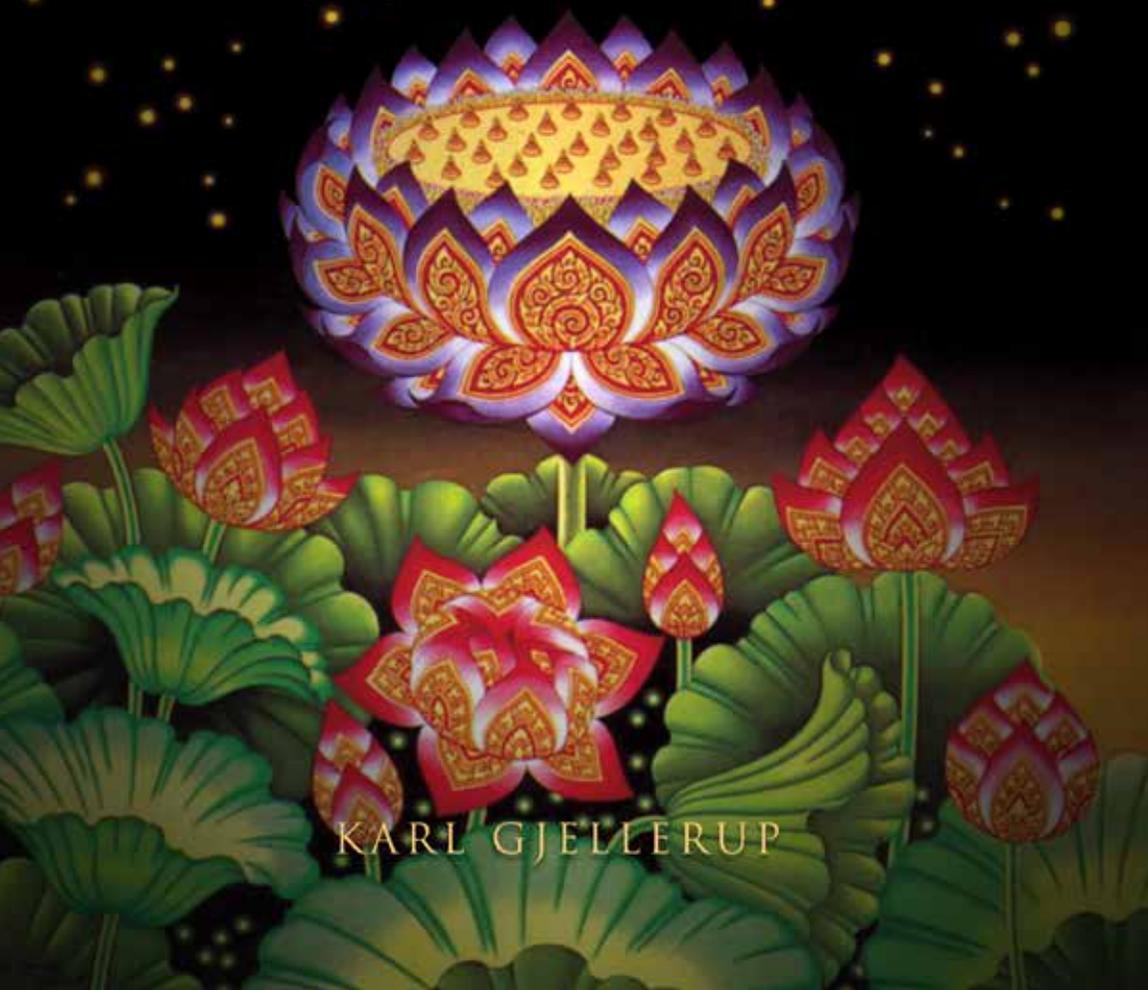




THE PILGRIM

Kamavita

A LEGENDARY ROMANCE



KARL GJELLERUP

THE PILGRIM
Kamanita

BY KARL GJELLERUP



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THE PILGRIM
Kamavata

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BY KARL GJELLERUP

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NAMO TASSA BHAGAVATO ARAHATO SAMMĀSAMBUDDHASSA

HOMAGE TO THE BLESSED, NOBLE AND
PERFECTLY ENLIGHTENED ONE!

DEDICATION

To my small companion Winston, who taught me the beauty of uncomplicated love,
to my father John, brother Charlie, to Sarah Sandon, Keith and to the young girl
I met briefly in the town of Hossegor in France in 2014.

May they be free from suffering.

May all beings be free from suffering.

Eddie Coram-James

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PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION

Time past and time future

What might have been and what has been

Point to one end, which is always present.

T.S. Eliot, 'Four Quartets – Burnt Norton'

THE BOOK YOU HOLD IN YOUR HANDS is the second print edition of 'The Pilgrim Kāmanīta – a Legendary Romance'. It has now been over fifteen years since the original Abhayagiri edition of this book was published. During that time the original print run of a few thousand copies has long since been exhausted yet, even though interest in the book has maintained a steady level, sadly, up until now, there have not been the resources to fund a second print run.

The intervening years have brought technological developments of a order of magnitude that might have surprised even a few of the deities in the brahmā worlds mentioned in this story. It was thus possible to make the book freely available in the public domain via the agency of both the Abhayagiri and the Amaravati Monastery web-sites. We were very pleased to be able to do this, starting in 2008, to help this classic and illuminating tale be circulated ever more widely.

That said, for a number of people, reading on an iPad or a Kindle is not as satisfactory an experience as that of imbibing a story from an ink and paper book. Perhaps it is the fragrance of the print and the glue, or some subtle magic between eye and the bend of bowing pages; perhaps it's plain conditioning or nostalgia... the fact remains that many do find joy in holding a physical book. We were thus delighted when Edward Coram-James stepped forward with the offer to sponsor a new printed edition and it is through his thoughtful generosity that the present volume is before you.

The text of the story here is largely unchanged from the 1999 and the 2008 editions, although – poetic licence of the author notwithstanding – a few more factual errors have been corrected. There have also been a few additions and amendments to the Notes and References since, over the years, more of the author's sources have become apparent.

Another significant addition to the book has come through the editor having received a copy of the 1995 Boisselle-Löhmann Verlag edition of 'Der Pilger Kamanita' –

a photo-reproduction of the original work in German. This edition valuably contained the substantial Note on the text by the author, Karl Gjellerup, which the Thai edition we had been working from had omitted. This Note adds some fresh insight into the chemistry of the tale's ripening in the commodious brew-pot of the author's imagination, we are thus very glad to be able to include it here.



So here you are, holding 'just another book' – a dynamic that could easily be devoid of value or meaning. As T.S. Eliot put it with blunt poignancy in 'Burnt Norton' – merely women and...

*Men and bits of paper, whirled by the cold wind
That blows before and after time*

Or, instead, it could be that this little story reaches into your heart, gentle reader, and there touches some strand of recognition, plucks a chord of insight and invites forth the music of understanding.

It is a story about time and action, choices, paths taken and not taken, and even though it is set across a timescape of æons, maybe its greatest value is that it points to this very life, this present reality of our world as well.

Despite the fact that, at times, we all make foolish choices and miss great opportunities:

*Footfalls echo in the memory
Down the passage which we did not take
Towards the door we never opened
Into the rose-garden.*

That rose-garden is still there. May the coils of this tale lead you on a rich journey; may it serve and delight you well and help you to reach that garden of great and fragrant peace.

*Amaro Bhikkhu
Amaravati Buddhist Monastery
January, 2017*

PREFACE TO THE 1999 EDITION

IT WAS SOMETIME during the winter retreat of 1989 at Amaravati Monastery, in the Chiltern Hills of Hertfordshire, England, that I first met up with Kāmanīta.

Ajahn Sumedho, the abbot, was away in Thailand and had invited me, as one of the senior monks, to use his room during his three-month absence – to keep it clean and looked after, and also because the amenities there were considerably more salubrious than chez moi.

Ajahn Sumedho seems to attract as many books to himself as I do, so, being in his place, I found myself surrounded by a fresh supply of fascinating literature to pick through. Of the many books in his collection, a large proportion were in Thai – a language that I can hold a simple conversation in but which I had never learned to read. Thus in scanning his shelves I passed over the Thai section numerous times without really looking: even at the few volumes that had English script on the spines – these often only bearing Anglicised titles and no more than a scattered word or two in English on the inside. Eventually I picked out a particular, plastic-wrapped volume, mostly out of curiosity in the elegant quasi-Devanagari English script on the cover. At first glance it had looked like a book of chants but then it struck me that, if that were the case, it had a very strange picture on the jacket – a male and a female devatā, floating in the sky. ‘Maybe it’s a book of Paritta chants, protective verses and magic spells...’ I pondered. So I opened it and, to my surprise, found pages of English script as well as Thai; very curious... I started to read, soon realizing: ‘Well, well, well – it’s a Buddhist novel. And written by some obscure Danish scholar.’ It was ‘The Pilgrim Kāmanīta’ – who by now, some ten years later, feels like an old, old friend.

As I started to read, familiar passages leapt off the page: well known characters and utterances, famous and favourite incidents from the Buddhist scriptures, had all been woven together and rearranged, spun into a cloth of beautiful hue and texture. I dived in and dissolved myself into the story – picking it up during every spare moment of the days and nights that followed – convincing myself meanwhile that meditative absorption into an object can be very rewarding when one does so mindfully...

By the time the last page was reached, and the book finally put down, there was a profound glow left in my heart and the conviction that – ‘This is not only a great yarn, it’s got most of the essential Buddhist teachings threaded through it too – this

shouldn't just be a curio of Byronic English and Buddhist history, this should be out there for the world to see, at least for those who are interested.'

Once the retreat was over I started to edit the text of an evening and to give readings from it at the community's daily morning meetings. After a few weeks I had had to go off and lead a retreat in Ireland and had left the reading to be carried on by Ajahn Attapemo. I had introduced him to the story and he was similarly enamoured of it, however he had run into problems preparing the text, replete as it was with complex hyperbolic language and syntax, tortuous classical sentence structures and quaintly redundant idioms. The non-English speakers of the community were getting lost – and also some had been getting bad dreams after the 'Vājashravas episode' – the readings were thus abandoned and the book shelved.

But not in my mind, nor in Ajahn Attapemo's.

With Buddhism taking root and beginning to flower in the West we realized that something more than meditation practice is needed: amongst a multitude of other essential elements we need to develop both the aspects of education and culture – so where are the good Buddhist novels and plays? What good book or piece of music can you give to a teenager to let them taste the flavour of the Dhamma? There's not much so far.

The new Dharma School in Brighton, England, has a lot of energy behind it now, as do the various annual family summer camps and the Young People's retreats held at Insight Meditation Society in Massachusetts, Spirit Rock Center in California and at Amaravati. Ajahn Attapemo and I had both had a fair amount of involvement with some of these enterprises over the years, so the two of us came to the decision, sometime around the summer of '95, that, if we wanted there to be good influences available for the people, we shouldn't just sit around complaining and waiting for someone else to produce but we should do something about it ourselves. And in the flush of the moment he said, 'If you can edit 'Kāmanīta' and put it into readable English, I will get it printed, somehow.'

'OK,' I replied, 'it's a deal.'

So what you now hold in your hands is the product of that conversation. Before you dive into the story, however, and for those who like hints and explanations (and who can bear to read boring prefaces) it might be helpful to give a little more background on some issues related to this book.

Firstly, the author: Karl Gjellerup (1857-1919) was a Danish writer who spent most of his life either in Copenhagen or in Dresden, Germany. He was not a Buddhist scholar in particular but wrote mostly on spiritual matters – novels, poetry and plays, and also critical essays. He was originally trained as a Christian theologian, but between the mid-1890's and 1913, having been heavily influenced by Schopenhauer, he wrote almost exclusively around themes of Buddhism and Indian spirituality. 'The Pilgrim Kāmanīta' was published in German in 1906, and translated into English in 1912 – published by E.P.Dutton & Co.

of New York. On similar themes to ‘Kāmanīta’ are: ‘The Sacrificial Fires’ (a play inspired by the Upanishads); ‘The Wife of the Perfected One’ (on Princess Yashodharā, the bride of the Buddha-to-be, Siddhartha Gotama, before his renunciation of the palace life); and ‘The World Wanderers’ (a contemporary Indian spiritual tale). After this period he returned to Christian themes and in 1917 he was awarded the Nobel Prize for literature.

Secondly, the material and format of this book: it should be noted that although Karl Gjellerup has been very faithful to the original scriptural texts, particularly with respect to individual events and teachings of the Buddha, he has been extremely liberal with the principal characters, their relationships and the time sequences of events.

For example, the central incident of the tale comes from Discourse No. 140 of the Middle Length Discourses, the Dhātuvibhanga Sutta. One doesn’t have to go very far into this text before finding that the central character is called Pukkusāti, not Kāmanīta, and that, unlike our hero, he realizes the identity of the person speaking to him. I do not want to get ahead of the story but it is very important to realize that some of what you read here is faithful to the scripture and some is the fabrication of the Weaver of the Yarn. (For the sake of interest to the reader the whole of the *sutta* mentioned above has been included at the end of the book – in Appendix 2).

Thirdly, the reader might also be interested in how it came to be that the book I found was in Thai and English, when it seems to have started life as a novel by a Dane written in German.

It seems that a pair of talented Thai academics (Prof. Phra Anuman Rajadhon – ‘Sathirakoses’ – and Phra Saraprasert – ‘Nagapradipa’) discovered the book, in the English version, sometime in the 1930’s when they were studying at Oxford. They translated it into elegant and polished Thai and also fleshed out the text in a few places. Curiously enough they also published it anonymously (as they had done with Grey’s Elegy and a few other classics) to help it be disseminated without preconception or bias within Thai society; it was well received, both as a work of fine literature and also as a good learning text for Buddhist principles. After a year they revealed its provenance as a work by a European – to the great surprise of many Thai people – and King Rama the Seventh adopted and promoted it as his ‘chosen literary work for the nation’ (a custom of the previous members of his dynasty). A section of it was used as part of the standard high school textbook on Thai literature.

We then move forward to about 1952, when Sulak Sivaraksa, the famous Thai social critic and reformer, was a student in London. He knew of the book in Thai and managed to borrow a copy of the English version from the Buddhist Society library. He was interested in how the two versions compared (he preferred the Thai) and, when back in London again many years later, in 1977, he looked once again for the book but it had vanished from the Buddhist Society’s shelves. Eventually he tracked down a copy in the S.E. Asian Studies department of U.C. Berkeley, California; taking this he produced an edition with both Thai and English together. This was published in 1977 and then reprinted, together with the illustrations included in this volume, in 1985.

This latter edition having been produced by 'MATICHON' – a well known newspaper and publishing house in Bangkok.

The worst thing that could happen to a story to be read for pleasure is to have it surrounded by footnotes and appendices. This is true; but it's also true that some readers might like to know: 'Did this come from the Buddha?' 'Where can I find the rest of that quote?' 'That tradition sounds interesting, I wonder what it symbolises?' What we have done, therefore, is to create an appendix of notes and references, outlining the sources (as far as we are able to track them) of all the derived material that Karl Gjellerup used. The main body of the text is not marked in any way to indicate these notes; however, if you are curious about a certain passage, go to Appendix 1, look for the page and quotation in question and see if there's a comment or reference for it. This way, if you just want to read the story and ignore the rest you can easily do so, or, if you are interested in finding out more and checking the facts, the origins are mostly outlined there for you. We will also be delighted to hear of any mistakes, omissions or unwanted intrusions that any reader might find in these notes – feedback will be helpful for any future editions. Also, gentle reader, please note that the author (K.G.) switched freely between using Sanskrit (the language of the Northern Buddhist and Hindu scriptures) and Pāli (the language of the Southern Buddhist scriptures) during the course of his tale. In our efforts to be true to his original style we have maintained this mixture of usage.

One last point that I should make is that, in editing this work, I have tried to be as faithful as possible to the original author's text. I felt that my remit was simply to put it into a language that people of the late 20th/early 21st Century could easily understand, and yet for it still to be in a form that the author would be glad to read. I know how agonizing it can be to see your works butchered by others in the cause of 'improvement' (Mikhael Bulgakov's 'Black Snow' is a great essay on this subject). I have to confess, however, that there were a few passages that I did rewrite. These were altered for a variety of reasons: some to cover up the author's occasional inaccurate representation of the Buddha and his teachings (sometimes I got the feeling that K.G. saw the Buddha as a kind of genial old philosophy professor – one could almost see the gold-rimmed glasses, the bushy moustache, the tweed jacket with leather elbows and pipe smouldering in the top pocket, all surrounded by a multi-hued aura of chalkdust); some changes were made to fix inconsistencies in his plot line; some to represent the practice of the monastic discipline more accurately; and some to represent events in a way more in keeping with present times. If I have done the master wrong in any of this, *mea culpa* – accordingly I ask for forgiveness.

Amaro Bhikkhu
Abhayagiri Buddhist Monastery, California
February, 1999

AUTHOR'S NOTE TO THE FIRST EDITION - 1906

WITH THE EXCEPTION of the Buddha's encounter with the pilgrim in the hall of the potter (M 140, in which the pilgrim both recognizes and understands the Buddha) and the conversion of Angulimala¹, all events told in this book are my own fiction – I mention this because a few readers of the manuscript thought I just edited an ancient Indian tale. Admittedly I also took the account of the ball game from Dandin's cycle of stories, the *Dasakumaracaritam* – and in the brilliant introduction to the German translation of this work – by J.J. Meyer – I found many a useful hint. For the purpose of embellishment of the social milieu I drew from both historical and cultural works, both older and newer – the former mainly from the *Jatakas* – although this hardly needs a mention; of modern works I used, amongst others, Richard Schmidt's 'Beiträge zur indischen Erotik' ('Contributions to Indian Eroticism') which is an ample source of information (Lotus-Verlag, Leipzig, 1902; the same house which published the '*Dasakumaracaritam*').

The authentic words of the Buddha are easily recognizable as such by their style – even though one could mistake a few I imitated (on pp 119-122) as authentic ones. Mostly I took the words of the Buddha from the outstanding translations of Dr. Karl E. Neumann's 'Die Reden des Buddhos' (*Majjhima Nikaya*). However I am also indebted to Prof. Oldenberg, from whose epochal and still unsurpassed work 'Buddha' I took a few important quotes.

It hardly needs to be mentioned that the few quotes from the Upanishads (pp 33ff, 108-09) are taken from Prof. Deussen's 'Sechzig Upanishads des Veda'. To the second great translation of this excellent and indefatigable inquirer, 'Die Sutras des Vedanta', my tenth chapter owes its origin. If this curious piece is in substance a presentation of Indian *Übermenschentum* [the doctrine of the Ariyan master-race which became the basis of Adolph Hitler's philosophy, after K.G.'s time] – as the extreme antithesis to Buddhism – it is in its form a painfully accurate copy of the Vedantic *Sūtra* style, with the enigmatic brevity of the text, the true principle of which – as Deussen has rightly recognised – consists in giving¹ only catchwords for the memory, but never the words that are important to the sense. In this way the text could without danger be fixed in writing, since it was incomprehensible without the oral commentary of the

1 Chapter 34. The details follow M 86 but the prevented shooting of the arrow is my own addition. The image of hell is also not found there but in M 50; the following part, about the judge in hell is from MN 130; the subsequent scale of the Many and the Few belongs to a different part of the Canon (AN – taken from K.E. Neumann's 'Buddhistische Anthologie,' p 106ff.)

teacher, which thus usually became all the more pedantically intricate. Indeed, these Kāli Sūtras – like the whole Vājashravas episode – are a jocular fiction of mine – but one, I believe, which will be granted by every student of ancient India, to be within the bounds of the possible – nay, of the probable.

India is indeed the land where even the robber must philosophize, and occasionally become strange saints, and where even the Guardians of Hell remain ‘polite until the last step up the gallows.’

Should anyone familiar with ancient India now be inclined to castigate me because of some inaccuracies, I would now like to ask them to consider whether or not he who wrote ‘The Pilgrim Kāmanīta’ might not know best what liberties he has taken and why. Instead of the later Sukhavati [which appears only in the Northern, Mahayana Buddhist scriptures] I could easily have chosen the Heaven of the Thirty Three Gods, and would have remained accurate and correct. But what, for heaven’s sake, should I have done with those Thirty Three Gods when I didn’t even have a use for Amitabha Buddha in Sukhavati? Also, enjoying the licence of a poet, the question of whether or not the Mahābhārata existed at the time of the Buddha, or in what form, did not bother me. I would also like to confess that I don’t even know whether it is possible to see the snow-capped peaks of the Himalayas from Kusinara, I actually doubt it very much; this is not just because of distance, however, since Schlagintweit was able to espy them from the even greater distance of the Plains. Whatever the case: I am of the opinion that the requirements of poetry preempt the requirements of geography.

If not for this principle I would never have allowed myself, for ‘poetry’s’ sake, to change anything even slightly in the original Buddhism; the fact that I, as I already mentioned, used the much later and highly popular image of Sukhavati cannot be reckoned as so much of a distortion, since identical ideas are alive in spirit in the oldest traditions of Buddhism. Much more was it my heart’s desire to unroll a picture of the genuine Buddhist Lebens-und-Weltanschauung – view of life and the world. Dr. K. E. Neumann, without whose works this novel could never have come into existence, wrote in the Afterword to his ‘Path to the Truth’ (Dhammapada) thirteen years ago: ‘Only the last decades, the last years, have given us some idea of who the Buddha was and what he taught ... the poesy of Buddhism’s innermost nature, however, remains a book with five seals. One after another they have to be opened if we want to understand its heart ... After the scholars have done their work, may the poets now come forth and do theirs: the Pali scriptures are waiting for them. Only then will the Buddha’s teaching have come to live here in our land, only then will the German language blossom amongst Germans’ – it is my hope that my learned and honoured friend – and maybe a few others with him – will find in this work the beginning of the fulfillment of that wish.

Karl Gjellerup
Dresden, September, 1906

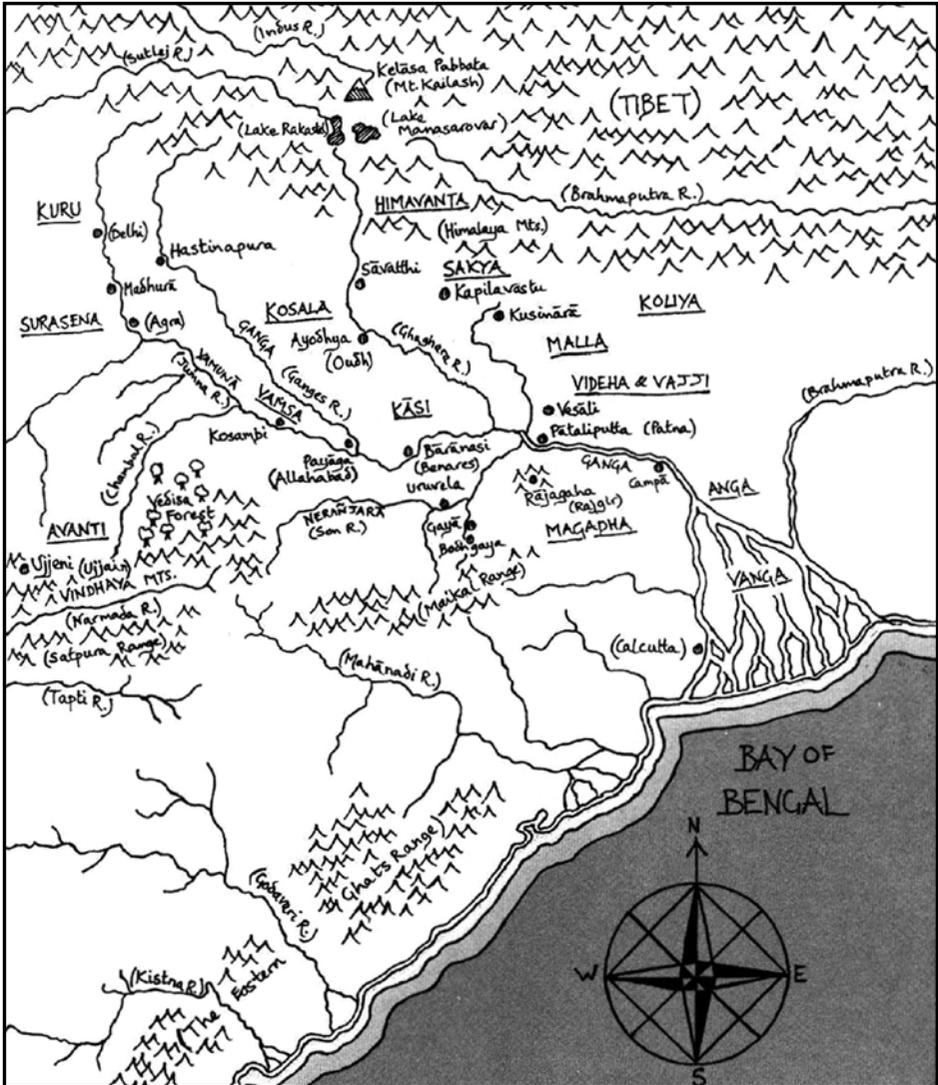
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To all of these, and to the many others involved in this project, abundant gratitude is due – may they all realize Nibbāna.

NORTH-EAST INDIA IN THE TIME OF THE BUDDHA



MODERN DAY NAMES IN PARENTHESIS

*... 'twas the moment deep
When we are conscious of the secret dawn
Amid the darkness that we feel is green ...
Thy face remembered is from other worlds,
It has been died for, though I know not when,
It has been sung of, though I know not where ...
... beside thee
I am aware of other times and lands,
Of birth far-back, of lives in many stars.
O beauty lone and like a candle clear
In this dark country of the world!*

STEPHEN PHILLIPS: MARPESSA

*If you love somebody
you lead them to enlightenment -*

*you don't draw them
into your own defilements.*

AJAHN SUMEDHO





THE BUDDHA REVISITS THE CITY OF THE FIVE HILLS

‘THUS HAVE I HEARD. The time came when the lifespan of the Lord Buddha was drawing to an end and, journeying from place to place in the land of Magadha, he came to Rājagaha.’ Thus it is written in the Buddhist Sūtras of ancient India.



As the Master drew near to the City of the Five Hills, day was almost over. The benevolent rays of the evening sun lay along the green rice-fields and meadows of the far-reaching plain as if they were emanations from a divine hand extended in blessing. Here and there billowing clouds – of purest gold-dust it seemed – rolled and crept along the ground, showing that farm-workers and oxen were plodding wearily homeward from their labour in the fields; and the lengthening shadows cast by isolated groups of trees were bordered by a halo, radiant with all the colours of the rainbow.

Framed in a wreath of blossoming gardens, the embattled gateways, terraces, cupolas and towers of the capital shone forth delicately clear as in some ethereal vision; and a long line of rocky out-crops, rivalling in colour the topaz, the amethyst and the opal, were patterned into an enamel of incomparable beauty.

Moved by the beauty of the landscape, the Buddha stayed his steps. A quiet joy welled up within him as his heart greeted those familiar forms, bound up with so many memories: the Grey Horn, the Broad Vale, the Seer’s Crag, the Vultures’ Peak – ‘whose noble summit towers, rooflike, over all the rest.’ And then there was Vebhāra, the mountain of the hot springs, under whose shadow, in the cave beneath the Satapanni tree, the young homeless wanderer had found his first retreat, his first resting-place on the final journey from Samsāra to Nirvāna.

For when, in that now remote time – ‘while still young, a black-haired young man in the flower of his youth, in the prime of life, though his mother and father wished otherwise and grieved with tearful faces, he shaved off his hair and beard, put on the ochre robe and went forth from the home life into homelessness’ – he had left his royal father’s house in the northern country of the Sākyas and had turned his steps toward the valley of the Gangā. And there, under the shadow of lofty Vebhāra, he had allowed himself his first lengthy stay, going every morning into Rājagaha for alms-food.

It was at that time also, and in that very cave, that the young Bimbisāra, King of Magadha, had visited him seeking to persuade him to return to the home of his fathers and to the life of the world – although his efforts had been in vain. At length the royal visitor, strangely moved by the words of the young ascetic, had felt the first tremblings of a new faith that later made him a follower of the Buddha.

Fifty years had passed since that day, and in the interval he had changed not only the course of his own life but also that of the world. How vast the difference between that past, when he dwelt in that humble cave and sat beneath the Satapanni tree, and the present. Then he was simply a seeker – one struggling for liberation. Terrible spiritual contests lay before him – six long years of self-inflicted mortification, inhuman agonies that were as sickening as they were fruitless, just the description of which made the flesh of even the stoutest-hearted listeners creep.

Eventually, having risen above all such self-torturing asceticism, through profound meditation, he had reached the Light, the realization of Nirvāna, had left the conflict behind him and was dedicated to the enlightenment of all living beings. Filled with a divine compassion, he became a supreme and perfect Buddha.

Those had been the years in which his life had resembled a changeful morning in the rainy season – dazzling sunshine alternating with deepest gloom, as the monsoon piles cloud above cloud in towering masses and the death-laden thunder-storm comes growling nearer. But now his life was filled with the same calm sunny peace that lay upon the evening landscape, a peace that seemed to grow ever deeper and clearer as the sun’s disc dipped towards the horizon.

For him too sunset, the close of life’s long day, was at hand. He had finished his work. The dispensation of the Dharma had been established on sure foundations and the liberating teaching had been proclaimed to all humankind; many monks and nuns of blameless life and transcendent knowledge – and both women and men lay followers were now fully capable of sustaining this Realm of Truth, and upholding and spreading its teachings.

And, even as he stands there, there abides in his heart, as a result of the reflections of this day spent in solitary travelling, the inalienable knowledge:– For you the time is coming, and soon, when you shall depart from here and leave this world which you, and many who have followed you, have transcended, and there will be the peace of Final Nirvāna.

And looking over the land spread out before him – with a joyful recollection within which there lay a note of deep poignancy – he bade this beloved land farewell.

‘What beauty you possess, Rājagaha, City of the Five Hills. How lovely your landscapes, how richly blessed your fields, how gladdening your wooded glades gleaming with waters, how stately your clustering hills of rock.

‘For the last time I now look down upon your graceful borders from this, the fairest of all places from which your children love to gaze upon your face. Only once more – on the day when the Tathāgata goes forth from here and looks back from the crest of that far mountain ridge – shall he see you again, beloved valley of Rājagaha; after that, never more.’

And still the Master stood, until finally only two structures of all in the city before him towered in the golden sunlight: one, the highest pinnacle of the palace from which King Bimbisāra had first espied him when, as a young and unknown ascetic, he had passed that way and, by his noble bearing, called himself to the notice of the King of Magadha; the other, the dome-like superstructure of the great temple in which, in the years before his teaching had delivered the people from bloody superstition, thousands upon thousands of innocent animals had been annually slaughtered in honour of some deity.

Finally even the pinnacles of the towers slipped down into the rising sea of shadow and were lost to view, and only the cone of golden parasols still glowed. Rising one above another, they crowned the dome of the temple, suspended as if in mid-air, flashing and sparkling as the red glow deepened against the dense cobalt blue background of the tall tree-tops.

At this point the Master caught sight of the still somewhat distant goal of his journey. For the tree-tops he saw were those of the Mango Grove on the farther side of the town, the gift of his disciple Jīvaka, the king’s physician, in which a well-appointed monastery provided the monastic community with a residence that was both peaceful and simple.

To this home of the Order, the Sangha, the Buddha had sent on the monks who had accompanied him – about two hundred in number – under the leadership of his cousin and faithful attendant Ānanda; since he had been inclined towards tasting the delight of a day’s solitary wandering. He was also aware that a band of young monks from the west, led by his great disciple the wise Sāriputra, would arrive in the Mango Grove at sunset.

In his mind’s eye, capable of picturing the unfolding of events in all their details, he went over the scenes that would be enacted. He saw those arriving exchange friendly greetings with the monks already there, saw them conducted to resting places and huts in the forest, their robes and alms-bowls being taken from them; and he heard all this take place in a racket of noise and loud conversation, like the crowds of fisher-folk down at the landings quarrelling over their spoils. He knew this to be no exaggeration;

and to one who loved silence and serenity, and disliked clamour as does the solitary lion in the jungle, the thought was doubly uninviting of being involved in such bustle after the delight of travelling alone and the blessed peace of the evening landscape.

So he determined, as he went on his way, that he would not go through the city to the Mango Grove but would rest for the night in any house in the nearest suburb in which he could find shelter.

Meanwhile the flaming gold of the western heavens had died down in burning orange tints, and these in turn had melted into a blaze of the fieriest scarlet.

Round about him the green fields deepened and grew more luminous, as though the earth were an emerald lit up from within. But already a dreamy violet haze enveloped the horizon, while a mysterious purple flood – whether light or shadow no-one could say – rolled in from every side, rising and sinking, filling all space, dissolving fixed outlines and combining fragments, sweeping near objects away and bringing closer those that were distant – causing everything to undulate and waver in trembling uncertainty.

Startled by the footsteps of the solitary wanderer, a fruit-bat unhooked itself from the branch of a black Sāla tree and, spreading its leathery wings, swept with a shrill cry away through the dusk to pay a visit to the orchards of the area.

Thus by the time that the Master had reached the outskirts of Rājagaha, the day was far spent and shadowy night was at hand.





S. S. S.



THE MEETING



IT WAS THE INTENTION of the Master to stop at the first house he came to – in this instance a building whose blue walls shone out from between the trees of the surrounding garden. As he was about to approach the door, however, he noticed a net hung upon a branch. Without a moment's hesitation he walked past, repelled by the house of the bird-catcher. Here at the extreme outskirts of town the houses were scattered, in addition to which a great fire had recently swept the area so that some time elapsed before he came to another human habitation. It was the farmhouse of a well-to-do brahmin. The Master had hardly stepped within the gate, when he heard the loud voices of the brahmin and his two wives as they scolded and wrangled, hurling invectives at one another. The Blessèd One turned himself around, went out through the gateway and moved on.



The pleasure garden of the rich brahmin extended for a considerable distance along the road. The Master was already conscious of fatigue and his right foot, injured by a sharp stone, pained him as he walked. In this condition he approached the next dwelling place, which was visible from a great distance owing to a broad path of vivid light that streamed across the road from the latticework of shutters and from the open door. Even had a blind man come that way he could not have failed to notice this house, for lusty laughter, the clang of silver drinking cups, the clapping of hands, the beat of dancing feet and the rhythmic notes of the seven-stringed *vinā* rose clearly upon the air. Leaning against the door-post was a beautiful girl robed in rich silks and hung with jasmine garlands. Laughing, she flashed her teeth, red from chewing betel nut, and invited the wayfarer to stay: 'Enter here, stranger. This is the House of Delight.' But the Blessèd One went on his way, and as he did so he recalled his own words: 'For one who is enraptured with the Truth, the smile of smiling eyes is all-sufficing.'

The neighbouring house was not far distant but the noise of the drinking, singing and vīnā-players penetrated there, so the Buddha went on to the next. Beside it two butcher's assistants were hard at work by the last glimmer of daylight, cutting up with sharp knives a cow they had just slaughtered. And the Master moved on past the house of the butcher.

In front of the one following stood many dishes and bowls freshly formed from clay, the fruit of a diligent day's labour. The potter's wheel stood under a tamarind tree, and the potter at that moment removed a dish from the wheel and bore it to where the others lay.

The Master approached the potter, greeted him courteously, and said, 'If it is not inconvenient to you, respected friend, I would like to spend this night in your guest-hall.'

'It is not inconvenient to me, sir. But at this moment another seeker like yourself, a wanderer who arrived tired from a long journey, has already moved in there for the night. If it is agreeable to him, you are welcome to stay, sir; it's up to you.'

The Master reflected: 'Solitude, it is true, is the best of all companions, but this good pilgrim has arrived here late, just like myself, tired from his wanderings. And he has also passed by the houses where people follow unwholesome and bloody livelihoods, past the house of wrangling and strife, the house of clamour and unholy pleasure, and he has not rested until he entered the house of the potter. In the company of such a man it is possible to spend the night.'

So the Buddha entered the outer hall and there he perceived a young man of noble bearing sitting in a corner on a mat.

'If it is not disagreeable to you, friend,' said the Master, 'I would like to spend the night in this place.'

'The hall of the potter is spacious, brother; please stay here if you wish.'

The Master thus spread out his mat close to one of the walls and sat down with his legs crossed, his body perfectly upright, focusing his mind in deep meditation. The Blessed One remained sitting in this way during the first part of the night.

The young man also remained sitting thus during the first part of the night. Seeing this, the Buddha thought to himself: 'I wonder whether this noble youth is happy in his search after Truth. How would it be if I asked him?' So he turned to the young seeker and enquired, his voice both deep and golden: 'What were the reasons, young friend, what were the causes that encouraged you to choose the life of homelessness?' The young man answered: 'The night is yet young, venerable sir, if you are happy to lend an ear I shall gladly tell you why I have chosen the life of the spiritual seeker.'

The Blessed One gave assent by a friendly movement of his head, and the young man began to tell his tale.







