Buddha meditated under the Rajayatana tree. On the 50th morning, after seven weeks of fasting, two merchants came into his presence. They were called Tapussa and Bhallika. They offered the Buddha rice cakes and honey to break his fast and Buddha told them some of what he had found in his Enlightenment.

These two merchants, by taking refuge in the Buddha and his Dhamma (sometimes translated as "teachings of the Buddha"), became the first lay followers. There was no Sangha or order of monks and nuns then. They asked Buddha for something sacred to keep with them. Buddha wiped his head with his right hand and pulled out some hair to give to them. These hair relics called Kesa Datu, were later reputed to be enshrined by the merchants on their return home, to what is now known as Burma, in the Shwedagon Pagoda in Rangoon.

18. MEETING THE FIVE FRIENDS

Now Buddha wanted to tell other people how to become wise, good and do service for others. He thought, "Now Asita, Alara and Uddaka are dead but my friends Kondanna, Bhaddiya, Wappa, Mahanama and Assaji are in Benares. I must go there and talk to them."

Then he set out to Benares till at last he came to a grove where his five friends were. This grove was called "Deer Park". They saw him coming towards them and one said to another, "Look yonder! There is Gotama - the luxury-loving fellow who gave up fasting and fell back into a life of ease and comfort. Don't speak to him or show him any respect. Let nobody go and offer to take his bowl or his robe. We'll just leave a mat there for him to sit on if he wants to and if he doesn't he can stand. Who is going to attend on a good-for-nothing ascetic like him."

However, as the Buddha came nearer and nearer, they began to notice that he had changed. There was something about him, something noble and majestic such as they had never seen before. And in spite of themselves, before they knew what they were doing, they forgot all they had agreed on. One hasten forward

to meet him, and respectfully took his bowl and robe, another busily prepared a seat for him, while a third hurried off and brought him water to wash his feet.

After he had taken a seat Buddha spoke to them and said: "Listen, ascetics, I have the way to deathlessness. Let me tell you, let me teach you. And if you listen and learn and practise as I tell you, very soon you will know for yourselves not in some future life but here and now in this present lifetime that what I say is true. You will realise for yourself the state that is beyond all life and death."

Naturally the five ascetics were very astonished to hear their old master and teacher talking like this. They had seen him give up the hard life of fasting and consequently believed that he had given up all efforts to find the truth. So initially they simply did not believe him and they told him so.

But Buddha replied, " You are mistaken, Ascetics. I have not given up all effort. I am not living a life of self-indulgence, idle comfort and ease. Listen to me. I really have attained supreme knowledge and insight. And I can teach it to you so you may attain it for yourselves."

Finally the five were willing to listen to him and he delivered his first sermon where he advised his followers to avoid the two extremes of self-indulgence and self-torture. He also spoke about the four Noble Truths and how to practise the Noble Path that would lead to freedom from suffering and enlightenment.

19. YASA AND HIS FIFTY-FOUR FRIENDS

While Buddha stayed at the Deer Park in Benares, a rich man young man called Yasa came to see him. Yasa listened to the Buddha's teachings and was so enthralled by them that he became a Bhikkhu (monk).

Towards evening, an elderly man came to Buddha and told him that his son had left home that morning saying he was going to visit Buddha, but he had not returned. Both he and his wife were worried thinking robbers must have killed him. Buddha told the father not to worry and that his son had become a bhikkhu. Then he started to explain his teachings to Yasa's father and soon he too became a follower.

Yasa had fifty-four friends who were presented to Buddha to hear his teachings. They too become monks. In this way in a short time there were sixty followers.

20. THE KASSAPA BROTHERS

As soon as he had sixty disciples Buddha sent them away to teach people everywhere . He left the Deer Park and turned southwards towards the Magadha country.

On the banks a river there lived three brothers whose names were Uruvela Kassapa, Nadi Kassapa and Gaya Kassapa. Each lived with 500, 300 and 200 followers respectively.

One evening Buddha visited Uruvela Kassapa's hut and asked, "If it is not an inconvenience, may I spend a night in your kitchen?"

"I don't mind, Great Gotama but there is a fierce serpent king in the kitchen. I am afraid it will harm you," said Uruvela Kassapa.

"O I don't mind, so you have no objection I will spent the night there," answered Buddha.

Buddha went into the kitchen, spread some grass on the floor for bedding, and sat down. The fierce serpent-king hearing him came slithering out opening his mouth to bite Buddha.

"I will not harm this serpent-king. I will subdue him by my love and kindness," thought Buddha. Thus the more angry the serpent-king became the more kindly and loving was Buddha. The serpent-king could not do him any harm.

Early next morning Uruvela Kassapa went to Buddha and found him sitting in deep meditation. The ascetic was surprised and asked Buddha whether the serpent-king had harmed him. "Here see for yourself," said Buddha and uncovered his begging bowl. Out came the fierce serpent-king and the ascetic started to run away in fright. But Buddha stopped him, saying that he had a way to tame any fierce serpent.

"Can I learn?" asked the ascetic. Buddha then preached his teachings and Uruvela Kassapa, his brothers and all their followers became devotees of the Buddha Dhamma.

21. RETURNING HOME

When King Suddhodana came to know that Buddha was preaching in Rajagaha he sent nine messengers, one after the other, inviting him to come to Kapilavatthu. All the messengers became monks. They listened to Buddha's teachings, which they found so appealing that forgot to convey the king's message.

Meanwhile, the king also made arrangements for the Buddha to stay in a park called Nigrodha. But when the Buddha did not come, the king sent Kaludayi, a playmate of Buddha's, to invite him back to Kapilavatthu.

When the people of Kapilavatthu came to know that the Buddha had come to their city they flocked to see him. Prince Siddhartha's own relatives came as well and said, "He is our younger brother, our nephew, our grandson."

Then the Buddha realised that some people even then, did not understand that he was already enlightened but felt they were his elders. He showed them a miracle called the "Twin miracle". The king seeing this miracle worshipped him.

The next day Buddha took his begging bowl and went from door to door begging for food. The king seeing this was very annoyed. "Why do you disgrace me, my son? Why do you ruin me like this? Why don't you take food in the palace? Is it proper for you to beg for food in this very city where you used to travel in golden sedan chairs? Why do you put me to shame my dear son?"

"I am not putting you to shame, O Great King. This is our custom," replied the Buddha calmly.

"How can this be? Nobody in our family has ever begged like this? How can you say 'it is our custom'?"

"O Great King, this is not the custom of the Royal family, but of the Buddhas. All the former Buddhas have lived by receiving food this way."

However, when the king begged Buddha to take food in the palace Buddha kindly did so.

22. PRINCESS YASODHARA

When Buddha had taken his meal all who knew him as Prince Siddhartha except Princess Yasodhara, came to talk to him. All of them were surprised but happy to see their prince dressed like a monk.

Yasodhara stayed in her room thinking, "Prince Siddhartha is now the Enlightened One - the Buddha. He now belongs to the line of Buddhas. Is it right for me to go to him? He does not and cannot need me. I think it is better to wait and see."

After awhile Buddha asked "Where is Yasodhara?"

"She is in her room" said his father.

"Come, let us go there," said Buddha and giving his bowl to the king they went to her room. As he entered he said "Let her pay me respect as she likes. Say nothing."

As Buddha entered her room, and before he took his seat, Yasodhara quickly came to him and holding his ankles, placed her head on his feet and cried and cried until his feet were wet with her tears. The Buddha kept quiet and nobody stopped her until she was tired of crying.

King Suddhodana then said, "Lord, when my daughter-in-law heard that you were wearing yellow robes, she also robed herself in yellow; when she heard you were taking one meal a day, she also did the same; when she heard that you had given up lofty couches, she lay on a low couch; when she heard that you had given up garland and scents she too gave them up. So virtuous is my daughter-in-law."

Buddha nodded and said, "Not only in this last birth O king, but in a previous birth too, Yasodhara was devoted and faithful to me."

23. PRINCE NANDA

On the third day after the Buddha's return to Kapilathu he was invited to attend the wedding of Prince Nanda, his youngest stepbrother, to Princess Janapada Kalyani. Buddha attended the wedding and celebrations, blessed them all, left his begging bowl with Nanda and went away.

Nanda thought, "I will go to the temple and return the bowl." When he did this Buddha talked to him for awhile then said, "Nanda would you like to be a monk?"

"Yes Sir," said Nanda and Buddha ordained him.

Afterwards Nanda thinking of his beautiful bride became very sad and unhappy. "Why are you so sad Nanda?" asked the monks.

"Brothers, I am disappointed. I do not like this life. I want to leave it and go home."

Buddha then came to talk to Nanda. First Buddha showed him a she-monkey whose nose and tail were burnt and fur singed and bloodied. "Do you see this monkey Nanda?. Then take good note of her." said Buddha.

Then Buddha showed Nanda 500 celestial nymphs.

"Nanda, do you see these nymphs?"

"Yes", answered Nanda.

"Who is prettier the nymphs or Janapada Kalyani?"

"Sir, as my bride is prettier than the burnt monkey, so are the nymphs compared to Janapada Kalyani."

"Well Nanda what then?"

"Reverend Sir, how does one obtain the celestial beings?"

"By performing the duties of a monk."

"In that case I shall take the greatest pleasure in living the monk's life," said Nanda and began to follow the Buddha's teaching very carefully.

24. PRINCE RAHULA

On the seventh day after Buddha's homecoming Princess Yasodhara dressed up young Rahula. He had been brought up by his mother and grandfather and was now seven years old. She pointed to the Buddha and said, "That is your father Rahula, go and ask him for your inheritance."

Innocent Rahula went to the Buddha and looking up into his face told him what his mother had asked him to say, adding, "Father, even your shadow is pleasing to me."

As Buddha left the palace Rahula followed him saying "Give me my inheritance." Coming to the park Buddha thought, "He desires his father's wealth, but this goes with the worldly life and is full of trouble and suffering. I shall instead give him what I know and thus give him an excellent inheritance." Buddha then asked Sariputta, one of his disciples to ordain Radula.

When King Suddhodana heard that his beloved grandson had become a monk he was deeply grieved. The king said, "When you left home it made me sad. When Nanda left home my heart ached. I concentrated my love on my grandson and again the one I love has left me. Please do not ordain anyone without their parent's permission." To this Buddha agreed and never ordained anybody after that without their parent's permission.

25. THE TWO CHIEF DISCIPLES

Near Rajagaha there were two villages called Upatissa and Kolita. The headmen of these two villages were also known by these two names. Both families were very close friends.

One day Upatissa's wife, Sari, gave birth to a son called Sariputta. On the same day Kolita's wife, Moggali, also gave birth to a son called Moggallana. Both sons became best friends.

When they grew up both of them used to watch dramas. One day while watching one called Giragga Samapujja (The Mountain Festival) the young boys decided to leave home in order to seek greater happiness and understanding of life than could be had watching plays.

Now at this time there was staying near Rajagaha a famous religious teacher called Sanjaya. The two friends went to learn from him but after awhile they found his teachings unsatisfactory and left. They promised each other they would both continue searching, studying and meditating in an effort to find the truth about life, and whoever found it first would let the other know.

One morning, in the main street of Rajagaha, Sariputta saw the ascetic Assaji begging for alms. He radiated modesty and calmness as he went from house to house. As Sariputta came closer he saw on Assaji's face a look of perfect peace, like a smooth undisturbed lake under a calm clear sky. Finally

Sariputta went up to him, and humbly said, "Your face friend is serene; your eyes so clear and bright. Who is your teacher and what does he teach Sir?"

"I can soon tell you that, brother," replied Assaji. "There is a great ascetic of the Sakya race who has left his home and country behind in order to follow the homeless life. He is my teacher and it is his teaching that I follow and practise."

"Please tell me more."

"I am only a newcomer to the way of Buddha," replied the ascetic modestly, "I do not know very much yet. But I will give you a brief description."

"That is all I want, brother," said Sariputta quickly, "Tell me the meaning of the teachings. Why make a lot of words about it?"

"Very well then, " said the ascetic, "Listen! The Buddha teaches that there is a cause for everything, and also how things cease to be."

After the Venerable Assaji spoke these lines, Sariputta was so clever that he understood their meaning. He realised the truth that everything that ever has come into existence, or will come into existence, must pass away. He said, "If this is what Buddha teaches you have found the state that is free from sorrow and suffering and full of peace and happiness." After thanking Assaji, Sariputta and took leave of him and went to find his friend Moggallana to bring him the great news.

Before he spoke a word Moggallana cried, "Why brother how clear and shining your face is. Can it be that at last you have found what we have been seeking?"

"It is so brother it is so," was Sariputta's glad reply and he explained Buddha's teachings to him.

Thus, Sariputta and Moggallana joined Buddha and in a short time became two of his chief disciples. Sariputta became known for his wisdom and Moggallana for his miraculous power.

26. THE BUDDHA'S DAILY ROUTINE

The Buddha's daily routine was divided into five parts: 1. the morning session, 2. the afternoon session, 3. the first watch, 4. the middle watch and 5. the last watch.

The Morning Session (4.00 a.m. to 12.00 noon)

The Buddha would get up at 4.00 a.m. and as soon as he had had a wash would sit down to meditate for an hour. From 5.00 to 6.00 a.m. he would look around the world with his mental eye to see if anybody needed help. At 6.00 a.m. he would put on his robe and either go out and help the needy or beg for food.

When begging Buddha would go from house to house, eyes fixed to the ground, receiving in silence any food that was put into his bowl. Sometimes he would go begging with his disciples who would walk behind him in a single file. Often people would invite him to their houses for lunch and he would preach to them and his followers.

The Afternoon (12.00 noon to 6.00 p.m.)