TO THE BANKS OF THE GANGA

MY NAME IS KĀMANĪTA. I was born in Ujjenī, a town lying among the mountains far to the south, in the land of Avanti. My father was a merchant and rich, though our family could lay claim to no special rank. He gave me a good education and, when of age to assume the Sacrificial Cord, I already possessed most of the accomplishments which befit a young man of position, so that people generally believed I must have been educated in Taxilā, at the great university.

I could wrestle and fence with the best. My voice was melodious and well-trained, and I was able to play the vīnā with considerable artistic skill. I could repeat all the verses of the Mahābhārata by heart and many others also. I was most intimately acquainted with the mysteries of poetic construction, and was myself able to write verses full of feeling and ingenious thought. I could draw and paint so that few surpassed me, and my originality in the art of arranging flowers was universally lauded.

I attained an unusual mastery in the knowledge of the colouration of crystals and, furthermore, could tell at sight from what place any jewel came. My parrots and minah-birds I trained so that none spoke so well as they. And to all these accomplishments I added a thorough command of the game of chess, the wand game, archery, ball games of every description, riddles and of flower games. So that it became, my friend, a proverbial saying in Ujjenī: 'Talented as the young Kāmanīta.'



When I was twenty years old, my father sent for me one day and said, 'My son, your education is now complete; it is time for you to see something of the world and begin your career as a merchant. A suitable opportunity has just offered itself. Within the next few days our king will send an embassy to King Udena in Kosambī, which lies far to the north. There I have a friend named Panāda. He and I have visited and stayed

with each other at various times. He has frequently told me that in Kosambī there is good business to be done in the products of our land, particularly in rock crystals and sandalwood powder, and also in artistic wicker-work and woven goods. I have always, however, shunned such business journeys, holding them to be too hazardous an undertaking on account of the many dangers of the road; but for anyone going there and back along with the embassy there can be no danger whatsoever. So now, my son, we had better go to the warehouse and inspect the twelve wagons with their teams of oxen and the goods which I have decided on for your journey. In exchange for these items you are to bring back muslin from Benares and carefully selected rice; and that will be the beginning, and I trust a splendid one, of your business career. Then you will have an opportunity of seeing foreign countries with trees and gardens, landscapes and architecture other than your own, and other customs; and you will have daily contact with courtiers who are men of the highest station and of most refined aristocratic manners. All of this I consider will be a great gain, for a merchant must be a man of the world.'

I thanked my father with tears of joy, and a few days later said farewell to my friends and my home. What a joyful anticipation my heart beat with as, at the head of my wagons, I passed out of the city gates, a member of this magnificent procession, and the wide world lay open before me! Each day of the journey was to me like a festival, and when the camp-fires blazed up in the evenings to scare the panthers and tigers away, and I sat in the circle by the side of the ambassador with men of years and rank, it seemed to me that I was in some kind of wonderful fairyland.

Through the magnificent forest regions of Vedisa and over the gently swelling heights of the Vindhaya mountains we reached the vast northern plain, and there an entirely new world opened itself out before me for I had never imagined that the earth could be so flat and so huge.

It was about a month after our setting out that, one glorious evening, from a palm-covered hill-top, we saw two golden bands which, disengaging themselves from the mists on the horizon, threaded through the immeasurable acres of green beneath, and gradually approached each other until they became united in one broad zone.

A hand touched my shoulder.

It was the ambassador who had approached me unperceived.

'Those, Kāmanīta, are the sacred river Yamunā and the divine Gangā whose waters unite before our eyes.' Involuntarily I raised my hands, palms together, in reverence.

'You do well to greet them in this way,' my patron went on. 'For if the Gangā comes from the home of the gods amid the snow-clad mountains of the north and flows from the Abode of the Eternal; the Yamunā, on the other hand, takes its rise in lands known to far-distant heroic days, and its floods have reflected the ruins of Hastinapura, The City of Elephants, and it washed the plain where the Pāndavas and the Kaurāvas struggled for mastery; where Karna raged in his tent, where Krishna himself guided

the steeds of Arjuna – but of all that I do not need remind you, I know that you are well-versed in the ancient heroic songs.

‘Often I have stood on that projecting tongue of land where the blue waves of the Yamunā roll onward side by side with the yellow waters of the Gangā, and blue and yellow have never mingled. Blue and yellow, warrior and brahmin in the great river-bed of Caste, passing onward to eternity, approaching – uniting – for ever side by side – for ever two. Then it seemed to me that, blended with the rushing of these blue floods, I heard warlike sounds – the clash of weapons and the blowing of horns, the neighing of horses and the trumpeting of war elephants – and my heart beat faster, for my ancestors also had been there. And the sands of Kurukshetra drank their heroic blood.’

Full of admiration, I looked up to this man from the warrior caste in whose family such memories lived.

But he took me by the hand and said, ‘Come, son, look at the goal of your first journey.’ He led me a few steps around some dense shrubbery that had, up until then, hidden the view to the east.

As it flashed upon my vision I gasped in admiration for there, at a bend of the broad Gangā, lay the city of Kosambī great and splendid in its beauty. With its walls and towers, its piled-up masses of houses, its terraces, quays and bathing-ghats lit up by the setting sun, it really looked like a city of red gold – a city such as Benares had been until the unwholesome lives of its inhabitants changed it to stone and mortar – while the cupolas that were of real gold shone like so many suns. Columns of smoke, dark red-brown from the temple courts above, light blue from the funeral pyres on the banks below, rose straight into the air. Carried aloft on these, as if it were a canopy, there hung over the whole a veil woven of the tenderest tints of mother-of-pearl, while in the background, flung forth in the wildest profusion, there flashed and burned every hue of heaven. On the sacred stream, which mirrored all this glory and multiplied it a thousandfold in the shimmer of its waters, countless boats were rocking, gay with many-coloured sails and streamers. And, distant though we were, we could see the broad stairs of the ghats swarming with people and numerous bathers splashing in the sparkling waves beneath. A sound of joyous movement, floating out upon the air like the busy hum of innumerable bees, was borne up to us from time to time.

As you can imagine, I felt as if I was looking upon a city of the Tāvātimsa heaven, the abode of the Thirty-three Gods, rather than one of human beings; indeed, the whole valley of the Gangā and the Yamunā with its luxuriant richness looked to us men of the hills like Paradise. And, in truth, this very place of all others on earth was indeed to become Paradise for me.

That same night I slept under the hospitable roof of Panāda, my father’s old friend.

Early on the following day I hurried to the nearest ghat and descended, with feelings which I cannot attempt to describe, into the sacred waters which should not only cleanse me from the dust of my journey but also from my unwholesome karma as well. This was, owing to my youth, of no great gravity as yet; however I filled a large bottle from the river to take home to my father. Unfortunately, it never came into his possession, as you will soon learn from my tale.

The good Panāda, a grey-haired old gentleman of venerable appearance, now conducted me to the markets of the city and, with his friendly assistance, in the course of the next few days I was able to sell my wares at a good profit – and to purchase an abundance of those products of the northern plains which are so highly prized among our people.

My business was thus brought to a happy conclusion long before the embassy had begun to think of getting ready to start on its return journey; and I was in no way sorry, for I had now full liberty to see the town and to partake of its pleasures, which I did to the full, in the company of Somadatta, the son of my host.







THE MAIDEN BALL-PLAYER

ONE DELIGHTFUL AFTERNOON we took ourselves to a public garden outside the town – a really magnificent park it was, lying close to the high banks of the Gangā with shady groups of trees, large lotus ponds, marble summer-houses and jasmine arbours in which, at this hour of the day, life and bustle reigned supreme. Here we were gently rocked on a golden swingseat by the attendants, while with ravished hearts we listened to the lovesick notes of the Kokila bird and the sweet chatter of the green parrots. All at once there rose on the air the merry tinkling of anklets, and instantly my friend sprang out of the swing and called to me: ‘Look, Kāmanīta! The fairest maidens in Kosambī are just approaching, virgins specially chosen from the richest and most noble houses, come to do honour to the Goddess who dwells on the Vindhaya mountains by engaging in ball games. Count yourself fortunate, my friend, for at this game we may see them without restraint. Come, we must not miss our chance.’

Naturally I waited for no second bidding but made haste to follow.



On a spacious stage decorated with precious stones the maidens appeared, ready for the game. And, if it must be acknowledged that it was a rare sight to behold this galaxy of fair young creatures in all their glory of shimmering silk, airy muslin veils, pearls, sparkling jewels and golden bangles, what must be said of the game itself that gave to all these gracious figures such varied opportunities of displaying their wealth of subtle beauty in the most charming of positions and movements? And yet that was, as it were, but a prologue. For when these gazelle-eyed worshippers had entertained us for a considerable time with games of many kinds, they all stepped back except for one, who remained alone in the centre of the jewelled stage: in the centre of the stage ... and in the centre of my heart.

Ah, my friend, what shall I say? To talk of her beauty would be an audacity! I should need to be a poet like Bharata himself to conjure up to your imagination even a faint reflection of it. Let it suffice that this maiden, with the gentle radiance of the moon in her face, was of such faultless form and glowed in every feature with the freshness of youth, that I felt her to be the incarnate Goddess of Fortune and Beauty. Every hair on my body quivered with delight as I beheld her.

In honour of the Goddess whom she so perfectly represented, she soon began a performance worthy of a great artist. Dropping the ball easily on the stage, as it slowly rose she gave it, with flower-like hand, thumb slightly bent and tender fingers outstretched, a sharp downward blow, then struck it, as it rebounded, with the back of her hand and caught it again in mid-air as it fell. She tossed it in slow, in medium and in quick time, now inciting it to rapid motion, then gently quieting it.

Then, striking it alternately with the right hand and with the left, she drove it towards every point of the compass and caught it as it returned. If you are acquainted with the mysteries of ball-play – as it seems to me from the intelligence of your expression that you are – I need only tell you that you have probably never seen the Curnapāda and the Gītamarga so perfectly mastered.

Then she did something that I had never seen and of which I had not even heard. She took two golden balls and, while her feet moved in a dance to the tinkling of the jewels she wore, she made the balls spring so rapidly in lightning-like lines, that it was as if one saw the golden bars of a cage in which a wondrous bird hopped daintily to and fro.

It was at this point that our eyes suddenly met.

To this day, O stranger, I do not understand how it was that I did not instantly drop dead, to be reborn in a heaven of bliss. It may well be, however, that the fruits of deeds done in a former life were not yet exhausted. Indeed, this karma from my wanderings in the past has, it seems, carried me safely through various mortal dangers down to the present day, and I trust it will do so for a long time to come.

But to return. At this instant one of the balls, which had hitherto been so obedient to her, escaped and flew in a mighty curve down from the stage. Many young men rushed to seize it. I reached it at the same moment as another richly-dressed youth and we flew at one another, because neither was willing to yield it. Owing to my absolute familiarity with the tricks of the wrestler, I succeeded in tripping him up; but he, in order to hold me back, caught at the crystal chain which I wore round my neck, and to which an amulet was attached. The chain snapped, he went crashing to the earth and I secured the ball. In a fury, he sprang up and hurled the chain at my feet. The amulet was a tiger-eye, not a specially precious stone, yet it was an infallible safeguard against the evil eye; and now, just as his enraged glare landed upon me, I was without it. But what did that matter to me? Did I not hold in my hand the ball which, a moment before, her lily-hand had touched? At once, as any highly-skilled player should, I succeeded in

pitching it with such an accurate aim that it came down just in front of one corner of the stage and, rising again with a gentle movement, it landed as if tamed within reach of the fair player, who had not for a moment ceased to keep the other in motion, and who now wove herself again into her golden cage – amid the wild jubilation of the crowd of spectators. With that the ball-play in honour of the Goddess Lakshmi came to an end, the maidens disappeared from the stage and we turned our steps homeward.

On the way, my friend remarked that it was fortunate that I had no business to conduct at court; for the young man from whom I had captured the ball was no less a personage than the son of the Minister of State, and everyone had noticed from his looks that he had sworn undying hatred to me. That did not move me in the slightest; how much rather would I have learned who my Goddess was. I fought shy of asking, however; in fact, when Somadatta wanted to tease me about the fair one, I even affected perfect indifference, praised with the language of a connoisseur the finish of her play but added, at the same time, that we had in my native town girl-players at least as skilful – while in my heart of hearts I begged the incomparable one to pardon my falsehood.



I need hardly say that that night brought no sleep to my eyes, which I only closed in order to be possessed anew by the blissful vision I had seen. The following day was spent by me in a corner of my host's garden, far removed from all the noise of the day, where the sandy soil under a mango-tree ministered a cooling balm to my love-tortured body – my only companion being the seven-stringed vīnā to which I confided my longing. As soon as the lessening heat permitted my going out, however, I persuaded Somadatta to drive with me to the public gardens, although he would have greatly preferred to go to a quail fight. As it was, I wandered through the whole park in vain. Many maidens were there and all engaged in games, as though bent on luring me with false hopes from one spot to another, but that unsurpassed one – Sri Lakshmi's very image – was not among them.

Bitterly disappointed, I now pretended that I was possessed by an irresistible longing to enjoy the strangely fascinating life of the Gangā. We visited all the ghats and finally got into a boat, in order to become one of the joyous flotilla which every evening rocked to and fro on the waves of the sacred stream. I lingered until the play of light and the golden glow of evening were extinguished, and the blaze of torches and the glimmer of lanterns danced and whirled on its glassy surface.

Then at last I was obliged to give up my silent but nonetheless passionate hope, and I bid my boatman steer for the nearest ghat.

After another sleepless night I remained in my room and, in order to occupy and relieve my mind which was still utterly possessed by her image, I sought with the aid

of brush and colour to transfer to the wooden panel on my wall her fair lineaments as I had last beheld them, when dancing she had struck the golden ball. I was unable to eat a morsel; for even as the Cakora with its exquisitely tender song lives only upon the rays of the moon, so did I live solely upon the rays that emanated from her whose face was as the moon in its fairness, although these came to me only through the mists of memory; yet I confidently hoped that this evening in the pleasure gardens they would refresh and vivify me with all their glow and radiance. Alas! I was again doomed to disappointment.

Afterwards Somadatta wished to take me to the gaming tables, for he was as passionately addicted to the dice as was Nāla after the fierce Goddess Kāli had entered into him. I feigned tiredness.

Instead of going home however, I took myself again to the ghats and out onto the river, but, to my unspeakable grief, with no better result than on the preceding evening: She was not there.







THE MAGIC PORTRAIT

AS I KNEW THAT for me sleep was not to be thought of, I did not undress at all that evening, but sat down at the head of my bed on the grass mat intended for meditation and devotional prayers. I spent the night there in what I took to be a suitably spiritual fashion: filled with fervent thoughts of love and absorbed in contemplation of the lotus-bearing Lakshmi, her celestial prototype. The early morning sun, however, found me again at work with brush and colour.



Several hours had already flown away as if on wings while I was thus occupied, when Somadatta entered the room. When I heard him coming, I only just had time to thrust the panel and painting materials under the bed. I did this quite involuntarily.

Somadatta took a low chair, sat down beside me and looked at me with a smile on his face.

'In truth I perceive,' he said, 'that our house is to have the honour of being the spiritual birthplace of a holy man. You fast as only the most strenuous of ascetics do and refrain from using the luxurious bed. For neither on your pillows nor on your mattress is there to be seen the faintest impression of your body, and the white sheet is without a crease. Nevertheless, although as the result of your fasting you have already grown quite slim, your body is not yet entirely devoid of weight, as the observant may see from this grass mat on which you have obviously spent the night in prayer and meditation. But I find that, for so holy a tenant, this room looks somewhat too worldly: here on your dressing-table, the jar of skin cream – untouched, it is true; the box of sandal-wood powder; the carafe of scented water and the dish with bark of the lemon tree and betel-nut. There on the wall, the wreath of yellow amaranths, and the vīnā, but... where is the panel which usually hangs on that hook?' In my embarrassment I

was unable to frame any answer to this question and he meanwhile discovered the missing board, and drew it forth from under the bed. 'Why! Why! What wicked and crafty wizard,' he cried, 'has caused the fascinating picture of a maiden playing ball to appear by magic on the board which I myself hung quite empty on that hook? Plainly, they have done this with evil intent, to assail the embryo ascetic and tempt him at the very beginning of his career, and thus to confuse both sense and thought in him. Or could it be that this is the work of a god? For we know it is a fact that the gods fear the omnipotence of great ascetics; and, beginning as you have done, the Vindhaya Mountains might well begin to belch smoke at the fervency of your austerities; indeed, owing to your accumulation of blessings, the kingdom of heavenly beings might almost begin to totter. And now I also know which deity it is! Certainly it is he whom we name the Invisible, the God with the Flower Darts who bears a fish on his banner – Kāma, the god of love, from whom you get your name, as I now remember. And, heavens, what do I see? But this is Vāsithī, the daughter of the rich goldsmith!' As I thus, for the first time, heard the name of my beloved, my heart began to beat violently and my face grew pale from agitation.

'I see, my dear friend,' this incorrigible jester went on, 'that the idea of the magic of Kāma has given you a great fright and, truly, we shall be obliged to do something in order to avert his anger. In such a case, however, I feel that a woman's counsel is not to be despised. I shall show this picture to my beloved Medinī, who was also one of those at the dance and who is, furthermore, the foster-sister of the fair Vāsithī.'

With that, he was about to go away, taking the panel with him. Perceiving, however, what the rogue had in mind I bade him wait, as the picture still lacked an inscription. I mixed some beautiful red of a brilliant hue and in a few minutes had written, in the daintiest of script, a verse of four lines which related in simple language the incident of the golden ball. The verse, when read backwards, stated that the ball with which she had played was my heart, which I myself sent back to her even at the risk of her rejecting it. It was possible, however, to read the verse perpendicularly through the lines and when so read, from top to bottom, it voiced in saddest words the despair into which my separation from her had plunged me; if one read it in the opposite direction then the reader learned that nevertheless I dared to hope.

But of all that I had conveyed to her in such a surreptitious fashion I said nothing, so that Somadatta was by no means enchanted with this specimen of my poetic skill. It seemed to him much too simple, and he informed me that I ought certainly to mention how the god Kāma, alarmed at my asceticism, had by his magic skill created this picture with which to tempt me and that by it I had been wholly vanquished – Somadatta, like so many others, being highly impressed by his own wit.

After he had carried off the picture I felt myself in a particularly exalted and energetic mood, for a step had now been taken which, in its consequences, might lead to the longed-for goal of all my happiness. I was now able to eat and drink

and, after a light meal, I took down the *vīnā* from the wall and drew from its strings melodies that were sometimes no more than tuneful sighs but now and then grew exulting and joyous, while I repeated the heavenly name of *Vāsithī* in a thousand endearing accents.

Somadatta found me thus when, a few hours later, he came in with the picture in his hand. ‘The ball-playing destroyer of your peace has also been moved to verse,’ said he, ‘but I cannot say that I am able to find much of consequence in what she has written, although the handwriting is unusually pretty.’

And it was indeed pretty. I saw before me – with inexpressible joy – a second verse of four lines written in characters like sprays of tender blossoms swayed by summer zephyrs, and looking as if they had been breathed upon the picture. Somadatta had, of course, been unable to find any meaning in them, for they referred solely to that which he had not perceived, and showed me that my fair one had correctly read my composition in every direction – backwards, upwards and downwards. It gave me a good idea of her exalted education and knowledge, no less than it did the revelation of her rare spirit in the graciously humorous turn she gave to my fiery declaration, which she chose to accept as a piece of gallantry or an effusion to which too much importance need not be attached.

I now attempted, I confess, to read her verse in the criss-cross fashion which had been possible with mine, in the hope that I might find in it a covert confession or other secret message, perhaps even the invitation to a rendezvous, but in vain. And I told myself at once that this was in truth but a convincing proof of the highest and most refined feminine virtue: my darling showed me that she was perfectly capable of understanding the subtlety and daring ways of the masculine mind but could not be induced to imitate them.

Besides which I found immediate comfort for my disappointed expectations in Somadatta’s next words.

‘But this fair one with the beautiful brows, even if she is no great poetess, really has a good heart. She knows that for a long time I have not seen her foster-sister, my beloved *Medinī*, except at large social gatherings where only the eyes may speak and even these solely by stealth. And so she has arranged a meeting for tomorrow night, on the terrace of her father’s palace. Tonight it is, I regret to say, not possible as her father gives a banquet; so until tomorrow we must have patience. Perhaps you would like to accompany me on this adventure?’ As he said this, he laughed with much slyness and I laughed with him, assuring him that he would have my company. In the best of spirits, we took the chessboard which was leaning against the wall and were about to pass the time by engaging in this game when a man-servant came in and announced that a stranger wished to speak with me.

In the entrance hall I found the ambassador’s attendant, who informed me that I must prepare for departure at once and come to the courtyard of the palace that

very night, bringing my wagons in order to be able to start with the first glimmer of daylight on the morrow.

My despair knew no bounds and I imagined that I must have offended one of the deities in some mysterious way. As soon as I was able to collect my thoughts I dashed away to the ambassador and filled his ears with lies about some business that I had not yet arranged, and that it could not possibly be brought to a satisfactory conclusion in so short a time. With hot tears I begged him to put off the journey for but a single day.

‘But you said eight days ago that you were ready,’ he replied.

I assured him that afterwards, and quite unexpectedly, the opportunity of gaining a valuable prize had presented itself. And that was indeed no falsehood, for what gain could mean more to me than winning the heart of this incomparable maiden? So I finally succeeded in willing this one day from him.

The hours of the next day wore quickly away, filled as they were with the preparations necessary for our journey, so that in spite of my longing the time did not drag. When evening came our carts stood loaded in the courtyard. Everything was prepared for yoking in the oxen so that, as soon as I should appear – that is, before daybreak – we might be able to start.







ON THE TERRACE OF THE SORROWLESS

NOW THAT NIGHT AND darkness had come, Somadatta and I took ourselves – clad in shadow-coloured clothing which we gathered well up about us, our waists firmly belted and with swords in our hands – to the western side of the palatial house of the goldsmith, where the terrace that we sought was perched, crowning the steep and rocky side of a deep ravine. With the help of a bamboo pole that we had brought with us, and by the dexterous use of a few existing projections, we climbed the face of the rock at a spot veiled in deep darkness. We swung over the wall with ease and found ourselves on a spacious terrace decorated with palms, Asoka trees and magnificent flowering plants of every description, all now bathed in the silver light of the moon.



Not far away, beside a young girl on a garden bench and looking like a visitant from the heavenly spheres in her wonderful likeness to Lakshmi, sat the great-eyed maiden who had played ball with my heart. At the sight I began to tremble so violently that I was obliged to lean against the parapet, the touch of whose marble cooled and quieted my fevered and failing senses.

Meanwhile Somadatta hastened to his beloved, who had sprung up with a low cry. Seeing this, I also pulled myself together so far as to be able to approach the incomparable one. She, to all appearances surprised at the arrival of a stranger, had risen and seemed undecided as whether she should go or stay; her eyes meanwhile, like those of a startled young gazelle, shot sidelong glances at me, and her body quivered like a tendril swaying in a gentle breeze. As for me, I stood in steadily increasing confusion, with disordered hair and tell-tale eyes, and was barely able to stammer a few words in which I told her how much I appreciated the unhopèd-for happiness of meeting her here. But she, when she noticed my great shyness, seemed herself to become calmer.

She sat down on the bench again, and invited me with a gentle movement of her lotus-hand to take a seat beside her; and then, in a voice full of tremulous sweetness, assured me that she was very glad to be able to thank me for having flung the ball back to her with such skill that the game suffered no interruption; for, had that happened, the whole merit of her performance would have been lost and the Goddess so clumsily honoured would have visited her anger upon her, or would at least have sent her no happiness. To which I replied that she owed me no thanks as I had, at the very most, only made good my own mistake and, as she did not seem to understand what I had meant by that, I ventured to remind her of the meeting of our eyes and of the ensuing confusion which caused her to fail in her stroke so that the ball flew away. But she reddened violently and absolutely refused to acknowledge such a thing:— What should have confused her in that? ‘I imagine,’ I answered, ‘that from my eyes, which must have rivalled flowers in full bloom then, such a sweet odour of admiration streamed forth that for a moment you were stupefied and so your hand went beside the ball.’

‘Oh! What talk is this of yours about admiration?’ she retorted, ‘you are accustomed to seeing much more skilful players in your home-town!’ From this remark I gathered with satisfaction that I had been talked of and that the words I had used to Somadatta had been accurately repeated. But I grew hot and then cold at the thought that I had spoken almost slightly and I hastened to assure her that there was not one word of truth in my statement, and that I had only spoken thus in order not to betray my precious secret to my friend. But she wouldn’t believe it, or made as if she didn’t and, in speaking of it, I happily forgot my bashfulness, grew passionately eager to convince her, and told her how, at the sight of her, the Love God had rained his flower darts upon me:— I was convinced, I said, that in a former existence she had been my heart’s companion – otherwise how could such a sudden and irresistible love have arisen? But if that were so, then she must equally have recognized in me her former beloved, and a similar love must have sprung up in her breast also.

With such audacious words did I besiege her, until at length she had her burning and tearful cheek on my breast and acknowledged in words that were scarcely audible, that it had been with her as it had been with me, and that she would surely have died had not her foster-sister brought her the picture.

Then we kissed and caressed one another countless times and felt as if we should expire for joy, until suddenly the thought of my impending departure fell like a dark shadow over my happiness and forced a deep sigh from within me.

Dismayed, Vāsithī asked why I sighed, but when I told her of the cause she sank back fainting on the bench and broke into a perfect tempest of tears and heart-rending sobs. Vain were all my attempts to comfort my heart’s beloved one. In vain did I assure her that as soon as the rainy season was over I would return and never again leave her, even if I had to take service as a manual labourer in Kosambī. Spoken to the winds were all my assurances that my despair at the separation was not less than her own, and that

only stern, inexorable necessity tore me away from her so soon. Between her sobs, she was scarcely able to utter the few words needed to ask why it was so imperative to go away as early as tomorrow, just when we had found one another. And when I then explained it all to her very exactly, with every detail, she seemed neither to hear nor to comprehend two syllables together:- Oh, she saw perfectly that I was longing to get back to my native town where there were many maidens more beautiful than she, who were also far more skilful ball-players, as I myself had acknowledged.

I might affirm, protest, and swear whatever I chose – she nevertheless adhered to her assertion, and ever more copiously flowed her tears. Can anyone wonder that I soon found myself lying at her feet, covering the hand that hung limply down with kisses and tears, and that I promised not to leave her? And who could then have been more blissful than I when Vāsithī flung her soft arms around me, kissing me again and again, laughing and crying for joy? It is true she now instantly said, ‘There, you see, it was not at all so necessary for you to travel away, for then you would unquestionably have had to go.’ But when I set myself once more to explain everything clearly to her, she closed my mouth with a kiss and said that she knew I loved her and that she did not really mean what she had said of the girls in my native town.

Filled with tender caresses and sweet confidences, the hours flew by as in a dream, and there would have been no end to all our bliss had not Somadatta and Medinī suddenly appeared to tell us that it was high time to think of returning home.

In the courtyard at Somadatta’s we found everything ready for my setting out. I called the overseer of the ox-wagons to me and – bidding him use the utmost haste – sent him to the ambassador with the information that my business was, I was sorry to say, not yet entirely settled and that I must, as a consequence, relinquish the idea of making the journey under the escort of the embassy. My one request was that he would be so good as give my love to my parents and with that I closed my message.



Scarcely had I stretched myself on my bed, in order – if possible – to enjoy a few hours sleep, when the ambassador himself entered. Thoroughly dismayed, I bowed deeply before him while he, in imperious voice, asked what this unheard-of behaviour meant:- I was to come with him at once! In reply, I was about to speak of my still unfinished business, but he stopped me in mid-stream.

‘What nonsense! Business! Enough of such lies. Do you suppose I would not know what kind of business is on hand when a young puppy suddenly declares himself unable to leave a town, even if I had not seen that your wagons already stand fully loaded, harnessed up with the oxen, in the courtyard?’ Of course I now stood scarlet with shame and trembling, completely revealed in my lie. But when he ordered me to come with him at once, as already too many of the precious, cool morning hours

had been lost, he encountered an opposition for which he was plainly not prepared. From a tone of command he passed to a threatening one, and finally was reduced to pleading. He reminded me that my parents had only decided to send me on such a distant journey because they knew I would perform it in his company and under his protection.

But he could have put forward no argument less suited to his purpose. For I at once realized that then I should have to wait until another embassy went to Kosambī before I could return to my Vāsithī. No, I would show my father that I was well able to conduct a caravan alone through all the hardships and dangers of the road.

It is true that the ambassador now painted all of these dangers in vividly gloomy colours, but all that he said was spoken to the winds. Finally, in a great rage, he left me:— He was not to blame, he barked, and I must smart for my own folly.

To me it seemed as if I were relieved from an insufferable burden; I had now surrendered myself completely to my love. In this sweet realization I fell asleep and did not wake until it was time for us to take ourselves to the terrace where our loved ones awaited us.



Night after night we came together there, and on each occasion Vāsithī and I discovered new treasures in our mutual affection and bore away with us an increased longing for our next meeting. The moonlight seemed to me to be more silvery, the marble cooler, the scent of the double-jasmines more intoxicating, the call of the Kokila bird more languishing, the rustling of the palms more dreamy, and the restless whispering of the Asokas more full of mysterious promise than they could possibly have been anywhere else in the world.

Oh! How distinctly can I still recall the splendid Asoka trees which stood along the whole length of the terrace and underneath which we so often wandered, holding each other in close embrace. 'The Terrace of the Sorrowless' it was called, from those trees which the poets name The Sorrowless Tree, and sometimes Heartsease. I have never seen such magnificent specimens anywhere else. The spear-shaped sleepless leaves gleamed in the rays of the moon and whispered in the gentle night-wind, and in-between them glowed the golden, orange and scarlet flowers, although we were as yet only at the beginning of the Vasanta season. But then, brother, how should these trees not have stood in all their glory, seeing that the Asoka opens its blossoms at once if its roots are touched by the foot of a beautiful maiden.

One wonderful night, when the moon was at its full, I stood beneath them with the beloved cause of their early bloom, my sweet Vāsithī. Beyond the deep shadow of the ravine we gazed far out into the land. We saw the two rivers before us wind like silver ribbons away over the vast plain and unite at that most sacred spot, which people call

the Triple Union, because they believe that the Heavenly Gangā joins them there as a third river – for by this beautiful name they call the wonderful heavenly glow which we in the South know as the Milky Way – and Vāsithī, raising her hand, pointed to where it shone far above the tree-tops.

Then we spoke of the mighty Himalayas in the north, whence the blessed Gangā flows down; the Himalayas, whose snow-covered peaks are the dwelling places of the gods and whose immense forests and deep chasms have given shelter to the great ascetics. But it was with even greater pleasure that I followed the course of the Yamunā to where it takes its rise.

‘Oh,’ I called out, ‘if I only had a fairy ship of mother-of-pearl, with my wishes for sails and steered by my will – it would carry us on the swell of that silver stream upwards to its source. Then Hastinapura would rise again from its ruins and the towering palaces would ring with the banqueting of the revellers and the strife of the dice-players. Then the sands of Kurukshetra would yield up their dead. There the great Bhīshma in his silver armour, over which would float his long white braided locks, would tower above the field on his lofty chariot and rain his polished arrows upon the foe; the valiant Phagadatta would come dashing, mounted on his battle-drunk bull elephant; the agile Krishna would sweep with the four white warrior-steeds of Arjuna into the fiercest tumult of the fight.’

Oh! How I envied the ambassador his belonging to the warrior caste, when he told me that his ancestors also had taken part in that never-to-be-forgotten encounter.

But that was foolish. For not only by descent do we possess ancestors; we are our own ancestors. Where had I been then? Probably also there among the combatants. For although I am a merchant’s son, the practice of arms has always been my greatest delight; and it is not too much to say that, sword in hand, I am a match for any man.

Vāsithī embraced me rapturously and said I must certainly have been one of the heroes who still live on in song; which one of them of course we could not know, as the perfume of the Coral Tree could scarcely penetrate to us through the sweet aroma of the Asoka blossoms.

I asked her to tell me something of the nature of that perfume of which, to tell the truth, I had never heard, for indeed I found that fantasy, like all other things, blossomed far more luxuriously here in the valley of the Gangā than it did with us more arid folk up amongst the mountains.

So she related to me how once, on his journeying through Indra’s world, Krishna had, at the martial games, won the celestial Coral Tree and had planted it in his garden, a tree whose deep red blossoms spread their fragrance far around. And she said that one who inhaled this perfume would remember in her heart the long, long past times of former lives long since vanished.

‘But only saints and holy ones are able to inhale this perfume here on earth,’ she said, and added almost roguishly, ‘and we two shall, I fear, hardly become such. But

what does that matter? Even if we were not Nāla and Damayantī, I am sure we loved each other quite as much – whatever our names may have been. And perhaps, after all, Love and Faith are the only realities, merely changing their names and forms. They are the melodies and we the instruments upon which they are played. The vīnā is shattered and another is strung, but the melody remains the same. It can sound, it is true, fuller and nobler on one instrument than on another, just as my new vīnā sounds far more beautiful than my old one. However, whatever is the case with us two, we are both splendid instruments for the gods to play upon – from which to draw the sweetest of all music.’

I pressed her silently to my breast – deeply moved as well as astonished at these thoughts, profound and strange.

But she added – and smiled gently, probably guessing what was in my mind: ‘Oh! I know, I really ought not to have such thoughts; our old family brahmin became quite angry on one occasion when I hinted at something of the kind:– I was to pray to Krishna and leave the thinking to the brahmins! So, since I am not to think but am only allowed to believe, I will believe that we were, really and truly, Nāla and Damayantī.’

And, raising her hands in prayer to the Asoka before us, in all its glory of shimmering blossom and flimmering leaf, she spoke to it in the words which Damayantī, wandering heart-broken in the woods, used to the Asoka. But on her lips the flexible verses of the poet seemed to grow without effort and to blossom ever more richly, like a young shoot transplanted into hallowed soil:

*‘Oh Sorrowless One,
Of this heart-stricken girl, hear the anguished cry!
You, so well-named “Heartsease”,
Bring the peace of your peace to me.
Your blossoms, all-seeing, are the eyes of gods;
Your whispering leaves their lips,
Tell me! Oh tell me, where my heart’s beloved wanders.
Where is it my cherished Nāla waits?’*

Then she looked on me with love-filled eyes, in whose tears the moonlight was clearly mirrored, and she spoke with lips that were drawn and quivering: ‘When you are far away, and you recall this scene of our bliss, imagine to yourself that I stand here and speak thus to this noble tree. Only then I shall not say Nāla but Kāmanīta.’

I locked her in my arms, and our lips met in a kiss full of unutterable feeling.

Suddenly there was a rustling in the summit of the tree above us. A large, luminous red flower floated downward and settled on our tear-bedewed cheeks. Vāsithī took it in her hand, smiled, blessed it with a kiss, and gave it to me. I hid it in my breast.

Several flowers had fallen to the ground in the avenue of trees. Medinī, who sat beside Somadatta on a bench not far from us, sprang to her feet and, holding up several

yellow Asoka blossoms, came towards us calling out: ‘Look, sister! The flowers are beginning to fall already. Soon there will be enough of them for your bath.’

‘You don’t mean those yellow things!’ exclaimed my mischievous friend. ‘Vāsithī may not, on any account, put them into her bath-water, that is, if her flower-like body is to blossom in harmony with her love; I assure you, only such scarlet flowers as that one which Kāmanīta has just concealed at his heart should be used. For it is written in the Golden Book of Love: “It is called Saffron, Yellow Affection, when it attracts attention but then later fades away; it is called Scarlet however, when it does not fade but later becomes only too apparent.” At the same time he and Medinī laughed in their merry, confidential way.

Vāsithī, however, answered gravely, though with her sweet smile, and gently but firmly pressed my hand: ‘You are mistaken, Somadatta! My love has the colour of no flower. For I have heard it said that the colour of the truest love is not red but black – blue-black as Shiva’s throat became when the god swallowed the poison which would otherwise have destroyed all living beings. And so it must always be. True love must be able to withstand the poison of life, and must be willing to taste the bitterest, in order that the loved one may be spared. And from that bitterest it will assuredly prefer to choose its colour, rather than from any pleasures, however dazzling.’

In such profound fashion spoke my beloved Vāsithī, that night under the Sorrowless trees.





IN THE RAVINE

DEEPLY MOVED BY THESE vivid memories, the young seeker became silent for a short time. Then he sighed, drew his hand over his forehead and went on with his narrative.



In short, O brother, I went about during this whole time as if intoxicated with bliss and my feet scarcely seemed to touch the earth. On one occasion I felt obliged to laugh aloud because I had heard that there were people who called this world a vale of tears, a place of dissatisfaction, and who directed their thoughts and aspirations to not being born again in the human realm. 'What misguided fools, Somadatta,' I cried, 'as if there could be a more perfect abode of bliss than the Terrace of the Sorrowless!' But beneath the Terrace was the Abyss.

Down into this we had just scrambled, as I had called out those foolish words and, as if I were to be shown that even the greatest of earthly pleasures has its bitterness, we were at that very instant attacked by several armed men. How many there were of them it was not possible for us to distinguish in the darkness. Fortunately, we were able to cover our backs by placing them against the wall of rock; and, with the calming awareness that we were now only threatened from the front, we began to fight for life and love. We bit our teeth together and were silent as the night as we parried and thrust as coolly as possible; but our opponents howled like devils in order to urge one another on and we believed we could distinguish eight or ten of them. Even if they now found a couple of better swordsmen before them than they had expected, our situation was still grave. Two of them, however, soon measured their length on the ground and their bodies hindered the fighting of the others, who feared to stumble over them and so be delivered up to the tender mercies of our sword-points. We guessed that they then withdrew a few steps for we no longer felt their hot breath in our faces.

I whispered a few words to Somadatta and we moved a couple of paces sideways, in the hope that our assailants, imagining us in the old spot, would make a sudden leap forward and, in so doing, would run against the wall of rock and break the points of their swords, while ours would find a firm lodging-place between their ribs. Although we were as cautious as could be some faint sound must have awakened their suspicion, for the blind attack we had hoped for did not come. But presently I saw a narrow streak of light strike the wall, and also became aware that this ray was emitted from a lamp-wick, evidently fixed in a carefully opened holder, beside which a warty nose and a cunning half-closed eye were to be seen.

As the bamboo pole by the help of which we had scaled the terrace-front was still in my left hand, I made a hearty thrust with it. There was a loud shriek – and the disappearance of the ray, no less than the crash of the small lamp as it fell to the earth, bore witness to the efficacy of my strike. This brief respite we made use of to get away as rapidly as possible in the direction from which we had come. We knew that here the gorge became gradually narrower and the ascent somewhat steep, and that finally one could scramble up to the top without any great exertion.

It was nevertheless a piece of great good fortune that our would-be murderers very soon gave up the pursuit in the darkness – at the final ascent, my strength threatened to give way and I felt that I was bleeding copiously from several wounds. My friend was also wounded, though less severely.

On the level once more, we cut up my shirt and temporarily bound up our wounds, and then, leaning on Somadatta's arm, I fortunately succeeded in reaching home, where I was obliged to pass several weeks on a bed of pain.



There I now lay, tortured by threefold troubles: my wounds and a fever together consumed my body; a burning longing for my beloved devoured my heart; but to these two was soon added apprehension for her precious life. For the delicate, flower-like being had not been able to endure the news of the mortal danger in which I had been, and perhaps still was, and had fallen victim to a severe illness. Her faithful foster-sister Medinī, however, went daily from one sick-bed to another and so we still

enjoyed constant communication and loving exchanges. Flowers passed to and fro between us and, as we had both been initiated into the mystery of their secret language, we conveyed many things to one another by the help of these sweet messengers. Later, as our strength came back, many a dainty verse found its way from hand to hand. Our condition would soon have become really quite endurable (our recovery

occurred at the same pace for both of us, just as if we were too truly united to allow any precedence whatsoever between us) if the future had not approached and filled us with grave concern.

I should say here that the nature of the enigmatic and sudden attack had not remained a mystery to us. None other than the son of the Minister of State (Sātāgira was his hated name) with whom I had wrestled on that unforgettable afternoon in the park for Vāsithī's ball – none other than he had set the hired murderers upon me. Beyond a doubt he had noticed that I had remained behind in town after the departure of the embassy and, his suspicions having been thereby awakened, he had very soon spied out my nightly visits to the Terrace.

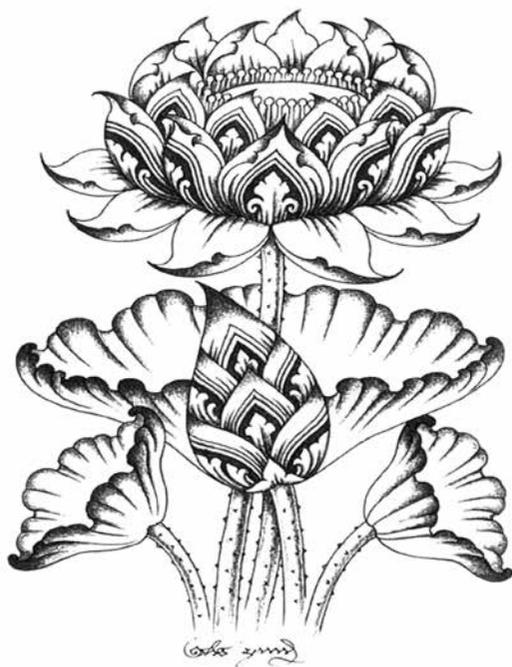


Oh my friend, that Terrace of the Sorrowless was, to our love, like a sunken island now. True, I would have joyfully flung my life into the breach over and over again to be able to embrace my beloved. But even if Vāsithī had had the heart to expose me every night to deadly danger any such temptation was spared us. Sātāgira, in his low cruelty, must have informed the parents of my sweetheart of our secret meetings, for it was soon apparent that Vāsithī was carefully and jealously watched; besides which, staying out on the Terrace after sundown was forbidden to her – ostensibly on account of the danger to her health.

Thus, then, was our love homeless. That which most of all feels itself at home in secret, might only be so now where the whole world looked on. In that public garden where I first met the sight of her divine form, and had searched for her several times in vain, we met once or twice as if by chance. But what meetings they were! How fleeting the stolen minutes! How hesitating and few the hasty words! How forced the movements which felt themselves exposed to curious or even spying glances! Vāsithī begged me to immediately leave this town in which I was so threatened with deadly danger because of her presence. She reproached herself bitterly for having prevailed upon me to stay, and thereby having all but driven me into the jaws of death. Perhaps even at this very moment in which she was speaking a fresh band of assassins was being hired to slay me. If I did not depart at once, and so place myself beyond the reach of this peril, I would make her the murderess of her beloved. Suppressed sobs choked her voice, and I was obliged to stand there without being able to enfold her in my arms or kiss away the tears which rolled, heavy as the first drops of a thunder-shower, over the strained contours of her dusky cheeks. Such a farewell I could not abide, and I told her it was not possible to leave without first meeting her alone, in whatsoever way this might have to be accomplished.

Just at that moment we were obliged to part owing to the approach of several people; Vāsithī's face held a despairing and beseeching look but it could not shake my determination. Spurred on by longing for me and fear for my life – and counselled moreover by her clever and, in all love matters, experienced foster-sister Medinī – I trusted that the ingenuity of my beloved would be certain to find some way out of the difficulty. And I was not deceived; for that very night Somadatta informed me of a wonderfully promising plan of hers.







THE PARADISE BUD

A LITTLE BEHIND THE eastern wall of Kosambī lies a beautiful Simsapā wood which is, strictly speaking, a sacred grove.

In an open glade the temple sanctuary still stood, though in a sadly dilapidated condition. It had been a long time since any sacrificial rite had taken place in this ancient clearing because Krishna, to whom it was dedicated, had had a magnificent and much larger temple built to him inside the town itself. In the ruin, however, there dwelt, along with a pair of owls, a holy woman who enjoyed the reputation of communing with spirits, by whose help she was able to look into the future – and such insight the good soul did not withhold from those who brought her votive offerings.

Such people made pilgrimages to her in large numbers; among them, and particularly after sunset, were young couples who were in love. And there were not a few malicious tongues that asserted that the old woman should have been called a fortuneteller-cum-matchmaker rather than a saint. However that may have been, this saintliness was just what we needed and her little temple was chosen as the place for our meeting.



Next day I started with my ox-wagons and took care that it should be at the hour when people were on their way to the bazaar or to the law-courts. In doing so I intentionally chose the most frequented streets so that my departure could not possibly remain hidden from my enemy Sātāgira. After only a few hours travel, however, I halted in a large village and had my caravan go into nightquarters there, to the great delight of my people. Shortly before sunset I mounted a fresh horse and, wrapped in the coarse cloak of one of my servants, rode back to Kosambī over the road we had just travelled.

Night had fallen and it was quite dark by the time I reached the Simsapā wood. As I carefully guided my horse between the tree-trunks, I was welcomed by the intoxicating fragrance of the blossoms of the night-lotus, which rose to greet me from the ancient Krishna pond.

Very soon the crumbling roof of the temple, with its swarming images of gods and its jagged and tangled outlines, began to show against the starlit heavens. I was at the appointed place. Scarcely had I swung myself out of the saddle when my friends were at my side. With a cry of rapture, Vāsithī and I rushed into one another's arms, half beside ourselves with the joy of meeting again. All my recollections now are of caresses, stammered words of endearment and assurances of love and fidelity, which absorbed us utterly.

I was rudely startled by the unexpected feeling of a wing that softly fanned my cheek as it brushed lightly past. This, together with the hoot of an owl which immediately followed the jarring clang of a cracked bronze bell, had the effect of completely rousing me from my love-trance. Medinī had pulled the old prayer-bell and this had scared the owl from the recess in which she dwelt.

The good-hearted girl had done it not so much to summon the saintly woman, as because she saw that that formidable person was already coming out of the sanctuary, plainly indignant that she should hear voices within the sacred precincts although no-one had either rung or knocked.

Medinī informed the ancient woman that her great reputation for holiness and the report of her marvellous knowledge had brought herself and this young man – pointing to Somadatta – to seek her, in order to receive information about what was as yet concealed in the lap of time. The holy woman raised her glance searchingly towards the heavens and gave it as her opinion that, as the Pleiades occupied a particularly favourable position with regard to the Pole Star, she had good reason to hope that the spirits would not refuse their help; upon which she invited Somadatta and Medinī to enter the House of Krishna, the Sixteen-thousand-one-hundredfold Bridegroom, who delighted in granting to a pair of lovers the inmost wishes of their hearts.

Vāsithī and I, however, as the supposed attendants, remained outside. How we now assured one another, with the most solemn oaths, that only the All-destroyer, Death, should be able to part us. Avidly we spoke of my speedy return as soon as the rainy season was over, and discussed ways and means by which her extremely rich parents should be brought to consent to our union.

How all of this was intermingled with innumerable kisses, tears and embraces, I could not now describe to you with even an attempt at truth, for it abides with me only as the remembrance of a vague dream.

Still less can I, if you yourself have not lived through a similar experience, give you any idea of the way in which, in every embrace, sweetest rapture and heartrending despair clasped each other close. For each embrace reminded us that the last for this

time would soon come, and who could give us the assurance that it would not then be the very last for all time? All too soon, Somadatta and Medinī came forth from the temple. The saintly woman wished to reveal the future to us now also, but Vāsithī shrank from the thought.

‘How could I bear it,’ she exclaimed, ‘if a future that portended disaster were to be unveiled!?’ ‘But why just portending disaster?’ said the well-meaning old woman, whose life experiences, presumably as the result of her sanctity, had probably been happy ones. ‘Perhaps for the servant also, happiness waits,’ she added, with a look brimming with promise.

But Vāsithī was not to be allured; sobbing, she clung around my neck. ‘Oh my love!’ she cried, ‘I feel the future’s inexorable face glaring down upon us. I feel it – I shall never see you again.’

Although these words caused an icy chill to creep over me, I tried to reason her out of this groundless fear; but simply because it was groundless my most eloquent words availed little or nothing. The tears rolled in an unbroken stream over her cheeks, and with a look of divine love she caught my hand and pressed it to her breast.

‘Even if we should never again see each other in this world, we shall still remain faithful; and when this short and painful life on earth is ended, we shall find one another in Paradise and, united there, enjoy the bliss of heaven forever... O Kāmanīta, promise me that. How much more will that raise me up and strengthen me than any words of comfort! For these are as powerless against the inevitable stream of karma already surging towards us, as reeds before the waters of a flooding torrent. But sacred, deep-seated resolution is all-powerful, and capable of bringing forth new life.’

‘If it only depends upon that, beloved Vāsithī, how could I fail to find you anywhere?’ I said, ‘but let us hope that it will be in this world.’

‘Here everything is uncertain and even the moment in which we now speak is not ours, but it will be otherwise in Paradise.’

‘Vāsithī,’ I sighed, ‘is there a Paradise? Where does it lie?’ ‘Where the sun sets,’ she replied with complete conviction, ‘lies the Paradise of Infinite Light; and, for all who have the courage to renounce the worldly, and to fix their thoughts upon that place of bliss, there waits a pure birth from the heart of a lotus flower. The first longing for that Paradise causes a bud to appear in the holy waters of the crystal pools; every pure thought, every good deed, causes it to grow and develop; while all unwholesomeness committed in thought, word and deed gnaws like a worm within it and brings it nearer to withering away.’

Her eyes shone like temple lights as she spoke thus in a voice which sounded like sweetest music. Then she raised her hand and pointed over the dark tops of the Simsapā trees to where the Milky Way, with a soft radiance upon it as of glowing alabaster, lay along the dark purple star-sown field of heaven.

‘Look there, Kāmanīta,’ she whispered, ‘the Heavenly Gangā! Let us swear by its silver waters, which feed the lotus-pools of the Fields of the Blessed, to fix our hearts wholly upon the preparing of an eternal home for our love there.’

Strangely moved, completely carried out of myself and agitated to the very depths of my being, I raised my hand to hers and our hearts thrilled as one at the divine thought that, at that instant in the endless immensities of space, high above the storm of this earthly existence, a double bud of the life of eternal love had come into being.

Vāsithī sank into my arms as though, with the effort, all her strength was exhausted. Then, having pressed yet another lingering farewell kiss upon my lips, she rested on my breast to all appearance lifeless.

I put her softly onto Medinī’s arms, mounted my horse and rode away without once looking back.







UNDER THE CONSTELLATION OF THE ROBBERS

WHEN I AGAIN REACHED the village in which my followers had taken up their quarters for the night, I did not hesitate to waken them; and at least a couple of hours before sunrise the caravan was on its way.



On the twelfth day, about the hour of noon, we reached a charming valley in the wooded region of the Vedisas. A small river, clear as crystal, wound slowly through the green meadows; the gentle slopes were timbered with blossoming underwood which spread a lovely fragrance all around. Somewhere about the middle of the extended valley bottom and not far from the little river, there stood a Nigrodha banyan tree, whose impenetrable leafy dome cast a black shadow on the emerald grasses beneath, and which, supported by its thousand secondary trunks, formed a grove wherein ten caravans like mine could easily have found shelter.

I remembered the spot perfectly from our journey out and had already decided on it as a camping-place, so a halt was made. The tired oxen waded out into the stream and drank greedily of the cooling waters, enabling them to enjoy the tender grasses on the banks all the better. The men refreshed themselves with a bath and, collecting some withered branches, proceeded to light a fire on which to cook their rice; meanwhile I, also reanimated by a bath, flung myself down full length where the shadows lay deepest, with a root of the chief trunk as head-rest, in order to think of Vāsithī and soon, as it turned out, to dream of her. Led by the hand of my beloved, I floated away through the fields of Paradise.



A great outcry brought me abruptly back to rude reality. As though an evil magician had caused them to grow up out of the soil, armed men swarmed about us, and the neighbouring thickets added constantly to their numbers. They were already at the wagons, which I had ordered to be drawn up into a circle round the tree, and had begun to fight with my people, who were practised in the handling of arms and defended themselves bravely. I was soon in the thick of the fight.

Several robbers fell by my hand. Suddenly I saw before me a tall, bearded man of terrifying appearance: the upper part of his body was naked and about his neck he wore a triple garland of human fingers. Like a flash the knowledge came to me: 'This is Angulimāla, the cruel, bloodthirsty bandit-chief, who turns villages into heaps of blackened timbers, reduces towns to smoking ruins and devastates the wide lands, leaving them as desert wastes; this is the one who does away with innocent people and hangs their fingers about his neck.' And I believed my last hour had come. As a matter of fact this ogre-like being at once struck my sword out of my hand – a feat which I would have credited no creature of flesh and blood with the ability to perform.

Soon I lay on the ground, fettered hand and foot. Round about me all my people were killed except one, an old servant of my father's who was overpowered and, like myself, had been made prisoner without a wound. Gathered in groups round about us, under the shady roof of the gigantic tree, the robbers indulged themselves to their hearts' content. The crystal chain with the tiger-eye, which was torn apart in the struggle with Sātāgira (it was a chain which my good mother had hung round my neck as an amulet at parting) was rent from me by Angulimāla's murderous hand. But much more distressing was the loss of the Asoka flower, which I had constantly carried over my heart since that night on the Terrace. I believed I could see it not far from me, a little red flame in the trampled grass on the very spot where the youngest robbers ran hither and thither, carrying to the revellers the streaming flesh of oxen which had been hastily slaughtered and roasted and, which was even more agreeable to the thirsty passions of that coarse throng, calabashes filled with alcoholic spirits.

It was to me as though they trampled on my heart every time I saw my poor Asoka flower disappear under their foul feet, to reappear a moment later less luminous than before, until at length I could see it no longer. I wondered whether Vāsithī now stood beneath the Sorrowless tree pleading for news. How good, if she were, that it could not tell her where I then was, for she would certainly have yielded up her tender spirit and died had she seen me in such a condition. Not more than a dozen paces away the formidable Angulimāla himself caroused with several of his cronies. The bottle circulated freely and the faces of the robbers – with the exception of one of whom I will speak later – became more and more flushed while they carried on conversations full of noisy animation and excitement, and now and again broke into open quarrel.

At that time, unfortunately, an understanding of the language of the robbers had not been added to my many accomplishments – from which one may see how little

human beings can discern what acquisitions are likely to be of most service to them. How more than glad would I have been to be able to comprehend the gist of their raucous talk, for I did not doubt that it concerned me and my fate. Their faces and gestures showed me as much with gruesome plainness; and the tongues of flame, which from time to time flashed over to me from beneath the dark bushy brows of the robber captain, brought home with much bitterness the loss of my amulet against the evil eye, which I could now see gleaming amongst the severed fingers on the shaggy breast of the demon-king himself.

My feeling was not at fault for, as I later learned, I had cut down a favourite of Angulimāla's before his very eyes – one who was, moreover, the best swordsman in the whole band. The captain had only refrained from killing me on the spot for the reason that he wanted to slake his thirst for vengeance by seeing me slowly tortured to death. But the others were not inclined to see such a rich prize, which belonged by right to the whole band, uselessly squandered in any such way. A bald-headed, smooth-shaven robber, who looked as though he might be a priest, struck me as the man who chiefly differed in view from Angulimāla, and the only one who understood how to curb the savage. He was also the only one whose face retained its composure during the drinking. After a long dispute, in the course of which Angulimāla sprang up a couple of times and reached for his sword, victory fell – fortunately for me – to the professional aspect of the case.



It should be mentioned that Angulimāla's band belonged to the clan of robbers known as the Senders, so-called because it was one of their rules that, of two prisoners, one should be sent to raise the money required for the ransom they demanded for the other. If they took a father and son prisoner, they bade the father go and bring the ransom for the son; of two brothers, they sent the elder; if a teacher with his disciple had fallen into their hands, then the disciple was sent; had a master and his servant been caught, then the servant was obliged to go – for this reason they were known as The Senders. To this end they had, as was usual with them, spared my father's old servant when they butchered all the rest of my people; for, although somewhat advanced in years, he was still very active, and looked intelligent and experienced – which indeed he had proved himself to be, seeing that he had already successfully conducted several caravans.

He was now freed from his fetters and sent away that same evening, after I had given him a confidential message to my parents from which they would be able to see that there was no deception about the matter. But before he set out, Angulimāla scratched some marks on a palm-leaf and handed it to him. It was a kind of pass of safe-conduct, in case he should fall into the hands of other robbers on the way back with

the money. For Angulimāla's name was so feared that robbers who dared to steal royal presents from the King's highway would never have had the audacity even to touch anything that was his.

My chains were also soon taken off, as they knew well that I would not be so foolish as to attempt to escape. The first use I put my freedom to was to fling myself down on the spot where I had seen the Asoka flower disappear. Alas! I could not even discover a remnant of it. The delicate fragment of flaming flower seemed to have been trampled to dust under the coarse feet of the robbers. Was it a symbol of our life-happiness?



Comparatively free, I now lived with and moved about among those dangerous characters, awaiting the arrival of the ransom which had to come within two months.

As we were at that time in the dark half of the month, thefts and robberies followed upon one another in rapid succession. This season, which stands under the auspices of the terrible Goddess Kālī, was devoted almost exclusively to regular business, so that no night passed without a surprise attack being carried out, or a house being broken into. Several times whole villages were plundered.

On the fifteenth night of the waning moon, Mother Kālī's festival was celebrated with ghastly solemnity. Not only were bulls and countless black goats slaughtered before her image but several unhappy prisoners as well, the victim being placed before the altar and having an artery so opened that the blood spouted directly into the mouth of the terrifying figure hung round with her necklaces and pendants of human skulls. Thereafter followed a frantic orgy, in the course of which the robbers swilled intoxicating drink with complete abandon until quite senseless. During the course of this bacchanalian the band amused themselves with some of the sacred dancers, known as bhajaderes who, with unparalleled audacity, had been carried off from a great temple nearby.

Angulimāla, who in his cups became magnanimous, wanted to make me happy also with a young and beautiful bhajadere. But when I, with my heart full of Vāsithī, spurned the maiden, and she, overwhelmed by the slight put upon her, burst into tears, Angulimāla flew into a frightful rage, seized and would have strangled me then and there, had not the bald, smooth-faced robber come to my help. A few words from him sufficed to make the iron grip of the chief relax, and sent him away growling like a scarcely tamed animal.

This remarkable man – who thus for the second time had become my rescuer, although his hands were still bloody from the hideous Kālī sacrifice he had just conducted – was the son of a brahmin. But because he had been born under the Constellation of the Robbers he had taken to that same trade. At first he had belonged to the Thugs, but went over for spiritual reasons to the Senders. From his father's

family he had inherited, so he told me, a leaning towards religious practices. So, on the one hand, he conducted the sacrificial services as a priest – and people ascribed the unusual luck of the band nearly as much to his priestly knowledge as to Angulimāla's able leadership – and, on the other hand, he lectured on the metaphysics of the robber-nature, in systematic form. And not only on the technical side of it but on its ethical side also; for I observed, to my amazement, that the robbers did have a morality of their own and by no means considered themselves worse than other men.

These lectures were delivered chiefly at night, during the bright half of the month, at which time – apart from chance occurrences – business was quiet. In a forest clearing the hearers arranged themselves in several semicircular rows about the praiseworthy Vājashravas, who sat with his legs crossed under him. His powerful head, barren of all hair, shone in the moonlight and his whole appearance was not unlike that of a Vedic teacher who, in the quiet of a starlit night, imparts the Esoteric or Secret Doctrine to the inmates of a forest hermitage. But, on the other hand, many an unholy and bestial face, and in truth that of many a gallows-bird, was to be seen there in that circle. It seems to me, brother, as though I see them still at this moment – as though I hear again the seething of the sounds in that gigantic forest, now swelling to the long rumblings of the far-off storm, now sinking to the gentle sigh of the night wind as it goes to rest amid the lonely tree-tops – at intervals, the distant growl of a tiger or the hoarser bellow of a panther – and above it all, clear, penetrating, marvellously quiet, the voice of Vājashravas – a deep, full-toned bass, the priceless inheritance of countless generations of udgātars, the sacrificial singers of the Vedas.

To these lectures I was admitted because Vājashravas had conceived a liking for me. He even went so far as to assert that I, like himself, had been born under the Robbers' Star and that I would one day join myself to the servants of Mother Kālī.

It was also for this reason that he claimed it would be of value for me to listen to his discourses, as they would unquestionably waken to active life the instincts slumbering within me. On such occasions I thus heard truly remarkable lectures from him on the different Sects of Kālī – usually called thieves and robbers – and on the activities which distinguish them from each other.

No less instructive than entertaining were his other descriptive remarks on themes like – 'The value of courtesans in hoodwinking the police,' or – 'Characteristics of officials of the upper and lower ranks open to bribery, with reliable notes as to each man's price.' Irreproachable testimony was borne to his particularly keen observation of human nature, as well as to his severe logicity in drawing conclusions, by his treatment of the question – 'How and why rascals recognize one another at first glance, while honest men do not, and what advantages accrue to the former from this circumstance'; not to speak of his brilliant remarks on – 'The stupidity of night-watchmen in general, a stimulating reflection for beginners.' The sleeping forest

would ring again and again to such choruses of laughter that the robbers flocked together from all sides of the camp in order to hear what was going on.

The master also understood how to handle dry technical questions in an interesting fashion, and I recollect really fascinating dissertations on – ‘How to make a breach in a wall without noise,’ or – ‘How to excavate a subterranean passage with technical accuracy.’ The proper construction of different kinds of crowbar, particularly of the so-called ‘snake-jaw’ and the ‘crab-leg hook,’ was most graphically described; the use of soft-stringed instruments to discover whether people were awake, and of the wooden head of a man thrust in at the door or window to ascertain whether the supposed burglar will be observed – all such things were thoroughly discussed.

His development of the theory that a man, when carrying out a theft, must unquestionably take the life of everyone who might bear witness against him, as also his general consideration of the statement that a thief should not be afflicted with moral talk and conversation but, on the contrary, should be coarse and violent, occasionally abandoning himself to drunkenness and immorality, I count among the most learned and witty lectures I have ever heard.

In order, however, to give you a better idea of the profound mind of this truly original man, I must repeat to you the most famous passage from his ‘Commentary on the Ancient Kālī-Sūtras, the Esoteric Doctrine of the Thieves’ – a discourse of all but canonical importance.





ESOTERIC DOCTRINE

THUS THE SŪTRA READS: ‘The Divine also, do you think? ... No! ... Non-responsibility ... On account of Space, of Scripture, of Tradition.’



The worshipful Vājashravas comments upon this as follows: “The Divine also...” that is punishment.

‘For, in the preceding Sūtra, such punishments were spoken of as the king or the authorities might decree upon the robber; these are as follows: the mutilation of hand, foot and nose; the seething cauldron; the pitch garland; the “dragon’s mouth”; running the gauntlet; the rack; besprinkling with boiling oil; decapitation; rending by dogs; impalement of the living body – these being more than sufficient reason why the robber should, if possible, not let himself be caught but, if he should indeed have been caught, why he should in every possible way seek to escape.

‘Now some people say, “Divine punishment also threatens the robber.” “No!” says our Sūtra. Why? Because “Non-responsibility” comes into play. Which may be made clear in three ways: by the aid of reason, from the Veda, and from the heroic songs handed down to us.

“On account of Space...” by which the following consideration, founded on reason, is meant. If I cut off the head of a human being or an animal, my sword goes through between the indivisible particles – the atoms; for it cannot cut through these particles on account of their very indivisibility. What it cuts through then, is the empty space which separates these particles. But, on account of its very emptiness, one cannot do any harm to this space. For to harm a nothing is just the same as not to harm anything. As a consequence one cannot, by this cutting through of space, incur any responsibility, and a divine punishment cannot therefore be meted out for it. And if this be true of

killing, how much more so than of deeds which are punished less severely by human law? ‘Thus far, reason; now comes “Scripture”. The sacred Veda teaches us that that which alone has any true existence is the Highest Godhead, the Brahman. If this is true, then all killing is an empty deception. This the Veda also says in so many words, in the passage where Yama, the God of Death, tells the young Nashiketas of this Brahman, and among other things, says:

*“Who, when slaying, believes he kills,
Who, when slain, believes he dies,
Deceived are both this and that one too –
He dies not, neither does he kill.”*

‘Even more convincingly is this awful truth revealed to us in “The Heroic Song of Krishna and Arjuna” – the *Bhagavad Gītā*. For Krishna himself – having known no beginning, destined to know no end, the eternal, almighty, inconceivable Being, the Highest God, who for the salvation of all living beings caused himself to be born as a man – in the last days of his earthly pilgrimage Krishna helped the king of the Pāṇdavas, the high-minded Arjuna, in the war against the Kaurāvas because the latter had done him and his brothers grievous wrong. Now when both armies were drawn up in battle array, their bristling ranks opposed to one another, Arjuna espied among the hostile forces many a former friend, many a cousin and comrade of past days – for the Pāṇdavas and the Kaurāvas were the sons of two brothers. Arjuna was moved to the depths of his heart, and he hesitated to give the signal for battle for he was loath to kill those who had once been his own people. So he stood there looking down from his war chariot, his chin sunk on his breast, a prey to torturesome hesitancy, undecided as to what he should do; and beside him stood the golden god Krishna, who was his charioteer. And Krishna guessed at the thoughts of the noble Pāṇdava king.

‘Smiling, he pointed to the rival armies, and showed Arjuna how all those beings came into existence and will pass – yet only apparently do so – because in all of them only that One lives whose past has known no dawn, whose future shall know no sunset, untouched alike by birth and death:

*“Whosoever holds someone to be a killer,
Or describes as ‘murdered’ one who’s lying here,
They do not understand the truth of either case.
Come Arjuna! Now begin the fight!”*

‘Taught in this way, the Pāṇdava king gave the signal for beginning the terrible battle, and won. So that Krishna, the human-born Highest God, by the revelation of this great esoteric doctrine, changed Arjuna from a shallow and weak-hearted man to a deeply thoughtful, iron-hearted sage and hero.

‘In truth then, the following also holds good – “Whosoever commits a crime or causes it to be committed, whosoever destroys or causes to be destroyed, whosoever strikes or causes to be struck, whosoever robs the living of life or takes that which

has not been given to them, breaks into houses or robs others of their property – whatsoever it be that they do, they burden themselves with no guilt on that account; and if someone were to slaughter every living thing on this earth with a sharply ground axe and reduce them to a single boneless mass, to one mass of pulp, they would be in no way guilty on that account – they would do no wrong. And if someone were to make their way along the southern bank of the Gangā laying waste and murdering, they would, on that account, acquire no bad karma; and if someone were to make their way along the northern bank of the Gangā distributing alms and making offerings, on that account they would acquire no merit. By means of generosity, gentleness and self-renunciation, one acquires nothing meritorious, nothing good.” And there now follows the astounding, indeed frightful, 477th Sūtra. Which, in its striking brevity, runs: ‘Rather ... on account of The Eater...’

The meaning of these few words, wrapped as they are in deepest mystery, the worshipful Vājashravas discloses to us as follows: ‘Far removed from any such idea as that of divine punishment threatening the robber and murderer, “Rather” is the opposite the case; namely, that such a one grows to be like God Himself; which becomes clear from those passages in the Veda where the Highest God is glorified as “The Eater”, such as: “Both the warrior and the brahmin, He eats for bread, when with death’s garnishing He sprinkles them.” As the world has its beginning in Brahman, so also it has its passing away there – Brahman causing it constantly to come forth anew and constantly destroying it. So that God is not only the creator but also the devourer of all living beings, of whom here only warriors and brahmins are mentioned as the highest in rank but who therefore represent all the others.

‘So also it reads in another passage: “I eat them all, but me they do not eat.” These were the very words, as you should know, of the Highest God Himself when, in the shape of a ram, he carried the boy Medhātithi to the heavenly world. For, indignant at his forcible abduction, the latter demanded to know who his abductor was – “Tell me who you are or I, a brahmin, will strike you with my wrath”; and He, in the semblance of a ram, revealed Himself as that Highest Brahman, as the All in All, in the words:

*“Who is it that kills and also prisoner takes?
Who is the ram that leads you far from here?
It is I, who in this form appear,
It is I, and I appear in every form.*

*“If one feels fear – it be of whatsoever –
That fear is Mine, who also causes fear;
But in the holy greatness lies the difference –
I eat them all but Me they do not eat.*

*“Who can know Me?
Who can call Me by My true name?
I strike down all My enemies,
yet no-one can strike Me.”*

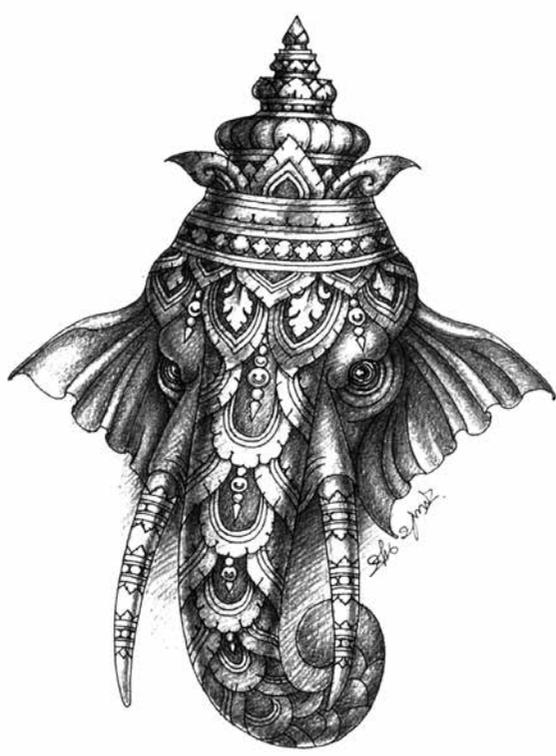
‘By this time, it must be plain to the dimmest eye that the likeness to the Brahman cannot lie in being destroyed and eaten – as would be the case were gentleness and self-renunciation to be regarded as virtues – but on the contrary, it lies in destroying and eating all others. In other words, it lies in using others to the utmost and in crushing them – while oneself suffering no harm. There cannot therefore be the slightest doubt that the doctrine of the punishment of hell for one who commits deeds of violence is an invention of the weak to protect themselves from the might of the strong, by intimidating them.

‘And if in the Veda several passages contain this doctrine of punishment, they must have been treacherously interpolated by the weak as they are quite out of harmony with the chief tenets of the faith. When the *Rig Veda* says that, although the whole world is the Brahman, it is a fact that God recognizes humankind to be the most fully penetrated by that Brahman. By virtue of the same argument it must also be recognized that, among people, the real and true robber is the one above and beyond all others who is most fully penetrated by the Brahman, and that the robber is therefore the Crown of Creation.

‘But with regard to the thief who does not rise to the level of robberhood: seeing that scripture frequently declares the idea of “That belongs to me” to be a delusion and a hindrance to the highest purpose for which humanity was created, it is, without further waste of words, clear that thieves represent the highest Truth, as they have made it their life-work to combat that delusion by their daily actions. Nevertheless robbers, on account of their violence, stand higher.

‘So then, the position of the robber as Lord of Creation has been plainly made manifest, both by logical reasoning, from scripture and from tradition, and is therefore to be regarded as incontrovertible.’







THE ELEPHANT'S TRUNK

AFTER THE FOREGOING specimen of the curious beliefs of this extraordinary man – on whom one could at least not lay the charge, unlike the case of so many other noted thinkers, that he didn't put his theories into practice – I resume the thread of my narrative.



In the presence of these many adventures and new mental occupations (I naturally didn't neglect the opportunity of making the robbers' vernacular my own) it was impossible that the time should not pass quickly. But the nearer it approached its end, the more my confidence was shaken by oppressive fears. Would the ransom come at all? Although the safe-conduct given him could protect the old servant against robbers, a tiger might have rent him in pieces at some point on his journey, or a swollen river swept him away, or any one of the countless unforeseen chances of travel might have detained him until too late. Angulimāla's flaming glances shot so often and so evilly at me that I felt as if he were hoping for something of the kind, and then perspiration born of pure fear broke forth from every pore.

However wonderfully and systematically introduced, and with whatever keen logic Vājashravas' reasoned statement might be established (that in every case in which the ransom was not forthcoming within the proper time, the prisoner in question had to be sawn through the middle with a cross-cut saw and both parts tossed on to the high-road with the head towards the rising moon) I must honestly confess that my admiration for this, scientifically regarded, assuredly astounding performance of my learned friend, was somewhat spoiled by a peculiar sensation in my more than slightly interested peritoneum, particularly as the double-toothed cross-cut saw used on such occasions was fetched and, to illustrate what he said, was set in motion by two horrible-looking fellows, its victim for the moment being a wooden log representing a human being.

Vājashravas, who noticed that I began to feel sick, patted me encouragingly on the shoulder and said that the thing should not in any way concern me. From this, I naturally believed that, in case of necessity, he would come to my rescue for the third time. But when I, in most grateful words, hinted at something of the kind, he drew a very long face and said, 'If your karma should really bear you such a grudge as to cause your ransom to come late, even if only by so much as half a day, then assuredly neither god nor devil could help, for the laws of Mother Kālī are inviolable. But comfort yourself, my son, you are destined for other things. Rather do I fear for you that one day, after a notable robber career, you will be beheaded or impaled in some public place. But that is a long way off yet.'

I could not say this comfort uplifted me greatly, and so I was very relieved when, a full week before the expiry of the allotted time, our faithful old servant arrived with the sum demanded. I bade farewell to my horrible host – who, remembering his slain friend, put on a gloomy expression as though he would much rather have had me sawn asunder – and affectionately pressed the hand of the brahmin, who banished a tear of emotion by the confident assurance that we should certainly meet again on the nightly paths of Kālī. Then we left accompanied by four robbers, who had to answer with their lives for our safe arrival in Ujjenī, for Angulimāla, who was very jealous of his robber honour, promised them, as he sent us away, that if I were not handed over safe and sound in my native town, he would flay them alive and hang their skins up at the four corners of a cross-roads – and the men knew that he kept his word.

Fortunately however it did not, in this instance, become necessary and the four rogues, who behaved admirably on the way, may still be in the service of the Goddess-dancer with her swaying necklace of skulls.