In the afternoon the monks would usually go to Buddha to ask questions and be taught and advised. Buddha would then retire to his room and look around the world with his mental eye to see if anyone is looking for his help. He would then go and meet people who were waiting for him. He would preach to them in such a way that everybody felt that the Buddha was preaching to each one of them separately, "giving joy to the wise, promoting the intelligence of the average people and dispelling the darkness of the dull-witted."

First Watch (6.00 p.m. to 10.00 p.m.)

During this time the followers would come again to Buddha to either listen or ask questions to clarify their doubts.

The Middle Watch (10.00 p.m. - 2.00 am)

During this period the devas would seize the opportunity to go to see Buddha and learn the truth of life. Buddha, on answering their questions, would complete the middle watch of the night.

The Last Watch (2.00 p.m. - 4.00 a.m.)

For the first hour Buddha would walk up and down meditating and freeing himself from the discomfort of sitting all day. He then would sleep for an hour.

Thus we can see the Buddha was busy the whole day. In fact he only slept one hour each day during this 45 years of teaching. During the early hours of the day he saw the whole universe, blessed it with his boundless love and brought happiness to millions.

27. POOR SOPAKA

There once was a boy by the name of Sopaka belonging to a very poor family. When this boy was only seven his father passed away and his mother married another man who was very cruel, wicked and unkind. He always beat and scolded small Sopaka who was very kind, innocent and good.

The stepfather thought, "This boy is a nuisance, a good-for-nothing but I cannot do anything to him because his mother loves him so much. What shall I do about him?"

One evening he said, "Dear son, let us go for a walk."

The boy was surprised and thought, "My step-father has never talked to me so kindly. Perhaps my mother has asked him to be kind to me." So he happily went with his stepfather.

They walked to a cemetery where there were many rotting bodies and the step-father tied Sopaka to one of them, leaving him alone and crying.

As the night became darker and darker Sopaka's fear increased. He was alone in the cemetery and so frightened that his hair stood on end and drops of sweat rolled down his body. The noises of the jackals, tigers, leopards and other wild animals made him even more frightened. Then when he was almost paralysed with fear he saw a shining noble looking person with a bright light coming towards him saying, "Sopaka, don't cry. I am here to help you so don't fear." And at that moment Sopaka broke his bonds and stood before Buddha in the Jetawana Temple. Buddha bathed him, gave him food to eat, cloths to wear and consoled and comforted him.

Meanwhile, the wicked stepfather on returning home was questioned by Sopaka's mother. "Where is my son?" she asked. "I don't know," he replied, "he came home before me." But the mother could not sleep the whole night for worrying about her son.

So early next day she went to see Buddha for help. "Why are you crying sister?" asked Buddha.

"O Lord," replied the lady, "I have only one son and since last night he has been missing. My husband took Sopaka for a walk and he never returned home."

"Don't worry sister. Your son is safe. Here he is," and so saying Buddha showed her Sopaka who had become a monk. The mother was overjoyed to see her son again and after listening to Buddha teaching she to became a follower.

28. LADY PATACARA

During Buddha's lifetime there was a rich man who had a charming daughter called Patacara. Her parents loved her so much that they kept her in the seventh storey of their mansion and did not let her go anywhere.

When she was sixteen her parents made arrangements for her to marry the son of another wealthy man. But Patacara had already fallen in love with her pageboy and wanted to be with him.

So just before the wedding, early in the morning, she dressed up like a servant and slipped out of the mansion. She met her pageboy at an arranged place and they ran away to a far away place.

The two married and after sometime Patacara was ready to give birth to their child. "Here I have no one to help me. But a mother and father always have a soft spot in their heart for their child. Please take me to their house so I may give birth to our child."

But her husband said, "My darling what are you saying. If your mother and father were to see me they will torture me to death. It is out of the question for me to go." She begged him over and over again and each time he refused to go.

One day when her husband was away she went to her neighbours and told them, "If my husband asks you where I have gone tell him that I have gone home to my parents."

When he came home to find Patacara missing, her husband ran after her and overtaking her begged her to return home. She began to refused as her birth pains started and she soon gave birth to a son. She thought, "There is no point in going to my parent place now," and returned home with her husband.

After some time she was ready to give birth to her second child and left for her parents home again when her husband was at work. Again her husband came after her and begged her to return with him but she refused.

While this was happening a fearful storm arose. Patacara told her husband, "Dear, my birth pains have come upon me. I cannot stand it please find me a place to shelter from this storm."

Her husband taking his axe went here and there in the heavy rain looking for branches and leaves to make a shelter. Seeing a bush growing on an anthill he went to chop it down. As he did so a poisonous snake slithered out and bit him killing him immediately.

As Patacara waited for her husband, her pains became more and more severe and soon she gave birth to another son. Weak, cold and wet she could not do much except put the children to her bosom and spend the whole night sheltering as best she could.

Early the next morning, with the newborn on her hip and holding the hand of the other child, she went along the path her husband had taken and eventually saw him lying dead. "All because of me my husband died on the road," she cried.

After awhile she continued walking along the path until she came to the river Acirawati that was flooded from the storm. Since she felt weak from the previous night she could not carry both children together. Patacara placed the older boy on the bank and carried the younger one across the river. She then put the baby on a bed of leaves and returned for the older child.

Hardly had she come to mid-stream when a hawk came down from the sky and swooped off with the young child. The mother seeing the hawk screamed in a loud voice, "Su!, Su!". "Mother is calling me" thought the older boy and in a hurry to get to her slipped down the bank and was swept away by the river.

Now Patacara became very sad and cried and cried saying, "One of my sons has been carried away by a hawk, the other swept away by the river, and by the roadside my husband lies dead."

She went off weeping until she met a man and asked him, "Sir, where do you live?"

"In Savatthi," he replied.

"In the city of Savatthi in such and such a street lives such and such a family. Do you know them Sir?"

"Yes my good Lady, but don't ask me about that family. Ask me about another family you know."

"Good Sir I know only that family. Please tell me about them," said she.

"Since you insist I cannot hide the truth," said the man. "In the heavy rains last night, the family's house collapsed killing all of them."

"Oh no!," cried Patacara.

"Yes, can you see that fire over there?" he asked pointing to some flames, "That is their funeral fire."

No sooner had Paracara heard this than she fell on the ground rolling to and fro with grief. Some villagers came and took her to the Jetawana Temple where Buddha was teaching. The Buddha asked some ladies to wash her, clothe her and give her food and then he consoled her in a most sweet and wonderful voice. When she recovered her senses Patacara begged Buddha to ordain her. Thus Patacara became a Bhikkuni (nun).

29. ANGULIMALA, THE BANDIT

The King of Kosala had an adviser called Bhaggawa. Bhaggawa had a wife called Mantani and a son called Ahinsaka.

When Ahinsaka was born, all the weapons in the country shone brightly. The king was disturbed by this and the next morning he called his adviser to find out the reason why the weapons were shiny. The adviser said, "My wife has given birth to a son your majesty."

"Then why do the weapons shine in such a manner?" asked the king.

"Your majesty, my son will be a bandit."

"Will he rob alone or with a gang?" asked the king.

"He will be single-handed your majesty," replied Bhaggawa.

"We should kill him now," said the king.

"No!" exclaimed Bhaggawa, "As he will be alone we shall be able to catch him easily."

When Ahinsaka was old enough his father sent him to a school in Takka Sila. Ahinsaka was the strongest, brightest and the most obedient child of all the children in the whole school. Other children became envious of him and behind his back made the teacher hate him. Thus, when he had finished his education the teacher said, "Now as you must pay me my tuition fee."

"How much should I pay Sir?" asked Ahinsaka.

"I don't want cash but one thousand right-hand human fingers. And remember not to bring two right hand human fingers from the same person."

Although it was a most difficult thing for him to do Ahinsaka promised to pay his teacher. Taking a sword off he went until he reached Kosala.

Hiding near a jungle highway, he waited for passers by. He would rush out and kill them, cutting off a right hand finger and hanging their corpses on a tree for the vultures and crows. He made a garland out of the finger bones and soon became known as "Angulimala" (anguli=fingers, mala=garland).

Angulimala went to another district and began to kill again. Because he was murdering so many people, the king of Kosala decided to go with his strong army and capture the bandit. When Mantani heard this she went to her husband to try to get him to save their son.

"Darling he is very fierce now," said Bhaggawa, "He may have changed completely and if I go there he may even kill me." But the mother was very soft hearted and loved her son more than she loved herself. She thought, "I must go to the jungle myself and save him."

Now Angulimala had killed 999 people. He had spent months and months in the jungle without proper food, sleep or comfort, so he was impatient to pay off his debt and live a decent life. He thought, "Today even if my own mother comes I will kill her and cut off a finger to make one thousand fingers."

Now that day while Buddha looked round the world to see if anybody that needed help, he saw Angulimala and his mother. "I must save them," he thought as he set out towards the jungle.

The villagers seeing Buddha cried out, "Teacher, don't go that way it is too dangerous. Return home quickly." Three times they warned him but Buddha continued, thanking them for their concern.

Now Angulimala's mother entered the jungle. Angulimala saw her coming and thought, "Poor lady. She comes alone. I pity her but it cannot be helped. I must keep my word and kill her." All of a sudden, Buddha appeared between them. Angulimala thought, "It is very good that this ascetic comes before my mother. Why should I kill her. I will leave her alone and kill this stranger". And with his sword he ran toward Buddha. The Buddha walked slowly before him thinking, "Let this young man see me running." So

Angulimala ran and ran towards Buddha but he could not catch up with him. He became so weak that he could not run any further. Then he shouted at Buddha, "Stop! Stand still!"

"I stand still Angulimala! Do you also stand still?" said the Buddha.

Angulimala could not understand the meaning of the Buddha's words so he asked him, "How can you say you stand still while running faster than me?"

"I stand still Angulimala evermore; For I am merciful to all living being But you are merciless to living beings Therefore I stand still and you stand not still."

Angulimala was very pleased with what Buddha said and throwing away his sword knelt before him. Buddha blessed him and took him to the temple and he became a monk.

The king before leaving to go to the jungle wanted to obtain Buddha's blessings. So he went to the temple with five hundred horses and soldiers. Buddha asked him "What is it that troubles you mighty king?"

"There is a most fierce killer called Angulimala and I am going to catch him."

"But mighty king suppose you see Angulimala head shaven, wearing yellow robes. What would you do to him?"

"I would worship him," answered the king.

Then Buddha called Angulimala and the frightened soldiers started to run away. But Buddha stopped them, and preached the Dhamma to them all.

30. WAKKALI - THE MONK WHO ADMIRERD THE BEAUTY OF BUDDHA

In Savatthi there was a young man called Wakkali who admired the Buddha's beauty. One day he thought, "So long as I am living at home I cannot see Buddha, but if I become a monk I would see him daily." So he went to the temple and was ordained by Buddha.

Now he had the opportunity to always admire Buddha's, appearance. He did nothing all day and followed Buddha like a shadow. Buddha waited for his wisdom to ripen and said not a word. But instead of reading, learning and meditating Wakkali admired Buddha. Buddha thought, "Unless this monk gets a shock he will never come to understand."

So one day Buddha had an invitation from a man to spent three months in Rajagaha and he left Wakkali behind.

Wakkali was very disappointed and began to think, "Three months is a long time. What a miserable period I will have to spent. What is the use of living any longer. I'll throw myself off Mount Vulture Peak.

Now Buddha staying in Rajagaha, saw with his mind's eye Wakkali about to jump off Vulture Peak. "If this monk gets no comfort or consolation from me he will kill himself," he thought. Buddha immediately sent forth a radiant image of himself and Wakkali seeing Buddha before him felt his sorrow vanish. Wakkali's mind was filled with joy and he thought, "The person who has perfect faith in Buddha will be full of joy and satisfaction and reach the place of peace and happiness."

31. SUNITA, THE SCAVENGER

In Savatthi there was a scavenger named Sunita. As a road-sweeper he received barely enough to support himself. He slept on the roadside for he did not have a house to go to. He saw other people enjoying themselves but he could not mix with them because these people called him an outcaste. Whenever a higher caste person went on the road Sunita had to run and hide so his shadow did not fall on them. If he was not quick enough he would be scolded and beaten. Poor Sunita lived a miserable life.

One day as he was sweeping a dirty dusty road, Sunita saw the Buddha with thousands of followers coming towards him. His heart was filled with joy and fear and finding no place to hide he stood, joining his palms in respect. The Buddha stopped and spoke to him in a sweet gentle voice saying, "My dear friend, would you like to leave this work and follow me?"

Nobody had ever spoken to Sunita like this before. His heart was filled with joy and his eyes with tears. "O most venerable Sir, I have always received orders but never a kind word. If you accept a dirty and miserable scavenger like me I will follow you."

So the Buddha ordained Sunita and took him along with the other monks. And from that day forth no one knew what his caste was and everybody - kings, ministers commanders - respected him.

32. BUDDHA AND THE SICK BHIKKHU

On one occasion, while visiting a monastery, Buddha entered a chamber where a Bhikkhu lay in great pain from a loathsome disease. And although there were many other Bhikkhus at the monastery not one of them was concerned about their sick brother. The Buddha beholding this woeful situation began to look after him. He called Ananda and together they bathed the sick man, changed his dirty bed and eased his pain.

Then Buddha admonished the monks of the monastery for their neglect and encouraged them to nurse the sick and care for the suffering. He concluded by saying, "Whosoever serves the sick and suffering, serves me."

1. THE BUDDHA'S PAEAN OF JOY

The Buddha had withstood the worst attacks of Mara. Finally, the Evil One retreated and the terrible storm he had raised died away. Now the mind of the Blessed One relaxed into peace. The great darkness faded away and the full moon and stars reappeared again.