We reached Ujjenī without further adventure and, to be quite truthful, I had had enough with what I had already gone through. The joy of my parents at seeing me was indescribable. But all the more was it impossible to wring from them the permission to undertake another journey to Kosambī very soon. My father had lost, as you know, all the goods and all the people in my caravan in addition to my ransom, and he was not in a position to fit out a new one at once. Yet that was a small hindrance in comparison to the terror which overcame my parents at the thought of the dangers of the road. In addition we did not fail to hear from time to time of Angulimāla's further terrible deeds; and I cannot deny that I had no great desire to fall into his hands a second time. Nor was there just then the slightest possibility of getting a message through to Kosambī – the roads were so dangerous that no courier could be paid enough to make the journey – so I was obliged to content myself with memories and, confidently relying upon the fidelity of my adored Vāsithī, to comfort myself with the hope of better times.

And at last these came. One day a rumour flew like wild-fire through the town that the frightful Angulimāla had been utterly defeated by Sātāgira, the son of the Minister in Kosambī, his band had been cut down or dispersed and he himself with many of his most notorious followers had been taken prisoner and executed.

My parents were now no longer able to resist my passionate entreaties. People had very good reason to believe that, for a long time to come, the roads would be free, and my father was not disinclined to try his luck again. But at this juncture I became ill, and when I rose from my bed the rainy season was so near that it was necessary to wait until it should be past.

Then, at last, nothing further stood in my way. With many admonitions to be prudent, my parents bade me farewell and I was once more on the road – at the head of a well-stocked caravan of thirty ox-wagons, with a heart full of joy and courage, and urged forward by consuming desire.

Everything ran as smoothly on the present journey as on my first one, and one beautiful morning I entered Kosambī, half-crazed with joy. I was soon aware, however, of a huge throng of people in the streets, and my progress became ever slower until at length, at a spot where we had to cross the chief thoroughfare of the town, our train of wagons was brought to a complete standstill. It was literally impossible to force our way through the crowd, and I now noticed that this main street was magnificently decorated with flags, carpets draped from the windows and balconies, and festoons hung from side to side over the road, as if for some pageant. Cursing with impatience, I asked those who stood in front of me what was taking place.

‘Why!’ they cried out, ‘don’t you know? Today Sātāgira, the son of the Minister of State, is celebrating his marriage. Consider yourself blessed to have arrived just at this moment: the procession is now on its way from the temple of Krishna and will pass right by here. Assuredly you will never have beheld such magnificence before!’ That Sātāgira should be celebrating his marriage was important and welcome news to me, because his seeking the hand of my Vāsithī in marriage would have been, along with the ill-favour of her parents, one of the greatest hindrances to our union. So the waiting did not displease me, especially in the realization that it could not last long for already we were able to see the lances of a cavalry division which moved slowly past amid the deafening cheers of the crowd. The people told me that these horsemen now enjoyed great popularity in Kosambī, because it was chiefly they who had destroyed Angulimāla’s band.

Almost directly behind them came the elephant carrying the bride – beyond all question a stupendous sight – the crusted, knoll-like forehead of the gigantic animal (which reminded one of Meru, the mountain of the gods) was covered with a veil of many-coloured jewels. And just as early in the year, when a fiery bull elephant moves along, the drops of perspiration rolling down his temples and cheeks attract swarms of bees allured by the sweet odour, so here his temples and cheeks shimmered with the

most wonderful pearls, above which dangled limpid garlands of black diamonds – an effect beautiful enough to make one cry out.

The powerful tusks were mounted with the purest gold; and from the breastplate, which was made of the same precious metal and set with large rubies, the airiest of Benares muslin hung down and softly wound itself around the powerful legs of the animal, like morning mists around the stems of regal forest trees.

But it was the trunk of the state elephant that, more than all other sights, enchained my glance. I had seen processions in Ujjenī, and gorgeously decorated elephants' trunks, but never one displaying such taste as this. With us, the trunk was usually divided into fields which formed one exquisite pattern and were completely covered with colour. But here the skin was left free as the ground-tone, and over this branch-like foundation was twined a loose spray of lancet-shaped Asoka leaves, from the midst of which yellow, orange and scarlet flowers shone forth – the whole, in treatment and finish, the perfection of exquisite ornamental stylisation.

While I now studied this marvellous piece of work with the eye of a connoisseur, there began to creep over me a home-sick feeling, and I seemed to inhale again all the love-odour of those blissful nights upon the Terrace. My heart began to beat violently as I was involuntarily drawn on to think of my own marriage; for what happier adornment than just this could be invented for the animal which should one day carry Vāsithī, seeing that the Terrace of the Sorrowless was famed throughout Kosambī for its wonderful Asoka blossoms? In this dreamy condition, I heard, near me, one woman say to another: 'But the bride – she doesn't look at all happy!' Hardly conscious of what I did, I glanced upward, and a strangely uneasy feeling stole over my heart as I caught sight of the figure sitting there under the purple baldachin. Figure, I say because I couldn't see the face – the head was sunk upon the breast – but even of a figure one saw little, and it seemed as if in that mass of rainbow-coloured muslins, although a body did exist, it was not one gifted with life or any power of action. The way in which she swayed hither and thither at every movement of the animal, whose powerful strides caused the curtained structure on his back to rock rhythmically to and fro, had something unutterably sad, something to make one shudder in it. There was real cause to fear that she might at any moment plunge headlong downward. Some such idea may have occurred to the maiden standing behind her, for she laid her hand on the shoulder of the bride and bent forward, possibly to whisper a word of encouragement in her ear.

An icy fear all but crippled me as, in the supposed servant, I recognized... Medinī. And before this suddenly awakened foreboding had time to grow clear within me, Sātāgira's bride raised her head.

It was my Vāsithī.





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12

AT THE GRAVE OF THE HOLY VAJASHRAVAS

YES, IT WAS SHE. No possibility of mistaking those features, and yet they in no way resembled hers, they were indeed like nothing that I had ever seen – in such nameless, superhuman misery did they seem to be petrified.



When I came to my senses again the end of the procession was just passing us. My fainting so suddenly was ascribed to the heat and to the crush of people. Utterly without power of volition, I allowed myself to be taken to the next caravanserai. There I lay down in the darkest corner, with my face to the wall, and remained in the same position for many days, bathed in tears and refusing all food. To our old servant and caravan leader, the same that had accompanied me on my first journey, I gave directions to sell all our wares as quickly as possible – if necessary, even on the most unfavourable terms – as I was too ill to attend to any business. In truth, I was able to do nothing but brood upon my inconceivable loss; in addition to which I did not wish to show myself in the town, lest I should be recognized by someone. Before all things, I desired to keep Vāsithī from learning anything of my presence in Kosambi.

Her picture as I last saw her floated unceasingly before my vision. True, I was indignant at her fickleness, or rather at her weakness, for I could not fail to realize that only the latter came into question, and that she had not been able to withstand the pressure brought to bear upon her by her parents. That she had not turned her heart to the triumphant son of the Minister was made evident plainly enough by her attitude and appearance. But when I remembered her as she had sworn eternal fidelity to me, standing in the Krishna grove with her whole face transfigured, I did not understand

how it was possible for her to yield so soon; and I cursed to myself, sighing bitterly in my despair:- On women's oaths no reliance was to be placed. Yet always that face full of deepest misery rose before me – and in a moment all resentment was dispelled and only tenderest compassion went surging forth to meet it. So I firmly made up my mind not to add to her troubles by allowing any news of my presence in Kosambi to come to her ears. Never again should she learn anything of me; she would then, beyond all question, believe that I was dead and would gradually resign herself to her fate, which was, after all, not lacking in outward splendour.

Fortunately circumstances rendered it possible for my old servant, in an unexpectedly short time, to exchange or sell our wares to great advantage so that, after only a few days, I was able to leave Kosambi with my caravan very early one morning.

When I passed the western gate on my way out, I turned to take a last look at the city – within whose walls I had lived through so much joy and sorrow that the place could never be forgotten. A few days before, as I had entered the town, I had been filled to such a degree with restless anticipation that I had eyes for nothing round about me. Impossible as it may seem, I had thus remained blind to the fact that not only the battlements of the gate, but also the coping of the walls to either side, were hideously decorated with impaled human heads.

There was no room for doubt – these were the heads of the executed robbers from Angulimāla's band.



For the first time since I had seen Vāsithī's face under the baldachin, another feeling than that of grief possessed me, and I gazed with unspeakable horror upon those heads, of which the vultures had long since left nothing but the bones with, at the very most, the pigtails and here and there a beard, whose wild tangle had protected the place on which it grew. All of them would thus have been unrecognizable had not the savage red beard of one betrayed him and another by the pigtail wound around on the top of his head in the manner of the ascetic plait-wearers. These two, and without doubt many of the others, had often nodded to me in comrade-like fashion from the camp-circle at night; and I remembered with ghastly distinctness how that russet beard, flaring in the moonlight, had wagged with merriment on the occasion of the lecture upon 'The stupidity of night-watchmen'.

Yes, so realistic was it all that I could almost imagine I still heard the raucous laughter from that lipless mouth.

But in the middle of the battlements over the gate, and somewhat raised above the rest, a powerful skull shone forth in the rays of the rising sun and imperiously drew all my attention to itself. How could I have not recognized those lines again? It was he who that day forced us all to laugh, without himself moving a muscle of his brahmin

face. Vājashravas' head dominated here, while, without a doubt, Angulimāla's had been put up over the eastern gate. And a curious sensation stole over me as I thought of the profundity with which that man had in those past days expounded the mysteries of the various modes of capital punishment – quartering, rending by dogs, impalement, decapitation – and with what great care he thereupon sought to prove that the robber should not let himself be caught; but if unfortunately caught, how he must seek by all possible means to escape. Of what help had his science been to him? So little may we avoid our karma, which is as we know, the fruit of all our deeds – perhaps in this or perhaps in some former life.

To me it seemed as though he stared with great earnestness from the hollows of his empty eyes, and his half-open mouth called to me: 'Kāmanīta! Kāmanīta! Look closely upon me, consider well what you see. For you also, my son, were born under a Robber Star, you also will tread the nightly paths of Kālī and, just as I have ended here, so too you will also end one day.'

Yet, strangely enough, this fantasy filled me neither with fear nor horror, even though it was as vivid as any sense perception. My appointed career as a robber, (according to this supposition) to which I had up to this time never given any serious thought, suddenly stood before me – and not merely in pleasant but even in seductive colours.

Robber chief! What could be more alluring to me in my misery? For I did not doubt for a moment that, with my many talents and accomplishments, and particularly with those that I owed to the teaching of Vājashravas, I should at once take the position of leader. And what position could mean as much to me as that of robber chief? Why, even that of a king would be of little count beside. For could it give me vengeance on Sātāgira? Could it bring Vāsithī to my arms? I saw myself fighting Sātāgira in the midst of a forest, splitting his skull with a powerful stroke of my sword; and again I saw myself as I bore the fainting Vāsithī out of a burning palace, which rang with the voices of my robber band.

For the first time since that sorrowful sight of my lost Vāsithī had met my eyes, my heart beat with courage and hope, and I began to think of the future; for the first time I wished for myself not death, but life.

Full of such pictures, I had scarcely gone 1,000 paces when I saw before me a caravan which, evidently coming from the opposite direction, had halted while its leader offered up a sacrifice beside a little hillock close to the highway.

I went up to him with a polite greeting and asked what deity he was worshipping here.

'In this grave,' he replied, 'rests the holy Vājashravas, to whose protection I owe it that, passing through a dangerous neighbourhood, I am still able to reach home safely and without damage to life or property. And I advise you earnestly not to neglect to offer up a suitable sacrifice here. For if, when you enter the wooded region, you were

to hire a hundred forest guardians, their help would be as nothing to you compared with the protection of this holy man.'

'My dear friend,' I replied, 'this mound seems to be only a few months old, and if a Vājashravas lies buried beneath it, it certainly will not be any saint but the robber of that name.'

The merchant quietly nodded assent.

'The same... certainly... I saw him impaled at this spot. And his head is still up over the city gate. But since he has suffered the punishment imposed by the King he has, purged thereby from his sins, entered heaven without spot or stain and his spirit now protects the traveller from robbers. Over and above this, however, people say that even during his robber life-time he was an exceedingly learned and almost saintly man; for he knew even secret parts of the Veda by heart – at least that is what is said.'

'And it is perfectly true,' I replied, 'for I knew him well, and may even call myself his friend.'

As the merchant looked somewhat appalled when I said this, I continued: 'I was once made prisoner by this band, and at that time Vājashravas twice saved my life.'

The merchant's look passed from fright to envious admiration.

'Then indeed you can truly count yourself happy! If I had so stood in his favour, I should in a very few years be the richest man in Kosambī. And now, a prosperous journey to you, O enviable one!' Saying which, he gave the signal for his caravan to proceed on its way.



I naturally did not neglect to lay an offering for the dead on the grave of my famous and esteemed friend; but my prayer, in contrast to all of the others offered up here, had for its substance the wish that he would lead me straight into the arms of the nearest robber band, to which, with his help, I would then join myself. And the leadership of which, as I have already said, I did not doubt would soon pass into my hands.

I was presently to see, however, that my learned and, by popular pronouncement now sainted friend, had been mistaken when he averred that a robber constellation had shone upon me at my birth. For on no part of the way to Ujjenī did we see even a trace of robbers, and yet scarcely a week later a caravan we met, after we had gone through a large forest close to the borders of Avanti, was fallen upon by bandits at that very spot.

It has been the source of many a thoughtful reflection to me that the purest chance should to all appearances have led to my remaining in civil life, instead of adopting, as my heart so ardently desired, the life of the robber. Not that it is impossible for one of the nightly paths of Mother Kālī to lead directly to the path of the spiritual seeker; just as, of the hundred-and-one veins filled with quinque-coloured fluid, only a single

one leads to the head and it is that one by which, at death, the spirit leaves the body, so it is also quite possible that, even if I had become a robber, I might nevertheless have become a seeker now – and on the spiritual path, with enlightenment as my goal. Besides, when one has attained enlightenment, all one's works disappear, whether good or bad: burnt to ashes, as it were, in the fervour of illumined knowledge.

Moreover the interval between that time and this, had it been given over to the life of the robber rather than to civil life, might not have turned out as differently as you might expect, brother, insofar as its moral fruits are concerned. For, during the time that I dwelt among the robbers, I came to know that there are among them many different types, of which some possess most excellent qualities, and that, certain external features apart, the difference between robbers and honest folks is not quite so vast as the latter would have us believe. And furthermore, in the ripe period of life on which I now entered, I could not help noticing that the 'honest' folks dabbled in the handiwork of the thieves and robbers: a number of them as opportunity offered and, as it were, improvising; others regularly and with great as well as highly profitable skill. Thus by mutually lessening the dividing distance, considerable contact took place between the two groups.

For this reason I am really unable to say whether or not I have actually gained so very much from the help of the protective spirit which held me back from the nightly paths of the Dark Goddess-dancer with her swaying necklace of human skulls.



After this profound reflection, Kāmanīta became silent and turned his eyes, lost in thought, on the full moon, which rose large and glowing into the heavens directly over the distant forest – the haunt of the robbers – and flooded the open hall of the potter with a stream of light, where it seemed to transform the ochre mantle of the Master into pure gold, like the raiment of some god-like image.

The Lord Buddha – on whom the seeker involuntarily turned his gaze, attracted by the splendour but without having the smallest inkling of the identity of him whom he beheld – expressed his sympathy with a gentle inclination of his head, and said, 'Still, friend, I only see you turning your steps towards the household life rather than to homelessness, although the path to the latter had in truth opened itself to you.'

'Even so, brother! My dim eyes failed to see the path to freedom and I took my way, as you say, to the household life.'

The young seeker sighed deeply and, in a fresh clear voice, shortly resumed the record of his experiences.



13

THE COMPANION OF SUCCESS

THE END OF THE MATTER was that I continued to reside in the house of my parents in Ujjenī.



As all the world knows, stranger, this my native town is famed throughout Jambudvīpa as much for its revels and unstinted enjoyment of life, as for its shining palaces and magnificent temples. Its broad streets resound by day with the neighing of horses and the trumpeting of elephants, and by night with the music of lovers' lutes and the songs of care-free carousers.

But of all the glories of Ujjenī, none enjoy a reputation so extraordinary as do its courtesans. From the great ladies who live in palaces – building temples to the gods, laying out public parks for the people, and in whose reception-rooms one meets poets, artists and actors, distinguished strangers and occasionally even princes – down to the common wenches, all are beauties with softly swelling limbs and indescribable grace. At all the great festivals, in processions and exhibitions, they form the chief adornment of the beflagged and flower-strewn streets. In crimson saris with fragrant wreaths in their hands, the air about them heavy with delicious perfumes, their dresses sparkling with diamonds:– Do you see them, brother? Sitting on their magnificent grandstands or moving along the streets with glances full of love, seductive gestures and playfully laughing words, everywhere fanning the heated senses of the pleasure-seekers to living flame.

Honoured by the King, worshipped by the people, sung of by the poets, they are aptly named 'The many-coloured floral crown of the rock-enthroned Ujjenī,' and they draw down upon us the envy of the less favoured neighbouring towns. Not infrequently the choicest of our beauties go to these places as guests, and now and again it happens that one or another of them has to be recalled by royal decree.

Desiring to drown the grief that was eating away my life, the golden cup of pleasure, filled to the brim with its intoxicating Lethe draughts of forgetfulness, was freely – nay, prodigally – raised to my lips by the fair hands of this joyous sisterhood. Owing to my many talents and wide knowledge of the fine arts, and not less of all social games, I became a favoured guest of the great courtesans. In fact there was even one, whose favour could scarcely be measured by gold, who fell so passionately in love with me that she quarrelled with a prince on my account. On the other hand, owing to my complete mastery of the robbers' dialect, I was soon on confidential terms with the girls of the low streets, whose company on the path of a coarser and more robust type of pleasure I by no means despised, and of whom several were heart and soul devoted to me.

Thus madly did I dive deep down into the rushing whirl of the pleasures of my native city, and it became, O stranger, a proverbial saying in Ujjenī: 'As fast as young Kāmanīta.'



It was about this time that an event occurred which goes to show that evil habits, and sometimes even vice, may be the source of good fortune to such an extent that the man of worldly mind cannot easily decide whether he mostly owes his prosperity to his good or to his bad qualities.

I refer particularly to that familiarity with the women of the lower classes to which allusion has already been made, and which became of the greatest service to me. My father's house was broken into and jewels, which had been for the most part entrusted to him for valuation, were stolen; and to an amount which it was practically impossible to make good. I was beside myself for absolute ruin stared us in the face. In vain did I make use of all the knowledge I had gained in the forest. From the fashion in which the subterranean passage was constructed I could easily tell to what class of thief

the deed was to be ascribed. But even this most useful hint proved of no value to the police, who in Ujjenī, to be sure, were not held in the same high regard as was the institution of the courtesans – even though there was considerable evidence of some inner relationship between the two bodies. On one occasion, in a very learned lecture on the love affairs of the various classes, I heard with my own ears the following sentence: 'The gallantries of the police officer have to take place during his nightly round of inspection, and with the courtesans of the city. By order.' Which, taken in connection with Vājashravas' remarks upon – 'The service rendered by the city courtesans in hoodwinking the police,' gave me, in those days of anxious waiting, much food for thought.

Now, however, in this strangest of all worlds of ours, things seem to be so arranged that the left hand must make good what the right has done amiss. And that is what

happened here. For those flourishing blossoms from Ujjenī's flower-garden actually yielded to me the fruit which the thorny hedge of the police – perhaps stunted solely on account of that very same flourishing condition of the blossoms – had failed to produce.

These kind maidens, seeing me in despair because of the ruin threatening me and mine, discovered the culprits and forced them to hand over the plunder by threatening the complete withdrawal of their favours, so that we got off leniently with the loss of the little that had already been spent, and with a fright which did not fail to have its effect upon me.

It woke me up from the dissipated life in which I was uselessly squandering the best of my years and strength. For, quite apart from the waking up and the reasons for it, my folly had now reached a point where it was certain either to enslave and deprave me completely, in the garb of habit or, on the contrary, to fill me with gradually increasing disgust. This latter result was now very much hastened by the experience I had just had. I had seen poverty staring me in the face – the poverty to which the life I had been leading would have handed me over defenceless, after it had, with all its costly pleasures, treacherously left me in the lurch. At this juncture I thought of the words uttered by the merchant at the grave of Vājashravas: 'If I stood as high in Vājashravas' favour as you do, in a very few years I would be the richest man in Kosambī.'

Thus I resolved to become the richest man in Ujjenī and, to this end, to devote myself with all my strength to the traffic of caravans of goods.

I carried out my resolutions; and whether my friend and master Vājashravas, from his abode in the other world, did or did not stand by me in person in all my undertakings I cannot certainly say, although I have at times believed it. This much is certain, that his words in their after-effects now did. For my having become familiar, through his teaching, with all the customs and usages of the various types of robbers, and my having even been initiated into the mysteries of their secret rules, now placed me in a position where I was able, without ridiculous foolhardiness, to carry to a successful conclusion enterprises which another would never have dared to venture upon. And so it was these that I now purposely selected, no longer condescending to the ordinary routes.

As a result, when I conducted a large caravan to a town to which, for months, no other merchant had been able to proceed because powerful bands of robbers had cut off the district from all contact with the outer world, I found the inhabitants so desperately anxious to buy my wares that I was at times able to dispose of these at ten times the usual profit. But that was not all; for inestimable was the advantage I drew from my old friend's instruction with regard to – 'The distinguishing marks of officials, both of higher and lower rank, who are open to bribery – with reliable notes as to each man's price,' and what I gained in the course of a few years by the skilful use of these hints alone, represented a modest fortune. So several years passed, during

which the various delights of my pleasure-loving native city alternated healthily with the hardships of business journeys, rich indeed in dangers but nevertheless by no means barren of pleasure, in spite of all perils. In strange cities I always resided with a courtesan to whom I was as a rule recommended by some mutual friend – some one of the fair ones of Ujjenī – and who not only played the part of hostess but, as often happened, formed my business connections for me very shrewdly as well.

Such was the tenor of my life when, one morning, my father came to my room.

At that moment I was busy putting some lac on my lips, only pausing from time to time to shout directions to a servant who had led my horse out into the courtyard in front of my window and was saddling him up. The special care required on the present occasion was due to a unique contrivance by which cushions were to be strapped on in front of the saddle for a gazelle-eyed beauty I was to hold there. An outing had been arranged for the afternoon to a public garden and I was going both with women and men friends.

I welcomed my father and was about to call for refreshments, but he stopped me; and when I offered him some sweet-scented cashews from my golden box he declined these also, only taking some betel. I concluded at once from this, and not without misgiving, that my respected parent had something on his mind.

‘I see that you are getting ready for a little excursion, son,’ he said, after he had taken the seat I offered him, ‘and I cannot blame you, seeing that you have just returned from a fatiguing business journey. Where are you going today?’ ‘It is my intention, father, to ride with some friends to the Garden of the Hundred Lotus Ponds, where we will amuse ourselves with various games.’

‘Excellent, most excellent, my son! Charming, delightful is an afternoon in the Garden of the Hundred Lotus Ponds – the deep shade of the trees and the cooling breath of the waters invite the visitor to linger there. And sophisticated and ingenious games are most praiseworthy, for they exercise body and mind without straining them. I wonder whether the games are still in vogue that we used to play in my youth? What do you suppose, Kāmanīta, will be played there today?’ ‘It depends, father, on whose proposal proves to be most acceptable. I know that Nimi wants to propose spraying with water.’

‘I don’t know it,’ said my father.

‘No – Nimi learnt it in the South, where it is all the fashion. The players fill bamboo canes with water and spray one another, and whoever becomes wettest has lost. It is very amusing. But Koliyā thinks of suggesting Kadamba.’

My father shook his head: ‘I don’t know that either.’

‘Oh! that is much in favour at present. The players first divide into two parties.

These then attack one another, and the branches of the Kadamba shrub, with its great golden blossoms, serve as magnificent weapons. The wounds are recognizable from the dust of the blossoms, so that the umpires are able to decide without difficulty which party has won. The game is bracing, and has something dainty about it. I myself, however, intend to propose the wedding game.'

'That is a good old game,' said my father, with a decided smirk, 'and I am greatly delighted that you are minded to propose it, as it is an evidence of your sentiments. From play to the real thing...' he paused, 'the step is not an excessively long one.'

As he said this he again smirked, with such evident satisfaction that it made my very flesh creep.

'Yes, son,' he went on, 'talking of that leads me straight to what brought me to you today. You have, on your many business journeys, by your capacity and good fortune multiplied our possessions many times over, so that the prosperity of our business has become proverbial in Ujjenī. On the other hand, however, you have also quaffed the delights of youth's freedom in unstinted draughts. As a result of the former, you are well able to provide for a household of your own. And from the latter, it follows that it is also time for you to do so, and to think of spinning the thread of our race farther. In order to make things very easy for you, dear son, I have sought out a bride for you in advance. She is Sitā, the eldest daughter of our neighbour Sañjaya, the great merchant, and has just recently reached marriageable age. As you can perceive, she comes from a family of like standing with our own, respected and very rich, and she has a large number of relatives both on her father's and mother's side. Her body is faultless; her hair, of the blackness of the bee; her face, like the moon in its beauty; eyes, like a young gazelle's; a nose like a blossom of the sesame; teeth like pearls; and Bimba lips, from which there comes the voice of the Kokila, so rarely sweet is it. And her limbs delight the heart as does the stem of the young Pisang, while her full hips lend to her carriage the easy majesty of the royal elephant. It is not possible, therefore, that you could have anything to object to in her.'

I had indeed nothing to find fault with, save perhaps that her many and so poetically extolled charms left me utterly cold. And I admit that among the details of the wedding ceremony, in the prescribed three nights of renunciation – during which I had to eat no seasoned food, sleep on the floor and keep the hearth-fire alight – preserving the strictest celibacy in the company of my young wife was, amongst all the others, the least irksome to me.



An unloved wife, brother, does not make one's home dear, nor its four walls attractive, so I took myself on journeys almost more willingly than before and in the intervals concerned myself solely with business matters.

And as I – to give the truth its due – did not deal too scrupulously in these, but without much hesitation took what was to my own advantage on every occasion, my riches increased to such an extent that, after a few years, I found myself near to the goal of my ambition and was one of the richest citizens of my native town.

With that happy state of things, as master of a house and father of a family (Sītā had in the meantime borne us two beautiful daughters: Ambā and Tambā) there came the desire to taste the sweets of my riches abundantly and especially to make a display of them before my fellow citizens. To that end I purchased a large tract of land in the suburbs and laid out a magnificent pleasure-garden, in the midst of which I built a spacious mansion with halls whose ceilings were borne aloft on marble pillars. This property was reckoned among the marvels of Ujjenī and even the King came to see it.

Within these fair domains I now gave fabulous garden parties and the most luxurious of banquets, for I had now begun to devote myself more and more to the pleasures of the table. The most luscious morsels which were to be had for money were always served, even at ordinary meals. At that time I was not as you see me now, lean and weathered by lone wanderings, by life in the woods and ascetic practices; rather I was of a full endowment of body – indeed, even inclined to be somewhat portly.

And it became, O stranger, a proverbial saying in Ujjenī: ‘His table is like the merchant Kāmanīta’s.’







THE FAMILY MAN

ONE MORNING I WAS walking back and forth in the grounds with my head gardener, considering where improvements could be best introduced, when my father rode into the courtyard on his old donkey.



I hastened forward and, after helping him to dismount, was about to go into the garden with him as I believed he had come to enjoy the beauty of our flowers. But he preferred to enter the nearest reception room and when I ordered my man to bring some refreshments he declined:— He wished to speak to me without being disturbed.

Overcome by a feeling of uneasiness and scenting danger ahead, I sat down on a low seat beside him. ‘My son,’ he began, in a tone of deepest earnestness, ‘your wife has, so far, only borne you two daughters and my brahmins tell me that there is no prospect that she will present you with a son. Now, it is said, and with much truth, that the man dies miserably for whom there is no son to offer the sacrifices proper to the dead.

‘I don’t blame you, son,’ he added hastily, perhaps observing that I had become somewhat agitated; and, although I was not aware how in this matter I could have deserved blame, I thanked him with suitable humility for his clemency and kissed his hand.

‘No, I must blame myself, because in choosing your wife, I allowed myself to be dazzled in too great a degree by worldly considerations, having reference to family and possessions, and did not observe the characteristic marks sufficiently. The girl whom I now have in mind for you comes, it is true, from a family which is by no means distinguished, and far from rich; nor can one praise her for her possession of what the superficial observer might call beauty. But, by way of recompense, she has a navel which sits deep and is turned to the right; both hands and feet bear lotus, urn and

wheel marks; her hair is quite smooth, except for on her neck where she has two whorls curling to the right. And of a maiden who possesses such marks, the wise say that she will bear five heroic sons.'

I declared myself perfectly satisfied with the prospect, thanked my father for the kindness with which he looked out for me and said I was ready to lead the maiden home at once. For I thought to myself: 'Well – if it has to be...'

'At once?!' cried out my father, in accents of horror. 'My son, moderate your impatience! We are at present in the southern course of the sun. When this deity enters his northern course and we have reached the half of the month in which the moon waxes, then we will choose a favourable day for the joining of hands – but not before – not before, my son! Otherwise what good would all the bride's qualities do for us?' I begged my father to have no anxiety;– I would have patience for the time mentioned and would in all things be guided by his wisdom. On which note he praised my dutifulness, gave me his blessing and allowed me to order refreshments.



At last the day approached – in truth I did not ardently long for it but it was the one on which all the propitious signs were found to be united. The ceremonies this time were much more tedious. I needed a full fourteen days of instruction beforehand in order to master all the necessary sentences.

The agony of fear I endured during the joining of hands in the house of my father-in-law it is hardly possible to put into words. I trembled without intermission – filled with a horrible dread lest I should not recite some verse correctly, or in keeping with the action to which it belonged; for my father would assuredly never have forgiven me for it. And yet, in my anxiety, I had almost forgotten the chief thing, for instead of taking my bride Savitrī's thumb, I reached out to seize her four fingers, as though I wished her to bear me daughters – but luckily she had presence of mind enough to push her thumb into my hand instead.

I was literally bathed in perspiration by the time I was finally able to yoke in the bulls for our departure. Meanwhile my bride inserted into each of the collar-holes the branch of a fruit-bearing tree, and I spoke the required couplet with a feeling that the worst was now past. The dangers, however, did not by any means lie behind us yet.

It is true that we reached the house without encountering any of the numerous little mishaps which, on such occasions, seem to lie in wait for their unfortunate victims. And at the door Savitrī was lifted from the wagon by three brahmin women of blameless life who had all given birth to boys, and whose husbands yet lived. So far, all had gone well. But now, brother, imagine the shock I received when, on entering the house, my wife's foot all but touched the threshold. To this day, I cannot conceive whence I drew the resolution to lift her high up in my arms, and thereby hinder such

contact from possibly taking place. Nevertheless, even this was an irregularity and, when entering the house, was of itself bad enough; but to add to it I, for my own part, forgot to enter with the right foot first. Fortunately the wedding guests, and especially my father, were so nearly beside themselves at the threatened contact with the threshold, that my false step was all but entirely disregarded.

In the middle of the house I took my station to the left of my wife, on a red bull's hide that lay with the neck towards the east, and with the hairy side uppermost. Now my father had, after a long search, and with endless trouble, come upon a male child that had only brothers and no sisters – not even dead ones – and was the son of a father who had been the same, having had brothers only. Moreover, this was also actually true of his grandfather and, to the accuracy of the statements in each case, legal testimony was forthcoming. This little boy was to be placed on my bride's knee. Already there stood at her side the copper dish containing lotus flowers from the swamps, which she was to lay in the folded hands of the child; and everything was prepared, when... the hapless little urchin was nowhere to be found! Not until afterwards, when it was too late, did a manservant discover that the child had found the sacrificial bed between the fires all too enticing and had rolled himself in the soft grass until he was practically buried in it. Now, of course, the sacrificial bed had to be made up anew and fresh Kusa grass cut – which was in itself reversing the due order of things as the grass should have been cut at the rising of the sun.

We were finally obliged, as I have indicated, to do without this crown of the whole function, and to content ourselves with the hastily procured son of a mother who had borne only sons. But my father was in such a state of excitement at the failure of this precaution, on which he had built his highest hopes, that I feared a fit of apoplexy would suddenly put an end to his precious life. True, he would under no circumstances have committed the indiscretion of dying at that moment, in order not to interrupt the ceremonies in the worst of all possible ways, but this comforting reflection did not occur to me at the time. Martyred by the most horrible fears, and in order that no interval might ensue, I was obliged to pass the time of waiting for the substitute by reciting some appropriate mantras without pause.

That hour I solemnly promised myself that, come what may, I would never marry again.

Finally, after everything was ended, I was obliged to spend twelve nights with my new wife – who, by the way, was anything but the monster of ugliness my father's description had led me to expect – in absolute chastity, fasting rigorously and sleeping on the floor. This time it was twelve nights because my father thought it was better to be on the safe side and do too much rather than too little. But the doing was distinctly painful to me; particularly because I had to deprive myself, during the whole time, of my favourite dishes – high seasonings and all.

However, this period of probation I also managed to survive, and life ran on again on the old lines, though soon with a very substantial difference. Before long I was to see how thoroughly warranted was my aversion to my father's new marriage proposal. True, I had instantly comforted myself with the idea that, if a man had one wife, he might just as well have two. But alas, how sadly had I deceived myself! My first wife, Sītā, was a sweet person and had always seemed to possess a gentle demeanour, she certainly leaned to the side of mellowness rather than to that of irritable passion; and Savitrī was also quite loveable and had always been praised for her genuine warmth and her true womanly softness. In the same way, brother, that water and fire both have truly beneficial qualities, when they meet on the hearth, one must be prepared for noise and steam. And from that unhappy day onward there was indeed the sound of hissing in my home. It was misery – and I also chided myself for having brought this situation about, where two good women were set up in competition with each other, and thus caused to bring out the very worst in themselves.

But imagine to yourself, if you can, what became of the situation when Savitrī did indeed bear me the first of those five heroic sons. Now Sītā accused me of not having wanted sons by her, and of having refrained from offering the fitting sacrifices in order that I might thus have an excuse for marrying another; while Savitrī, when she was irritated by Sīta, performed a very devil's dance of triumphant scorn. Then, between the two, there was a constant wrangle as to precedence; my first wife laying claim to the first position as having actually been the first, while the second made the same demand as the mother of my son.

But worse was yet to come.

One day Savitrī dashed in to me, trembling from head to foot in frenzied agitation, and demanded that I should send Sītā away as she wished to poison my beloved son: the boy – whom everybody knew by the nickname of 'Krishna', on account of his unusually dark coloration and mischievous nature – had merely had an attack of colic from eating too many sweets, a habit in which he also imitated his divine namesake.

I rebuked her severely, but had scarcely freed myself from her presence when Sītā stood before me, clamouring that our two lambs, Ambā and Tambā, were not sure of their lives so long as that vile woman remained in the house:– Her rival wished to get both of my dear little daughters out of the way in order that their dowries should not diminish the heritage of her son.

So, under my roof, peace was no longer to be found. If you, brother, chanced to delay your steps at the farmhouse of the rich brahmin who lives but a short way off, and heard how his two wives railed at one another – disputing in high, shrill tones and shaking the air with their coarse language – then you have, so to speak, passed my house on the way.

And it also became, I am sorry to confess, a proverbial saying in Ujjenī at that time: 'The two agree: like Kāmanīta's wives!'





15

THE SHAVEN-HEADED MONK

SUCH WAS THE STATE of affairs in my home when, one morning, I sat in a large room which lay on the shady side of the house and which was set apart for the transaction of all business matters. For that reason it over-looked the courtyard, an arrangement which enabled me to keep under my own eye everything relating to the administration of my affairs.

Before me stood a trusted servant who had, for a number of years, accompanied me on all my journeys and to whom I was giving exact instructions with regard to the taking of a caravan to a somewhat distant spot. Along with these directions I was, of course, describing to him the best mode of disposing of his wares when he got there, the produce he had to bring back with him, the business connections he was to form and other similar matters, for it was my intention to give him full charge of the expedition.



To be sure, my house was less home-like than ever, and one might suppose that I myself would have been glad to embrace every opportunity of roaming about in distant lands. But I was beginning to be somewhat self-indulgent and dainty, and I shunned very distant journeys – not only because of the fatigues to be faced on the way but, above all, on account of the sparing diet to be put up with when actually on the road. Yet even supposing the journey's end reached, with the possibility of making up for lost time and of having the best of everything, there were numerous disappointments to be reckoned with and I, at least, was never able to dine abroad as well as I did at home. As a result, I had begun to send out my caravans under trusty leaders while I remained behind in Ujjeni.

Well, as I was saying, I was in the midst of giving my caravan leader very minute and well-considered instructions, when from the courtyard we heard the voices of my

two wives, both much louder than usual and with a flow of language which sounded as though it would never end. Irritated by this tiresome interruption, I finally sprang up and, after having vainly looked out of the window, I stepped into the courtyard.

There I saw both of my wives standing at the outer gate. But far from finding them wrangling with one another as I had expected, I came upon them for the first time of one mind: they had discovered and pounced upon a common enemy and on him they now poured out the vials of their united wrath. This luckless victim was a wandering ascetic, who stood there next to one of the pillars of the gate quietly letting this stream of abuse flow over him.

The actual reason for their attack upon him I have never discovered; I imagine, however, that the mother instinct, which was very highly developed in both of them, scented in this self-denier a traitor to the sacred cause of human propagation and a foe to their sex, and that they had just as instinctively fallen upon him as two mongooses upon a cobra.

‘Out with you, you bald-pated priest, you shameless ruffian! Just look how you stand there, with your bent shoulders and hang-dog look, breathing piety and contemplation – you oily hypocrite! You smooth-faced windbag! It is the kitchen pot that you peer and gaze for, that you sniff and snuffle at – just like any old donkey who, unyoked from his cart, runs to the rubbish-heap in the courtyard and peers and gazes and sniffs and snuffles... Out with you, you lazy, brazen-faced thief, you shameless beggar, shaveling monk!’ The object of these and similar expressions of maternal contempt, a wanderer belonging to some ascetic school and a man of strikingly lofty stature, stood still beside the gate-post in an attitude of easy repose. His robe, of the amber colour of the Kanikāra flower and not unlike your own, fell in picturesque folds over his left shoulder to his feet, and gave the impression of covering a powerfully built body. The right arm, which hung limply down, was uncovered and I could not help admiring the huge coil of muscles, which rather seemed to be the well-earned possession of a warrior than the idle inheritance of an ascetic; and even the clay alms-bowl appeared to be as strange and incongruous in his hand as an iron bludgeon in that same hand would have seemed to be in its proper place. His head was bent, his gaze fixed on the ground, his mouth absolutely without expression, and he stood motionless there as though some masterly artist had hewn the statue of a wandering monk in stone, had painted and clothed it, and that I had thereupon caused it to be set up at my gate – as if it were a symbol of my liberality.

This tranquillity of his, which I held to be meekness but which my two wives regarded as contempt, naturally goaded the latter to ever greater efforts; and they would probably have graduated to actual violence, had I not come between, rebuked them for their disrespectfulness and driven them into the house. Then I went up to the wanderer, bowed respectfully before him and said, ‘I trust, Most Venerable One, that you will not take to heart what these two women may have said, I know it has been

both uncalled for and unfitting. I am afraid they were overwrought and not entirely in control of their faculties. I trust that you will not, on this account, strike this house with your ascetic anger. I will fill your almsbowl myself with the best this house has to offer, Honoured Sir. How fortunate that the bowl is as yet empty! I will fill it so that it cannot contain another morsel and no neighbour shall, this day, earn merit by feeding you. You have indeed not come to the wrong door, Venerable One; and I believe the food will be to your taste, for it is a proverbial saying in Ujjenī: “His table is like the merchant Kāmanīta’s,” and I am he. I trust, therefore, Venerable One, that you will not be angry at what has taken place, and will not curse my house.’

Whereupon he answered, and with no appearance of unfriendliness: ‘How could I be angry at such abuse, O head of this house, seeing as how it is my duty to be grateful for even far coarser treatment? Once, in the past, I took myself with robe and alms-bowl into a town to receive food from the charitable, as is our custom. But in that town, Māra, the Evil One, had just then stirred up the brahmins and the householders against the Order of the Buddha: “Away with these so-called virtuous, noble-minded ascetics! Abuse them, insult them, drive them away, pursue them.” And so it happened, as I passed along the street a stone flew at my head; next a broken dish struck me in the face and a stick which followed half crushed my arm. But when, with head all cut and covered with blood, with broken bowl and torn robe I returned to the Master, his words were: “Bear it, brahmin! Bear it! For you are experiencing here and now the result of deeds because of which you might have been tortured in hell for many years, for many hundreds of years, for many thousands of years”.’ At the first sound of his voice, there quivered through me from head to foot a flash of horror and, with every additional word, an icy coldness penetrated deeper into the very recesses of my being. For it was, brother, the voice of Angulimāla, the robber – how could I doubt it? And when my convulsive glance fixed itself on his face, I recognized it also: although his beard formerly went up almost to his eyes and his hair had grown down deep into his forehead, and whereas he now stood completely clean-shaven before me. But only too well did I recognize again the eyes under those bushy, coalescing eyebrows, although instead of darting flashes of rage at me, as in those former days, they now looked kindness itself; and the sinewy fingers which encircled the alms-bowl – they were assuredly the same that had once clutched my throat like devilish talons.

‘How, indeed, could I grow angry at abuse?’ my gruesome guest went on, ‘has not the Master said, “Bhikkhus, even if robbers and murderers were to sever you savagely limb by limb with a two-handled saw, one who gave rise to a mind of hatred on that account would not be carrying out my teachings”.’ When I, brother, heard these words, with their diabolically concealed yet to me so evident threat, my legs shook under me and to such a degree that I had to hold on to the wall in order not to fall down.

With the greatest difficulty I managed to pull myself together so far as to indicate to the robber-ascetic, more by gesture than by my few stammered words, that he was to have patience until I should procure him the food.

Then I hurried, as rapidly as my shaking legs would carry me, straight across the courtyard into the large kitchen, where just at that moment the midday meal for the whole household was being prepared, and where from every pot and pan there came the sounds of roasting and boiling.

Here I chose, with no less haste than care, the best and most savoury morsels. Armed with a golden ladle and followed by a whole troop of servants bearing dishes, I dashed again into the courtyard in order to wait upon and, if possible, conciliate my terrible guest.

But Angulimāla had disappeared.





READY FOR ACTION

HALF-SWOONING, I SAT down upon a bench. My brain, however, began to work again at once. Angulimāla had been there, of that there could be no doubt; and the reason for his coming was only too clear to me.



How many tales had I heard of his implacability and greed for vengeance! Moreover, I had had the misfortune to slay his best friend and, from my time with the robbers, I well knew that friendship among them does not count for less than among highly respectable citizens – indeed, if anything, for much more. At the time when I was his prisoner, Angulimāla couldn't kill me without contravening the laws of the Senders and at the same time putting an indelible blot upon his robber honour; yet he nevertheless all but did it twice over. Now, however, he had at last been able to seek out this land, in spite of its lying so far from the scene of his favoured activities, and evidently he intended to make up for that past omission.

In the disguise of an ascetic he had succeeded in leisurely surveying the places in the neighbourhood and, without doubt, had resolved to act that same night. Even if he had by any chance perceived that I recognized him, he dared not delay, for this was the last night of the dark half of the month and to carry out such an enterprise in the light half would have been an offence against the sacred laws of the robbers, and would have brought down upon him the vengeance of the wrathful Goddess Kālī.

I at once ordered my best horse to be saddled and rode into town to the palace of the King. I could easily have obtained an audience but, to my disappointment, I learned that he was just then residing at one of his distant hunting lodges. I was therefore obliged to be content with a visit to the Minister of State. As it happened this was the very same man who had conducted the fateful embassy to Kosambī, and in whose protection as you will remember, I did not travel back. Now, from that day on which

I had refused to follow him, he had not been very friendly to me, as I had noticed on several occasions when we had chanced to meet; in addition to which, I knew he had frequently criticized my mode of life. To have to bring this matter before him was not exactly agreeable; its justification, however, was so apparent that here, it seemed, there was no room left for personal likes or dislikes.

I related to him, therefore, as shortly and clearly as possible, what had taken place in my courtyard, and added the all but self-evident petition that a division of troops might be stationed for the night in my house and garden, for the double purpose of defending my property from the certain attack of the robbers, and of capturing as many of these as possible.

The Minister heard me in silence and with an inscrutable smile on his face. Then he said, 'My good Kāmanīta, I do not know whether you have already indulged in an early and very heavy draught, or are still suffering from the effects of one of your famous nightly banquets which have become the talk of Ujjeni; or, indeed, whether you may not have ruined your inner organs to such an extent by your no less proverbial than remarkable spiced dishes, as to now be subject to nightmares, and not only by night but also in broad daylight! For as such I am compelled to designate this interesting tale, particularly as we know that it is a long time since Angulimāla ceased to sojourn amongst the living.'

'But that was a false rumour, as we now see!' I called out impatiently.

'I by no means see it,' he replied sharply. 'There can be no question in this instance of a false rumour – a short time after the affair, Sātāgira himself related to me in Kosambī that Angulimāla had died in the underground dungeons of the ministerial palace, under torture; and I myself saw his head on one of the spikes over the eastern gate.'

'I do not know whose head you saw there,' I cried, 'but this I do know, that one hour ago I saw the head of Angulimāla safe and sound on his shoulders, and that, far from meriting your mockery, I deserve that you, on the contrary, should thank me for giving you the opportunity...'

'...of killing a dead man and making a fool of myself?' the Minister interrupted me. 'Much obliged!' 'Then I beg you at least to remember that this is not a matter which concerns just any old place, but relates to a mansion and grounds reckoned among the wonders of Ujjeni, and inspected by our gracious King himself with great admiration. He will not thank you if Angulimāla reduces all these splendours of his capital to ashes.'

'Oh! that troubles me very little,' said the Minister, laughing. 'Take my advice: go home, calm yourself with a short sleep, and don't let the matter disturb you further. For the rest, the whole affair arises from this, that you plunged yourself into a romantic adventure that year in Kosambī and, in your headstrong folly, flung my words to the winds rather than return with me. Had you listened then, Angulimāla would never have made you prisoner and you would not now have been tormented by an empty and

baseless fear. Moreover, your two-month-long life in the company of that robber pack did not improve your morals, as all of us here in Ujjeni have perceived.’

At this point he launched into a few additional moral platitudes and then he dismissed me.

Even before I reached home I was considering what was to be done, seeing that I was now thrown onto my own resources. Arriving there, I had all the movable treasures – costly carpets, inlaid tables and similar items – carried into the courtyard and loaded onto wagons, in order to have them conveyed to a place of safety in the inner town. At the same time I had weapons distributed amongst all my people; both wagons and weapons being forthcoming in abundance, owing to the fact that a caravan had been in course of preparation. But I didn’t let things rest there. My first measure was to send several trusted servants into the town in order, by the promise of a handsome reward, to enlist for the night courageous and capable fighting men.

For any other person this would have been a hazardous procedure, for how easily might such fellows at the critical moment make common cause with the assailants. But I relied upon certain female friends, who recommended to my servants only trustworthy rascals – that is, fellows who were capable of anything, but to whom their solemnly pledged word and fighting money, once accepted, were sacred. As I knew this riff-raff and their curious customs, I was well aware of what I was doing.

During these preparations, as I had no time myself to go to my wives, I sent a servant to each of them with instructions that they should hold themselves in readiness – Sītā with her two daughters, Savitrī with her little son – to move into town to my father’s home. I didn’t let them know that it was only to be for one night because I had considered that, once they were there, they might as well stay a week or longer, and I should meanwhile enjoy a little period of peace at home – supposing, of course, that I succeeded in beating off the attack. Just as little did I let them know the reason for this arrangement because, at that time, I foolishly believed that one should never give reasons to women.

Meantime the work went on and I was on the point of making a stirring speech to my armed servants, an old practice of mine when danger threatened on our caravan journeys, and which had always been attended with excellent results, when, with one accord and as if by prearrangement, my two wives dashed out of separate doors into the courtyard, with an air of consternation on their faces and shouting loudly. Everyone looked round at them and I was forced to interrupt my speech before it was well begun.

Sītā brought out our two daughters with her, Savitrī our little son. No sooner had they reached me than they pointed each at the other, and cried simultaneously: ‘So at last this awful woman has succeeded in turning your heart against me, so that you drive me forth and lay upon me, your faithful wife, the disgrace of being sent back to my father’s house, with your innocent little daughters!/with your poor little son!’ How

long and bitterly, brother, have I regretted my greed and folly to have married myself to two women at the same time – to have drawn these two into a situation fraught 96 97 with such potential for friction – how painful and joyless it was for all three of us, to speak nothing of the children and the rest of the household who all had to endure our constant wranglings. How rarely, I was to discover, does such an arrangement bring anything but grief – for thus it was between us once again.

The foaming rage that possessed them brought it to pass that neither perceived how the other accused her of the very same thing which she herself brought forward, and complained of the same hard fate which she herself bewailed as her own and that, without question, there must have been a mistake somewhere.

Far from suspecting anything of the kind, they screamed and howled, tearing their hair and striking their breasts with their fists – berating me also for my faithlessness and favouritism – until at last, as if by way of relaxation, each began to pour out abuse upon her supposedly victorious rival, which in its coarseness far surpassed anything I had ever heard, even in the company of the women of the streets.

Finally I succeeded in making myself heard, and also in making clear to them that they had utterly misunderstood my message: that neither of them was to be sent to her own parents, but to my father's house, and by no means as a punishment or as a sign of my displeasure, but solely on account of their own and their children's safety. When, however, I saw that they at last fully understood this, I could no longer contain myself, but cried out: 'This is what you have created by your unbearable rudeness; you both need to learn to behave yourselves in a seemly fashion! This is what your "shaveling monk" has done for you! Who do you suppose that was? It was Angulimāla: the robber, the horrible fiend, who slays people and hangs their fingers around his neck. He it is whom you have abused, he whom you have angered! It's a miracle that he didn't beat you to death with his almsbowl. But it is we others, if any of us should fall into his hands, who will have to pay to the uttermost farthing; and who knows whether you yourselves will be safe from him, even at my father's house!' When my wives fully comprehended the meaning of my words, they began to cry as if they already felt the knife at their throats, and wanted to rush out of the gate with the children.

I stopped them, however, and then carefully explained that for the present no danger was to be feared because Angulimāla, as I well knew, would not attack us before midnight. Then I bade them go back into our dwelling and pack all the things together which they and the children would be likely to need during the time that the danger from robbers compelled them to remain in town. This they then at once did.

At the same time I had quite overlooked the possible effect of my words on my people. And that, as I soon discovered, was anything but agreeable. For when they learned that it was the terrible Angulimāla, long since believed to be dead, that had spied out my house, and would certainly attack it in the night, first one and then another slunk quietly away, until finally they threw down their arms by dozens and

declared that they would have nothing to do with such a devil – that no-one could possibly ask it of them. Those who had been enlisted in the town, and of whom the first-comers arrived just then, when they heard how things stood, also said that this was not what they had bargained for and withdrew.

Only about twenty of my own people, at their head the brave steward of my house, Kolita by name, professed that they would not leave me but would defend the place to the last drop of their blood; for they could all see that I was determined not to sacrifice this splendid property in which my heart was wrapped up but, if need be, to perish with it.

Several resolute fellows from the town, attracted almost more by the prospect of a hot fight than by the money, and who not only did not fear the name of Angulimāla but talked themselves into the belief that, after they had fought well and been taken prisoner, they would be enrolled in the band – several such desperate characters joined themselves to us, and so I finally had command of about forty well-armed and brave men.

Meanwhile, evening was almost upon us and the wagon for my wives drove up. They came out, bringing the children with them, and all were by this time quieted down. But a fresh anxiety arose at once when they perceived that I was not going with them – that, on the contrary, I had not the slightest intention of leaving the house. They threw themselves on their knees, clutched at my clothes and begged me as the tears streamed down, to rescue myself with them: ‘Husband, don’t forsake us, don’t cast yourself into the jaws of death!’ I explained to them that, if I abandoned my post, our house would become a prey to flames and plundering hands, and my son would lose the chief part of his inheritance, while, on the other hand, if we held out bravely, there was still a possibility of rescuing it as no-one could say whether or not Angulimāla would attack in great force.

‘Kāmanīta, Kāmanīta!’ they cried, ‘please don’t leave us! The terrible Angulimāla will make away with you and will wear your fingers on his gory necklace! He will torture you to death in his fearful fury and the fault will be ours. Because of our curses and bad language you, our beloved, must suffer and on that account we will be punished in hell!’ I sought to comfort them as well as I might, and when they saw that I was not to be moved from my resolution, they were obliged to make the best of it and get into the wagon. Scarcely, however, had they taken their places when they began to hurl accusations at one another.

‘It was you who began it!’ ‘No! You called my attention to him as he stood there beside the gate-post. Yes, that you did! You pointed your finger at him right there.’

‘And you, you spat at him – red spittle – up to that time I hadn’t chewed any betel – I never do that in the morning.’

‘But you called him a tramp, a lazy beggar!’ ‘And you, a bald-pated monk...’

And so it went on; but the creaking of the wheels, as the oxen now began to pull, drowned out their voices.



TO HOMELESSNESS

WHAT A HITHERTO unknown stillness enveloped me now, brother, as I again entered the house after stationing my people, each man at his post. That I didn't hear the voices of my wives – it wasn't that alone; it was also that I had heard their voices going out of the gate, away into the distance. It was that there was no possibility of suddenly hearing out of any corner those scolding tones growing gradually shriller and shriller until they finally united or rather became disunited in one cacophonous brawl-duet – it was that which lent to my house an air of unspeakable quiet, which as yet I could hardly bring myself to believe in.



As I stood there my palace, surrounded by its beautifully laid-out parks, seemed to me more splendid than ever before, and I trembled at the thought that all this magnificence was to be utterly destroyed within a few hours by the infamous band of robbers. Fear for my own life troubled me far less than the cruel conviction that these well-cared for avenues of trees would be laid waste, these artistically hewn marble pillars hurled down, and that all this, the building up of which had cost me so much thought and such tedious effort, whose completion had filled me with so much joy, would be a heap of ruins when the sun rose again. For only too well did I know the traces left by Angulimāla.

There was, however, no more for me to do now but wait, and it was still yet several hours before midnight.

I had for years been living in a ceaseless round of business and pleasure – never a moment had I taken in which to come to myself; and as I sat there with nothing to do, alone in a room opening into the pillared hall on the one side and into the garden on the other, in the midst of all the deathlike stillness of the palace, I lived through the first hours, in a sense, since my earliest youth, which entirely belonged to me.

My suddenly unfettered thoughts began to focus for the first time on myself. My whole life passed in review before me; and looking upon it as a stranger might have done, I could find no pleasure whatsoever in the sight.

These reflections I interrupted a couple of times to make a round through the house, courtyard and garden, and thus assure myself that my men were on the watch. As I stepped out for the third or fourth time from between the pillars, my eyes, trained on many a caravan journey, at once told me from the position of the stars and constellations that it was but half an hour to midnight.

I hastily went the rounds again and exhorted my people to be keenly on the alert. I myself felt the blood hammering in every vein, and my throat seemed to contract from the anxiety and the strain. Going back to my room, I sat down as before. But no thoughts would come; I felt a heavy pressure on my breast and soon it seemed to me as though I should suffocate. I sprang up and went out between the pillars to inhale the cool night air. As I did so, my cheek was softly fanned by what seemed to be a passing wave of air, and immediately thereafter the hoot of an owl sounded in the stillness. At the same moment a strong odour of the blossoms of the night-lotus was wafted towards me from the garden ponds. I had raised my eyes in order to calculate once more the hour from the stars, when:- There it was! I beheld, across the deep blue expanse of the heavens, between the black tree tops, the softly glowing radiance of the Milky Way.



‘The Heavenly Gangā,’ I murmured involuntarily, and in a moment it was as if the pressure on my breast were loosening, were rising in a warm wave within me, to pour out in a stream of hot tears from my eyes. It is true I had, a few hours earlier, when my whole life passed in review before me, thought of Vāsithī and the brief season of my love – but then only as of something distant and strange that seemed to be no more than a foolish dream. Now, however, I no longer thought of it at all – I lived it again: I was all at once the self of the past and the self of the present, and with genuine horror did I become aware of all the difference. At that time I possessed nothing except myself and my love; and these – were they not inseparable? Now – oh what did I not possess now! Wives and children, elephants, horses, cattle, draught oxen, servants and slaves, richly filled warehouses, gold and jewels, a pleasure park and a palace the possession of which my fellow citizens envied me – but – where was I? As in some blighted fruit, the kernel had dried up – disappeared – and everything had turned to empty shell..

Like one awakening, I looked around me.

The extensive and beautifully timbered park lifting its dark tree-tops against the night sky, sown with myriads of stars and threaded by the Milky Way, and the proud hall where the alabaster lamps glowed between the pillars – these suddenly appeared to me in quite a new light.

Hostile and threatening, they surrounded me like magnificently glistening vampires which had already drained almost the whole of my heart's blood and were now gaping greedily for the enjoyment of the last drops, after which there would remain nothing but the withered corpse of an abortive human life.

A distant and undefinable noise – murmurs of footsteps as it seemed to me – caused me to start up. Unsheathing my sword, I sprang down a couple of steps and then stood still to listen. The robbers! – but no... everything was silent, everything remained silent. Far and wide, nothing moved. It was only one of those unfathomable sounds which belong to the stillness of the night, one of those which so often by the watch-fires of the caravans had caused me to spring to my feet. Outside, there was nothing. But what was that within me? This was no longer terror which made the blood beat in my temples; nor yet the courage of despair; no, it was exultant jubilation.

'Welcome, you robbers! Come, Angulimāla! Lay it all to waste, reduce it to ashes! These are my deadliest enemies whom you destroy – that which would crush me, you take away. Here, here to me! Immerse your swords in my blood! It is my bitterest enemy you pierce, this body devoted to sensuality, given over to gluttony! It is my saddest possession, this life which you deprive me of. Welcome robbers! Good friends! Old comrades!' It could not be long now; midnight was past, and with what joy did I look forward to the combat! Angulimāla would seek me; I wished to see whether he would be able this time also to strike my sword out of my hand. Oh, how sweet that would be, to die, after I had pierced him to the heart – him, to whom alone all my misfortune was due.

'It cannot be long now...' – how often I repeated that comfort to myself, as hour passed hour, that night! Now – at last! No, it was a rustling of the tree-tops which died away in the distance, to rise again as before – it sounded as though a great shaggy animal had shaken itself. Again and again it was repeated, and then there sounded the shrill cry of some bird.

Were not these signs of approaching day?



Fear made me cold. Was it possible that I was to be disappointed? Yes, I trembled now at the thought that, after all, the robbers might not come. How closely within my reach the end had appeared to be – a short, exciting fight and then death, scarcely felt. Nothing seemed to me so hopeless now as the wretched prospect of being found here in the morning, in the old surroundings, my old self again, and again bound to the old life. Was that really to happen? Were they not coming, my deliverers? It must assuredly be high time – but I didn't even dare to look. Yet how was that possible? Was I, after all, the victim of some illusion when I recognized Angulimāla in that wanderer? Again and again I asked myself the question, but that I could not believe. And yet if it

were he, he would be sure to come this night – he would certainly not have appeared at my house in his very clever disguise without a purpose, only to disappear again as though the earth had swallowed him; for I had caused inquiries to be made and I knew that he had begged for alms nowhere else.

The drowsy crowing of a young cock, in the courtyard nearby, woke me out of my brooding. The constellation that I sought, I was now scarcely able to find, several of its stars having already sunk beneath the tree-tops. All the other groups, with the exception of those that stood highest in the heavens, had lost their clear twinkling. There was no longer room for doubt; the grey dawn was already heralding its coming and an attack by Angulimāla was absolutely out of the question.

But of all the strange things that I had experienced this night, the strangest came now.

The recognition of my immunity was at first accompanied by a feeling of disappointment, rather than any feeling of relief because of the disappearance of all danger. But a new thought had suddenly arisen and possessed me utterly: ‘What do I really need those robbers for?’ I had longed for their torches and pitch garlands to come and free me from the burden of this magnificent property. There are people, however, who of their own free will divest themselves of their possessions and lay hold of the wandering seeker’s staff. As a bird, whithersoever it flies, flies bearing only its wings and is content with these, so also it is with the spiritual seeker – they are content with a robe to cover the body and with alms-food to sustain health and life. And I have heard them say in praise of that life: ‘The household life is crowded and dusty; wide open, like the free air of heaven, is the life of one gone forth.’

I had called upon the swords of the robbers to kill this body. But if this body crumbles into dust, a new one is formed; and out from the old life goes forth a new one as its fruit. What type of life would go forth from mine? It is true that Vāsithī and I solemnly swore by yonder Heavenly Gangā, whose silver waves feed the lotus ponds of the Western Paradise, that we would meet in those Fields of the Blessèd. And with that vow there was formed, as she said, for each of us there in the crystal waters of the sacred sea, a life bud: a bud that would grow by every pure thought, every good deed, but at which everything low and unworthy in our lives would gnaw like a worm. Ah! I felt mine must have been gnawed utterly away long ago. I had looked back over my life; it had grown unworthy. Unworthiness would go forth from it. What would I have gained by such an exchange? But there are, as we know, people who before they leave this life, destroy every possibility of rebirth on earth and who win the steadfast certainty of eternal bliss. And these are the very people who, forsaking everything, adopt the wandering seeker’s life.

What then could the burning torches of the robbers, what could their swords do for me? And I, who had at first trembled anxiously because of the robbers, and had afterwards longed impatiently for them as my one hope – now I neither feared them nor hoped for anything from them. Freed alike from fear and hope, I felt a great calm. In this peace I assuredly experienced a foretaste of the joy which is theirs who have reached the spiritual seeker's Goal. For, as I stood in relationship to the robbers, so those seekers surely stand in relation to all the powers of this world: they neither fear them nor do they hope for anything from them, they simply abide with them in serene and perfect peace.

And I – who a mere twenty hours earlier had feared to start out on a short journey on account of the hardships and the meagre fare of the caravan life – I now decided without fear or vacillation to journey shelterless and on foot to the end of my days, content to take things as they came.

Without once going back into the house I went straight away to a shed lying between the garden and courtyard, where all kinds of tools were kept. There I took an ox-goad and cut the point off it, in order to use it as a staff; and I hung over my shoulder a gourd-bottle, such as the gardeners and field-workers carried.

At the well in the courtyard I filled the gourd, upon which the house-steward approached me.

'Angulimāla and his robbers will not come now, Master! Will they?' 'No, Kolita, they will not come now.'

'But, Master – are you going out already?' 'Even so, Kolita, I go. And of this very matter I desire to speak with you. For I go the way now that people call the way of the noblest birds of passage. From this way, however, Kolita there is no return for one who perseveres in it – no return to this world after death, how much less to this house during life. But the house I give into your care, for you have been faithful unto death. Administer the house and fortune until my son attains to manhood. Give my love to my father, my wives, my little girls and the boy, and – farewell!' After I had thus spoken and freed my hand from the good Kolita, who covered it with kisses and tears, I walked towards the gate, and at the sight of the gate-post beside which the figure of the wanderer had stood, I thought: 'If its likeness to Angulimāla was but a vision, then I certainly have read the vision right!' Quickly, and without looking back, I went through the suburb with its gardens. Before me the desolate, far-reaching country road lay stretched out in the first grey shimmer of the dawn, as if it went on and ever on for all eternity.

Thus, Venerable One, did I adopt the life of homelessness.



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IN THE HALL OF THE POTTER

WITH THESE WORDS the pilgrim Kāmanīta brought his narrative to a close, sat silently and gazed meditatively out upon the landscape.



And the Lord Buddha also sat silently and gazed meditatively out upon the landscape.

Lofty trees were to be seen, some near, some farther off, some grouping themselves in shadowy masses, others dissolving airily in cloud-like formations and disappearing into the mists in the distance.

The moon now stood directly over the porch, and its light shone into the outer part of the hall, where it lay like three white sheets upon a bleaching-green, while the left side of the pillars gleamed as though mounted in silver.

In the deep silence of the night one could hear a water-buffalo somewhere in the neighbourhood, cropping the grass with short measured jerks.

And the Master pondered within himself: 'Should I tell this seeker all I know of Vāsithī? How faithful she was to him; how, without fault of her own, she was forced to marry Sātāgira by low fraud; how it was her doing that Angulimāla appeared in Ujjeni; and how, owing to that very visit, he himself, Kāmanīta, is now treading the path of the spiritual seeker instead of sinking in foul luxury. Should I reveal to him the path that Vāsithī is following now?'

But he decided that the time was not yet come and that such knowledge would not be helpful to the seeker in his efforts. The Master, therefore, spoke and said:

"To be separated from what we love is suffering, to be united to what we do not love is suffering." When this was said, it was said of such an experience as yours.'

'Oh! how true!' called out Kāmanīta, in an agitated voice, 'how profoundly, deeply true! Who, stranger, uttered those wise and wonderful words?'

‘There is no need to be concerned about that, friend. It is of no consequence who uttered them, as long as you feel and recognize their truth.’ ‘How could I not? They contain in a few words all my life-trouble. Had I not already chosen a Master, I would seek none other than the admirable one with whom these words originated.’

‘Then you have a Master whose teaching you acknowledge, friend, and in whose name you have gone forth?’ ‘In truth, brother, I went forth in the name of no Master. On the contrary, my idea at that time was that I should win my way to the Goal unaided. And when I rested by day in the neighbourhood of a village, at the foot of a tree or in the recesses of a forest, I gave myself up with fervour to deepest thought. To such thoughts as these: “What is the Self? What is the universe? Is the Self eternal and the universe temporal? Is the universe eternal and the Self temporal?” Or: “Why has the highest Brahmā caused the world to come forth from Himself? And if the highest Brahmā is pure and perfect happiness, how does it happen that the universe He has created is imperfect and is afflicted with suffering?” And when I gave myself up to such thoughts, I reached no satisfactory solution. On the contrary, new doubts constantly arose, and I did not seem to have neared by so much as a single step, the Goal for the sake of which the noble-minded abandon home for ever and voluntarily become homeless.’

‘Yes, friend,’ the Buddha replied, ‘it is as if one were to pursue the horizon, thinking: “Oh, if only I could reach the line that bounds my vision!” In the same way does the Goal escape those who give themselves to such questions.’

Kāmanīta nodded thoughtfully, and then went on: ‘Then it happened one day, when the shadows of the trees had already begun to lengthen, that I came upon a hermitage in a forest glade, and there I saw young men in white robes, several of whom milked cows, while others split wood and yet others washed pails at the spring.’

‘On a mat in front of the hall sat an aged brahmin, from whom these young people evidently learned the sacred songs and sentences. He greeted me with friendliness, and although it would take, as he said, scarcely an hour to reach the next village, he begged me to share their meal and to spend the night with them. I did so gratefully enough, and before I had laid myself down to sleep I had heard many a good and impressive utterance.’

‘On the following day, when I was about to go on my way the brahmin addressed me with: “Who is your Master, young man, and in whose name have you gone forth?” And I answered him as I have answered you. Upon which the brahmin said, “How will you, friend, reach that highest Goal if you wander alone like the rhinoceros, instead of in a herd and led by an experienced leader as is the way of the wise elephant?” At the word “herd”, he glanced benevolently towards the young people standing round about; at the word “leader” he appeared to smile with much inward satisfaction.’

“For,” he went on, “this is indeed too high and too deep for one’s own comprehension, and without a teacher it must remain a closed book. On the other hand, the Veda, in the teaching of Shvetaketu, says: ‘Just as, O beloved, a man who has

been led blindfolded hither from the land of Gandhāra, and then has been let loose in the desert, will strike too far eastward, or it may be too far to the north, or the south, because he has been led hither with his eyes bound; but he will, after one has unbound his eyes and said to him: “There, in that direction live the Gandhāra, go thither,” ask his way from village to village and reach his home, richer in knowledge and wisdom; so also is the man who has found a Master to direct him to the land of the Spirit. Such a man can say: “I shall have part and lot in this world’s turmoil until my liberation comes, and then I shall go to my real Home.”” I saw at once, of course, that the brahmin was planning to secure me as a pupil. But this very desire of his destroyed any confidence which might have been awakening within me. On the other hand, I was well pleased with the saying from the Veda and, as I went on my way, repeated it over and over again to myself, in order to fix it in my memory. In doing so, a sentence occurred to me which I had once heard used regarding a particular Master: “The Master does not crave disciples, but the disciples, the Master.”

‘What a very different man he must be, I thought to myself, from this forest brahmin! And I longed, Venerable One, for such a Master, who was above all such craving.’

‘Who is this Master whom you heard so praised? What is his name?’ ‘He is, brother, the Samana Gotama, of the Sākya clan, who renounced the throne of his fathers. This Master Gotama is greeted everywhere with honour and the joyous acclaim: “He is the Blessed One, the Holy One, Impeccable in Conduct and Understanding, Knower of the Worlds, Teacher of Gods and Humans, the Enlightened One, the Buddha.” And I journey now in order to find that Sublime One and to acknowledge myself as his disciple.’

‘But where, friend, does he now reside – this Sublime, this Enlightened One?’ ‘Far to the north, brother, in the kingdom of Kosala, lies the great city of Sāvātthi. Just beyond the town is the richly wooded Jetavana park, filled with mighty trees in whose deep shade, far removed from all noise, the wise and faithful are able to sit and meditate. Its crystal pools ever exhale coolness, and its emerald meadows are strewn with myriads of vari-coloured flowers. Years ago the rich merchant Anāthapindika purchased the grove from Prince Jeta and presented it to the Buddha – it cost so much money that, if spread over the surface of the ground, it would have concealed the whole property. There, then, in this delightful Jetavana over whose meadows the feet of so many of the wise have passed, the Master, the Fully Enlightened One, at present makes his abode. If I step out bravely I hope in the course of about four weeks to have accomplished the distance from here to Sāvātthi and to sit at the feet of the Master.’

‘But have you ever seen him, brother – this Blessed One – and if you did see him would you recognize him?’ ‘No, brother, I have not yet seen him, the Blessed One, and if I saw him I would not recognize him.’

Then the Master reflected: 'For my sake this young seeker is now on the Way; he acknowledges himself as my disciple; how would it be if I revealed the heart of the Dharma to him?' And the Master turned to Kāmanīta and said, 'The moon has just risen over the porch, we are not yet far into the night and too much sleep is not good for the mind. If it is agreeable to you I can offer, in return for your narrative, to unfold to you the Teaching of the Buddha.'

'That would make me very happy, brother, and I beg you to do so if you are able.'

'Listen well then, my friend, and reflect on what I have to say to you.'





Sp. 27ms.

THE MASTER

AND THE LORD BUDDHA said, 'The Tathāgata, the Fully Enlightened One, set the wheel of the Dharma rolling at Benares, beside the Rock of the Prophet, in the Grove of the Gazelles. And it can neither be stopped by monk nor brahmin, neither by god nor demon, nor by anyone else in this world.'



'That Teaching is the Unveiling, the Revelation of the Four Noble Truths. What Four? The Noble Truth of Suffering, the Noble Truth of the Origin of Suffering, the Noble Truth of the Cessation of Suffering, the Noble Truth of the Path which leads to the Cessation of Suffering.

'But what, brother, is the Noble Truth of Suffering? Birth is Suffering, ageing is Suffering, sickness is Suffering, death is Suffering; sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief and despair are all Suffering; to be separated from the loved is Suffering; to be united with the unloved is Suffering; not to obtain what we desire is Suffering; in short, all the various forms of attachment involve Suffering. That is, brother, the Noble Truth of Suffering.

'But what, brother, is the Noble Truth of the Origin of Suffering? It is this: the craving that continually gives rise to fresh birth, companioned by desire and passion, ever seeking fresh delight, now here, now there. In other words: craving for sensual pleasure, the craving for existence or the craving for annihilation. That is, brother, the Noble Truth of the Origin of Suffering.

'But what, brother, is the Noble Truth of the Cessation of Suffering? It is the complete fading away and cessation of that very craving; its abandonment and relinquishment; the freedom from and discarding of it. That is, brother, the Noble Truth of the Cessation of Suffering.

‘But what, brother, is the Noble Truth of the Path which leads to the Cessation of Suffering? It is the Noble Eightfold Path consisting of Right View, Right Intention, Right Speech, Right Action, Right Livelihood, Right Effort, Right Mindfulness, Right Concentration. That is, brother, the Noble Truth of the Path which leads to the Cessation of Suffering.’

After the Master had in this way set up the four corner-stones, he proceeded to raise the whole structure of the Teaching in such a way as to make it a habitable home for the thoughts and feelings of his pupil. He elucidated each separate sentence as a skilled mason hews and polishes each individual stone, and just as one lays one stone upon another so did he join sentence to sentence, everywhere laying down the foundations carefully and fitting each sentence into its own proper place, in its due relation to every other. By the side of the pillar of the Principle of Suffering he placed the pillar of the Principle of the Transitoriness of All Things; and, as an entablature joining the two, while supported by and overarching them, he added the weighty Principle of the Selflessness of Phenomena. Through this mighty portal he ascended, leading his pupil circumspectly, step by step, several times up and down the well-built stair of the fundamental law of conditionality – Dependent Origination – everywhere establishing and perfecting.

And just as an able builder, when erecting some magnificent structure, adds pieces of statuary at suitable points and in such a way that they serve not only as ornaments but also as bearers of supports, so too the Master at times introduced an amusing or ingenious analogy, conscious that by such method the veiled meaning of many a profound utterance can become clear.

Finally, however, he summed the whole up and at the same time, as it were, covered the structure over by placing upon it a resplendent, far-seen dome in the words: ‘By attachment to existence, friend, one comes into existence; lacking such attachment one comes into existence no more.