The Lord passed into a deep meditation, passing beyond the limits of ordinary human understanding, seeing the world as it is, and not as it appears to be. Like an eagle soaring effortlessly toward the sun. His mind moved swiftly onward and upward.

He saw his past lives and all his former births, with their good and evil deeds, with their gains and losses. As his mind soared upwards he saw the round of birth and death of all mankind. He saw beings born repeatedly and die according to their Karma.

Those who do good actions have heavenly births. Though these lives last longer than those on earth, they also ended in death, as they are also subject to the 'law of impermanence'. Those who were suffering in the hell realms would also continue in the round of rebirths. So all beings (except Buddhas) are caught in the same 'round of existence' due to ignorance.

As his vision became even clearer, he saw the so-called soul of man which man claims as his own, broken up into parts and laid before him like the unwoven threads of a garment. He saw the cause of the chain of existence - Ignorance. For the ignorant person, clinging to things that are worthless and transient, creates in himself or herself more and more dangerous illusions. But when desire dies, illusions end, and Ignorance vanishes like the night, as the sun of Enlightenment shines.

And having understood the world as it is, the Buddha was perfected in wisdom, never to be born again. Craving and destructive desire had been completely eradicated - as a fire goes out for lack of fuel.

Bathed in the brilliant light of all Wisdom and Truth sat the Buddha, the Perfect One. And all about Him the world lay calm and bright and a soft breeze lifted the leaves of the Bodhi Tree.

Filled with compassion. The Lord sat beneath the Tree in deep contemplation of the Dhamma. He was lost in bliss, the perfect peace of Nibbana. At the dawn after His Enlightenment the Buddha uttered this paean of joy:

"Thro' many a birth in Samsara wandered I Seeking, but not finding, the builder of this house. Sorrowful is repeated birth. House builder, thou art seen. Thou shalt build no house again. All thy rafters are broken; thy ridgepole is shattered. The mind attains the unconditioned. Achieved is the end of craving."

2. THE BUDDHA'S FIRST SERMON

The Turning of the Wheel of Truth

The Buddha's first sermon was called the Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta which means the establishment of wisdom, or the Turning of the Wheel of Truth. It was preached on the full-moon day of July, called Asalha.

This sermon was preached to the five ascetics who were his former companions at the Deer Park in Isipatana (now called Sarnath), near Benares, India. Many devas and Brahmas (angels and gods) were present to listen to the discourse.

The Buddha started the discourse by advising them to give up two extremes. These were the enjoyment of sensual pleasures and the tormenting of the body (self-indulgence and self-mortification).

He advises against too much sensual pleasures because they were base, worldly, not noble and unhelpful in spiritual development. On the other hand, tormenting the body was painful, not noble and also unhelpful in spiritual development. He advised them to follow the Middle path called Majjhima Patipada which is helpful to see things clearly as they are, to attain knowledge, higher wisdom, peace, enlightenment and Nibbana.

The Buddha then taught the Four Noble Truths in His first sermon. They are the Noble Truth of Suffering, its Cause, its End, and the Way to its end. Everything in this world is full of Suffering and the cause of suffering is craving. The end of Suffering is Nibbana. The way to the end of Suffering is the Noble Eightfold Path.

The Buddha said that he was enlightened only after he understood these Four Noble Truths. The Eightfold Path has eight parts or factors: Right Understanding, Right Thought, Right Speech, Right Action, Right Livelihood, Right Effort, Right Mindfulness and Right Concentration.

1. Right Understanding means to know and understand the Four Noble Truths.

2. Right Thought means to think three kinds of thoughts.

- (i) Thoughts of renunciation or thoughts which do not have lustful desires.
- (ii) Thoughts of goodwill to other which are opposed to ill will.
- (iii) Thoughts of harmlessness as opposed to cruelty.

3. Right Speech deals with refraining from falsehood such as telling lies or not telling the truth, slandering or saying bad things about other people; harsh words and frivolous talks such as gossiping.

4. Right Action deals with refraining from killing, stealing and sexual misconduct.

5. Right Livelihood deals with the five kinds of trade which should be avoided in order to lead a noble life. They are trading in arms (weapons), living beings (breeding animals for slaughter), intoxicating drinks and poison.

6. Right Effort has four parts using meditation:

- (i) To try to stop evil thoughts that have arisen
- (ii) To prevent evil thoughts from arising.
- (iii) To try to develop good thoughts
- (iv) To try to continue good thoughts that have arisen

7. Right mindfulness is also fourfold. It is mindfulness of the body, mindfulness of feelings/sensations, mindfulness of thoughts passing through the mind and mindfulness of Dhamma.

8. Right Concentration is one-pointedness of mind as developed in meditation.

The eight factors can be grouped into three smaller groups as follows:

SILA (Morality)

Right Speech, Right Action, Right Livelihood.

SAMADHI (Concentrated mind in meditation)

Right Effort, Right Mindfulness, Right Concentration.

PANNA (Wisdom)

Right Thoughts, Right Understanding.

Sila, Samadhi and Panna are the three stages on the Path to mental purity whose object is Nibbana. These stages are described in a beautiful verse:

To cease from evil,
To do what is good.
To cleanse one's mind:
This is the advice of all the Buddhas.

3. KING BIMBISARA

The Buddha's First Royal Patron

King Bimbisara had earlier offered half his kingdom to the ascetic Gotama which he turned down because he wanted to search for Enlightenment. King Bimbisara had asked him to return to Rajagaha to enlighten him should the ascetic find what he was looking for.

When Gotama became the Buddha, The Enlightened One, he did not forget his promise to come back. He decided to revisit Rajagaha followed by a large number of his disciples. His fame as a religious teacher was spreading in the city and it eventually reached the ears of King Bimbisara.

On hearing that the Buddha had arrived in the city's gateway, the King went out with a large number of his subjects to welcome the Buddha and his disciples. He approached the Buddha and paid his respects, but some of his subjects did not know to whom they should pay their respects - the Buddha or Venerable Kassapa. They wondered whether the Buddha was leading a holy life under Venerable Kassapa or the reverse as both were highly respected religious teachers.

The Buddha read their thoughts and asked Venerable Kassapa why he had given up his fire sacrifice. Understanding the motive behind the question Venerable Kassapa explained that he preferred the peaceful state of Nibbana to useless sensual pleasures. After this he fell at the feet of the Buddha and said "My teacher, Lord, is the Exalted One: I am the disciple."

The devout people were very glad to hear of the conversion. The Buddha then preached the Dhamma, and King Bimbisara attained the first stage of Sainthood. After realising the doctrine, King Bimbisara addressed the Buddha. " Formerly, O Reverend Sir, when I was a prince, I had five wishes. They are now fulfilled. My first wish was to become king. My second wish was that a Fully Enlightened One should visit my country. My third wish was that I should associate with such an Enlightened One. My fourth wish was that He should preach to me the doctrine. My fifth wish was that I should understand that doctrine. Now all these five wishes are fulfilled."

Out of gratitude for this spiritual gift from the Buddha, King Bimbisara gave a park with a quiet bamboo grove for the use of the Buddha and his disciples. This park was named the Bamboo Grove. The Buddha spent three successive rainy seasons there and three other rainy seasons later.

After listening to the Dhamma, the King became a good and pious ruler but due to his past bad Kamma, he had to face an untimely and miserable death caused by his son's wickedness.

4. VISAKHA

The Greatest Female Supporter of the Buddha Visakha was the devout and generous daughter of a millionaire. When she was only seven years old, the Buddha visited her birthplace. Her grandfather, hearing of the Buddha's visit advised her to go out and welcome the Buddha. Though she was so young, she was religious and virtuous. As such, immediately after hearing the Dhamma from the Buddha, she attained the first stage of Sainthood.

When she was fifteen years old, some Brahmins who saw her thought she would be an ideal wife for their master Punnavaddhana, the son of a millionaire named Migara. Visakha possessed the five kinds of feminine beauty - beautiful hair, a beautiful figure, beautiful bone structure, beautiful skin which was smooth and golden in colour, and youthfulness. Accordingly, they made arrangements for Visakha to be married to Punnavaddhana.

On her wedding day, her wise father gave her some advice under ten headings as follows:

1. A wife should not criticise her husband and parents-in-law in front of other people. Neither should their weaknesses or household quarrels be reported elsewhere.
2. A wife should not listen to the stories or reports of other households.
3. Things should be lent to those who do return them.
4. Things should not be lent to those who do not return them.
5. Poor relatives and friends should be helped even if they do not repay.
6. A wife should sit gracefully. On seeing her parents-law or her husband, she should respect them by rising from her seat.
7. Before taking her food, a wife should first see that her parents-in-law and husband are served. She should also make sure that his servants are well cared for.
8. Before going to sleep, a wife should see that all doors are closed, furniture is safe, servants have performed their duties, and that parents-in-law have retired. As a rule a wife should rise early in the morning and unless she is sick, she should not sleep during the day.
9. Parents-in-law and husband should be treated very carefully like fire.
10. Parents-in-law and husband should be given the respect due to Devas.

From the day Visakha arrived in Savatthi, the city of her husband, she was kind and generous to everyone in the city and everyone loved her.

One day, her father-in-law was eating some sweet rice porridge from a golden bowl when a Bhikkhu entered the house for alms. Although her father-in-law saw the Bhikkhu, he continued to eat as if he had not seen the Bhikkhu. Visakha politely told the Bhikkhu, "Pass on, Venerable Sir, my father-in-law is eating stale food."

For a long time Visakha's father-in-law had been unhappy at her because she was a devout follower and supporter of the Buddha while he was not. He was looking for a chance to break off the marriage between his son and Visakha, but her conduct was faultless. Now he had got his chance. Misunderstanding Visakha's words, he thought she had brought disgrace to his family.

He ordered Visakha to be expelled from the house, but she reminded him of her father's request to eight clansmen. Her father told them, "If there be any fault in my daughter investigate it."

The millionaire agreed to her request and summoned those eight clansmen to come and investigate whether Visakha was guilty of rudeness. When they arrived he told them, "Find her guilty of this fault and expel her from the house."

Visakha proved her innocence by explaining, "Sirs, when my father-in-law ignored the Bhikkhu and continued to eat his milk-rice-porridge he was not making merit in his present life. He was only enjoying the merits of his past actions. Was this not like eating stale food?"

Her father-in-law had to admit that she was not guilty of being rude.

There were other misunderstandings after this, but Visakha was able to explain to his satisfaction. After this, her father-in-law had realised his error and the great wisdom of Visakha. At her suggestion, he invited the Buddha to their house to give a sermon. On hearing the sermon he became a Sotapanna.

With wisdom and patience, she succeeded in converting her husband's household to a happy Buddhist home.

Visakha was also very generous and helpful to the monks. She built the Pubbarama monastery at a great cost for the use of monks. Great was her joy when the Buddha spent six rainy seasons there.

In one of the discourses that the Buddha delivered to Visakha, he spoke of the eight qualities in a woman that bring her welfare and happiness in this world and the next:

"Herein, Visakha, a woman does her work well, she manages the servants, she respects her husband, and she guards his wealth. Herein, Visakha, a woman has confidence (Saddha) in the Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha, Virtue (Sila), charity (Caga), and Wisdom (Panna)."

Being a woman who had many talents, she played an important role in various activities amongst the Buddha and his followers. At times, she was given the authority by the Buddha to settle disputes that arose amongst the Bhikkhunis (nuns). Some Vinaya rules of discipline were also laid down for the Bhikkhunis when she was called in to settle their disputes.

She died at the ripe age of one hundred and twenty.

5. DEVADATTA

The Buddha's Greatest Personal Enemy

Devadatta was the son of King Suppabuddha and Pamita, an aunt of the Buddha. His sister was Yasodhara. He was thus a cousin and brother-in-law of the Buddha. Together with Ananda and other Sakyan princes, he entered the Order of monks in the early part of the Buddha's ministry. Unable to attain any stage of Sainthood, he worked hard for the worldly psychic powers.

In his early days, he was a good monk known for his grace and psychic powers. Later he became conceited with worldly gain and fame. As his ill will and jealousy towards the Buddha increased, he became the greatest personal enemy of the Buddha.

One day in a large assembly which included kings and princes. Devadatta approached the Buddha and requested Him to make him the leader of the Sangha. Since he was not capable and worthy enough, the Buddha turned down his request. He became very angry as a result and vowed to take revenge on the Buddha.

Although Devadatta was an evil monk, he had many admirers and followers. One of his chief supporters was King Ajatasattu with whom he planned to kill King Bimbisara and the Buddha. Ajatasattu succeeded in killing his father, but Devadatta failed to kill the Buddha.

His first attempt to kill the Buddha was to hire a man to kill the Blessed One. That man would be killed by two other men who would in turn be killed by four other men. Finally the four men would be killed by eight other men. But when the first man came close to the Buddha, he became frightened. He put aside his weapons and took refuge in the Buddha. Eventually all the men who were hired to kill one another became the disciples of the Buddha. As a result, the first plot to kill the Buddha failed.

Then Devadatta himself tried to kill the Buddha. When the Buddha was walking on the Vultures' Rock, Devadatta climbed to the peak and hurled a huge rock at the Buddha. On its way down, the rock struck another rock and a splinter flew and wounded the Buddha's foot, causing blood to flow. The Buddha looked up and seeing Devadatta, he remarked with pity, "Foolish man, you have done many unwholesome deeds for harming the Buddha."

Devadatta's third attempt to kill the Blessed One was to make the fierce man-killer elephant, Nalagiri, drunk with liquor. When Nalagiri saw the Buddha coming at a distance, it raised its ears, tail and trunk and charged at the Buddha. As the elephant came close, the Buddha radiated his loving-kindness (Metta) towards the elephant. So vast and deep was the Buddha's love that as the elephant reached the Buddha, it stopped, became quiet and stood before the Master. The Buddha then stroked Nalagiri on the trunk and spoke softly to it. Respectfully, the elephant removed the dust at the master's feet with its trunk, and scattered the dust over its head. Then it retreated, with its head facing the Buddha, as far as the stable, and remained fully tamed. Usually elephants are tamed with whips and weapons, but the Blessed One tamed the elephant with the power of his loving-kindness.

Still trying to be the leader of the Sangha, Devadatta tried yet another plan - a deceitful one. With the help of five hundred misled monks, he planned to split the Sangha community.

He requested the Buddha to make it compulsory for monk to follow five extra rules:

- (i) Dwell all their lives in the forest
- (ii) Live only on alms obtained by begging
- (iii) Wear robes made from rags collected from the dust heaps and cemeteries
- (iv) Live at the foot of trees
- (v) Refrain from eating fish or meat throughout their lives.

Devadatta made this request knowing fully well that the Buddha would refuse them. Devadatta was happy that the Buddha did not approve of the five rules, and he used these issues to gain supporters and followers. Newly ordained monks who did not know the Dhamma well left the Buddha and accepted Devadatta as their leader. Eventually after Venerable Sariputta and Venerable Moggallana had explained the Dhamma to them, they went back to the Buddha.

After this, evil days fell on Devadatta. He fell very ill at the failure of his plans, and before his death he sincerely regretted his actions, and wanted to see the Buddha before he died. But the fruits of his evil Kamma had begun to ripen and prevented him from doing so. He died on the way to see the Buddha, near the gate of Jetavana monastery. But before he died he took refuge in the Buddha.

Although he has to suffer in a woeful state because of his crimes, yet as a result of his holy life that he led in the early part of his career, it is stated that he would become a Pacceka Buddha named Atthissara in the distant future. As a Pacceka Buddha he would be able to achieve Enlightenment by his own efforts.

6. KHEMA

The Beautiful Queen Who Became the Chief Disciple of the Buddha.

Just as the Buddha had appointed two chief disciples, Venerable Sariputta and Venerable Moggallana, for the order of monks, he appointed two chief female disciples for the order of nuns. They were Venerable Khema and Venerable Uppalavanna.

Khema was one of the beautiful queens of King Bimbisara. The conversion of Khema was one of the rare cases where the Buddha used his psychic powers to make a change in the heart of another. The Buddha never used his powers to control another person's emotions, but merely to create understanding and make wisdom arise.

Khema was beautiful like a full moon reflected on a still lake at midnight. Her cheeks were smooth as lotus petals and her eyes sparkled like gems. As she had heard that the Buddha did not speak well of physical beauty, she had no wish to see him.

One cool, breezy morning, Khema decided to visit the monastery which King Bimbisara had built for the Buddha in the Bamboo Grove. Squirrels were scampering in the fruit trees that threw long shadows on the grass. The ponds were covered with water lilies and a light scent of jasmine was in the air.

Then Khema was drawn to a deep, clear voice coming from the preaching hall. It was unlike anything she had heard before. It sounded more beautiful than the singing of birds at the break of dawn. The voice was warm, relaxed and full of love and concern. Its words were words of wisdom.

Like a bee being attracted to a flower, Khema moved to the hall where the Buddha was preaching. As she did not want the Buddha to recognise her she pulled her scarf down over her face and sat at the back of the hall. What she did not know was that the Buddha knew who she was and what she was thinking.

With his psychic powers, the Buddha created the image of a most beautiful young lady about the age of sixteen standing by his side and fanning him. Khema gasped in wonder at her beauty and rolled her eyes in admiration for her.

"Oh look at her finely shaped nose, her mouth, her arms and fingers," thought Khema. "With her perfect complexion, she looks like a fully bloomed flower in spring. She is far more beautiful than anyone I have ever seen, and is far, far more beautiful than I."

Just for the moment Khema thought her eyes were playing tricks on her. Did she see this young girl growing older? Oh yes. And the beauty was fading from this lovely creature. Some wrinkles appeared on her face and the smile on her lotus-like lips changed into a toothless grin. Her hair turned grey, then white. The limbs that were slender and strong became thin and feeble, and she fell on the floor. From a young lady, this image had changed into an eighty-year-old woman.

Khema saw this old woman die and rot until her bones turned to dust. She then realised that just like the lovely image, one day she too would grow old and die. All vanity of external beauty fell from her and she instantly understood the impermanence of the physical body and life.

She attained Arahantship, and entered into the order of nuns after getting King Bimbisara's consent. She became renowned for her Insight Knowledge amongst the order of nuns.

7. ANATHAPINDIKA

The Millionaire Supporter of the Buddha

The millionaire Anathapindika was born as Sadaria. As a result of his great generosity, he was given the name Anathapindika which meant "Feeder of the Helpless"

By buying a park from Prince Jeta at a huge cost, Anathapindika built the famous Jetavana Monastery for the Buddha to spend the rainy season. A layer of gold coins covering the grounds of the park measured the price of the park. As the Buddha spent the major part of his life in the quiet surroundings, most of his sermons were delivered there. Altogether the Buddha spent twenty-four rainy seasons at Jetavana Monastery.

Several of the Buddha's sermons delivered to Anathapindika were intended for lay people. Two of them

were on generosity and the Four Kinds of Bliss. In the discourse on generosity, the Buddha advised that the first stage of the Buddhist life is to practice generosity such as giving alms to monks and building monasteries. More important than being generous is to take refuge in the Triple Gem and to observe the Five Precepts, the five rules that help us discipline our words and deeds. More important than observation of the five precepts is the regular practice of meditation on loving-kindness (Metta-bhavana), but the most meritorious act is to develop Insight into the fleeting nature of things.

In the discourse on the four kinds of bliss a layman can enjoy, the Buddha mentioned the bliss of ownership, the bliss of wealth, the bliss of being debtless and the bliss of blamelessness.

The bliss of ownership means the satisfaction in gaining wealth by honest means and hard work. The bliss of wealth is the satisfaction of enjoying a person's wealth while fulfilling all his duties. The bliss of being debtless is the satisfaction that a layman enjoys whenever he knows that he does not incur a debt, great or small to anyone. The bliss of blamelessness is the satisfaction derived by a person whose actions of the body, speech and thought do not cause harm to others and free from any blame.

When Anathapindika first met the Buddha at the Sitavana forest near Rajagaha, his confidence was so strong that an aura glowed from his body. On hearing the Dhamma for the first time Anathapindika became a Sotapanna (first stage of sainthood).

8. THE BUDDHA & THE FARMER KASIBHARADVAJA

Once the Buddha was in the village of Ekanala in Magadha. The rain had fallen and it was planting time. In the early morning when the leaves were still wet with dew, the Buddha went to the field where Kasibharadvaja, a Brahmin and farmer, had five hundred ploughs at work. When the Blessed One arrived, it was the time for Brahmin to distribute food to the workers. The Buddha waited there for his alms food, but when the Brahmin saw him he sneered and said:

"I plough and sow, and having ploughed and sown. I eat, O ascetic, you also should plough and sow, and having ploughed and sown, you should eat."

"O Brahmin, I too plough and sow. And having ploughed and sown, I eat," replied the Buddha.

The puzzled Brahmin asked, "You claim that you plough and sow, but I do not see you ploughing?"

The Buddha replied:

"I sow faith as the seeds. My discipline is the rain. My wisdom is my yoke and plough. My modesty is the plough-head. The mind is the rope. Mindfulness is the ploughshare and the goad."

"I am restrained in deeds, words and food. I do my weeding with truthfulness. The bliss I get is my freedom from suffering. With perseverance I bear my yoke until I come to Nibbana. Thus I have done my ploughing. It brings the fruit of immortality. By ploughing like this, one escapes all suffering."

After this explanation, the Brahmin realised his error, and said, "May the Venerable Gotama eat the milk-rice! The Venerable Gotama is a farmer since his crops bear the fruit of Deathlessness!" So saying, the Brahmin filled a large bowl with milk-rice and offered it to the Buddha.

The Buddha refused the food saying that He could not accept food in return for His preaching.

The Brahmin fell at the feet of the Buddha and asked to be ordained into the Order of monks. And not long after, Kasibharadvaja became an Arahant.

9. MAGANDIYA

The beautiful maiden who harboured a grudge against the Buddha

Magandiya was such a beautiful girl that many wealthy men wanted to marry her. Her parents always turned down the suitors whom they thought were not good enough for her. Even when her parents found a suitable man for her, she refused to marry anyone less than a king. She was determined to use her beauty to marry well.

One day as the Buddha was surveying the world, He noticed that Magandiya's parents were spiritually developed. All it needed was one statement from Him to open their eyes to Truth. The Buddha went to the place where the Brahmin was making his fire sacrifice outside his village.

When Magandiya's father saw the Buddha coming, she was moved with wonder by His physical beauty, calmness and noble manner. There could not be a better person to give his daughter in marriage, the Brahmin thought. "Don't go away O monk," he said, "wait here until I bring my daughter to see you. You are an ideal partner for her, and she for you."

The Buddha did not speak and remained silent. Instead He stamped His footprint on the ground and went away. Very excitedly the Brahmin carried the news to his wife. "Dress her up quickly, dear. I have seen a man worthy of our daughter." When three of them came back to the spot, the Buddha was nowhere to be seen. They only saw the footprint.

The wife who was familiar with signs read the print, and said, "I don't think this is the print of one who would marry our daughter. It belongs to a person who has given up worldly pleasures."

"You and your signs again. You see crocodiles in a water pot, and robbers in the middle of the house. Look, there he is sitting under the tree. Have you seen, my dear, anyone so marvellous in form! Come along, daughter. This time your suitor is so perfect that you cannot complain."

"Monk, I'm giving my daughter in marriage to you," said the Brahmin to the Buddha. The Buddha turned down the offer, explaining that He had overcome all His worldly pleasures. He related how He had given up household life with all its enjoyment, and how He could not be tempted by even the beautiful daughters of Mara. He said that however beautiful the body may be, it is still full of impurities.

Hearing this, the Brahmin and his wife understood immediately that the worldly life is miserable and not something to be attached to, no matter how nice it may appear. Both of them attained Anagami, the third stage of sainthood.

Unfortunately, proud Magandiya, who was not spiritually developed, could not understand the real meaning of these words. She thought the Buddha was insulting her beauty. "How could this monk insult me when so many men have fallen for my beauty at first sight. Even if he doesn't want to marry me, he shouldn't declare that my body is full of dirt." Clenching her fists, she whispered under her breath, "You just wait, O monk. When I marry a husband who is powerful, I shall teach you a lesson."

Later, she was married to the King of Udena. When she heard that the Buddha had entered the city, her hatred of the Buddha rose again and she bribed and instigated the people to insult the Buddha so as to drive Him away.

Ananda, who was with the Buddha, did not want to stay on and endure the insults, but the Buddha advised him to practice tolerance and patience. The Buddha said, "As an elephant in the battle-field withstand the arrows shot from a bow, even so will I endure abuse of irreligious people." The Buddha said that the abusive talk would not last long, for such is the power of the Buddha. They stayed on in Udena, and all the abuse ended shortly.

10. ALAVAKA, THE DEMON

Alavaka, living near the city of Alavi, feasted on human flesh. So fierce, powerful and crafty was he that he was known as the 'Demon.'

One day, the King of Alavi went hunting for deer in the jungle when Alavaka caught him. The king begged to be released, but in return for his freedom he had to send one person everyday into the jungle as offering for Alavaka.

Everyday a prisoner would be sent into the forest with a plate of rice. He was told that to gain freedom he had to go to a certain tree, leave the plate there and he could go free. At first many prisoners volunteered to go on that 'simple' mission. But as the days went by and no one returned to tell the other prisoners what had happened, the prisoners were forced each day to go into the forest.

Soon the prison became empty. How was the king to fulfil his promise of sending a person each day to be eaten by the Demon? His ministers advised him to drop packets of gold in the streets. Those found picking the packets would be caught as thieves and sent to Alavaka. When the word got around, nobody dared to pick the packets. As a last resort, the king started catching children for offering. The terrified subjects fled the city, leaving it deserted. There was only one more boy left - and he was the king's son. With much reluctance, the king ordered that the prince should be sent to Alavaka the following morning.

That day, the Buddha happened to be near the city. When he surveyed the world with His Divine Eye that morning, He saw what was going to happen. Out of compassion for the king, the prince and Alavaka, the Buddha travelled the whole day to the Demon's cave and in the evening He arrived at the entrance of the cave.

The Demon was away in the mountains, and the Buddha asked the gatekeeper if He could spend a night at the cave. When the gatekeeper had gone to inform his master about the request, the Buddha went into the cave, sat on the seat of the Demon and preached the Dhamma to his wives.

When the Demon heard what had happened from his servant, he hurried home, very angry. With his extraordinary power, he created a terrifying thunderstorm which shook and lighted up the forest with thunder, lightening, wind and rain. But the Buddha was unafraid.

Alavaka then attacked the Buddha by throwing his spear and club at Him, but before the weapons could touch Him, they fell at the feet of the Blessed One.

Unable to frighten the Buddha, Alavaka asked: "Is it right that you, a holy man, should enter and sit amongst his wives when the owner of the house is away?" At this, the Buddha got up to leave the cave.

Alavaka thought, "What a fool I am to have wasted my energy trying to frighten this ascetic." So he asked the Buddha to enter the cave again. The Demon ordered the Buddha three times to get out and three times to enter the cave with the hope that he could kill the Buddha with fatigue. Each time the Buddha did as He was ordered. But when the Demon asked the Buddha to leave for the fourth time, the Buddha refused to do so, and said, "I'm not going to obey you, Alavaka. Do whatever you can but I'm going to remain here."