‘And in the seeker who is nowhere held fast by such attachments, there grows amid the unclouded cheerfulness of inner peace this realization: “My deliverance is unassailable, this is the last birth of all, now there will be no more coming into any state of being.” The one who has come thus far awakens to the highest wisdom. And this, friend, is the highest, holiest wisdom:– To know that all suffering is ended. One who has found this has found a freedom which stands true and inviolable. For that which is deceptive and fleeting is false, my friend; and that which has an undeceptive nature is the Supreme Noble Truth – that is to say: Nirvāna.

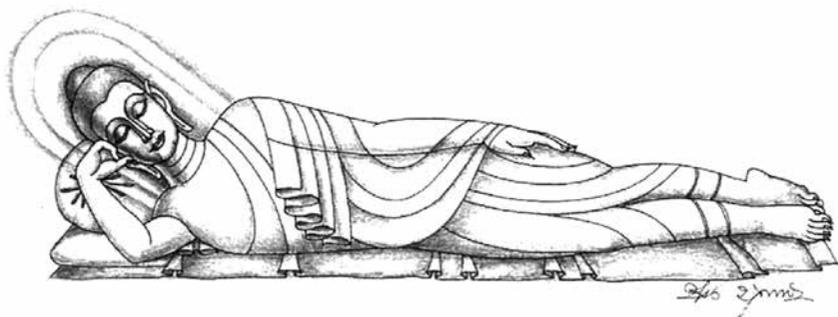
‘And one, who from the very beginning was subject to birth, the changes of age and to death, marking well the remorselessness of the Law of Nature, now wins the safety that knows no birth, no ageing and no death. One who was subject to sickness and corruption thus reaches the assurance that knows no change, that is pure and holy – such a one knows, with absolute certainty: “Birth is destroyed, the knowledge

of freedom is clear; the holy life has been fulfilled, what had to be done has been done, there is no more of this to come – the world has been utterly transcended.”

‘Such ones, my friend, are called “Finishers” because they have finished and made an end of all suffering.

‘Such ones, my friend, are called “Obliterators” because they have obliterated the delusion of “I” and “Mine”. Such ones, my friend, are called “Weeders” because they have weeded out the plant of life by the roots so that no new life can ever germinate again.

‘So long as they are in the body, such ones are seen by gods and humans; but when the body is dissolved in death they are no longer seen by anyone at all – and neither even does Mother Nature – the All-seeing – espy them any more. Such ones have also blinded the eye of Māra, escaped from the Evil One, the Lord of Illusion and the Sensory World. Crossing the stream of existence they have reached the Island – the only one – that lies beyond ageing and death: Nirvāna.’



THE UNREASONABLE CHILD

AFTER THE BUDDHA HAD ended his discourse, Kāmanīta remained sitting for a long time, silent and motionless, a prey to conflicting and sceptical thoughts. Finally he said, ‘You have told me much of how the monk should make an end of suffering in his lifetime, but nothing whatever of what becomes of him when his body disintegrates in death and returns to its elements, except that from that time on neither people nor gods, nor even Nature Herself, sees him again. But of an eternal life of supreme happiness and heavenly bliss – of that I have heard nothing. Has the Master revealed nothing concerning it?’



‘Even so, brother, thus it is: the Tathāgata has revealed nothing concerning it.’

‘That is as much as to say that the Lord Buddha knows no more of this most important of all questions than I myself,’ replied Kāmanīta discontentedly.

‘Do you think it to be so...? In that same Simsapā wood in the neighbourhood of Kosambī, where you and your Vāsithī swore eternal fidelity and pledged yourselves to meet again in the Paradise of the West, there the Tathāgata at one time took up his abode. As he walked through the wood he picked up a bundle of Simsapā leaves in his hand and said to the monks with him: “What do you think, bhikkhus, which are more numerous, these Simsapā leaves which I have in my hand, or all the other leaves in the forest?” Immediately they answered: “The leaves which you have in your hand are very few, Venerable Sir, whereas the leaves in the Simsapā forest are far more numerous.” “In the same way, bhikkhus”, said the Tathāgata, “that which I have discerned and yet not revealed to you is far greater in sum than that which I have revealed to you. And why have I not revealed everything? Because it is not helpful spiritually, it is not in keeping with the path of simplicity and renunciation, it does not lead to the turning

away from all worldly things, nor to the letting go of passions, nor to the final disowning of all that is subject to change, nor to perfect knowledge and enlightenment – it does not aid the realization of Nirvāna.” “If the Master spoke thus in the Simsapā grove at Kosambī,” answered Kāmanīta, “then the matter is probably even more serious still. For in that case, he has certainly been silent on the point in order not to discourage or, as might well happen, even terrify his disciples; as he certainly would, if he should reveal to them his version of the Final Truth – namely, annihilation. This seems to me to result as a necessary consequence from what you have so plainly stated. For, after all the objects of the five senses and of thought have been denied and rejected as fleeting, as without any real existence and as full of suffering, there remain no powers by means of which we could grasp anything whatsoever.

“So I understand, Venerable Sir, from the doctrine you have just expounded to me, that those who have freed themselves from all delusion fall victim to annihilation when the body dies, that they vanish and have no existence beyond death.”

“Did you not say to me,” asked the Buddha, “that within a month you would sit at the feet of the Master in the Grove of Jetavana near Sāvatti?” “I assuredly hope to do so, Venerable Sir; why do you ask me?” “When you sit at the feet of the Tathāgata, what do you think, my friend – is the physical form which you will see then, which you will be able to touch with your hand – along with the mind that then reveals itself, with its sensations, perceptions and ideas – do you see that as being the Tathāgata, the Perfect One, do you look upon it as such?” “I do not, Venerable Sir.”

“Perhaps then, you would see the Tathāgata as being in the body and mind – do you look upon it like that?” “I do not, Venerable Sir.”

“Then may it be, my friend, that you see the Tathāgata as apart from the body and the mind?” “I do not look upon it in that light, Venerable Sir.” “Do you think, then, that the Tathāgata is the owner of that body and that mind? Is that your view, my friend?” “That is not the way I see it, Venerable Sir.”

“Do you see the Tathāgata then, as having no body and no mind?” “He is apart from them insofar as his being is not fully comprehended within those elements.”

“What elements or powers have you then, my friend, apart from those of the body with all its qualities of which we are aware through the senses, and apart from those of the mind with all its sensations, perceptions and ideas – what powers have you beyond these, by means of which you can fully apprehend what you have not yet apprehended in the being of the Tathāgata?” “Such further powers, Venerable Sir, I must acknowledge I do not possess.”

“Then even here, friend Kāmanīta, in the world of senses, the Tathāgata is not in truth and in his very essence, apprehendable by you. Is it then right to say that the Tathāgata – or any one of those who have freed themselves from all delusion – is doomed to annihilation when his life ends, that he does not exist beyond death, solely because you are not in possession of any powers by which you can, in truth, apprehend

him in his very essence there?’ Questioned in such fashion, Kāmanīta sat speechless for some time, his body bent, his head bowed.

‘Even if I have no right to make that assertion,’ he said finally, ‘it still seems to me to be implied plainly enough in the silence of the Tathāgata. For he certainly would not have maintained such a silence if he had had anything joyous to communicate, which would of course be the case if he knew that for the one who had conquered suffering there remained after death not only not annihilation, but eternal and blessed life. It is certain that such a communication could only serve as a spur to his disciples and be a help to them in their spiritual efforts.’

‘Do you think so, my friend? How would it be if the Tathāgata had not pointed to the end of all suffering as the final Goal – even as he also began with suffering in the beginning – but had extolled an eternal and blessed life out beyond it and beyond this life of ours. Many of his disciples would assuredly have been delighted with the idea, would have clung to it eagerly, would have longed for its fulfilment but with the passionate longing which disturbs all true cheerfulness and serenity. So would they not also then have been involved unperceived in the meshes of the powerful net of craving for existence? And while clinging to a Beyond, for which by necessity they had to borrow all the colouring from this life, would they not have only clung even more to the present the more they pursued that Beyond? Whatever kinds of existence there are, in any way, anywhere, all are impermanent, pain-haunted and subject to change. So, one who sees this as it is abandons craving for existence without relishing non-existence. And how does such a one see this Reality? They see whatever has come into being as simply having come into being. By seeing it thus they have entered upon the way to dispassion for it, to the fading and cessation of craving for it. That is how one with vision sees.

‘For, like a watch-dog that, bound to a post and trying to free itself, rushes in a circle around about it – even so those worthy disciples who, even though they dearly long to transcend this body and the world, they still remain bound to it whether they love it or they hate it, rushing in endless circles around it.’

‘Though I am certainly compelled to acknowledge this danger,’ Kāmanīta answered, ‘I still hold that the other danger, the uncertainty evoked by silence, is by far the more dangerous, inasmuch as it cripples the energies from the very beginning. For how can the disciple be expected to exert himself with all his might to overcome all suffering, with decision and courage, if he doesn’t know what is to follow: eternal bliss or non-existence?’ ‘My friend, what would you think in such a case as this? Let us say that a house is burning, and that the servant runs to waken his master, saying: “Get up, sir! Fly! The house is on fire! Already the rafters are burning and the roof is about to fall in.” Would the master be likely to answer: “Go, my good fellow, and see whether there is rain and storm outside, or whether it is a fine moonlit night. In the latter case we will take ourselves outside?”’ ‘How, Venerable Sir, could the master give such an

answer? For the servant had called to him in terror: "Fly, sir! The house is on fire! Already the rafters are burning and the roof threatens to fall in." "Indeed the servant had called to him thus. But if, in spite of that, the master answered: "Go, my good fellow, and see whether there is rain and storm outside," would you not conclude from it that the master had not heard correctly what his faithful servant had said – that the mortal danger which hung over his head had by no means become clear to him?" 'I would certainly be forced to that conclusion, Venerable Sir, otherwise it would be unthinkable that the man could give such a foolish answer.'

'Even so, friend – you should therefore also act as if your head were encompassed by flames, as if your house were on fire. And what house? The world! And set on fire by what flame? By the flame of desire, by the flame of hate, by the flame of delusion. The whole world is being consumed by flames, the whole world is enveloped in smoke, the whole world rocks to its foundations!' Addressed thus, Kāmanīta trembled as does a young buffalo when it hears for the first time the roar of the tiger in a neighbouring thicket. With bent body, head sunk on his breast, his face suffused with burning colour, he sat for some time without uttering a word.

Then in a gruff although somewhat tremulous voice, he answered: 'It still does not please me that the Master has revealed nothing concerning this matter. That is, if he was able to give any information which would have been full of promise – and even if he has been silent because what he knew was comfortless and terrifying, or because he knew absolutely nothing, I am still no better pleased. For the thoughts and the efforts of human beings are directed towards happiness and pleasure, a tendency which has its foundation in Nature Herself and cannot be otherwise. And in keeping with this is the following which I have heard from the lips of brahmin priests.

"Let us imagine the case of a youth, capable, eager for knowledge, the quickest, strongest, most powerful of all youths, and that to him belonged the world with all its treasures. That would be a human joy. But a hundred human joys are but as one joy of the heavenly devatā; and a hundred joys of the heavenly devatā are but as one joy of the gods; and a hundred joys of the gods are but as one joy of Indra; and a hundred joys of Indra are but as one joy of Prajāpati; and a hundred joys of Prajāpati are but as one joy of Brahmā. This is the supreme joy, this is the path to the supreme joy."

'Yes, friend; but perhaps I can use another analogy to illustrate the situation I am describing: imagine there was an inexperienced child, incapable of sensible reasoning. This child feels in his tooth a burning, boring, stabbing pain, and runs to an eminent and learned physician and pours out his troubles to him: "I beg you, honoured sir, to give me by your skill, a feeling of blissful rapture in place of this pain at present in my tooth." And the physician answers: "My dear child, the sole aim of my skill is the removal of pain." But the spoilt child begins to wail: "Oh! I have endured a burning, stabbing, boring pain in my tooth for so long; is it not reasonable that I should now enjoy a feeling of rapture, of delicious pleasure instead? There do exist, as I have heard,

learned and experienced physicians whose skill goes this far, and I believed that you were one of those". And then this foolish child runs to a quack, a "miracle-worker" from the land of Gandhāra, who causes the following announcement to be made by a town-crier to the accompaniment of drums and conches: *"Health is the greatest of all gifts, health is the goal of all people. Blooming, luxuriant health, a comfortable and blissful feeling in all one's members, in every vein and fibre of the body, such as the gods enjoy, even the sickliest can obtain by my help, at a very small cost."* To this "miracle-worker" the child runs and pours out his troubles: "I beg you, honoured sir, by your skill, give me a feeling of comfort or blissful rapture in place of this pain in my tooth." And the magician answers: "My dear child, in doing just this very thing lies my skill." After he has pocketed the money offered by the child, he touches the tooth with his finger and produces a magical effect, by means of which a feeling of blissful pleasure drives out the pain. And the foolish child runs home overjoyed and supremely happy.

'After a short time, however, the feeling of pleasure gradually subsides and the pain returns. And why? Because the cause of the pain was not removed.

'Then, let us also suppose that another, reasonable person feels a burning, stabbing, boring pain in her tooth. And she goes to a learned and experienced physician and tells him of her trouble, saying: "Honoured sir, I beg you by your skill to free me from this pain." And the physician answers: "If you, madam, demand no more from me, I may safely trust my skill that far." "How could I ask for more," replies the woman. And the physician examines the tooth and finds the cause of the pain in an inflammation at its root: "Go home and have a leech put on this spot. When the leech has sucked itself full and falls off, then lay these herbs on the wound. By so doing, the pus and the impure blood will be removed and the pain will cease." This reasonable person then goes home and does as the physician bids her. And the pain goes and does not return. And why not? Because the cause of the pain has been removed.'

Now when the Master ceased speaking, Kāmanīta sat reduced to silence and sorely disturbed, his body bent, his head sunk on his breast, his face suffused with colour and without a word, while anguished sweat dropped from his forehead and trickled down from his armpits. For did he not feel himself compared by this venerable teacher to a foolish child and made equal with one? And as he was unable to find an answer, in spite of his utmost efforts, he was near to weeping.

Finally, when able to command his voice, he asked in a subdued tone: 'Venerable Sir, have you heard all this before, from the mouth of the Master, the perfect Buddha himself?' Now, it occasionally happens that Buddhas smile, and at this question a wry and gentle smile did indeed play momentarily around the Master's lips.

'No, brother,' he replied, 'I cannot truly say that I have,' for some of what he said had come to him just then.

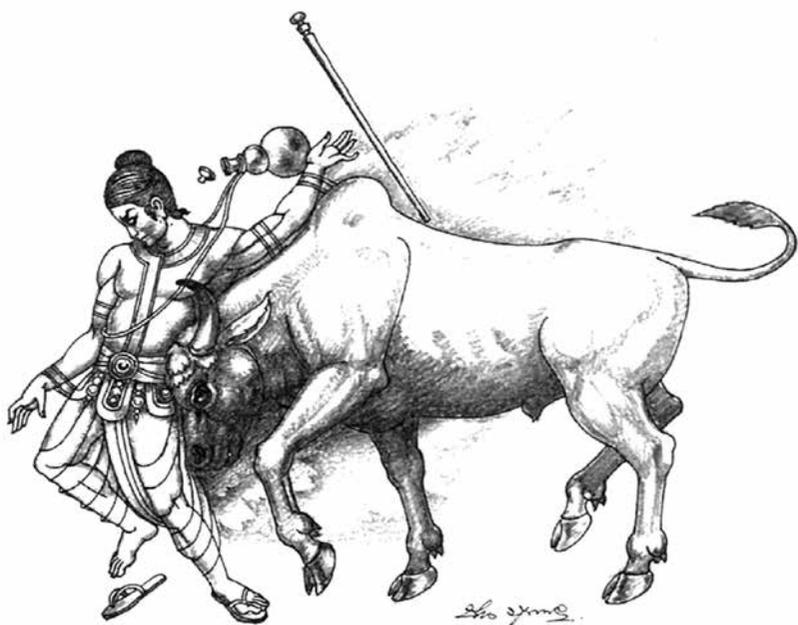
When the pilgrim Kāmanīta heard this answer, he joyfully raised his bent body and, with glistening eye and reanimated voice he burst forth: 'Wasn't I sure of it!

Oh, I knew for certain that this couldn't be the doctrine of the Master himself, but rather your own tortuous interpretation of it – an interpretation based altogether on misunderstanding. Is it not said that the doctrine of the Buddha is bliss in the beginning, bliss in the middle, and bliss in the end? So how could one say that of a teaching which does not promise eternal and blessed life, full of the most supreme joy? In a few weeks, if I step out bravely, I shall myself sit at the feet of the Master and receive the teaching of Liberation from his own lips, as a child draws sweet nourishment from its mother's breast. And you also should make efforts to get there too – and, once truly taught, maybe you will alter your mistaken and destructive view of things! But look, those strips of moonlight have now stretched themselves out and have almost disappeared, it must be far into the night – let us lay ourselves down to sleep.'

'As you will, brother,' answered the Master kindly. And, drawing his robe more closely around him, he laid himself down on his mat in the posture of the lion, supporting himself on his right arm, his left foot resting on the right.

And having in mind the hour of awakening, he instantly fell asleep.





21

IN MID-CAREER

WHEN THE MASTER awoke in the grey dawn he saw Kāmanīta busy rolling up his mat, hanging his gourd over his shoulder and looking round for his staff, which he hadn't at once been able to see in the corner in which he'd placed it, owing to its having fallen down. While thus engaged, there was in his every movement the appearance of a man in a great hurry.



The Master sat up and gave him a friendly greeting: 'Are you going already, brother?' 'Oh yes, yes!' called out Kāmanīta, full of excitement, 'just think, it's hardly to be believed – absolutely laughable and yet so marvellous – such rare good fortune! A few minutes ago I awoke and felt my throat quite parched after all the talk of yesterday. Without more ado, I jumped up and went to the well just across the way, beneath the tamarinds. A maiden was standing there drawing water. And what do you suppose I learned from her? The Master isn't in Sāvatti at all. But can you imagine where he is? Yesterday, accompanied by three hundred monks, he arrived here in Rājagaha! And at this very moment he is in the Mango Grove on the far side of town. In an hour, maybe less, I shall have seen him – I, who believed that I should have to journey for another four weeks! What do I say – in an hour? It is only a good half-hour to there, the maiden said, if you don't go through the main streets but run through the lanes and squares to the west gate... I can scarcely believe it. The ground burns beneath my feet – farewell, brother! You have meant well by me, and I shall not fail to bring you also to the Master, but now I really cannot delay a moment longer!' And the pilgrim Kāmanīta dashed out of the hall and ran away along the street as fast as his legs would carry him. But when he reached the city gate of Rājagaha it was not yet open and he was obliged to wait for a short time – time which seemed to him an eternity and which raised his impatience

to the highest pitch. He employed the minutes, however, in getting from an old woman carrying a basket of vegetables to the town, and who, like himself, was obliged to halt at the gate, exact information with regard to the shortest way – as to how he was to go through such and such a lane, past a little temple to the right and to the left past a well, and then not to lose sight of a certain tower so that he might perhaps recover in the town the time he had lost standing outside its walls.

As soon, then, as the gate was opened he dashed recklessly away in the direction indicated. In his urgency he knocked down a few children, then he brushed with such violence past a woman who was rinsing dishes at the kerbstone that one of these rolled rattling away from her and broke, then he bumped into a water-carrier. But the abuse which followed him fell on deaf ears, so utterly was he possessed by the one thought that soon, so wonderfully soon, he should see the Buddha.

‘What rare fortune!’ he said to himself, ‘how many generations pass and have no Buddha who sojourns on the earth in their time; and of the generation that has a Buddha for its contemporary, how few ever behold him. But this happiness will certainly be mine now. I have always feared that on the long and dangerous road wild beasts or robbers might deprive me of this joy, but now it cannot be taken from me.’

Filled with such thoughts, he turned into a narrow little lane. In his foolish onward rush he failed to observe that from the other end of it a cow, mad with fear from some cause or other, was dashing towards him, and he failed also to notice that while several people in front of him fled into a house, others concealed themselves behind a projecting bit of wall – nor did he hear the shout with which a woman standing on a balcony tried to warn him – but he dashed on, with his eyes fixed on the pinnacled tower, which was to prevent his taking some wrong turning.

Only when it was too late to get out of the way did he see with horror the steaming nostrils, the bloodshot eyes and the polished horn which, the next instant, drove deep into his side.

With a loud scream he fell down by the wall. The cow dashed onward and then disappeared into another street.



People instantly hurried up, in part from curiosity, in part to help. The woman who had warned him brought water with which to cleanse the wound. They tore up his robe to make a bandage and, if possible, to staunch the blood which gushed forth as if from a fountain.

Kāmanīta had hardly lost consciousness for an instant. It was clear to him at once that this meant death. But neither that knowledge nor the agonies he was enduring were such torture to him as the fear that he might not now see the Buddha. In a deeply agitated tone of voice he begged the bystanders to carry him to the Mango Grove:– To the Master.

‘I have journeyed so far, friends, I was so near my goal. Have pity upon me, don’t delay to carry me there. Don’t think of the pain to me, have no fear that I shall sink under it – I shall not die until you have laid me down at the feet of the Blessed One; then I shall die happy, and happily rise again.’

Some of them ran to fetch poles and a stretcher. A woman brought a strengthening draught of which Kāmanīta took a few mouthfuls. The men were divided as to which way was the shortest to the hall of the Sangha in the Mango Grove, for every step would make a difference. It was clear to all that the seeker’s life was ebbing fast.

‘Here come some disciples of the Blessed One,’ cried a bystander, pointing along the little lane, ‘they will best be able to tell us.’

And, in fact, several bhikkhus of the Order of the Buddha were approaching, clad in ochre robes. Most of them were young men but at their head walked two venerable figures – a grey-haired man whose earnest, if somewhat severe face, with its piercing eye and powerful chin, involuntarily attracted attention to itself, and a middle-aged man whose features were illumined by such a heart-winning gentleness that he almost had the appearance of a youth. Yet an experienced observer might, in his bearing and somewhat animated movements, as also in his flashing glances, have detected the inalienable characteristics of the warrior caste, while the deliberate calm of the older man no less revealed the born brahmin. In loftiness of stature and princely carriage they were, however, alike.

When these monks halted by the group which had collected round the wounded man, many voluble tongues at once related to them what had happened, and informed them that they were just about to carry the wounded pilgrim on a stretcher – which was then being fetched – to the Mango Grove, to the Buddha, in order to fulfil the man’s overwhelming desire:– Could one of the younger monks perhaps return with them to show them the shortest way to the spot where the Master was at that moment to be found? ‘The Master,’ answered the old man with the severe face, ‘is not in the Mango Grove, and we ourselves don’t know where he is.’

At the answer a despairing groan burst forth from Kāmanīta’s wounded breast.

‘But he certainly cannot be far from here,’ added the younger. ‘The Master sent the company of monks on ahead yesterday and pursued his journey alone. He arrived late, I expect, and sought quarters somewhere, probably in the suburbs. We are now on the way to look for him.’

‘Oh, seek diligently – find him,’ cried Kāmanīta.

‘Even if we knew where the Master was, it would not be possible to carry this wounded man there,’ said the stern monk. ‘For the shaking of the stretcher would soon render his condition so much worse that, even if he survived it, he would arrive on the point of death, with a mind incapable of apprehending the Master’s teaching. Let him, however, take care of himself now, be treated by an experienced surgeon and

be carefully tended, and there is always the hope that he may recover enough strength so as to be able to listen to and comprehend the Master's words.'

Kāmanīta, however, pointed impatiently to the stretcher: 'No time – dying – take me with you – see him – touch – die happy – with you – hurry!' Shrugging his shoulders the bhikkhu turned to the younger disciples: 'This poor man holds the Supremely Perfect One to be some kind of image at whose touch one's imperfections are dissolved.'

'He has gained faith in the Tathāgata, Sāriputra, even if he lacks the deeper understanding,' said the other, and he bent over the wounded man to ascertain what strength he still had; 'perhaps we might risk it after all. I am sorry for the poor fellow and I believe we could do nothing better for him than to make the attempt.'

A grateful look from the pilgrim rewarded him for his advocacy.

'As you will, Ānanda,' answered Sāriputra kindly. At this moment there came striding past, from the direction in which Kāmanīta had also come, a potter who carried on his head a basket with all kinds of baked clay wares. When he perceived Kāmanīta upon the stretcher – where they had just laid him with great care though not without causing him violent pain – he stopped, stricken with horror, and so suddenly that the dishes and bowls, piled one above another, came crashing down and were broken into pieces.

'Holy Brahmā! What has happened here? That is the young wanderer who honoured my hall by spending the night there, in the company of a monk who wore a robe like that of these reverend men.'

'Was that monk an aged man and of lofty stature?' asked Sāriputra.

'He was, Venerable Sir – and he seemed to me to be not unlike yourself.'

Then the monks knew that they did not need to seek any longer – that the Master was in the house of the potter. For 'The disciple who resembles the Master' was the description by which Sāriputra was generally known.

'Is it possible?' said Ānanda, glancing up from the wounded man, who, owing to the pain occasioned by his being lifted, had become all but unconscious, and had not noticed the arrival of the potter. 'Is it possible that this poor man should, the whole night through, have had the happiness for which he so longs, without in the least suspecting it?' 'That is the way of fools,' said Sāriputra. 'But let us go. Now he can, of course, be brought along.' 'One moment,' called Ānanda, 'he has been overcome by the pain.'

Indeed Kāmanīta's blank stare showed that he scarcely noticed what was happening around him. It began to grow dark before his eyes, but the long strip of morning sky which showed between the high walls nevertheless pierced his consciousness, and may well have appeared to him like the Milky Way crossing the midnight sky.

His lips moved.

'The Gangā,' he murmured.

'His mind wanders,' said Ānanda.

Those standing next to Kāmanīta, who had heard what he said, interpreted it differently.

‘He now wishes to be taken to the Gangā in order that the sacred waters may wash away his sins. But Mother Gangā is far from here – who could possibly carry him thither?’ ‘First to the Buddha, then the Gangā,’ murmured Sāriputra, with the wry pity a wise person bestows upon the fool who, beyond the reach of help, falls out of one superstition into another.

Suddenly, however, Kāmanīta’s eyes become wonderfully animated, a happy smile transfigured his face; he sought to raise himself. Ānanda supported him.

‘The Heavenly Gangā,’ he whispered, with weak but happy voice, and pointed with his right hand to the strip of sky above his head. ‘The Heavenly Gangā! We swore... by its waves... Vāsithī...’ His body quivered, blood gushed from his mouth, and he passed away in Ānanda’s arms.



Scarcely half an hour later Sāriputra and Ānanda, accompanied by the monks, entered the potter’s hall, greeted the Master respectfully and sat down before him.

‘Well, Sāriputra,’ asked the Master, after having given them a friendly greeting, ‘did the company of young monks under your leadership reach the end of their long journey well and without accident? Did you have any lack of food or medicine on the way? Are your disciples happy and studious?’ ‘I am glad to be able to say, Master, that we lacked for nothing and that the young monks, full of confidence and zeal, have but one desire, namely, to see the Master face to face. I have brought these noble youths, who know the essentials and have faith in the Dharma, in order to present them without delay to the Blessèd One.’

And at these words three young monks arose and greeted the Master with palms pressed together, in the shape of a lotus bud: ‘Greetings, Venerable Father.’

‘Welcome,’ said the Master, and with a gentle glance and a small movement of his hand, invited them to be seated again.

‘And did you, Master, arrive after yesterday’s journey without too much fatigue or other ill-effects? And have you spent a passable night in this hall?’ ‘Even so, Sāriputra, I arrived at dusk without ill effects from my journey and spent the night in the company of a young stranger, a wandering seeker.’ ‘That wanderer,’ began Sāriputra, ‘has been robbed of his life in the streets of Rājagaha by a cow...’ ‘...and never dreaming with whom he had passed the night here,’ added Ānanda. ‘His one desire was to be brought to the feet of the Blessèd One.’

‘Soon afterwards, to be sure, he demanded that he should be carried to the Gangā,’ remarked Sāriputra.

‘Not so, Brother Sāriputra,’ Ānanda corrected him; ‘for he spoke of the Heavenly Gangā. With radiant countenance he recalled a vow and, in doing so, uttered the name of a woman – Vāsithī, I believe – and so he died.’ ‘With the name of some woman on his lips he went hence,’ said Sāriputra. ‘I wonder where he has entered again into existence?’ ‘Foolish as an unreasonable child was the pilgrim Kāmanīta,’ said the Buddha. ‘This young seeker went about in my name and wished to profess himself a follower of the of the Buddha-Dharma, yet when I expounded the Teaching to him, entering into every detail, he took offence at it. The longings and aspirations of his heart were centred on bliss and heavenly joys. The pilgrim Kāmanīta, bhikkhus, has entered again into existence in Sukhavatī – The Paradise of the West – there to enjoy the pleasures of heaven for thousands upon thousands of years.’





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IN THE PARADISE OF THE WEST

AT THE TIME WHEN the Master uttered these words in the hall of the potter at Rājagaha, Kāmanīta awoke in the Paradise of the West.



Wrapped in a red mantle, whose rich drapings flowed down about him, delicate and glistening as the petals of a flower, he found himself sitting with crossed legs on a huge, similarly coloured lotus blossom which floated in the middle of a large lake. On the wide expanse of water such lotus flowers were to be seen everywhere, red, blue and white; some as yet were mere buds, others, although fairly developed, were still closed.

At the same time, however, countless numbers were open like his own, and on almost every one a human form was enthroned – their richly draped robes seemed to grow up out of the petals of the flower.

On the sloping banks of the lake, in the greenest of grass, there laughed such a wealth of flowers as made it seem that all the jewels of earth had taken the form of blossoms, and had been reborn there. Their luminous play of colour they had retained, but the hard coat of mail they had worn during their earthly existence they had exchanged for the soft and pliant, living vesture of plants. The fragrance they exhaled, which was more powerful than the most splendid essence ever enclosed in crystal, in keeping with this change, still possessed the whole heartsome freshness of the natural perfume of flowers. From this enchanting bank his enraptured glance swept away between masses of splendid trees, some loftily piercing the sky, others with broader summits and deeper shade, many clad in rich emerald foliage. Numbers of them were resplendent with jewelled blossoms, standing now singly, now in groups, some forming deep forest glades. Far upward he gazed – onto where craggy

heights of the most alluring description displayed their graces of crystal, marble, and alabaster, here naked, there covered with dense shrubbery or veiled in an airy drapery of florets. But at one spot the groves and rocks disappeared entirely to make room for a beautiful river, which poured its waters silently into the lake, like a stream of starry light.

Over the whole region the sky formed an arch, the deep blue of which grew deeper as it neared the horizon, and under this dome hung white, massy cloudlets on which reclined lovely gandharvas, celestial musicians, who drew from their instruments the magic strains of rapturous melodies that filled the whole of space.

But in that sky there was no sun to be seen and, indeed, there was no need for any sun. For from the cloudlets and the gandharvas, from the rocks and flowers, from the waters and from the lotus blossoms, from the garments of the Blessed and, in even greater degree, from their faces, a marvellous light shone forth. And, just as this light was of radiant clarity – without, however, dazzling in the least – so the soft, perfume-laden warmth was freshened by the constant breath of the waters, and the inhaling of this air alone was a pleasure which nothing on earth could equal.

When Kāmanīta had grown accustomed to the sight of all these splendours, so that they no longer overpowered him but began to seem like his natural surroundings, he directed his attention to those other beings who, like himself, sat round about on floating lotus thrones. He soon perceived that those clad in red were male, those in white were female, while of the figures wrapped in blue robes some belonged to one, some to the other sex. But all without exception were in the fullest bloom of youth, and seemed to be of a most friendly disposition.

A neighbour in a blue cloak inspired him with particular confidence, so that the desire to begin a conversation awoke within him.

‘I wonder whether it is permissible to question this radiant one?’ he thought. ‘I would so much like to know where I am.’

To his great astonishment the reply came at once, without a sound, and without even the faintest movement of the blue-clad figure’s lips.

‘You are in Sukhavatī, the abode of bliss.’

Unconsciously Kāmanīta went on with his unspoken questioning.

‘You were here, sacred one, when I opened my eyes, for my glance fell at once upon you. Did you awake at the same time as I, or have you been here long?’ ‘I have been here from time immemorial,’ answered the neighbour in blue, ‘and I would believe that I had been here for all eternity, if I hadn’t so often seen a lotus open and a new being appear – and also because of the mysterious perfume of the Coral Tree.’ ‘What is there special about that perfume?’ ‘That you will soon discover for yourself. The Coral Tree is the greatest wonder of this Paradise.’ The music of the heavenly gandharvas – which seemed quite naturally to accompany this soundless conversation, adapting itself with its melodies and strains to every succeeding sentence as if to deepen its

meaning and to make clear what the words could not convey – at these words wove a strangely mystical sound-picture. And it appeared to the listening Kāmanīta as if in his mind endless depths revealed themselves, in whose shadows dim memories stirred without being able to awaken.

‘The greatest wonder?’ said he, after a pause. ‘I imagined that of all wonderful things here the most wonderful was that splendid stream which empties itself into our lake.’

‘The Heavenly Gangā,’ nodded the blue.

‘The Heavenly Gangā,’ repeated Kāmanīta dreamily and again there came over him, only in added degree, that feeling of something which he ought to know and yet was not able to know; which the mysterious music seemed to seek, in the profoundest depths of his own being, as if for the sources of that stream.



23

THE ROUNDELAY OF THE BLESSÈD

WITH A GASP OF astonishment Kāmanīta now noticed that a white figure, throned not far from him on her lotus flower, suddenly seemed to grow upward. The mantle, with its piled-up mass of folds and corners, unrolled itself until it flowed down in straight lines from her shoulders to the golden border. And even this no longer touched the petals of the flower – the figure swept away untrammelled over the pond, up the bank and disappeared between the trees and shrubbery.



‘How glorious that must be,’ thought Kāmanīta. ‘But that is, I imagine, a very difficult accomplishment, although it looks as if it were nothing. I wonder whether I shall ever be able to learn it.’

‘You are able now; all you have to do is desire it,’ answered his neighbour in blue, to whom the last question was addressed.

Instantly Kāmanīta had the feeling that something was lifting his body upward. He was already floating away across the pond towards the bank and soon he was in the midst of the greenery. Whithersoever his glance was directed, there his flight followed, as soon as the wish was formed, and as quickly or slowly as he desired. He now saw other lotus pools equally splendid as the one he had just left. He wandered on through charming groves where birds of bright colours sprang from branch to branch, their melodious songs blending with the soft rustling of the tree-tops. He floated over flower-strewn valleys where graceful antelopes trotted and played without fearing him in the least, and finally he let himself down on the gentle slope of a hill. Between the trunks of trees and flowering shrubs he saw the corner of a lake where the water

sparkled round large lotus blossoms, several of whose flower-thrones bore blissful figures, while several others, even of the perfectly opened ones, were empty. It was plainly a moment of communal festivity. As on a warm summer evening fire-flies circle hither and thither under the trees and round about the shrubbery in noiseless, luminous movement, so here these radiant forms swayed singly and in pairs, in large groups of chains, through the groves and around the rocks. At the same time it was possible to see from their glances and gestures that they were conversing animatedly with one another, and one could easily divine the invisible threads of the exchanges which were being carried on between the noiseless passers-by.

In a state of sweet and dreamy shyness Kāmanīta enjoyed this charming spectacle, until gradually there grew in him a desire to converse with these happy ones.

Immediately he was surrounded by a whole company who greeted him kindly as the newly arrived, the just-awakened one.

Kāmanīta wondered much, and inquired how it was that the news of his coming had already been spread abroad all over Sukhavatī.

‘Oh! when a lotus opens itself all the other lotus flowers in the lakes of Paradise are moved, and every being is conscious that another has somewhere among us awakened into bliss.’

‘But how could you know that I happened to be the newcomer?’ The figures floating around him smiled charmingly. ‘You are not yet fully awake. You look at us as though you are seeing dream-figures and are afraid that we might suddenly disappear, and that rude reality will once again surround you.’

Kāmanīta shook his head.

‘I don’t quite understand. What are dream-figures?’ ‘You forget,’ said one white-robed figure, ‘that he has not yet been to the Coral Tree.’

‘No, I have not yet been there. But I have already heard of it. My neighbour on the lake mentioned it; the tree is said to be such a wondrous one. What is there about it?’ But they all smiled mysteriously, looking at one another and shaking their heads.

‘I would like so much to go there at once. Will no-one show me the way?’ ‘You will find the way yourself when the time comes.’

Kāmanīta drew his hand over his forehead.

‘There is yet another wonderful thing here of which he spoke... yes, the Heavenly Gangā ... by it our lake is fed. Is that so with yours also?’ The white-robed figure pointed to the clear little river that wound round about the foot of the hill and so, by easy turnings, onward to the pool.

‘That is our Source. Countless such arteries intersect these fields, and that which you have seen is a similar one, even if somewhat larger. But the Heavenly Gangā itself surrounds the whole of Sukhavatī.’