Unable to force the Buddha to do what he wanted, Alavaka changed his tactics and said, "I will ask you some questions. If you can't answer I'll split your heart, kill you and throw you over to the other side of the river."

The Buddha told him calmly, "There is no one, Alavaka, whether man or deva, ascetic, brahma or brahmin who can do such things to me. But if you want to ask anything, you may do so."

Alavaka asked some questions, which he learned from his parents who had, in turn, learned them from their parents. He had forgotten the answers, but he had preserved the questions by writing them on gold leaves. The questions were:

"What is the greatest wealth for a man? What brings the highest bliss when well mastered? What is the sweetest of all tastes? Which is the best way of life?"

The Buddha answered:

"The greatest wealth for a man is confidence. The true doctrine when well mastered brings the highest bliss. The sweetest taste is truth. Wise living is the decent way of life."

Alavaka asked many more questions all of which the Buddha answered. The final question was:

"Passing from this world to the next, how does one not grieve?"

The Buddha's reply was:

'He who possesses these four virtues - truthfulness, good morals, courage and generosity - grieves not after passing away.'

Understanding the meaning of the Buddha's words, Alavaka said, "Now I know what is the secret of my future welfare. It is for my own welfare and good that the Buddha came to Alavi." Alavaka prostrated before the Buddha and begged to be accepted as a disciple.

The next morning when the officers of Alavi came with the king's young son, they were surprised at the sight of the Buddha preaching to Alavaka who was listening attentively to the sermon. When the boy was handed to Alavaka, he was ashamed of himself to receive the boy as an offering. Instead he stroked the boy on the head, kissed him and handed him over to the officers. After that the Buddha blessed the child and Alavaka.

Indeed, the conversion of Alavaka the cannibal showed how the Buddha, with his great wisdom and compassion, could tame a savage and change him into a gentle disciple.

11. SUJATA AND THE DISCOURSE ON THE SEVEN TYPES OF WIVES

Sujata came from a wealthy family and was married to the son of Anathapindaka. She was arrogant, did not respect others and did not like to listen to the instructions of her husband and his parents. Consequently, discord arose in the family everyday.

One day when the Buddha visited the house of Anathapindaka, He heard an unusual uproar in the house and inquired what it was about.

Anathapindaka replied, "Lord, it is Sujata, my daughter in law. She does not listen to her mother in law, her father in law or to her husband. She does not even honour nor pay respect to the Exalted One."

The Buddha called Sujata to His presence and spoke kindly to her, "Sujata, there are seven types of wives a man may have. Which of them are you."

"What are the seven types of wives, Venerable Sir?" asked Sujata.

"Sujata, there are bad and undesirable wives. There is a wife who is troublesome. She is wicked, bad tempered, pitiless, and not faithful to her husband.

"There is a wife who is like a thief. She wastes the money earned by her husband."

"There is a wife who is like a master. She is lazy, and thinks only about herself. She is cruel and lacking in compassion, always scolding her husband or gossiping."

"Sujata, there are the good and praiseworthy wives. There is a wife who is like a mother. She is kind and compassionate and treats her husband like her son and is careful with his money."

"There is a wife who is like a sister. She is respectful towards her husband, just as a younger sister to her brother, modest, and is obedient to her husband's wishes."

"There is a wife who is like a friend. She rejoices at the sight of her husband just like a friend who has not seen her friend for a long time. She is of noble birth, virtuous and faithful."

"There is a wife who is like a handmaid. She behaves as an understanding wife when her shortcomings are pointed out. She remains calm and does not show any anger although her husband uses some harsh words. She is obedient to her husband's wishes."

The Blessed one asked, "Sujata, which type of wife are you like, or you would wish to be like?"

Hearing these words of the Blessed One, Sujata was ashamed of her past conduct and said, "From today onwards, let the Exalted One think of me as the one in the last example for I'll be a good and understanding wife." She changed her behaviour and became her husband's helper, and together they worked towards Enlightenment.

12. ANANDA

The Buddha had no regular attendant during the first twenty years of His ministry. Several monks used to attend on the Buddha, accompany Him on alms rounds and carry His extra robes and bowl. The monks who served Him were Nagasamala, Nagita, Upavana, Sunakhatta, Cunda, Sagata, Radha and Meghiya.

These monks did not always obey His instructions. For example, one day when the Buddha and Venerable Nagasamala came up to a junction, the Venerable Nagasamala decided to go one way although the Buddha suggested that they should go the other way. The monk went along the road of his choice where he was robbed and beaten by highway robbers. He came back to the Buddha to be reminded of his disobedience and be consoled.

On another day, as the Buddha was on His way to the village of Jantu, Venerable Meghiya who accompanied Him wanted to stop by a mango grove and practise asceticism. Thrice the Buddha advised

him against this, but he went his way. Eventually he returned to the Buddha and confessed that he had failed in his practice because almost all the time he was in the grove, three kinds of evil thoughts disturbed his mind: thoughts of sensual desires, ill-will and thoughts of cruelty.

When the Buddha came to the Jetavana Monastery in Savatthi, He said, "Now I am old, Bhikkhus. When I say, 'Let us go this way,' some go the other way; some drop my bowl and robe on the ground. Choose out one disciple to attend always on me." The Buddha was fifty five years of age at that time.

The Venerable Sariputta and Moggallana both volunteered their services, but the Buddha did not accept as they had other valuable services to perform to the world. The offers of other disciples were also turned down. As Venerable Ananda was silent, waiting to be nominated by the Buddha Himself, other monks advised him to offer his services.

The Buddha said, "It is not necessary for Ananda to be induced by others. He will serve me on his own accord."

Venerable Ananda agreed to serve the Buddha regularly subject to eight conditions:

1. He should not be given the robes received by the Buddha.
2. He should not be given the food received by the Buddha.
3. He should not sleep in the Fragrant Chamber of the Buddha.
4. He should not be asked to go with the Buddha to accept alms on invitation.
5. The Buddha should consent to invitations received by him.
6. The Buddha should give him permission to introduce visitors that come from afar to see the Buddha.
7. He should be allowed to consult the Buddha whenever he had any doubts to clarify.
8. The Buddha should repeat to him the discourses preached in his absence.

After the Buddha consented to these eight conditions, Venerable Ananda became the regular attendant of the Buddha for twenty-five years.

Venerable Ananda was the son of King Suddhodana's younger brother, and therefore a cousin of the Buddha. He entered the Order of monks during the second year of the Buddha's ministry. Not long after, he attained the first stage of Sainthood (Sotapatti) on hearing the sermon given by Venerable Punna Mantaniputta.

From the time he became the Buddha's personal attendant, he served the Buddha with devotion and care up to the Master's last moments. Day and night, he served the Master. At night he would go round the place where the Buddha was resting to prevent His sleep from being disturbed.

At the time of the awarding of ranks on the disciples, the Buddha recognised the Venerable Ananda as first among monks who are learned, mindful, well behaved and determined. He was greatly responsible for the establishment of the Order of nuns (Bhikkhunis) and the planting of the Ananda Bodhi tree which still survives today near the Jetavana Monastery.

Although Venerable Ananda had the rare privilege to listen to every sermon of the Buddha, he did not attain his Arahantship until after the Buddha had passed away.

Venerable Ananda lived to one hundred and twenty years of age before he passed away.

13. KING AJATASATTU

A Young King Who Was Misled by a Wicked Friend

King Bimbisara had a son, Prince Ajatasattu, who was a good friend of Devadatta. By frequent contact with him, Ajatasattu was influenced to kill his father.

One silent and dark night, he crept into the king's room with a knife tied to his thigh, but the guards caught him. The kind king thought to himself. "Ah, I have remained king for too long. It is time that I step down and make Ajatasattu the king so that he can rule in peace, and I can retire into a religious life." So instead of punishing Ajatasattu for his evil intentions, King Bimbisara made him the King.

After Ajatasattu was made the new king, he surprised everyone, including his father. Swift like a viper caught by its tail, he sprang round and threw his father into the dark and cold dungeon.

"Let him have no visitors other than my mother," ordered Ajatasattu, "and give him no food so that he will starve to death."

But the King Bimbisara did not die. His loyal wife secretly brought him food hidden in her clothes. When Ajatasattu found out and stopped this, she carried food in her hair knot. Again Ajatasattu found out. Finally, the queen had to bathe her body and cover it with a mixture of honey, butter, ghee and sugar. By licking this food off her body, he survived. At last Ajatasattu found this out and he forbade his mother from visiting his father. Now the king had no food to sustain him and would surely die.

But Ajatasattu lost his patience and demanded, "call the barber." When the barber came, he ordered, "I command you to go to Bimbisara's cell, cut open the soles of his feet with your razor, tear the skin away and put salt and oil on the raw flesh. Then I command you to force him to walk on burning charcoal until he dies."

When King Bimbisara saw the barber approaching, tears of joy watered his cheeks as he thought, "At last my son has realised his folly. Now he sends a barber to trim my beard and cut my hair before releasing me from prison." Instead, with the help of two soldiers, the barber carried on the orders and the good king died in great pain.

On that very day, Ajatasattu received news that his wife had given birth to a son. Great was his joy at being a father and thought came to his mind. He hurried to his mother and asked, "Tell me mother, did my father love me as much as I love my son?"

His mother turned around, stared at him in silence with her sorrowful eyes and then murmured in disbelief, "What did you say, Ajatasattu? You asked if your father loved you?"

"Ajatasattu, when you were in my womb, I wanted to drink blood from your father's hand. When he found this out, happily he cut his wrist for me to drink his blood for you. When the fortune-tellers predicted that you would be your father's enemy, I tried to have a miscarriage but he prevented me. Again I tried to kill you when you were born; he stopped me even though he knew that one-day you would kill him. Is that not love?"

"Do you see that scar on your thumb? That was a boil you had when you were small. You were crying from so much pain that nobody could put you to sleep. When your father heard this, he stopped from his royal duty and came running to see you. Gently he took you in his lap and sucked the boil until it burst open in his mouth. O my son, your father swallowed it out of love for you - that pus and blood. In what way did he not love you, Ajatasattu? Tell me, Ajatasattu, would you do for your son what your father had done for you? And you want him dead."

When he heard this, Ajatasattu was choked with tears. He ordered his guards, "Run, run and release my father before he dies." But none of them moved. "Go, I command you. Release my father before he dies," Ajatasattu shouted.

The his adviser stepped forward and said slowly, "Great king, your father has just died this morning." Ajatasattu fell on his knees and cried until his body jerked violently, uttering, "Forgive me, father. Please forgive me."

Ajatasattu realised what was the love of a father only when he became a father himself. As for King Bimbisara, he was reborn as a deva in the Catummaharajika Heaven.

14. KING PASENADI OF KOSALA (1)

A Royal Supporter of the Buddha King Pasenadi Kosala was the king of Kosala, which was north of Magadha ruled by King Bimbisara. The capital of the kingdom of Kosala was Savatthi. One of his sisters was the chief queen of King Bimbisara, and hence he was the brother-in-law of King Bimbisara.

King Pasenadi Kosala became a follower of the Buddha very early in the Buddha's ministry, and had remained a loyal supporter ever since. His chief queen was Mallika, a wise and religious queen who was well versed in the Dhamma and acted as his religious guide on several occasions.

The first time the King met the Buddha, he asked, "How is it that Master Gotama claimed that He has gained Full Enlightenment? Master Gotama is both young in years and young as a monk."

The Buddha replied, "Great king, there are four things that should not be looked down upon and despised because they are young. They are a noble warrior, a serpent, a fire and a Bhikkhu (holy man). An enraged young warrior may ruthlessly cause harm to others. The bite of even a small snake may kill. A little fire may become a huge fire that destroys building and forests. Even a young monk may be a saint."

Hearing this King Pasenadi Kosala understood that the Buddha was indeed a wise teacher and decided to become his follower.

King Pasenadi liked going to the Buddha for advice. Even during his official duties, he found time to speak to the Buddha. When talking to the Buddha one day, he received news that his wife, Queen Mallika, had given birth to a daughter. The king was not pleased with the news because he wanted a son.

The Buddha, unlike any other religious teacher, spoke well of women. He said, "Some women are better than men, O king. There are women who are wise, good, who regard their mothers-in-law as goddesses, and who are pure in word, thought and deed. They may one day give birth to brave sons who would rule a country."

Once, the king came to hear that the Buddha had said, "Dear ones whom we love bring sorrow and lamentation, pain, grief and despair." The king asked Queen Mallika whether she agreed with the Buddha. She said that if the Buddha had said so, it must be true. But the king was not satisfied. "How can a loved one bring sorrow?" wondered the king.

Queen Mallika approached a Brahmin to ask the Buddha to explain this. After hearing many stories to explain this, the Brahmin related them to the queen. She then asked the king, "Sire, what is your opinion, is Princess Vajira, your daughter, dear to you?"

"Yes, Mallika, she is very dear to me," said the King.

"If some misfortune were to happen to Princess Vajira, would that bring sorrow and lamentation, pain, grief and despair?"

"Yes," said the King.

"Sire, it was with reference to this that the Blessed One said that dear ones whom we love, bring sorrow and lamentation, pain, grief and despair."

"Mallika," said the King, "it is wonderful, it is marvellous, how far the Blessed One sees with understanding."

When King Kosala lost to his nephew and had to retreat to his capital at Savatthi, the Buddha commented to his disciples that neither the victor nor the defeated would experience peace:

"Victory breeds hatred. The defeated lives in pain. Happily the peaceful live, Giving up victory and defeat."

In a later battle, the two kings fought and King Kosala not only won, but he also captured King Ajatasattu alive with all his elephants, chariots, horses and soldiers. King Kosala thought that he would release his nephew, but not his horses, elephants and others. He wanted the satisfaction of keeping these material possessions as the prizes of victory.

On hearing about this, the Buddha told his disciples that it would have been wiser for King Kosala not to have kept anything for himself. The truth of this statement still applies to this modern war-weary world:

'A man may plunder, as he will. When others plunder in return, he who is plundered will plunder in return. The Wheel of Deeds turns round and makes the ones who are plundered plunderers.'

King Pasenadi Kosala passed away in his eightieth year when his son Vidudabha revolted against him.

15. KING PASENADI OF KOSALA (2)

One evening, when King Kosala was talking to the Buddha, there passed by on the road a band of ascetics with knotted hair, hairy bodies and long nails. They walked past slowly, with heads bent low. At once the king got up and knelt down to worship them, uttering his own name three times.

The king came back to the Buddha and said, "Sir, there were saints among those ascetics. Just see how calmly they walked with heads bent down." With His divine eyes the Buddha saw that those men were not saints but spies who were sent out to gather information.

"Your majesty," said the Buddha, "by mere appearances alone it is not possible for one who leads a life of comfort to know the real nature of another. If we want to understand a person's real nature, his good and bad qualities, we must associate with him for some time. We must be wise and have sharpness of mind."

"We can know a person's purity by conversing with him, observe his courage in the face of misfortune and understand his wisdom during discussions. The bad people, O king, sometimes pretend to be good and it is difficult for you to judge their state of morality."

King Pasenadi Kosala fought many wars with his nephew King Ajatasattu. He was defeated once and at another time he was victorious.

16. SUNDARI WHO ATTEMPTED TO DISCREDIT THE BUDDHA

In the 20th year of the Buddha's ministry, two important events took place. The first event was the conversion of the bandit Angulimala. The other event happened at Savatthi where some jealous ascetics tried to discredit him.

The Buddha and His disciples were famous and respected religious teachers at Savatthi. Large numbers of the citizens there came regularly to listen to their sermons and to offer them alms.

However, not all the people of Savatthi were followers of the Buddha. There were many ascetics who believed that their teachings were superior. They were very jealous to see more and more people going to the Buddha and His disciples to offer them alms and gifts of robes and medicine. Soon, overcome by jealousy, they decided to do something about it.

In Savatthi there was a female wandering ascetic by the name of Sundari. She was young in age and bad in character. The ascetics planned to attack the character and reputation of the Buddha and the monks through this female ascetic.

"Sister, you must try to help us do something about the Buddha," they told her. "He is attracting the supporters away from us."

"What can I do for you?" Sundari asked.

"You can help us by visiting the Jeta's Grove regularly, and find out as much as you can about the Buddha. With this information we may try to win the people back to support us."

So Sundari visited the Jeta's Grove regularly to spy on the Buddha. She did not know the real purpose - an evil one - why the ascetics had asked her to go there. When the ascetics knew that many people had seen Sundari going regularly to the Jeta's Grove, they killed her and buried her in a hole dug in a ditch nearby. They then went to King Pasenadi Kosala and reported that after Sundari had gone to listen to the Buddha preaching, she was missing.

"Where do you suspect she is?" asked the King.

"She may still be in the Jeta's Grove, great king," they replied. "We are worried because she has never been known to remain very long after the Buddha has finished giving his sermon."

The King said, "Then you must go immediately to search for her there." The ascetics pretended to search for Sundari in the Jeta's Grove. After searching for some time, they went to the spot where they had buried her and dug up her body. Placing the corpse on a stretcher, they carried it back to Savatthi. All the way they shouted angrily at the top of their voices, "See, Lords, see the work of these monks who call themselves holy people. They are shameless and wicked liars. See what they have done. They have committed sexual misconduct with poor Sundari and then they have killed her to hide their crimes."

The Buddha's disciples became frightened by these accusations and did not know what to do, but the Buddha calmly told them to control their fears. There was nothing to be frightened about, since they were innocent of the crime.

The Buddha advised them, "the people will accuse you and scold you, but you will do nothing except to recite: Those who lie and those who deny what they have done are equal in their evil deeds and suffer. Just

be patient. The people will see how calm you are and they will get tired of scolding you. Within seven days, the shouting and accusations will subside."

The people soon started to ask each other why the Buddha and his disciples were so calm. Then they remembered that the Buddha and His disciples were virtuous and they had never been known to commit any evil crime. Someone else had murdered Sundari. It was impossible that such compassionate religious teachers could have done it. In the end, the shouting stopped and the Buddha used this incident to give some advice to His, disciples on how to endure abuse with patience: "When harsh words are spoken to a bhikkhu, let him endure with an unruffled mind."

After some time, the king discovered that those ascetics committed the crime. When they were brought before the king, they confessed their crimes in public and they were punished accordingly. After the incident the Buddha and His disciples became more honoured and respected in Savatthi.

17. SIGALA WHO WORSHIPPED EVERY DIRECTION

The Discourse on a Layperson's Duties

One morning, the Buddha left the Bamboo Grove to go into Rajagaha. On His alms round, He saw a young man called Sigala, dripping wet as though he had just taken a bath. This man was bowing down in each of the four directions - East, South, West and North, to the sky above and to the ground beneath his feet. The Buddha stopped and asked the young man what he was doing.

"This was my father's last wish just before he died. My father advised me to do this to keep away evil from the four directions, from above and below."

"It is the right thing to do, to keep your father's advice which he gave you as his last wish, but you must not take your father's words literally," said the Buddha. "Your father did not intend that you should actually bow down in this way." Then the Buddha explained the real meaning of worshipping the directions:

"To worship the East really means to respect and honour your parents.

To worship the south means to respect and be obedient to your teachers.

To worship the West means to be faithful and devoted to your wife.

To worship the North means to be pleasant and charitable to your friends, relatives and neighbours.

To worship the sky means to look after the material needs of the religious persons such as the monks and ascetics.

To worship the earth means to be fair to your servants, giving them work according to their abilities, paying them fair wages, and providing them with medical care when they are sick.

It is by doing these that one can keep away from evil."

The Buddha also advised Sigala another fourteen evils to avoid. There are four evils of conduct which should be avoided: Killing, stealing, sexual misconduct and telling lies.

Then there are four evil motives which make people perform evil actions: partiality or being biased and prejudiced, enmity, foolishness and fear.

Finally, avoid the six ways of wasting one's wealth: drinking intoxicating drinks, roaming about the streets until late at night, spending too much time at fairs and thinking too much about entertainment, gambling, associating with evil friends, and being lazy.

Young Sigala listened with respect to this advice and he suddenly remembered that when his father was alive, he had often told him what a good teacher the Buddha was. Although he tried to get Sigala to go and listen to the Buddha, Sigala had always given excuses that it was too troublesome, he had no time, he was tired, or he had no money to spend on the monks.

He confessed this to the Buddha and asked Him to accept him as His follower. He promised that from now on, he would keep his father's dying wish, but in the correct way as was taught to him by the Buddha.

18. AMBAPALI

The Immoral Woman Who Later Became an Arahant

Persons of all castes, high and low, women as well as men sought the teachings of the Buddha - and He gladly received them. To Him, there was no caste in blood and tears. When the Buddha and His disciples stopped at Vesali, a lady named Ambapali offered Him the use of her Garden of Mangoes outside the city so that He might rest in the cool shade of her trees.

Ambapali was as lovely as the golden sun rising from the ocean, but was immoral in character. She did not intend to see him, but her servant said to her, "Lady, all the nobles and people went on foot to the Garden of Mangoes yesterday. When I asked them why they had gone there, they said that it was because of the man who is resting there. There was none like him. And he was the son of a king and had given up his kingdom that he might find the Truth."

Always ready for some new sight, she leapt to her feet, and got into one of her coaches and rode toward the garden, casting proud glances about her. When she arrived at the gate, she descended from the coach and walked through the palm trees and mango trees. It was very quiet, and even the leaves did not stir. Beneath the deep shade of trees, the Buddha was seated with folded hands and feet and behind His head an aura glowed like the midnight moon.

Ambapali stood there amazed, forgetting her beauty, forgetting herself, forgetting all but only the Blessed One. And her heart melted and flowed away in a river of tears. Very slowly, she approached the Buddha and fell before His feet and laid her face on the earth.

The Buddha asked her to rise and be seated, and spoke the Dhamma to her. She listened to these great words with ears that drank them as the dry earth longs for the rain. After she had received the Dhamma, she bowed at His feet and invited the Buddha and His disciples to a meal the following day. The Buddha accepted her invitation.

Now the nobles of Vesali had also come out to meet the Blessed One. On the way they met Ambapali who told them that the Buddha had accepted her invitation for a meal the following day.

They said to her, "Sell us the honour of His company for great weights of gold."

And she, glowing with joy, said, "Sirs, even if you were to give me Vesali and all its territories yet I would not give up the honourable meal."

In anger, the nobles went to the Buddha and requested the honour of offering the meal, but the Buddha informed them that He had accepted Ambapali's invitation.

The following day, Ambapali set sweet milk rice and cake before the Buddha and His followers, and she herself attended upon them in great humility. After the Buddha had eaten Ambapali sat on one side, with folded palms and said, "Holy one, I present this garden to the Order. Accept it, if it be your will."

The Buddha accepted the gift, seeing the purity of heart that made it. He then gladdened her with the Dhamma. This was the turning point of Ambapali's life: she understood the Dhamma and became a virtuous woman. Some time later she entered the Order of Nuns and with the heart of Wisdom strengthened in her, she became an Arahant. Just as the lotus does not grow on dry land but springs from black and watery mud, Ambapali, despite her immoral past, managed to achieve the height of spiritual development.

After this incident, the Buddha and His disciples moved to a little village nearby called Beluva. As the rainy season was about to begin, the Buddha decided to spend the last rainy season at this village.

19. JIVAKA

The Buddha's Doctor

Jivaka was the celebrated doctor during the Buddha's time in India. Immediately after his birth, Jivaka was placed in a wooden box and thrown away by his mother, a courtesan, on a rubbish heap beside the road.

That morning, Prince Abhaya, a son of King Bimbisara happened to pass that way as he was going to the palace. When the prince discovered that the baby was alive, he was moved by compassion and ordered it to be brought up as his adopted son.

When he grew up, Jivaka studied medicine for seven years under a famous teacher. Soon his unusual skill as a physician and a surgeon became known. He was called upon to treat kings and princes, including King Bimbisara himself. But of all the distinguished people Jivaka attended to, his greatest pleasure was to attend to the Buddha which he did three times a day. When a splinter from a rock thrown by Devadatta wounded the Buddha's foot, it was Jivaka who healed Him.

Realising the advantages of having a monastery close to his house, Jivaka built one in his mango garden. He invited the Buddha and His disciples to the monastery, offered alms and donated the monastery to the Buddha and the monks. After the blessing ceremony of this monastery, he attained the first stage of Sainthood (Sotapanna).

Later, when King Ajatasattu asked him where he could go for religious discussions, Jivaka brought him to see the Buddha. Although the king had killed his father under the evil advice of Devadatta, King Ajatasattu became a distinguished lay follower of the Buddha and took a leading role in the First Buddhist Council.

20. THE QUARREL AT KOSAMBI

Better to Live Alone If We Cannot Find Good Friends

In the 9th year of his ministry, the Buddha was residing at Kosambi. While He was there, a quarrel arose between two parties of Bhikkhus. One party consisted of experts in the Disciplinary code or the Vinaya rules; the other group consisted of experts in the Dhamma or the Teachings.

The Buddha tried various ways to settle the quarrel peacefully, but finally when His efforts had failed, He left them without a word, taking with Him only His bowl and robes, and retired to the Paileyayaka Forest.

During His stay in the forest, an elephant ministered to the needs of the Buddha. The elephant cleared a portion of the forest in the midst of which stood a stone cave. Daily the elephant brought fruits as offerings to the Buddha. One day a monkey, who had watched the elephant making his offerings, brought a honeycomb as an offering too.

Meanwhile, the people of Kosambi found out that the Buddha had gone alone to the Paileyayaka Forest because of the quarreling amongst the monks. They stopped offering alms to the monks. News of this reached Ananda at Savatthi. At the end of the rainy season Ananda decided to visit the Buddha and told him that the people everywhere were eager to hear the Dhamma from Him, especially the people at Savatthi. In this way the Buddha was persuaded to return to Savatthi and some time after this, the quarrelling monks came to seek the Buddha's forgiveness. It was because of the quarrel at Kosambi that the Buddha gave a sermon in which he said: "One should associate with the wise, not the foolish. It would be better to live alone if we cannot find good friends. There is no companionship with the foolish."

21. UPALI *

The Buddha's Attitude Towards Other Religious Teachers

Upali, a millionaire, was one of the best pupils of another religious teacher, Nigantha Nathaputta, whose teaching differed from that of the Buddha. Being very good at debating, Upali was requested by his religious teacher to approach the Buddha and defeat Him on certain points on the Law of Cause and Effect (Kamma). After a long discussion, the Buddha was able to convince Upali that his religious teacher's views were wrong.

Upali was so impressed with the Buddha's teaching that he immediately asked to become His follower. He was surprised when the Buddha advised him, "Upali, you are a famous person. Be sure that you are not changing your religion just because you are pleased with me or that you are under the influence of your emotions. Thoroughly investigate my teaching with an open mind before you decide to become my follower."

At the Buddha's spirit of free inquiry, Upali was even more pleased and he said, "Lord, it is wonderful that you have asked me to think over carefully. If it were other teachers, they would have accepted me without hesitation, taken me round the streets in a procession and proclaimed that such and such a millionaire had renounced his former religion and embraced theirs. Yes, indeed, Lord please accept me as your follower."