‘Have you also seen it?’ The white-robed one shook her head. ‘Is it not possible to go there, then?’ ‘Oh, it is possible,’ they all answered, ‘but none of us have been there.’

Besides, why should we go? It cannot be more beautiful anywhere than here. Several of the others, to be sure, have been there, but they have never flown there again.'

'Why not?' His white-robed visitor pointed towards the pond: 'Do you see the red figure, almost at the other bank? He was there once, though it is long, long ago. Shall we ask him whether he has flown again since then to the shores of the Gangā?' 'Never again,' at once came the answer from him of the red robe.

'And why not?' 'Fly there yourself and bring back the answer.' 'Shall we? Together with you I might do it.'

'I should like to go – but not now.'

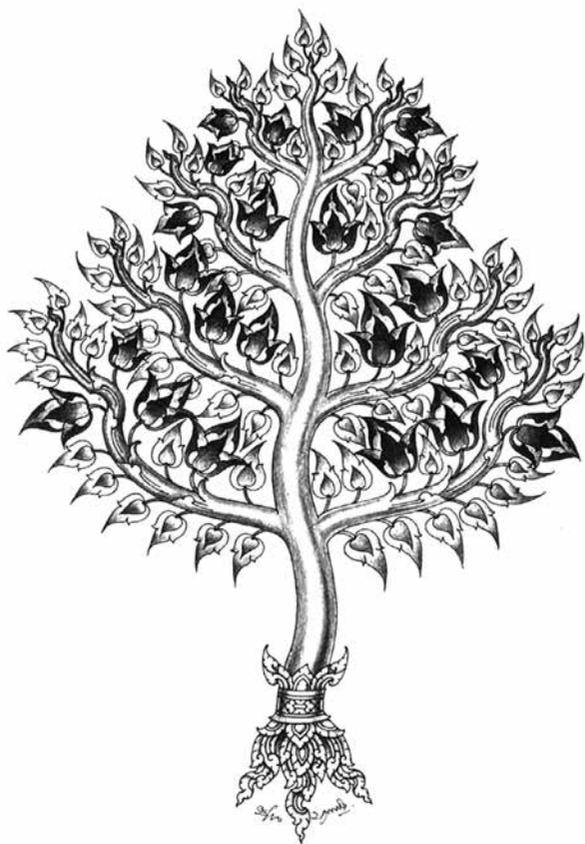
Forth from a neighbouring grove there floated a train of happy figures. They wound a chain about the meadow shrubbery and, while they extended the chain, the figure at the end, a light blue one, seized the hand of the white-robe. She stretched out her other hand invitingly to Kāmanīta.

He thanked her smilingly, but gently shook his head.

'I would prefer to be a spectator still.'

'Yes, better rest and awaken. For the present, farewell.' And, gently led away by the light blue, she floated thence in the airy roundelay.

The others also, with kind and cheerful greetings, moved away so that he might have quietude in which to collect himself.



24

THE CORAL TREE

KĀMANĪTA FOLLOWED THEM long with his eyes and wondered. And then he wondered at his wonder.



‘How does it happen that everything here seems so strange to me? If I belong to this place, why doesn’t everything appear perfectly natural? But every new thing I see is a puzzle and fills me with astonishment. For example, this fragrance that now floats past me so suddenly? How absolutely different it is from all other flower scents here – much fuller and more powerful, attracting and disquieting at the same time. Where can it come from? But where do I myself come from? It seems to me as though I was, only a short time ago, a mere nothing. Or did I have an existence? Only not here? If so, where? And how have I come here?’ While he revolved these questions in his mind, his body had risen up from the meadow, without his perceiving it, and he was already floating onward – though not in a direction taken by any of the others. He made his way upwards towards a depression in the crest of the hill. As he passed over it he was greeted by a yet more powerful breath of that new and strange perfume.

Kāmanīta flew onward. Beyond the hill the neighbourhood lost something of its charm. The show of flowers was scantier, the shrubbery darker, the groves more dense, the rocks more forbidding and higher. Herds of gazelles grazed there, but only in a few solitary instances was one of the Blessed to be seen.

The valley became narrower and ended in a cleft, and here the perfume grew yet stronger. Ever more rapid became his flight; ever more naked, steep and high did the rocky walls close around him until an opening was no longer to be seen.

Then the ravine made a couple of sharp turns and opened suddenly.

Round about Kāmanīta extended a deep, pit-like valley shut in by towering, deep

green malachite rocks which seemed to reach the heavens. In the midst of the valley stood the wonder-tree. Trunk and branches were of smooth, red coral; slightly more yellow was the red of the crisp foliage amid which blossoms of a deep crimson glowed and burned.

Over the pinnacles of the rocks and the summit of the tree rose the deep blue sky in which not a single cloud was to be seen. Nor did the music of the gandharvas penetrate in any appreciable degree to this spot – what still trembled in the air seemed to be but a memory of melodies heard in the long past.

There were but three colours to be seen in the valley: the cerulean blue of the heavens, the malachite green of the rocks, the coral red of the tree. And only one perfume – that mysterious fragrance, so unlike all others, of the crimson flowers which had led Kāmanīta there.

Almost immediately the wonderful nature of that perfume began to show itself.

As Kāmanīta inhaled it here, in the dense form in which it filled the whole basin, his consciousness became suddenly brightened. It overflowed and broke through the barriers which had been raised about him from the time of his awakening in the lake until the present.

His past life lay open before him.

He saw the hall of the potter where he had sat in conversation with that foolish Buddhist monk; he saw the little lane in Rājagaha through which he had hurried and the cow tearing towards him – then the horrified faces round about and the golden-clad monks themselves. And he saw the forests and the country roads of his spiritual wanderings, his palace and his two wives, the courtesans of Ujjenī, the robbers, the grove of Krishna and the Terrace of the Sorrowless with Vāsithī, his father's house, and the children's room...

And behind that he saw another life, and yet another, and still another, and ever others, as one sees a line of trees on a country road until the trees become points and the points blend into one strip of shadow.

At this, his brain began to reel.



At once he found himself in the cleft again, like a leaf that is driven by the wind. For on the first time, no-one can bear the perfume of the Coral Tree for long, and the instinct of self-preservation bears everyone away from there at the first sign of dizziness.

As he, by and by, moved more quietly through the open valley, Kāmanīta pondered: 'Now I understand why the white-robed one said she imagined I had not yet been to the Coral Tree. For I certainly could not imagine then what they had meant by "dream-pictures"; but now I know, for in that other life I have seen such. And I also know now

why I am here. I wanted to visit the Buddha in the Mango Grove near Rājagaha. Of course that intention was frustrated by my sudden and violent death, but my good intentions have been looked on favourably and so I have reached this place of bliss as though I had indeed sat at his feet and had died in his blessed Teaching. So my pilgrimage has not been in vain.' At this realization a great glad sigh issued forth from his heart, and he flew on.

Very soon Kāmanīta reached the lake again, where he let himself down upon his red lotus flower like a bird that returns to its nest.



25

THE BUD OF THE LOTUS OPENS

IT SUDDENLY SEEMED TO Kāmanīta as though something living were moving in the depths of the lake. In the crystal deeps he became dimly aware of a rising shadow. The waters bubbled and seethed, and a large lotus bud, red-tipped, shot like a fish above the surface on which it then lay swimming and rocking. The waters themselves rose and sank in ever-extending rings and, for a long time afterwards, trembled and glittered into fragments and radiating light, as if the lake were filled with liquid diamonds; the reflection of the watery coruscations flickered up like miniature flames over the lotus leaves, the robes and the faces and forms of the Blessed.



Kāmanīta's own being trembled and radiated all its hidden colours, and over his heart also there seemed to dance, as if in happy play, a reflection of joyous emotion.

'What was that?' his glance asked of his blue neighbour.

'Deep down, among far-distant worlds on the gloomy earth, a human being has this instant centred their heart's desire upon entering again into existence here in Sukhavatī. Now let us also see whether the bud will develop well and finally blossom. For many fix their desire on this pure abode of bliss and yet are not able to live up to its fulfilment but, on the contrary, they entangle themselves again in a maze of unholy passions, succumb to the cravings of sensuality and remain bound to the coarseness of life on earth. Then the bud withers away and at last disappears entirely. This time, as you see, it is a male.

'Such a one, in the chequered life of earth, fails more easily on the path to Paradise; and for this reason you will also notice that, even if the red and white are about equal in number, amongst the blue the females are by far the more numerous'.

At this communication the heart of Kāmanīta quivered strangely, as if all at once joy blended with pain and sorrow, bearing a promise of future happiness, had set it vibrating; and his gaze rested upon a closed lotus flower nearby, as though seeking the solution to some riddle. It was as white as the breast of a swan and rocked gracefully quite near to him in the still gently moving water.

‘Can you remember seeing the bud of my lotus rise from the depths?’ He asked of his experienced neighbour.

‘Surely, for it came up together with that white flower you are now gazing upon. And I have always watched the pair of you, at times with some anxiety. For fairly soon after its birth your bud began perceptibly to shrivel up, and it had almost sunk beneath the surface of the water when all at once it raised itself again, became fuller and brighter, and then developed magnificently until it opened. The white one, however, grew slowly but gradually and evenly towards the day when it should open, when suddenly it was attacked as if by some sickness. It recovered, however, very quickly and became the magnificent flower you now see before you.’

At these words there arose in Kāmanīta such a feeling of joy that it really seemed to him as if he had hitherto been but a sad guest in a sad place – to such a degree did everything now appear to glow, to smell sweet, and to breathe music.

And as though his gaze, which had rested unwaveringly on the white lotus, had been a magician’s wand for the raising of hidden treasures, the apex of the flower began to move, the petals bent their edges outward to droop gracefully down on every side, and lo! – in their midst sat the fair Vāsithī with widely-open eyes, whose sweetly smiling glance met his own.

Simultaneously Kāmanīta and Vāsithī stretched out their arms to one another, and hand in hand they floated away over the pond towards the bank.

Kāmanīta observed, of course, that Vāsithī had not as yet recognized him, but had only turned to him unconsciously as the sunflower towards the sun. How could she have recognized him – seeing that no-one, immediately on awakening, remembered anything of their previous life – even if at the sight of him dim presentiments might have stirred in the depths of her heart, as had happened in his own case when his neighbour spoke of the Heavenly Gangā.

He showed her the gleaming river, which emptied itself noiselessly into the lake: ‘In the same fashion the silver waters of the Heavenly Gangā feed all the lakes in the fields of the Blessed.’ ‘The Heavenly Gangā...?’ she repeated questioningly, and drew her hand across her forehead. ‘Come, let us go to the Coral Tree.’

‘But the groves and the shrubbery are so beautiful over there, and the Blessed are playing such delightful games,’ said Vāsithī, pointing in another direction.

‘Later! First let us go to the Coral Tree; you will be refreshed and revived by its wonderful perfume.’

Vāsithī followed him willingly – like a child that one has comforted with the promise of a new toy because of not having been allowed to take part in the joyous games of her friends. As the perfume began to float towards them her features grew more and more animated.

‘Where are you leading me?’ she asked, as they turned into the narrow gorge among the rocks. ‘Never before have I been so filled with expectation; and it seems to me that in the past, I have often been filled with expectations, although your smile reminds me that I have only just awakened to consciousness. But surely you have mistaken the way, we can go no farther in this direction.’

‘Oh we can go farther, much farther,’ smiled Kāmanīta, ‘and perhaps you will now become aware that that feeling of which you spoke has not deceived you, dearest Vāsithī.’

Even as he spoke there opened before them the basin of the valley amid the malachite rocks, with the red Coral Tree and the deep blue sky. Then the perfume of all perfumes enveloped her.

Vāsithī laid her hands on her breast as if to check her all too deep breathing. In an intense intermingling of sympathy and expectation Kāmanīta discerned, in the rapid play of light and shadow on her features, how the storm of life-memories was sweeping over her. Suddenly she raised her arms and flung herself on his breast: ‘Kāmanīta! My beloved!’ And he bore her thence, speeding back through the gorge with eager haste.

In the open valley with its dark shrubbery and thick groves, where the gazelles were at play but no human form disturbed the solitude, he descended with her, finding shelter under a tree.

‘Oh, my poor Kāmanīta,’ said Vāsithī, ‘what you must have suffered! And what must you have thought of me when you learned that I had married Sātāgīra!’ Then Kāmanīta told her how he had not learned that from hearsay but had himself, in the main street of Kosambī, seen the bridal procession, and how the speechless misery graven on her face had directly convinced him she had only yielded to the pressure of her parents. ‘But no power on earth would have compelled me, my only love, if I had not been forced to believe that I was in possession of sure proof that you were no longer alive.’

And Vāsithī began to tell him of the events of that bygone time.



2/10

THE CHAIN WITH THE TIGER-EYE

WHEN YOU, MY FRIEND, were gone from Kosambī, I dragged myself miserably through the days and nights, as a woman does who is devoured by a fever of longing, and is at the same time a prey to a thousand fears on behalf of her beloved. I did not even know whether you still breathed the air of this world with me, for I had often heard of the dangers of such journeys. And now I was forced to reproach myself most bitterly because, with my foolish obstinacy, I was to blame for your not having made the return journey in perfect safety under the protection of the embassy. Yet, with all this, I was not really able to repent of my thoughtlessness, because I owed to it all those precious memories which were now my whole treasure.



Even Medinī's cheering and comforting words were seldom able to dissipate for any length of time the cloud of melancholy which hung over me. My best and truest friend was the Asoka under which we stood on that glorious moonlit night, the tree that you, my sweetheart, have assuredly not forgotten, and to which I addressed on that occasion the words of Damayantī. Countless times did I try to obtain, by listening to the rustling of its leaves, an answer to my anxious questions, to see in the falling of a leaf or the play of light and shadow on the ground an omen of some kind. If it then happened that the sign given by such a self-invented oracle bore a favourable interpretation, I was able to feel happy for a whole day or even longer, and to look hopefully into the future. But just for that very reason my longing increased, and with the longing my fears returned as naturally as bad dreams result from a fevered temperature.

In this condition it was almost a benefit that, after a short time, my love was not permitted to live in solitary inactivity dedicated to suffering alone, but that it was forced into a combative attitude and obliged to gather up all its strength – even if thereby it brought me to the verge of complete estrangement from my own family.

It was in this way that it came about: Sātāgira, the son of the Minister, pursued me ever more assiduously now with tokens of his love, and I could no longer show myself in a public pleasure-garden with my companions without his being there and making me the object of his obtrusive attentions.

Unfortunately the fact that I didn't respond to these had not the slightest deterrent effect upon him – even though I showed him even more plainly than was polite how hateful they were to me. Soon, however, my parents began to plead his cause, first with all kinds of hints and then with less and less reserve, and when he finally came forward to press his suit openly, they demanded that I should give him my hand. I assured them, with bitter tears, that I could never love Sātāgira. That, however, made little impression upon them. But I was similarly as little affected by their representations, their prayers and their reproaches, and remained insensible alike to both the pleading of my mother and to the threats of my father. Driven to bay, I finally told them straight out that I had promised myself to you – of whom they had already heard from Sātāgira – and that no power on earth could either force me to break my word, which had been sacredly given to you, or to belong to another. And I added that, if the worst should come to the worst, I would kill myself by persistently refusing all nourishment.



As my parents now saw that I was quite capable of carrying out this threat they finally gave the matter up, although much put out and very angry, and Sātāgira also now seemed to yield to his fate and to be taking pains to comfort himself for his defeat in the courts of love by becoming the hero of victorious deeds on a sterner field of battle.

About this time people had many terrible tales to tell of the robber Angulimāla who, with his band, had laid waste whole districts, burnt villages and made the roads so unsafe that eventually almost no-one ventured to travel to Kosambī. I became a prey, as a consequence, to horrible fears for I naturally dreaded that you might at last be coming to me and be unfortunate enough to fall into his hands on the way.

Things stood thus when news arrived that Sātāgira had received the supreme command of a large body of troops with which to sweep the whole neighbourhood of Kosambī and if possible to capture Angulimāla himself, as well as the other members of the band. Sātāgira had, so the story ran, sworn to accomplish this or to fall fighting in the attempt.

Little as I was otherwise disposed to feel kindly towards the son of the Minister, I could not on this occasion refrain from wishing him the best of success and, when he moved out, my earnest wishes for his prosperity followed his colours.

About a week later I was in the garden with Medinī, when we heard loud cries from the street. Medinī rushed there at once to learn what had happened, presently she

announced that Sātāgira was returning to the city in triumph, having either cut down the robbers or taken them prisoner.

It seemed that Sātāgira had obtained information as to the whereabouts of the secret hideout of the band by capturing the beloved of one of Angulimāla's cronies and, through both threatening her life and promising rich rewards for their complicity, he had forced the man to betray his robber honour.

Sātāgira had thus been able to steal up on the gang with his troops, after one of their festive orgies, and had slaughtered most of them where they slept – Angulimāla himself had fallen into his hands alive.

She invited me to go out with her and Somadatta into the street, to witness the entry of the soldiers with the captive robbers, but I did not wish Sātāgira to have the satisfaction of seeing me among the spectators of his triumph. So I stayed behind alone, more than happy at the thought the roads were now again open to my beloved – for so little do mortals understand of the workings of karma that they sometimes, as I did then, treat as a specially fortunate day just that one on which the current of their lives takes a turn for the worse.



On the following morning my father entered my room. He handed me a crystal chain bearing a tiger-eye amulet, and asked me if I, by any possibility, recognized it.

I felt as though I should drop, but I summoned up all my strength and answered that the chain resembled one which you had always worn round your neck.

'It isn't like it,' said my father with brutal calmness, 'it is it. When Angulimāla was made prisoner he was wearing the chain and Sātāgira at once recognized it. For, as he related to me, he had once wrestled with Kāmanīta in the park for your ball and, in the course of the struggle, had seized Kāmanīta's chain in order to hold him back. The chain parted and remained in Sātāgira's hands so that he was able to examine it very carefully. He was convinced that he couldn't be deceived. And then Angulimāla, when closely questioned, confessed that two years ago he had attacked Kāmanīta's caravan on its return to Ujjenī, in the region of the Vedisa, had cut down his people and had taken Kāmanīta prisoner, along with a servant. The servant he sent to Ujjenī for ransom. As this was not forthcoming for some reason, he had put Kāmanīta to death, according to the custom of the robbers.'

At these frightful words I should certainly have lost consciousness, had not a possibility presented itself to my despairing mind of hoping against hope.

'Sātāgira is a low and crafty snake,' I answered, with apparent calm, 'who would not hesitate to cheat us; and he has set his heart, or rather his pride, upon gaining me for his wife. If he, at the time you speak of, examined the chain so attentively, what was to hinder him from having one made like it? I imagine that this idea occurred to him

when he first heard of Angulimāla. If he had not taken Angulimāla himself prisoner, he could always say that the chain had been found in possession of the robbers, and that they had confessed to having killed Kāmanīta.'

'That is hardly possible, my daughter,' said my father, shaking his head, 'and for a reason which you, it is true, cannot see, but which I, as a goldsmith, can fortunately reveal. If you will examine the small gold links which connect the crystals with one another, you will notice that the metal is redder than that of our jewellery here, because we use in our alloys more silver than copper. The workmanship also is of the somewhat coarser type seen in the mountain districts.'

On my lips there hung the reply:- So clever a goldsmith as himself would, no doubt, succeed as perfectly in the matter of the proper mixture of the gold as in turning out the characteristic workmanship. For I saw every one and everything conspiring against our love, and did not trust even my nearest relatives. However, I ended the matter by saying that I would not allow myself to be convinced by this mere chain that my Kāmanīta was not still alive.

My father left me in great anger and then, in solitude, I was able to give myself wholly up to my despair.





THE RITE OF TRUTH

AT THAT TIME I always spent the first hours of the night on the Terrace of the Sorrowless, either alone or with Medinī. On the evening of the day of which I have just spoken, I was there by myself and, considering the state of mind in which I then was, solitude was my best companion. The full moon shone as on those memorable nights of the past, and I stood before the great Asoka with its wealth of blossoms, to beg from it, the Heartsease, a comforting omen for my troubled heart. After some time I said to myself: 'If, between me and the trunk, a saffron-yellow flower should fall before I have counted to a hundred, then my beloved Kāmanīta is still alive.'



When I had counted to fifty a flower fell, but an orange-coloured one. When I reached eighty I began to count more and more slowly. Just then a creaking door opened in the corner between the terrace and the wall of the house, where a stair led down into the courtyard – a flight of steps really intended only for workmen and gardeners.

My father came forward, and behind him Sātāgira.

A couple of soldiers armed to the teeth followed, and after them came a man who towered a full head above the others. Finally, yet other soldiers brought up the rear of this strange, not to say inexplicable, procession. Two of the latter remained to guard the door, whilst all the others came directly towards me. At the same time I noticed that the giant in their midst walked with great difficulty, and that at every step there resounded a dismal clanking and rattling.

That very instant a saffron-yellow blossom floated down and remained lying just at my feet. I had ceased counting however, from sheer astonishment and, as a consequence, could not be sure whether it had fallen before or after the hundred had been reached.

The group now advanced from the shadow of the wall into the moonlight and then I saw with horror that the giant figure was loaded with chains. His hands were fettered at his back, about his ankles clanked heavy iron rings which were linked to either end of a huge rod and were connected by double chains of iron with a similar ring around his neck. To it, in turn, two other chains were fastened and these were held by two of the soldiers. As is usual in the case of a prisoner who is being conducted to the scaffold, around his neck and on his hairy breast there hung a wreath of the red Kanavera blossoms; and the reddish-yellow brick-dust with which his head was powdered caused the hair hanging down over his forehead, and the beard which reached almost to his eyes, to appear yet more ferocious. From this mask his eyes flashed out at me and then fell to the ground, wandering furtively hither and thither on the floor like those of an evil beast.

As to who stood before me I should not have needed to inquire, even if the Kanavera blossoms had concealed the symbol of his terrible name – the necklace of human fingers.

‘Now, Angulimāla,’ Sātāgira broke the silence, ‘repeat in the presence of this noble maiden what you have confessed on the rack regarding the murder of the young merchant Kāmanīta of Ujjeni.’

‘Kāmanīta was not murdered,’ answered the robber gruffly, ‘but taken prisoner and made away with, according to our customs.’

And he now related to me in a few words what my father had already told me of the matter.

I stood, meanwhile, with my back to the Asoka tree, and supported myself by clutching the trunk with both hands, burying my finger-nails convulsively in the bark in order to keep myself from falling.

When Angulimāla had finished speaking, everything seemed to be going round in a whirl. But even then I did not give up.

‘You are an infamous robber and murderer,’ I said, ‘what value can your word have for me? Why should you not say what is commanded to you by the one into whose power your villainies have brought you?’ And, as if by an inspiration which astonished even myself, and caused a glimmer of hope to flash up within me, I added: ‘You do not dare to look me in the eyes even once – you, the terror of all human beings, and me, a weak girl! You do not dare – because at the instigation of this man you are telling a cowardly lie.’

Angulimāla did not look up, but he laughed harshly and answered in a voice that sounded like the growling of a fettered beast of prey: ‘What good end would be served by looking you in the eyes? I leave that to young dandies. The eyes of an infamous robber you would believe as little as his words. And his oath would, I suppose, signify just as little.’

He came a step nearer.

‘Well then, maiden, be witness now to the Rite of Truth.’

Once again the lightning of his glance struck me as it swept upward and fixed itself upon the moon in such a way that, in the midst of the tangle of his discoloured hair and beard, only the whites of his eyes were still visible. His breast heaved, so that the red flowers moved as in a dance, and with a voice like that of thunder rolling among the clouds, he called aloud: *'You who tame the tiger, snake-crowned Goddess of Night! You who dance by moonlight on the pinnacles of the mountains, your necklace of skulls swaying and crashing, gnashing your teeth, swinging your blood-filled skull-cup! Mother Kālī! Mistress of the robbers! You who have led me through a thousand dangers, hear me! Truly as I have never withheld a sacrifice from you; truly as I have ever loyally observed your laws; truly as I did deal with this Kāmanīta according to our statute – the statute which commands us Senders when the ransom does not arrive by the appointed hour, to saw the prisoner through the middle and cast his remains on the public road – just as truly stand by me now in my direst need, rend my chains, and free me from the hands of my enemies.'*

As he said this he made a mighty effort – the chains rattled and shattered, arms and legs were free, the two soldiers who held him lay prone on the earth, a third he struck down with the iron links which hung at his wrists and before any one of us clearly understood what was happening, Angulimāla had swung himself over the parapet. With a fierce shout Sātāgira gave chase.

That was the last I saw or heard.

Afterwards I learned that Angulimāla had fallen, broken a foot and had been captured by the guard; that he had later died in prison under torture, and that his head had been placed over the east gate of the town where Medinī and Somadatta had seen it.

With Angulimāla's Rite of Truth my last doubt and my last hope left me. For I knew well that even the fearsome Goddess Kālī could not have worked a miracle to rescue him if he had not had the strength which truth lent to his side.

As to what should now become of me I troubled myself little, for on this earth everything good was henceforth lost. Only in the Paradise of the West could we two meet again. You had gone before me and I would, as I ardently hoped, soon follow. Only there could happiness blossom – all else was a matter of indifference.

As Sātāgira now continued to press his suit, and my mother, always wailing and weeping, kept on making representations to me that she would die of a broken heart if through me she should suffer the disgrace of having a daughter remain unmarried in the house of her parents:– She might just as well have given birth to the ugliest maiden in Kosambī! Little by little my resistance weakened.

Over and above this, I no longer had so much bitterness to bring against Sātāgira as before: I could not avoid recognizing the steadfastness and fidelity of his attachment, and I also felt that I owed him gratitude for having avenged the death of my beloved.

Thus, after almost another year had passed, I sadly became the bride of Sātāgira.



ON THE SHORES OF THE HEAVENLY GANGA

WHEN KĀMANĪTA PERCEIVED that even here in the abode of bliss these memories overshadowed, with dark and forbidding wings, the still delicate, newly awakened spirit of his beloved, he took her by the hand and led her away – guiding their flight to the soft green hill on whose slope he had recently lain and watched the games of the floating dancers.

Here they sought a resting-place. Already groves and shrubberies, meadows and hill-slopes were filled with countless floating figures, red, blue and white. Group after group surrounded them to greet the newly awakened one. And the two mingled joyfully amongst the ranks of the players.

They had been gliding hither and thither for a long time, wherever the chain of dancers led them – through the groves, round about the rocks, over the meadows and lotus pools – when they were suddenly met by the white-robed companion who had formerly called upon Kāmanīta to take the journey to the Gangā with her.

As they held out their hands to one another in the dance, she asked, with a sunny smile: ‘Well, have you been to the shores of the Gangā yet? You now have a companion, I see.’ ‘Not yet,’ answered Kāmanīta. ‘What is that?’ asked Vāsithī. And

Kāmanīta told her.

‘Let us go there,’ said Vāsithī. ‘Oh, how often have I, down in the sad valleys of earth, looked up to the distant reflection of the heavenly stream and thought of the blessed plains that are enfolded and watered by it, and asked myself if we should really one day be united in this place of bliss. Now I feel myself irresistibly drawn there, to linger with you on its shores.’

They withdrew from the chain of dancers and turned their flight in a direction which led them far from their own lake. After some time they saw no more lotus pools, nor the resplendent flowers bearing happy beings. The wealth of blossoms decreased perceptibly and more and more rarely did they meet the figures of the Blessed. Herds of gazelles and antelopes here gave life to the plains and swans glided along on the lakes, drawing trains of glistening waves behind them over the dark waters. The hills, which in the beginning had grown ever steeper and more rocky, disappeared entirely.

They floated over a flat, desert-like plain covered with tiger-grass and thorny shrubs, and before them lay stretched the endless curves of a forest of palms.

They reached the forest. More and more deeply did the shadows close in around them. The ringed trunks gleamed like bronze. High above them the tree-tops resounded with a clang as of metal.

In front, glistening points and streaks of light began to dance. And suddenly there streamed towards them such a blaze of light that they were obliged to hold their hands over their eyes. It seemed as though there stood a gigantic colonnade of burnished silver pillars in the forest, flashing back the light of the rising sun.

When they ventured again to remove their hands from their faces, they were just floating out between the last of the forest palms.

Before them lay the Heavenly Gangā, its silvery expanse reaching out to the far horizon; at their feet wavelets of liquid starlight lapped the pearl-grey sand of the shore, as if with tongues of flame both cool and argentine.

As a rule the sky begins to grow gradually clearer down towards the horizon, but here the order was reversed; the azure blue passed into indigo, and finally deepened to an all but absolutely black border, which rested heavily upon the silver waters.



Of the perfume of the blossoms of Paradise there was nothing left. And, whereas in the malachite valley that memory-laden perfume of perfumes lay dense around the Coral Tree, here there blew along the Stream of the Universe, a cool and fresh breath which took for its perfume the absence of all perfume – perfect purity. And Vāsithī seemed to quaff it greedily as a refreshing draught, while it took Kāmanīta's breath away.

Here also, one did not catch the faintest note of the music of the gandharvas. But from the stream itself there seemed to rise up mighty sounds like the deep booming of thunder.

'Listen,' whispered Vāsithī, and raised her hand.

'Strange,' said Kāmanīta, 'once on my journeyings I had found lodgings in a hut which stood at the entrance to a mountain ravine, and past the hut there flowed a little rivulet with clear water in which I washed my feet after my long day's walk. During

the night a violent rain fell and, as I lay awake in my hut, I heard the rivulet, which in the evening had rippled softly by, rush and rage with ever-increasing vehemence. At the same time my attention was caught by a banging, thundering sound which I could not explain to myself at all. The next morning, however, I saw that the clear brook had become a raging mountain torrent, with waters brown and foaming in which huge stones rolled and bounded as they dashed onward. And it was these that had caused the uproar. Why do you suppose that just here, when listening to these sounds, this memory out of the time of my pilgrimage should rise within me?' 'It comes from this,' answered Vāsithī, 'the sounds are analogous; though in that mountain stream you were merely hearing the collision of stones, here in the stream of the Heavenly Gangā, worlds are rolled and propelled along. It is these from which the booming sounds like thunder arise.'

'Worlds!' exclaimed Kāmanīta, horrified. Vāsithī smiled, and floated onward as she did so; but Kāmanīta, full of terror, caught her and held her back by her robe.

'Take care of yourself, Vāsithī! Who knows what powers, what fearful forces hold sway over this Stream of the Universe, forces into whose power you might fall by forsaking the shore. I tremble already at the thought of seeing you suddenly torn from me.'

'Would you not dare to follow me, then?' 'Certainly, I would follow you. But who knows whether I could reach you, whether we should not be torn from one another? And even if we remained together, what misery it would be to be borne away to the Illimitable, far from this abode of bliss.'

'To the Illimitable...!' repeated Vāsithī dreamily, and her glance swept over the surface of the Heavenly Gangā, far out to where the silver flood touched the black border of the sky, her gaze seeming to desire to penetrate ever farther. 'Is it possible, then,' she asked, as if she were lost in thought, 'for eternal happiness to exist where there is limitation?' 'Vāsithī!' exclaimed Kāmanīta, becoming truly alarmed. 'I wish I had never led you here! Come, love, come!' And, even more anxiously than from the Coral Tree, he drew her away from there.

She followed him willingly, but turned her head at the first palms as she did so, casting a last glance backward at the heavenly stream.

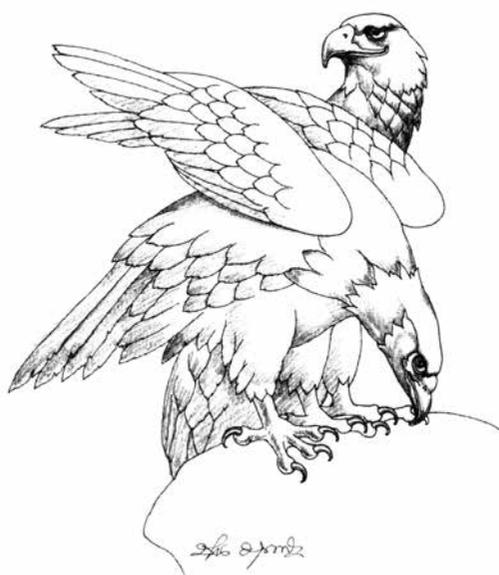


And again they were throned on the lotus seats in the crystal lake, again they floated between trees bearing blossoms of jewels, again they mingled with the ranks of the Blessed, joined in the dances, and enjoyed the raptures of heaven, happy in their unclouded love.

Once in the dance they met their friend of the white robe, who greeted them with:
'So you now really have been to the shores of the Heavenly Gangā.'

'How could you possibly know that we have been there?' 'I see it; for all who have been there wear a shadow on their brows. For that reason I don't wish to go. And you will also not go a second time, no-one ever does.'





AMID THE SWEETNESS OF THE CORAL BLOSSOMS

AS A MATTER OF FACT, they did not again visit the inhospitable shores of the Heavenly Gangā. Often, however, they turned their flight toward the valley of the malachite rocks. Reposing under the mighty crown of the Coral Tree, they breathed that perfume of perfumes which streamed from the crimson blossoms and, in the depths of their memory, there was opened up to them the vista of their former lives – life preceding life in some strangely appointed order, back into the far-distant past.



And they saw themselves in other times, when human beings were mightier than now, in those memorable heroic days when he tore himself from her arms and rode his war elephant to Hastinapura to aid his friends, the Pāndava princes, in their quarrel with the Kaurāvas; when, fighting at the side of Arjuna and Krishna, on the plain of Kurukshetra, on the tenth day of the gigantic battle he yielded up his spirit. And when she had received the news of his death and his shrouded body had been returned to her, she had ascended the funeral pyre in front of the palace, followed by all of her women, and had ignited the great blaze with her own hand.

And yet again they saw themselves in strange regions, amid scenery of another kind.

It was no longer the valley of the Gangā and Yamunā, with its magnificent palace-filled cities where warriors in shining armour, proud brahmins, rich merchants and diligent workers lent animation to the streets. This theatre which had so often framed the stage of their common life with its luxuriant tropical magnificence, as though there were no other world, now disappeared entirely to make room for a drearier and harsher land.

Here the sun of summer burns, it is true, just as hot as by the Gangā, dries up the water-courses and parches the grass, but in winter the frost robs the woods of their foliage and rime covers the fields. No towns rear their towers in this region; only widely scattered villages with large sheep-folds lie in the midst of its rich pastures, and the protecting elevation nearby is turned into a small fortress by means of ramparts and rough wall. A warlike, pastoral people have their home here. The woods are full of wolves; and miles away the trembling wayfarer hears the roar of the lion – ‘The beast that roams, frightful, savage; whose lair is in the mountains’ – as he describes it; for he is a song-maker.

After long wanderings, he approaches a village, an unknown but welcome guest; for that he is everywhere. Over his shoulder hangs his sole visible possession – a small harp – but in his head he carries the whole precious heritage of his fathers: ancient mystic hymns to Agni and Indra, to Varuna and Mitra, yes, even to unknown gods; songs of war and drinking choruses for men, lovesongs for the maidens; fortune-bringing magic sayings to protect the cattle, the givers of milk. And he has power and knowledge with which to increase this store from his own resources. Where, indeed, would such a guest not be welcome? It is the hour when the cattle are being driven home. At the head of a herd there walks, with supreme grace in every movement of her young body, a maiden of lofty stature; by her side goes her pet cow, whose bell the others follow, and from time to time the favourite licks her mistress’s hand. The young wanderer gives the maiden an evening greeting; she replies with kindly words. Smiling, they look at one another – and the look is the same as that which was born in the pleasure park of Kosambī, which flew back and forth between the ball-player on the stage and the handsome stranger.

But the Land of the Five Streams, after it has repeatedly given them shelter and a home, disappears in its turn as did the valley of the Gangā. Other regions come into view, other peoples and customs surround them – everything poorer, rougher, wilder.

The steppe over which the procession passes – horsemen, wagons, and people on foot in endless lines – is white with snow. The air is full of whirling flakes. Black mountains look darkly down. From under the tent-like roof of a heavy ox-wagon, a maiden leans forward with such haste of movement that the sheepskin slips aside, and her wealth of golden hair flows down over cheeks, throat and breast. Anxiety burns in her eyes as she gazes out in the direction in which all eyes are turned, where all fingers point – to where, like a dark cloud whirled up by the wind, a horde of mounted horsemen comes sweeping towards them. But she smiles confidently, as her glance meets that of the youth who rides on a black ox beside the wagon; and it is the same look as before, even if out of blue eyes. The glance sets the heart of the youth on fire – he swings his battle-axe, and with loud cry joins the other warriors who rush to meet the foe – sets it on fire, and still warms it when it is pierced by the cold iron of a Scythian arrow.

But they saw greater changes yet; led by the fragrant odour of the Coral Tree, they undertook even longer journeys.

They found themselves as stag and hind in a vast forest. Their love was wordless now, but not sightless. And again it was the same look; deep in the darkest depths of their great eyes, as if prescient, there lightened, even if through dim blue mists, the same spark that had later found its way so radiantly from human eye to human eye.