The Buddha agreed to accept Upali as His lay follower but further advised him, "Although you have now become my follower, Upali, you should practise tolerance and compassion. Continue to give alms to your former religious teachers as they still depend very much on your support. You cannot just ignore them and withdraw the support you used to give them."

The Buddha's advice of tolerance, free inquiry and not accepting his teachings for emotional reasons has given a clean record in the spread of Buddhism. There has never been any Buddhist a religious fanatic who forced people to accept the religion by torture or the fear of punishment. Buddhism was able to spread through peaceful means mainly because of its beauty and goodwill.

* This is not the Venerable Upali, a barber before he became a monk, who answered questions on the Vinaya rules at the First Buddhist Council.

22. SONA

The Monk Who Tried Too Hard

A son of a rich businessman, Sona liked to listen to lute music and to play the instrument. As he was brought up in the lap of luxury, his skin was very delicate and soft. It was said that hair grew out of the skin of his soles. Once he was brought before King Bimbisara who wanted to see the unusual feet he had heard so much about.

Sona lived near the Vulture's Peak Rock in Rajagaha where the Buddha stayed during some rainy seasons. One day, Sona went to the Vulture's Peak Rock to listen to the Buddha's sermons about the happiness experienced from non-attachment of worldly desires. As he wanted to experience this happiness, Sona asked to be ordained as a monk.

After becoming a monk, he was taught to be constantly mindful, even when walking. Sona was very enthusiastic. Everyday he walked to and fro in the monastery until one day his feet developed blisters and bled.

Even after trying so hard, yet he did not experience happiness, only pain and disappointment. Thoughts of craving for worldly things still came to his mind. "It is no use," Sona said to himself, "I have tried so very hard, but have still not achieved what I wished for. It is better for me to return to lay life and enjoy the happiness I used to experience by performing charity."

When the Buddha heard about this he went to see Sona. "Sona," He said, "I have heard that you are not getting good results from your practice of mindfulness and want to return to the lay life. Suppose I explain why you did not get good results, would you stay on as a monk and try again?"

"Yes, I would, Lord." replied Sona.

"Sona, you were a musician and you used to play the lute. Tell me, Sona, did you produce good music when the lute string was well tuned, neither too tight nor too loose?"

"I was able to produce good music, Lord." replied Sona. "What happened when the strings were too tightly wound up?"

"I could not produce any music, Lord," said Sona.

"What happened when the strings were too slack?"

"I could not produce any music at all, Lord." replied Sona.

"Sona, do you now see why you did not experience the happiness of renouncing worldly craving? You have been strained too hard in your meditation. Do it in a relaxed way, but without being slack. Try it again and you will experience the good result."

Sona understood and stayed on in the monastery as a monk and soon he attained sainthood.

23. MAHA PAJAPATI GOTAMI

The Establishment of the Order of Bhikkhunis (Nuns)

In the 5th year of His ministry, the Buddha was staying at Vesali when he heard that his father, King Suddhodana, was ill. He decided to visit him again at Kapilavatthu to preach to him the Dhamma. After hearing the Dhamma, the King immediately attained Arahantship and passed away peacefully seven days

later. It was in this year that the Order of Nuns was founded at the request of Maha Pajapati Gotami, the aunt and foster mother of the Buddha.

Three times she approached the Buddha and asked Him to ordain her into the Sangha, but each time the Buddha refused, without giving any reason. After the Buddha had stayed at Kapilavatthu as long as He liked, He journeyed back to Vesali.

Pajapati Gotami was quite a determined lady, and was not so easily discouraged. She got her hair cut and put on yellow garments and surrounded by a large number of Sakyan ladies, she walked the distance of about 150 miles from Kapilavatthu to Vesali. When she arrived at Vesali, her feet were swollen and her body was covered with dust. She stood outside the Hall where the Buddha was staying, with tears on her face, still hoping that the Buddha would ordain her as a nun.

Ananda was surprised to see her in this condition. "Gotami, why are you standing here like this?" he asked.

"Venerable Ananda, it is because the Blessed One does not give permission for women to become nuns," she replied.

"Wait here, Gotami, I'll ask the Blessed One about this," Ananda told her. When Ananda asked the Buddha to admit Maha Pajapati Gotami as a nun, the Buddha refused. Ananda asked three times and three times the Buddha refused.

So Ananda put the request in a different way. Respectfully he questioned the Buddha, "Lord, are women capable of realising the various stages of Sainthood as nuns?"

"They are, Ananda," said the Buddha.

"If that is so, Lord, then it would be good if women could be ordained as nuns," said Ananda, encouraged by the Buddha's reply.

"If, Ananda, Maha Pajapati Gotami would accept the Eight Conditions* it would be regarded that she has been ordained already as a nun."

When Ananda mentioned the conditions to Maha Pajapati Gotami, she gladly agreed to abide by those conditions and automatically became a nun. Before long, she attained Arahantship. The other Sakyan ladies who were ordained together with her also attained Arahantship.

The establishment of an Order of Nuns with rules and regulations was something, which the Buddha did for the first time in the world. No other religious leader had given such a high religious position for women in his religion.

These rules are related to certain Vinaya Disciplines.

24. THE BUDDHA AND THE CASTE SYSTEM

At the time of the Buddha, the caste system was firmly established in India. According to the caste system, a person's position in society was determined from the time he was born. There were four castes or classes of people in society:

The Brahmins or priests, who claimed to be the highest caste and the purest of peoples; the warriors ; the

merchants and traders; the untouchables considered the lowest class of workers and servants who did all the menial jobs, and were treated as slaves.

The Buddha condemned the caste system, which he considered unjust. He pointed out that there existed wicked and cruel people as well as virtuous and kind people in every caste. Any person who had committed a crime would be punished accordingly by his kamma no matter what caste he belonged to. A person may be considered to have come from a high or low caste according to his good and bad deeds. Therefore, according to the Buddha it is the good and bad actions of a person and not his birth that should determine a person's caste.

The Buddha introduced the idea of placing a higher value on morality and the equality of man instead of into which family or caste a person is born. It was also the first attempt to abolish discrimination and slavery in the history of mankind.

The Buddha said:

"By birth one is not an outcaste,
By birth one is not a brahmin;
By deeds alone one is an outcaste,
By deeds alone one is a brahmin."

25. THE MIRROR OF THE DHAMMA

From the Rajagaha the Buddha, accompanied by Venerable Ananda and a large number of His disciples started the journey to the north. They would stop a while at every city and village, and the Buddha would preach the Dhamma.

They stopped at a place called the Brick Hall in a little village called Nadika. It happened that some monks and lay devotees had passed away at this village, and Venerable Ananda wanted to know the future states of those who had passed away.

The Buddha revealed that as they had been practicing what He had taught, all of them had attained one of the stages of Sainthood. He continued, "Now, it is natural for human beings to die; but if you ask this question each time a person dies, it wearies me. So, I will give you a sermon called 'The Mirror of Truth or The Mirror of the Dhamma.'" With this, a noble disciple can predict for himself, "There is no more hell for me, no more sorrowful, evil and low states. I am a Sotapanna and I am not subject to fall back to the lower states. I shall be assured of final Enlightenment."

"What, O Ananda, is the Mirror or Truth? Herein a noble disciple has absolute confidence in the Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha. Because of his confidence, he spends much time to reflect or think about the great qualities of the Triple Gem. These reflections will help him develop the great qualities within himself and the power to concentrate the mind. These results will help him attain the first stage of Sainthood (Sotapanna).

"Possessing this Mirror of Truth, a noble disciple shall be able to predict for himself that he shall not fall back to lower states like hell, the animal world, the ghost world and other sorrowful and unhappy states."

After delivering this sermon at Nadika, the Buddha and His disciples then proceeded to Vesali.

26. THE BUDDHA'S ATTITUDE TO MIRACLES

When the Buddha was once living at Nalanda in the Pavarika Grove, a man by the name of Kevaddha went up to the Buddha, paid homage to Him and said, "Lord, Nalanda is a successful city. The people living in Nalanda are prosperous, and they have confidence in the Blessed One. Lord, it would be good if the Blessed One appointed a Bhikkhu to work a marvel of supernormal power, so that the people of Nalanda might become much more confident in the Blessed One."

The Buddha replied, "Kevaddha, I do not teach the Law to Bhikkhus in that way." The Buddha gave the same reply when the question was put to Him the second and third time. After the third question, the Buddha replied that there were three kinds of supernormal levels:

1. The marvel of supernormal power to appear as many persons, to pass through walls, to fly through the air, walk on water. All these are physical actions the ordinary people cannot perform.
2. The supernormal power to read other people's minds.
3. The supernormal power to be able to guide people according to their mental development, for their own good, using suitable methods to fit these people.

The first two supernormal powers if displayed for their own sake in order to impress people, are no different from the performance of magicians. A Bhikkhu who practices such worldly miracles is a source of shame, humiliation and disgust. Such actions may impress and win converts and followers, but they do not bring Enlightenment to help them put an end to suffering.

The third kind of supernormal power though which may be called a 'miracle' helps people to get rid of suffering. This is the only supernormal power that is fit to be practiced.

The only miracles that should be performed are these: when you see a man full of passion, craving and greed and you teach him to free from passion, craving and greed; when you see a man is a slave to hatred and anger, you use your powers to help him control his hatred and anger; when you come across a man who is ignorant and who cannot see the true nature of the world (everything in this world is impermanent, sorrowful and egoless) and you use your powers to help him overcome his ignorance. These are worthy 'miracles' you can perform.

This advice to Kevaddha was also extended to the Vinaya rules that forbid monks from performing miracles to impress people and gain converts, without helping them to be enlightened. This was clear in the case of Pindola.

Arahant Pindola Bharadwaja was famous for miraculous psychic powers. A rich man wanting this monk to prove his psychic powers placed a beautiful bowl at the top of a high place and challenged any holy man to get the bowl down. If he could do it, he could keep the bowl.

Pindola Bharadwaja flew up and took the bowl down easily. This was also done to prove to the rich man that there are saints in the world, a fact that the rich man did not believe. When the Buddha came to know about this incident, He called Pindola Bharadwaja to bring his bowl. He broke the bowl into pieces in front of a large gathering of Bhikkhus, saying, "I am displeased about the demonstration of your psychic powers. You must never show off your powers just to impress simple ignorant people."

27. THE BUDDHA'S ILLNESS AND ANNOUNCEMENT

The Buddha had not been staying very long at Beluva during the rainy season when He became sick. The severe sickness attacked Him with violent and deadly pains. But mindful and self possessed He bore them

without complaint. And this thought came into His mind: "it would not be right for me to pass away without addressing the disciples, without taking leave of the Order. Let me now by a strong effort of the will suppress this sickness." He suppressed the sickness and it abated.

And when He began to recover, He went out of the monastery, and sat down behind it on a seat spread out for Him. The Venerable Ananda went where the Buddha was, and sat respectfully beside Him, and said, "I have seen how the Blessed One suffered, and at that sight my body became weak as a creeper. Yet I had some little comfort in thinking that the Blessed one would not pass away until He had left some instructions for the Order."

"What then, Ananda? Does the Order expect that from me?" said the Buddha. "Now, a perfect One does not think that it is He who shall lead the Order or that it is dependent upon him. I too, Ananda, am now grown old and full of years. My journey is drawing to its close. Therefore, Ananda, each of you should make himself his island, himself and no other his refuge. Each of you should make the Law his island, the Law and no other his refuge. And whoever after I am dead shall be an island unto themselves, who make the Law their island, the Law as their refuge, they will be the foremost among my bhikkhus."

Though old and feeble, the Buddha continued to use every opportunity to speak the Dhamma to His disciples. He also went on alms rounds when there were no private invitations from the villagers at Beluva.

One morning the Buddha robed himself early in the morning and taking His bowl went into Vesali for alms. When he returned from his alms round, He spoke to the Venerable Ananda: "Take a mat, Ananda, let us go to the Capala Shrine to pass the day."

They sat down on a mat and the Buddha spoke about the pleasant surroundings in all the shrines in Vesali, and then addressed Venerable Ananda thus:

"When anyone has practiced and developed the Four Means of Accomplishment, he could, if he wished, live for a longer period. I have completely mastered the Four Means of Accomplishment, and if I so wish, I could live longer."

Even though the Buddha was giving such a clear suggestion, Venerable Ananda could not understand its meaning to ask the Buddha to live longer for the good, benefit, and happiness of the many, out of compassion for the world. At that time Venerable Ananda could not understand because his mind was confused.

The Buddha addressed him; "You may leave me, Ananda, for a while." So Ananda went and sat under a nearby tree.

The Buddha had appeared on earth to teach the seekers of Truth how to see things as they truly are and to show the path for deliverance from all the ills of life. The Buddha reflected about the long years of teaching He had performed to fulfil His purpose. He felt that He had given all the necessary instructions to His followers, both monks and the lay followers. Not only were they following His teaching, they were also able to teach the teachings to others. He therefore decided not to live up to His full life span and announced to Venerable Ananda that He would pass away in three month's time.

Only then Venerable Ananda remembered what the Buddha had said earlier and begged Him to live for a longer period for the good and happiness for all.

"Enough, Ananda, do not beg me. The time for making such a request is now past. Let us now go to the Hall with the Pointed Roof in the Great Wood, Ananda," said the Buddha.

When they arrived at the Great Hall, He said, "Ananda, go and summon all the monks living in Vesali. Ask them to meet at the service hall." When the monks had all come, He spoke to them, "Whatever truths I have taught you, study them and put them into practice, so that the Holy life may last long for the good and benefit of the many.

"All component things must grow old and pass away. Work out your salvation with diligence. At the end of three months from this time, the Blessed One will pass away. My age is now full ripe; my life draws to its close. I leave you, I depart, relying on myself alone. Be diligent, mindful and virtuous. Keep watch over your own hearts. Who lives out diligently this Law and Discipline will leave the round of rebirths and make an end of suffering."

All the Buddha's disciples were grieved to hear the sad announcement of His death in such a short time to come. All of them came forward to pay their last respects except one monk named Dhammarama. They did not know why he did not come and suspected him of not being loyal and dutiful to the Buddha.

This matter was reported to the Buddha who summoned Dhammarama to His presence to explain his absence to all the other monks. He then replied that since the Buddha would be passing away in three month's time, he thought that the best way of honouring the Teacher was by attaining Arahantship before His death.

"Excellent, excellent! He who loves me should follow the example of Dhammarama. He honours me most who practises my teaching best," said the Buddha in praise of this monk.

The Buddha decided to continue His last journey the next morning. His next destination was the little village of Pava.

28. THE LAST DAYS OF THE BUDDHA

Many incidents in the life of the Buddha occurring after His 55th year were recorded without an exact indication of the year in which they happened. However, the incidents occurring in His eightieth year were placed in that year because they were recorded in the Maha Parinibbana Sutta.

When the Buddha reached His eightieth year, He felt that His days in this world were coming to an end. Although He had suffered the sicknesses and effects of old age like any other man, He was different from an ordinary man. With His mental powers developed through advanced mental training, He was able to overcome certain painful feelings of the body. His mind was always sparkling like a radiant diamond, even though His body was beginning to weaken.

In this last year of His life, he decided to spend His last days in the peaceful and simple surroundings of Kusinaga, a small village in northern India. He preferred to leave behind Him the large and prosperous cities such as Rajagaha and Savatthi and their crowds, their merchants and kings.

The starting point of His journey was Rajagaha, the capital of Magadha. He journeyed on foot, accompanied by Venerable Ananda and many disciples, going through many cities and villages. By this time, Venerable Rahula and Yasodhara had already passed away, and so had the Buddha's two chief disciples, Venerable Moggallana and Venerable Sariputta.

During the travels, the Buddha's thoughts turned to the welfare of the Order of monks. Many of His sermons were concerned with advising on how the monks should behave to ensure that the Order would carry on after His death. He reminded His disciples to practice all the truths that He had taught them.

One sermon reminded the disciples to practise the 37 factors of Enlightenment. Another sermon was on the four ways to check whether a teaching was the teaching of the Buddha or not, by comparing them with the Vinaya (the disciplinary rules for the Order) and the Suttas (sermons of the Buddha).

There was one sermon, which the Buddha gave again and again during the many stops in His last journey. It was a sermon on the fruits following the three divisions of the Noble Eightfold Path: morality, concentration and wisdom, which would help His disciples to put an end to all sufferings.

29. THE BUDDHA'S LAST MEAL

On their arrival at Pava, the son of the village goldsmith invited the Buddha and His disciples, whose name was Cunda, to a meal called Sukaramaddava or boar's delight. Some scholars believe it was a special delicious dish of mushrooms with that name, while others believe it to be a dish of wild boar's flesh.

The Buddha advised Cunda to serve Him only with the Sukaramaddava that he had prepared. The other food that Cunda had prepared could be served to the other monks. Then the Buddha told him, "Cunda, if any Sukaramaddava is left over, bury it in a hole. I do not see anyone in the world other than the Blessed One who could digest the food if he ate it."

"Even so, Lord" Cunda replied, and buried the left over in the ground. He went to the Buddha, and after paying homage to him, he sat down at one side. Then the Buddha taught him the Dhamma. The Buddha also praised Cunda for the meal that had refreshed and strengthened Him after His journey. But soon after this, the Buddha suffered from an attack of dysentery, which he had earlier and sharp pains came upon Him. By an effort of will He was able to bear the pain. Though extremely weak the Buddha decided to continue on immediately to Kusinaga, a little more than six miles away. After a painful struggle, He reached a grove of Sala trees just outside the town.

The Buddha took his last bath in the Kakuttha river. After resting a while, He said, "Now it may happen that some people may make Cunda regret having given me the meal that made me sick. Ananda if this should happen, you should tell Cunda that you have heard directly from the Buddha that it was a gain for him. Tell him that two offerings to the Buddha are of equal gain: the offering of food just before His supreme Enlightenment and the offering of food just before He passes away. This is the final birth of the Buddha."

Then He said, "Ananda, please make a couch ready for me with its head to the North between two big Sala trees. I am tired and I want to lie down."

Now, on that occasion, those two Sala trees were covered with blossoms through the influence of the Devas, though it was not the season. They scattered and sprinkled the Buddha with the falling blossoms, as though out of respect for Him. Then the Buddha said to Venerable Ananda, "Ananda, the two big Sala trees are scattering flowers on me as though they are paying their respects to me. But this is not how I should be respected and honoured. Rather, it is the monks or nuns, or the men or woman lay followers, who lives according to my teaching that respects and honour me."

There are four places for faithful followers to see which would be their inspiration. These are four holy places made sacred by their association with the Buddha. They are:

1. The Buddha's birth place (Lumbini);
2. The place where the Buddha attained Enlightenment (Bodh Gaya);
3. The place where the Buddha gave His first sermon and set in motion the Wheel of the Dhamma or Truth (Sarnath);
- 4 The place where the Buddha attained Parinibbana or final liberation (Kusinaga).

A little while later it was noticed that Venerable Ananda was nowhere to be seen. He had gone into the hut, stood leaning against the door bar and was weeping. He thought: "Alas! I remain still but a learner, one who has yet to work out his own perfection. And the Master is about to pass away from me - He who is so kind!"

And, the Buddha sending for Ananda, said to him, "Enough now, Ananda! Do not sorrow and cry. Have I not already repeatedly told you that there is separation and parting from all that is dear and beloved? How is it possible that anything that has been born, had had a beginning should not again die? Such a thing is not possible.

"Ananda, you have served me with your acts of loving-kindness, helpfully, gladly, sincerely, and so too in your words and your thoughts. You have gained merit, Ananda. Keep on trying and you will soon be free of all your human weaknesses. In a very short time you too will become an Arahant.

"Now you can go, Ananda. But go into Kusinaga and tell all the people that tonight, in the last watch of the night, the Buddha will pass away into Nibbana. Come and see the Buddha before He passes away."

So Venerable Ananda, taking with him another monk, did as the Buddha bid him and went to Kusinaga to tell the people. When they heard the news, they were much grieved. And all the people of Kusinaga, men, women and children came to the two big Sala trees to bid a last farewell to the Buddha. Family by family, they bowed low down before Him and so bade Him farewell.

30. SUBHADDA

The Last Disciple of the Buddha

Now it happened that a certain wandering ascetic called Subhadda was staying near Kusinaga at that time and when he heard that the Buddha was about to pass away, he resolved to go and see Him about a certain matter before He passed away. He was sure that the Buddha could answer his question and clear up his doubts.

So Subhadda went to the Sala tree grove, and asked Venerable Ananda whether he could see the Buddha. But Venerable Ananda said, 'Enough, friend Subhadda, the Buddha is very weary. Do not trouble Him.'

For the second and third time, Subhadda made this request and for the second and third time, Venerable Ananda replied in the same manner.

However, the Buddha caught a word or two of the conversation between Venerable Ananda and Subhadda, and He called Venerable Ananda to Him and said, "Come, Ananda. Do not keep Subhadda from seeing me. Let him come and see me. Whatever Subhadda may ask of me, he will ask from a desire for knowledge and not to annoy me. And whatever I may say in answer to his questions, that he will quickly understand."

Permission granted, Subhadda approached the Buddha, and after greeting Him, said, "O Gotama, there are many famous religious teachers who teach other teachings which are different from yours. Have they all, as they claim, discovered the Truth? Or have some of them discovered the Truth and others have not?"

"Enough, O Subhadda," said the Buddha, "you should not worry about their teachings. Listen to me and pay close attention to what I say, and I will make known to you the Truth."

"In whatever doctrine or Teaching in which the Noble Eightfold Path is not found, there also are not to be found those who have become Sotapanna, Sakadagami, Anagami or Arahant. But in those teachings where the Noble Eightfold Path is found, there also is found the Sotapanna, the Sakadagami, the Anagami and the Arahant. And in this Teaching of mine, O Subhadda, is to be found the Noble Eightfold Path, and in it alone the Sotapanna, the Sakadagami, the Anagami, and the Arahant are found. In no other schools of religious teachers are such Aryan (saints) to be found. And if only my disciples live rightly and follow my precepts or training rules, the world will never be without genuine Arahants."

Then Subhadda asked to be admitted to the Order of monks, and the Buddha granted his request. In this way Subhadda became the very last convert and disciple of the Buddha, just as Kondanna in the deer park at Benares was the first convert and disciple forty-five years earlier.

And by earnest and diligent effort in following the Teaching, Subhadda very shortly became an Arahant.

31. THE BUDDHA'S FINAL WORDS OF ADVICE

After the conversion of Subhadda, the Buddha spoke again to Venerable Ananda: "It may be, Ananda, that some of you will say, without the Buddha, the Sublime Teacher, there is no Teacher for us. No, Ananda, you should not think in this way. Whatever Doctrine and Discipline taught and made known by me will be your Teacher when I am gone."

Then the Buddha, addressing the other monks said, "If any amongst you has any doubts as to the Buddha, the Teaching or the Order of monks, ask me now so that afterwards, you may have cause to regret that you did not ask me while I am still with you."

But at these words, none of the monks said anything. None had any questions, and all of them were silent. For the second and third time the Buddha addressed the monks in this way. And for the second and third time, all the monks were silent.

The Buddha said, "Perhaps it may be out of respect for the Teacher, that you do not question me. Let a friend, O disciples, tell it to another friend." Still the disciples remained silent.

Then Venerable Ananda spoke to the Buddha, "It is wonderful. It is marvellous, Lord! I do believe that in all this great company of monks there is not a single one who has doubts or questions about the Buddha, the Teaching or the Order of monks, or the Path and the method of training and conduct."

"With you, Ananda," said the Buddha, "this may be a matter of faith and belief. But, Ananda, I know that not one single monk gathered here has any doubt or question about these things. Of all the 500 monks here, Ananda, he who is the most backward is a Sotapanna, not subject to fall back to a lower state of existence, but is certain and destined for Enlightenment."

Then the Buddha addressed all the monks once more, and these were the very last words He spoke:

"Behold, O monks, this is my last advice to you. All component things in the world are changeable. They are not lasting. Work hard to gain your own salvation."

Then the Buddha lapsed into the Jhana stages or meditative absorption. Going from level to level, one after the other, ever deeper and deeper. Then He came out of the meditative absorption for the last time. Then He passed into Jhana a little way; and from this Jhana He passed into Nibbana leaving nothing whatever behind that can cause rebirth again in this or any other world.

The passing away of the Buddha occurred in 543 B.C. on a fullmoon day in the month of May, known in the Indian calendar as Vesak.

32. THE FIRST BUDDHIST COUNCIL

The Meeting to Preserve the Buddha's Teachings

The Buddha's death was a great loss. All of His followers, with the exception of Anagamis and Arahants, were plunged in deep grief. But an immoral monk who had entered the Order in his old age, was the only one who rejoiced at the Buddha's death.

"Do not be sad, brothers," he said. "Cry not. We are now free of the Great Ascetic. He constantly worried us, saying 'This is suitable, this is not suitable.' Now we are free do do what we like."

These unexpected words spoken by a monk hardly a week after the death of the Teacher caused the Venerable Maha Kassapa, the third chief disciple of the Buddha, to call a meeting of the leading Arahants in order to protect and preserve the Teachings. The other elder monks were consulted and they all welcome the suggestion.

King Ajatasattu was informed of the intention of the Order of the monks and he made all necessary arrangements for the monks to meet at the entrance of the Sattapanni Cave in Rajagaha.

Five hundred seats were arranged and prepared in the large hall, but only 499 famous Arahants were chosen for the meeting. The empty seat was reserved for the Venerable Ananda, who was still a Sotapanna.

Soon there was only one more day before the meeting was to begin. The Venerable Ananda thought, "The meeting is tomorrow. It is not right for me to go to the meeting as a mere learner and not an Arahant. I must try very hard to purify my mind in the little time left for me."

He spent much of the night in the "Contemplation of the body", one of the meditation exercises taught by the Buddha for the purification of mind. When it was almost dawn, he thought, "I shall lie down" but he kept mindful of the body. Before his head touched the pillow and after he has raised his feet off the ground, all the remaining defilements disappeared from his mind. He had attained Arahantship. And so he went to the council meeting as an Arahant.

The meeting started three months after the passing away of the Buddha. That meeting is now referred to as the First Buddhist Council.

The Venerable Maha Kassapa was the president at the First Council. Venerable Upali was chosen to answer questions about the Vinaya, the monks' and nuns' disciplinary rules. The Venerable Ananda who had the honour of hearing all the sermons of the Buddha and who had an unusually good memory was chosen to recite all the sermons and answer questions and the Dhamma and the Teachings.

The First Buddhist Council collected together and arranged the Pali Tipitaka or the Buddhist Scriptures which have been handed down from one generation of monks to another. In the early days of the spread of Buddhism, there was no written record of the Teaching. All the monks had to memories the Teaching and then teach the next generation of monk in the same way by the oral tradition.

About 83 B.C., during the reign of the pious Sinhala King, Vatta Gamani Abhaya, a Council of Arahants was held in Sri Lanka and the Tipitaka was, for the first time in the history of Buddhism, put down in writing on ola leaves. This historical event happened in a village called Aluvihara.