They grazed together and waded side by side in the clear, cool forest brook; body by body they rested in the tall soft grass. They had their joys in common and together they trembled for fear, when a branch suddenly became alive and the jaws of the python opened wide or when, in the stillness of the night, a scarcely audible creeping movement was caught by their quick ears, while flaring nostrils discerned the pungent odour of a beast of prey, and they fled with mighty bounds, just as a rustling crack made itself heard in the neighbouring thicket and the angry roar of a tiger that had fallen short of its prey rolled through the wood, which now suddenly awakened to life all around.



Farther yet, and a pair of golden eagles were building their eyrie high up in a savage mountain fastness, hanging over the blue abysses of the Himalayas, circling round its snowy pinnacles.

As two dolphins they ploughed the boundless expanse of old Ocean's salty flood.

Yes, once they even grew as two palms on an island in the midst of the seas, their roots intertwined in the cool sand of the shore and their tops rustling together in the cool sea-breeze.

Thus did they two, companions in so many wanderings, linger in the shade of the Coral Tree and, day by day, enjoy the sweets of memory exhaled by its fragrant blossoms.

For even as a royal couple have many tales related to them by the court story-teller in pursuit of amusement and knowledge – now the life-story of a king, now a simple village tale; at one time a heroic poem, at another a legend of ancient days; or maybe a fable of some animal, or a fairy tale – and all the while they know that, however often it pleases them to listen, there is no fear that this prince of story-tellers will ever be at a loss for words, because the treasury of his knowledge and his own inventive ability are both inexhaustible – so these two were able to say to themselves: 'However often and however long we may linger here, even if it were for an eternity, there is no danger that these blossoms will ever be unable to waken further memories; for the farther we go down into the abysses of time, the farther does time recede before us.'

And they marvelled much.

'We are as old as the world,' said Vāsithī.



‘TO BE BORN IS TO DIE...’

‘ASSUREDLY: WE ARE as old as the world,’ said Kāmanīta. ‘But up to this time we have wandered on, never resting, and the Lord of Death when he has come has always projected us into a new life. Now, however, we have reached a place where there is no more passing away, where eternal joy is our sweet possession.’



At the time when he spoke thus, they were just returning from the Coral Tree to their lake. He was about to let himself down on his lotus flower when it suddenly struck him that its red colour seemed to have lost something of its freshness and gloss. Yes, as he now remained floating over it in the air and looked attentively down, he saw with dismay that the petals of the corona had become brown at the edges, as if they had been burnt, and that their tips were losing their vitality and curling up.

Vāsithī’s white lotus did not look any better; she also had remained floating over hers, evidently arrested by the same phenomenon.

He turned his eyes upon his blue neighbour whose lotus showed just the same change, and Kāmanīta noticed that his face did not beam as joyously as it had on that day when he, Kāmanīta, first greeted him; his features were not so animated as formerly, his bearing not so open. Yes, even in his eyes Kāmanīta read the same dismay that had moved himself and Vāsithī.

And it was the same, as a matter of fact, everywhere he looked. A change had come over all the flowers and the Blessed of Sukhavatī.

Again he directed a searching glance towards his own lotus. One of the petals in the corona seemed to come alive – slowly it bent itself forward, but then it fell loose upon the surface of the water.

But it did not fall alone.

At the same instant a crown petal was loosened from every lotus flower – the whole expanse of water glittered and trembled and, as it rose and fell, it gently rocked the dainty, coloured fleet upon its bosom. Through the groves on the bank went a breath of frost; and a shower of blossoms, like sparkling jewels, fell to the ground.

A sigh was wrung from every breast, and a low but cutting disharmony traversed the music of the heavenly gandharvas.

‘Vāsithī, my love!’ exclaimed Kāmanīta, seizing her hand in deep agitation. ‘Do you see? Do you hear? What is this? What can it mean?’ Vāsithī, however, looked at him, calmly smiling.

‘This was in His mind, when He said, ““To be born is to die; All-destroying, Oblivion’s breath holds sway; As in the gardens of Earth, Flowers of Paradise fade, and pass away,”’ ‘Who is the author of that terrible, hope-destroying utterance?’ ‘Who but He, the Blessèd One, perfect in conduct and understanding; who has made clear the Truth out of compassion for all, for the enlightenment of us all, for the happiness of all; who has revealed the nature of the world with all its beings: the lowly and the noble, with its troops of gods, humans and demons; the Guide who shows the way out of this world of change; the Master, the Perfect One, the Buddha.’

‘The Buddha is supposed to have said that? Oh no, Vāsithī, that I do not believe. How often are the words of such great teachers misunderstood and inaccurately repeated, as I myself best know! For once, in Rājagaha, I spent the night in the hall of a potter in the company of a foolish monk who insisted on expounding what he called the Teaching of the Buddha to me. What he advanced, however, was poor stuff – a self-fabricated and stupid doctrine – although I could, it is true, perceive that genuine sayings of the Master lay at the root of it. They were spoilt, however, in the attempt to correct them and were misinterpreted by that contrary, nihilistic old man. I am sure that similar fools have also reported this saying falsely to you.’

‘Not so, my friend. For I heard it from the lips of the Master himself.’

‘What, beloved? You have yourself seen the Master, face to face?’ ‘I certainly have. I have sat at his feet.’

‘Oh, happy Vāsithī! For you are happy now in the memory of it – that I can see. I suppose that I would also be as happy and as confident as you, had not my dark karma – the fruit of unwholesome deeds of the past which had grown ripe at that sorrowful instant – robbed me at that last moment of the joy of seeing the sublime Buddha. For a violent death swept me away as I was journeying to him, in the very place in which he was residing too, in Rājagaha itself, on the morning after my talk with that fool of an ascetic. Just think of it: my karma overtook me only about a quarter of an hour’s distance from the mango grove where the Master had taken up his abode. But now this is given to me for comfort instead – that my Vāsithī succeeded in obtaining what was

denied to me. Tell me everything about your coming to him, to the Master! I am sure it will raise me up and strengthen me. And perhaps that saying of his, that seemed so terrible and so destructive of all hope, will grow clear and will lose its sting, yes, perhaps even contain some hidden ground for comfort.'

'Gladly, my friend,' replied Vāsithī.

They let themselves down on their lotus flowers, and Vāsithī went on with the story of her life.



THE APPARITION ON THE TERRACE

WHEN SĀTĀGIRA HAD REACHED the goal he had set himself – that is, possessing me as his wife – the ardour of his love rapidly cooled; and all the more quickly since it met with no response on my side. I had promised to be a true wife to him, and he knew well that I would keep my word, but more than that did not lie within my power, even if I had wished it.

As I bore him only a daughter who died in her second year, no-one wondered – and I least of all – that he took a second wife. She bore him the wished-for son. As a consequence she received the first place in the house and was able, in clever fashion, to attach to herself the love that I had so willingly resigned. Over and above this, matters of business more and more claimed the attention of my husband for, after the death of his father, he had succeeded the latter as the Minister of State.

In this way, several years slipped quietly by and I was left, for the most part, to myself, which was just what I desired. I gave myself up to my griefs, both for the loss of you and for my little girl; I almost felt that she, finding herself in a loveless family and with a mother given to such melancholy, had simply made up her infant mind to depart. So I communed only with memories and lived in the hope of a happy meeting here above – a hope in which I have not been disappointed.

Sātāgira's palace lay close to the same ravine from which you so often climbed up to the Terrace of the Sorrowless but at a much steeper place, and it had a terrace similar to the one at my father's house. Here I was accustomed to spend all the fine evenings in the hot season – often passing even the whole night there, reposing on a

couch. The rocky front of the ravine, which was also surmounted by a high wall, was so steep and slippery that I felt certain no human being could scale it.

Once, on a mild and glorious moonlit night, I lay on my bed unable to sleep. I was thinking of you, and particularly of that first evening together: the moment when I sat with Medinī on the marble bench on the Terrace awaiting your arrival, stood vividly before my mind's eye. And I thought of how, even before we had hoped for it, your form suddenly appeared over the top of the wall – for in your passionate ardour you had easily outdistanced Somadatta.

Lost in these sweet dreams, I had unconsciously let my gaze rest upon the parapet, when suddenly a figure rose up above it.

I was so convinced that no human being could ever scale this part of the wall, that I did not doubt in the least that your spirit, conjured up by my longing, had come to comfort me, and to bring me news of the blessed place where you now awaited me. For this reason I was in no way frightened but got up and extended my arms to embrace my visitor.

When, however, he stood on the Terrace and approached me with rapid steps, I saw that his figure was much taller than yours – indeed, even gigantic – and I perceived that I had the spirit of Angulimāla before me. But at that I became so greatly terrified that I was obliged to cling to the head of my couch in order not to fall down.

‘Whom did you expect?’ asked the fearsome apparition, coming close to me.

‘A spirit, but not yours,’

I answered. ‘Kāmanīta’s spirit?’

I nodded.

‘When you made your movement of welcome,’ he went on, ‘I feared that you had a lover who visited you here at nights. If that were so, you would not be able to help me. And I need your help as much as, at present, you need mine.’

At these strange words I ventured to look up, and now it seemed to me that in truth I did not have a spirit before me, but a being of flesh and blood. The moon, however, was behind him and, dazzled by its beams as well as confused by my terror, I only saw the outlines of a figure which might well have belonged to a demon.



‘I am not the spirit of Angulimāla,’ he said, guessing my thoughts, ‘I am Angulimāla himself, a living human being as you are.’

I began to tremble violently, not from fear but because I was standing face to face with the man who had cruelly murdered my beloved.

‘Do not be afraid, gracious lady,’ he went on, ‘you have nothing to fear from me; on the contrary, you are the only person I myself have ever been afraid of, and whom I dared not look in the eye, because, as you so truly said, I was deceiving you.’

‘You deceived me!’ I exclaimed, and I scarcely know even now whether joy rose up in my heart, awakened by the hope that my loved one was still alive, or whether yet greater despair seized me as I thought that I had allowed myself to be deluded into separating myself from my beloved.

‘I did,’ he said, ‘and for that reason we are thrown upon one another. For we both have something to avenge, and on the same man – Sātāgira!’ He spat the name.

With the bearing of a prince, this robber made a movement of his hand, bidding me be seated, as though he had much to say to me. I had been holding myself erect with difficulty and now sank down upon the bench without power of volition. I gazed at him, breathlessly eager to hear his next words which should enlighten me as to the fate of my beloved.

‘Kāmanita with his caravan,’ he went on, ‘fell into my hands in the wooded region of the Vedisas. He defended himself bravely but was captured unwounded and, as the ransom arrived in good time, he was sent home without molestation. He arrived safely in Ujjeni.’

At this news a deep sigh escaped my breast. For the moment I felt only joy in the knowledge that my beloved was yet amongst the living; foolish as the feeling was, for living he was even further removed from me than he would have been by death.



‘When I fell into Sātāgira’s power,’ Angulimāla continued, ‘he at once recognized the crystal chain with the tiger-eye amulet on my neck as the same one that had belonged to Kāmanita. On the following evening he came to my prison alone and promised, to my unbounded astonishment, to give me my freedom if I would swear in the presence of a maiden that I had killed Kāmanita. “Your oath alone would not convince her, to be sure,” Sātāgira had said, “but she must believe in a Rite of Truth.” He explained to me that I was, at the first hour of the night, to be conducted to a terrace where the maiden would be found. He would see that the fetters were filed through so that I could without difficulty burst them, after which it would be an easy matter for me to swing myself over the breast-work of the parapet, climb down into the ravine and escape; since the gully finally ended in a narrow watercourse through which a small brook ran under the city wall and emptied itself into the Gangā. With a solemn oath he swore that he would do nothing to hinder my escape from Kosambī.

‘It is true I did not trust him overmuch, but I saw no other way of escape. To perform the Rite of Truth – and in so doing to utter an absolute falsehood – nothing whatsoever could have induced me to do that, I acknowledge, for I should thereby have called down upon myself the most fearful judgement of the angry and insulted Goddess. But I saw at once how I could so express my oath as not to tell an untruth, yet at the same time, every one hearing would believe I had killed Kāmanita. And I trusted that Mother Kālī, who finds pleasure in craftiness of all kinds, would stand by me with all her power on account of this masterpiece and would lead me safely through the snares which the treachery of Sātāgira might lay for me.

‘As a matter of fact, everything now occurred in the way that we had arranged, and you yourself saw how I burst the iron chains asunder. But, to this day, I don’t know whether Sātāgira kept faith with me and had the chains filed through, as he had promised, or whether the Dark Mother helped me by a miracle. I am more inclined, however, to believe the former, for scarcely had I swum a few strokes out into the Gangā when I was fallen upon by a boatload of armed men. So he had evidently relied upon that ambush. Yet here could be seen what Kālī’s help is worth – for, although the pieces of chain hanging on my wrists were my only weapons, I succeeded in killing every man of them, and on the boat, which had capsized during the fight, I fortunately reached the safety of the north bank, though to be sure not without bearing away so many and such deep wounds that a whole year passed before I had recovered from them. During that time I often swore that Sātāgira would pay for what he had done. And now the time for that payment has come.’

In my heart there raged a storm of indignation at the shameful deception which had been practised upon me. I couldn’t blame the robber for saving his life as he did and, as he hadn’t soiled his hands with the blood of my beloved, I forgot for the moment how much other innocent blood adhered to them, and I felt neither fear nor disgust in the presence of this man who, whatever else he might have done, had brought me the message that my Kāmanīta yet dwelt in this world, even as I did. But a bitter hatred rose up within me against him whose fault it was that you and I were obliged to wander apart until the end of our earth journey; and, when I heard Angulimāla threaten his life, I experienced a deep and involuntary pleasure which, I imagine, was to be read in the expression of my face. For, in an excited and passionate tone of voice, Angulimāla continued: ‘I perceive, noble lady, that your lofty spirit thirsts for revenge, and soon you shall have your desire. For it is with that end in view that I have come here. For many weeks I have lain in wait for Sātāgira, just outside of Kosambī, and at last I have learned from a sure source that, in the course of the next few days, he will leave the town for the valleys lying to the east where a legal dispute, at present impending between two villages, has to be settled. My original plan, formed before I knew of this, was to force him to make a sally against me in order to take me prisoner again; but this journey of his has greatly simplified matters. To be sure I have made no secret of my presence, in accordance with my original intention, but have let my deeds speak for me – and the report of my reappearance has for a long time been freely circulated.

‘Although most people believe that some impostor has arisen who gives himself out to be Angulimāla, still fear has already seized on people to such an extent that only large and well-armed bands now venture out into the wooded region to the east, where I have my headquarters. To all appearance you have heard nothing of this, probably for the reason that, as a woman despoiled of her life’s happiness, you dwell in solitude with your grief.’

‘I have certainly heard of a daring band of robbers, but as yet without mention of your name; that was why at first I believed I saw your ghost.’

‘But Sātāgira has heard me named,’ the robber went on, ‘depend on that. And, as he has good reason to believe that it is the true Angulimāla, and has yet better reason to fear him, it may be taken for granted that he will not only travel under a powerful escort but will also take other precautions and make use of many devices with intent to conceal his real plans. However, although the band which I command is not very large, no kind of precaution will help him, if I only know for certain at what hour he moves out and what road he takes. And this it is that I hope to learn from you.’

Although I had up until now listened to what he had to say – dumb with amazement and as if laid under a spell, without thinking how much I was already compromising myself by doing so – at this suggestion, I rose up indignantly and asked what gave him the right to believe that I had sunk low enough to take a thief and robber as an ally.

‘In the case of an ally,’ replied Angulimāla quietly, ‘the chief thing is that they are to be depended upon, and you feel – of that I am convinced – that I am absolutely to be relied upon in this matter. On the other hand I need your help, for only in that way can I learn with certainty what I wish to know. True I have a source of information which is usually reliable, and from which as a matter of fact I know of Sātāgira’s journey, yet if our man causes a false report to be circulated, even this source can become untrustworthy. But you need me, because in a case like yours a proud and lofty being finds satisfaction only in the death of the traitor. If you were a man, then you would kill him yourself; as you are a woman, my arm is necessary to you.’

I was about to dismiss him angrily, but with a dignified movement of his hand he gave me to understand that he had not said all that he had to say – so, against my will, I paused and became silent.

‘Thus far, noble lady, I have spoken of revenge. But there is something other and weightier to come. For you, to secure future happiness; for me, to atone for the past. Justly, it is said of me that I am cruel, without compassion for man or beast. Yes, I have done a thousand deeds for each of which one must receive the consequences, as the priests teach, for a hundred or even a thousand years in the lowest hell. It is true I had a wise and learned friend, Vājashravas – whom the common people now even revere as a saint, and on whose grave I have offered rich sacrifices – and that he often demonstrated to us that there were no such hell-punishments but that, on the contrary, the robber was the most Brahman-filled of all living beings and the crown of creation. Yet he was somehow never able to convince me of the truth of his position.

‘Be that as it may, however – whether there are hell-punishments or not – this much is certain, that of all my deeds only one lies heavily upon my conscience, and that is that with my deceitful Rite of Truth I cheated you. Even then I did not dare to look you in the face – as you rightly discerned – and the memory of that hour sits ever like a thorn in my flesh. Well, the wrong I did you then I would now like to make good,

so far as that is still possible, and so do away with the hurtful consequences of my act. By my sly dealing you were separated from Kāmanīta, whom you believed to be dead, and were chained instead to this false Sātāgira. These fetters I now wish to take from you so that you may be free to unite yourself with your beloved, and I will go to Ujjenī myself and bring him to you safe and sound. Now do your part – and I will do mine. It is not difficult for a beautiful woman to draw a secret from her husband. Tomorrow, as soon as it is dark, I shall come here again to get the necessary information from you.’

He bowed deeply and, in my bewilderment and dismay, before it was possible for me to utter a single word, he vanished from the Terrace as suddenly as he had appeared.





श्री २००२

32

SATAGIRA

THE WHOLE NIGHT THROUGH I remained on the Terrace, the unresisting prey of passions hitherto unknown to me, but which were now unchained and which made sport with my heart as the whirlwind flurries the leaf.

My Kāmanīta was still alive! In his distant homeland he must have heard of my marriage, for otherwise he would have come long ago. How faithless – or how pitilessly weak – I must appear in his eyes! And for this degradation of mine Sātāgira was alone to blame. My hatred for him grew more deadly with every passing minute and deeply did I feel the truth of Angulimāla’s words that, if I had been a man, I would assuredly have killed him.

Then the prospect that Angulimāla had so unexpectedly opened up to me presented itself: that, if I were free, I could marry my beloved. At the thought my whole being became so wildly excited that I felt as if my blood would rend my breast and burst my temples. Incapable of holding myself upright I was not even able to totter to the bench, but sank down upon the marble tiles and my senses left me.

Eventually the coolness of the morning dew brought me back to my unhappy existence, together with its terrible questions:- Was it true that I wished to band myself together with a robber and thousandfold murderer, in order to get the man out of the way who had once led me around the nuptial fire?

As yet, however, I had not the least knowledge of when my husband was to leave. And how was I to ascertain the time of his departure, or the exact route he intended to take, if he had made a secret of these? ‘It is not difficult for a beautiful woman to draw

a secret from her husband' – these words of the robber still rang in my ears and made plain to me the lowness of such a course of action. Never would I be able to make up my mind to inveigle myself into his confidence by tenderness, in order then to betray him to his arch-enemy. But just because I felt this so clearly, so did it also become clear to me that it was really only the idea of the treacherous and hypocritical worming out of his secret that I deeply loathed. Had I already been in possession of it – had I known where to go in order to find a tablet on which it all stood written – I should certainly have furnished Angulimāla with the fatal information.

When this became plain to me I trembled with horror, as though I were already guilty of Sātāgira's death. I thanked fate that there was no possibility of getting this information, for even if I had been able to learn at what hour they were to start, still only Sātāgira himself and at the most perhaps one confidant, would know what roads and paths had been decided upon.

I saw the rising sun gild the towers and cupolas of Kosambī, as I had seen this ravishing spectacle so many times from the Terrace of the Sorrowless – but with what quite different feelings than when I spent the blessed night hours there with you! Unhappy as never before, weary and miserable as though I had in this one night aged by decades, I took myself back to my quarters.

In order to reach my rooms I was obliged to go through a long gallery, opening off which were several chambers with latticed windows. As I passed one of these I heard voices. One of them, that of my husband, was just then raised: 'Good! We start tonight – an hour after midnight.' I had stopped involuntarily. So I knew the hour! But the road? A flush of shame suffused my face for having played the eavesdropper. 'Fly, fly!' a voice made itself heard within me, 'there is still time!' But I stood as if rooted to the spot.

Sātāgira, however, said nothing further. He may have heard my footsteps and their stopping at the door, for the latter was suddenly torn open. My husband stood before me.

'I heard your voice in passing,' I said with quick resolution, 'and thought of asking whether I should bring you some refreshments as you have business so early. Then I feared to disturb you and was about to pass on.' Sātāgira looked at me without suspicion and even with great friendliness.

'Thank you,' he said, 'I need no refreshments, but you in no way disturb me. On the contrary, I was about to send for you and only feared that you had not yet risen. You can, just at this moment, be of the greatest service to me.'

He invited me to enter his room, which I did in a state of great astonishment, very curious to know what the service might be which he desired from me – just at this moment, when a deadly purpose against him filled my whole being.

A man, whom I recognized as the master of Sātāgira's horses and his most trusted follower, was sitting on a low bench. He rose as I entered and bowed. Sātāgira invited me to sit down beside himself, signed to the officer to be seated again, and turned to me.

'The matter is this, dear Vāsithī. I am obliged, as soon as possible, to undertake a journey in order to settle a village quarrel in the province to the east. Now, for several weeks, robbers have been active in the wooded region east of Kosambī and, as a matter of fact, very near to the town. Indeed, a foolish tale has even arisen that their leader is none other than Angulimāla – people having the unheard-of affrontery to assert that Angulimāla had, on the last occasion, escaped from prison and that I had, in place of his head, stuck up another very like it over the gate. Of course we can afford to laugh at all such fantastic stories. But, nevertheless, this robber does not seem to stand much behind the famous Angulimāla in point of audacity and, if he really gives himself out to be the latter in order to gain a large following by the use of his renowned name, his intention assuredly is to perform some particularly brilliant and deadly feat. For that reason a certain amount of prudence is, under all circumstances, advisable.'

A small table, inlaid with precious stones, stood beside him and on it a silk handkerchief.

He took the handkerchief up and mopped his forehead, observing, as he did so, that the day was very hot in spite of the early hour. I perceived, of course, that it was fear of Angulimāla which had caused the perspiration to flow from his every pore.

Instead of awakening my compassion, however, the sight only filled me with contempt for him. I saw that he was no hero – a fact that had now been made doubly clear by his deception of me and the cowardly subterfuge he had employed in taking Angulimāla prisoner.

'Now, however,' my husband went on, 'I cannot well arrive in these villages with a whole army; indeed, I should not like to take more than thirty mounted men with me on this journey. So all the more are prudence and diplomatic stratagem essential. I have just been discussing this with my faithful Panduka and he has made a good suggestion, of which I will also inform you, in order that you need not be in too great a state of anxiety on my account during these days.'

I murmured something that was intended to signify gratitude for this consideration.

'Panduka will, therefore,' he went on, 'make all necessary preparations and, with a great deal of ostentation, pretend as though I intended to make an expedition early tomorrow to the east with a fairly large body of troops to capture the robbers. If these, then, have their accomplices here in town who keep them informed of what goes on, they are certain to be deceived by it. In the meantime I shall start with my thirty riders an hour after midnight and, going out of the southern gate, shall take my way in a wide sweep through the hilly land to the south-east. Yet, even so, I should like to avoid the main roads until I have left Kosambī several miles behind. Now, just in this

neighbourhood lies your father's summer residence, and there you know every road and path from your childhood; you will be able then, I imagine, to help me greatly in this matter.'

I was at once ready to do so, and while I described everything to him in detail, I had a drawing-board brought and drew upon it an exact map of the neighbourhood of our country house, with crosses at the places which he must especially note. But chiefly did I recommend to him a certain path which led through a ravine. This ravine narrowed gradually until, finally, for a short distance, even two men could not ride through it abreast. On the other hand, however, the path was so little known that, even if the robbers should suspect him of making such a detour, not one of them would ever think of looking for him there.

In this ravine, however, I had as an innocent child played with my brothers, as well as with Medinī and our tenant's children.

Sātāgira noticed that the hand with which I drew on the board trembled, and asked me if I were feverish. I answered that it was only a little tiredness after a sleepless night. But he took my hand and found to his apprehension that it was cold and damp and, when I wished to withdraw it with the remark that it signified nothing, he continued to hold it in his own while he exhorted me to be prudent and to take care of myself. In his look and voice I observed, with unspeakable resentment and even with horror, something of the admiring tenderness of those days when he had sued for my hand in vain. I hastened to say that I really did not feel very well, and intended to take myself at once to bed.

But Sātāgira followed me out into the gallery and there, where we were alone, he began to excuse himself:- He had, it was true, neglected me for a long time for the mother of his son, but after his return things would be different; it would no longer be necessary for me to spend the nights alone on the Terrace.

He showed a tenderness that seemed to have arisen from the grave of a long-forgotten youthful love – a love which I was forced to recognize had, with a certain stubborn fidelity, once existed only for me; but although this could not fail to incline my heart somewhat in his favour – so that for a moment I wavered in my purpose – his parting words, which were uttered with a honeyed smile and such a loathsome familiarity, were of such a nature to destroy this inclination again for they reminded me of rights of intimacy which had been filched from me by his vile and cowardly treachery.





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ANGULIMALA

A FRIGHTFUL CALM NOW came over me as I returned to my room. There was nothing more to be considered, no doubt to be combated, no more questions to be answered. All was decided; his karma had ordained it so. By his double treachery his life was plainly forfeit to me and to Angulimāla.



So great was this calm that I fell asleep the instant I laid myself down on my couch, as though my whole being were anxiously endeavouring to bridge over the empty hours of waiting.

When it became dark I went to the terrace; the moon had not yet risen. I had not long to wait; Angulimāla's powerful figure swung itself over the parapet and came straight to the bench on which I sat half averted from him. I did not move and, without raising my eyes from the pattern of the coloured marble tiles, I spoke: 'What you wish to learn, I know. Everything. The hour when he leaves, the strength of his escort, the direction he takes and the roads and paths over which he goes. Under the influence of his own bad karma he himself forced his confidence upon me, otherwise I would have known nothing of it, for I could never have drawn it from him by feigned tenderness.'

I had considered these words well, for so foolish are we in our pride that even now, when I was making myself the tool of a criminal, it was to me an unendurable thought that I should appear lower in his eyes than I really was.

No less studied were my next words: 'Of all this, however, you will not hear one syllable unless you first promise that you will only kill but in no way torture him; and that you will kill only him and not even one of his escort, unless it be necessary in self-defence. I will, however, indicate a spot to you where you can deal him his death-blow when he is absolutely alone and so without any kind of fray. This, therefore, you

must promise me with a solemn oath. Otherwise you can kill me, but not one word more shall you hear.’ ‘Truly as I have been, to this day, a faithful servant of Mother Kālī,’ replied Angulimāla, ‘so truly will I kill none of his escort and so truly shall he suffer no torture.’

‘Good,’ I said, ‘I will trust you. Now then, listen, and note every detail exactly. If you have accomplices in the town you will have learnt already that preparations are being made for advancing against the robbers tomorrow. That is, however, all empty show to deceive you. In reality Sātāgira, escorted by thirty horsemen, rides from the town by the south gate an hour after midnight, leaves the Simsapā wood lying to his left, and sweeps out in a more southerly direction in order then to move eastward over byways through the hill country.’

And I now gave him an absolutely exact description of the neighbourhood, including the narrow ravine through which Sātāgira would have to pass, and where he could easily and surely be killed.

An oppressive silence followed my words, during which I heard nothing save my own hard breathing. I felt that I had not yet strength to rise and leave the terrace as I had planned to do.

Finally Angulimāla spoke, and the gentle, even sad note in his voice surprised me to such a degree that I was almost terrified and started involuntarily.

‘And so it would have happened,’ said he. ‘And you, the tender, gentle wife who has assuredly never intentionally injured even the smallest of creatures, would now have been in alliance with the vilest of human beings, a wretch whose hands drip blood. Yes, the murder of your husband would have burdened your conscience and would now be spinning its black karmic threads on the downward path, on into the infernal world – that is, so it would have been, if you had now been speaking to the robber Angulimāla.’

I didn’t know whether I could believe my ears. To whom else had I spoken then? It was certainly the voice of Angulimāla, even if with that wonderful change of tone; and as I turned abruptly round, now thoroughly dismayed and confused, and looked intently at him, it was beyond all doubt the robber-chieftain who stood before me, even if, in his whole bearing another character seemed to be expressed than that which on the previous day had held me in its fearful thrall.

‘But have no fear, noble lady,’ he added, ‘all this has not yet happened. Nothing has happened, not any more than if you had addressed your speech to this tree.’

These words were as puzzling to me as those that had preceded them. But I did understand that, for some reason, he had given up his plan of vengeance on Sātāgira.

After I had worked myself up through frightful inner struggles to such an unnatural pitch of crime, this sudden incomprehensible melting away, this ghost-like loss of

action, was a disappointment which I could not bear. The unusual strain to which my whole nature had been subjected found vent in a stream of abuse which I hurled in Angulimāla's face.

I called him a dishonourable villain, a faithless empty braggart, a cowardly cheat and much more – the worst names I could think of – for I hoped that when irritated in this way the man, notorious throughout Jambudvīpa for his violent temper, would stretch me lifeless on the ground with one blow of his iron fist.

But when I stopped, more because breath failed me than words did, Angulimāla answered with a softness of tone that quite put me to shame: 'All this and more have I deserved from you; yet with it I do not believe that you would have been able to so irritate even the old Angulimāla that he would have killed you – for I can see that to accomplish this is your intention. But even if another had now said this and worse, I would not only have borne it quietly but would indeed have been grateful to them for giving me the opportunity of undergoing a useful test. Has not the Master himself taught me: "Like the Earth, you should exercise evenness of temper. Even as one casts upon the Earth both that which is clean and that which is unclean, and the Earth is neither pleased nor horrified, humiliated or disgusted at that – so also like the Earth, exercise evenness of temper so that pleasant and unpleasant experiences will not invade your mind and remain." For you speak, Vāsithī, not with the robber, but with the upāsaka, the disciple Angulimāla.'

'What kind of disciple!? What Master?' I asked, with contemptuous impatience, although the strange speech of this incomprehensible man did not fail to exercise a peculiar, almost fascinating effect upon me.

'He whom they call the Tathāgata, the Knower of the Worlds, the Fully-Enlightened One, the Buddha,' he answered. 'He is the Master. Have you not heard of him before now?' I shook my head.

'I count myself happy,' he exclaimed, 'in that I am the first from whose lips you hear the name of the Blessèd One. If Angulimāla once, as robber, did you much harm, as a disciple he has now done you far more good.'

'Who is this Buddha?' I asked again in the same tone, without wishing to let it be seen how much my sympathy had been awakened. 'What has he to do with this strange behaviour of yours, and what blessing is hearing his name supposed to bring me!?' 'Even to hear the name of him whom they call The Welcome One,' said Angulimāla, 'is like the first shimmer of light to one who sits in darkness. But I will relate everything to you – how he met me and how he changed the current of my life – for it is certain that its happening on this very day has principally been on account of his concern for your welfare.'

In spite of the fierceness which emanated from his whole being, even on the first of these two evenings a certain grace of bearing in him had surprised me; how much more striking, however, was the unsought dignity with which he now sat down beside me, like one who feels himself among his equals.



S. H. S. S.

THE HELL OF SPEARS

A FEW HOURS after sunrise today I stood at the edge of the forest, gazing out at the towers of Kosambī, my mind full of vengeance on Sātāgira and revolving the question as to whether you would bring me the desired information. I then became aware of a solitary traveller on the road which leads from the eastern gate of the city to the forest; he walked with a gentle and easy motion, and was clad in an ochre robe.

On both sides of the road, herdsmen and farm-workers were busy with their daily toil. And I observed how those who were nearest the road shouted something to the lone traveller, while those who were farther off also paused in the middle of their work, looked after him, and pointed with their fingers. The women and men who were near appeared to warn him more eagerly the farther he advanced, yes, even to seek to stop him; while some ran after him, seized his robe and then with hurried and horror-stricken gestures pointed to the wood. I almost believed I could hear them calling to him: 'No farther! Don't go into the forest! That's where the fearful robber Angulimāla has his lair.'



But the traveller came onward undisturbed, in the direction of the wood. And now I saw from his robes and his closely cropped hair that he was a monk, a wanderer, one of those who belong to the order of the Son of the Sākyans, and an old man of commanding stature.

I thought to myself: 'This is truly strange! On this road in the past, groups of ten, twenty, thirty or even forty have set out in well-armed companies, and they have one and all fallen into my power; and this wanderer here comes on alone – like a conqueror.'

And it nettled me that he so openly defied my power. I made up my mind to kill him, and especially since I thought to myself that he might possibly have been sent into the

forest as a spy by Sātāgira. For these wanderers – so I thought – are all hypocritical and corrupt, and are ready to be used in all kinds of ways, feeding upon the superstition of the people and the safety they enjoy as its outcome; for thus had I been taught to regard them by my learned friend Vājashravas.

Instantly making up my mind, I seized my spear, hung my bow and quiver over my shoulder, made for the road and, step for step, followed the monk who had by now entered the forest.

Finally, when I had reached a favourable spot where no trees separated us, I took down my bow from my shoulder and shot an arrow so that it would pierce the left side of his back and pass through his heart; but it flew away, over his head.

‘By some mistake a bad arrow must have got in amongst the others,’ I said to myself as I took the quiver in my hand and picked out a beautifully feathered and faultless one, which I aimed so that it would transfix his neck. But the arrow stuck into the trunk of a tree to his left. The next flew past him to the right and the same thing happened with all my arrows until my quiver was empty. ‘Inconceivable! Amazing!’ I thought to myself.

‘Have I not often amused myself by placing a prisoner with his back against a fence and shooting my arrows at him in such a way that, after he had stepped aside, the whole outline of his body was indicated exactly by the arrows sticking in the fence – and that too, at a greater distance? Am I not accustomed to bringing down from the sky the eagle in full flight with my arrows? Whatever is the matter with my hand today?’ Meanwhile the monk had walked a considerable distance and I began to run after him in order to kill him with my spear. But when I had come to within a distance of about fifty paces from him I couldn’t gain another step, although I ran with all my might and he seemed to be walking quite leisurely forward.

Then I said to myself: ‘In truth, this is the most incredible thing of all. Have I not outrun frightened elephants and fleeing deer? And now, running with all my might, I cannot overtake this old monk who is just strolling along. What is the matter with my feet today?’ And I stopped and called out to him: ‘Stop, monk! Stop!’ But he paced quietly on and called back: ‘I have stopped, Angulimāla. You should stop too.’

At this I was again much astonished, and thought: ‘Plainly this monk has baffled my archery and my running by some Rite of Truth. But how can he then utter a manifest untruth and assert that he is standing still while he is in fact walking, and demand that I should stand still although he sees perfectly well that I am already standing as stationary as this tree. So might the flying goose say to the oak: “I am standing still, oak. You should stand still too.” Surely there must be something behind all this. Maybe it would be of more value to understand the meaning of these words than to take the life of such a holy man.’

And I called to him: ‘Walking, you imagine yourself to be standing still, monk; and me, whilst standing still, you falsely claim to be walking. Explain what you mean by this, great monk: how is it that you have stopped and I have not.’

And he answered me: ‘Angulimāla, I have stopped forever: I abstain from doing harm to living things; I am at rest and wander in Samsāra no more. But you, you who still rage against all living things, must wander ceaselessly from one place of suffering to another.’

I answered again: ‘That we wander forever, I have of course heard – but that about standing still, about wandering no more, I do not understand. Venerable Sir, please explain to me what you have just expressed in these few words. See, I have put my spear from me and solemnly swear to grant you peace.’

‘For the second time, Angulimāla,’ he said, ‘you have sworn falsely.’

‘For the second time?’ ‘The first time it happened was at that false Rite of Truth.’

That he should have known of that secret matter was not the smallest of these marvels to me; but, without pausing over that, I made haste to defend my crafty deed.

‘My words, Venerable Sir, were certainly somewhat ambiguous on that occasion but I swore nothing false – only the sense was misleading. That, however, which I swear to you now is true literally and in fact.’ ‘Not so,’ he answered, ‘for you can grant me no peace. It would be good, however, for you if you allowed yourself to experience peace instead.’

As he spoke thus, he turned round and motioned to me with a friendly gesture to approach.

‘Willingly, Venerable Sir,’ I humbly said.

‘Listen, then, and pay close attention.’

He sat down in the shade of a large tree and bade me seat myself before him. He began to teach me of wholesome and unwholesome deeds, and of their consequences, all the time explaining everything as fully to me as when one speaks to a child. I had not listened to words so brimming with deep wisdom since I had sat in the forest by night at the feet of Vājashravas, of whom I have already spoken to you and whose name, I imagine, you have also heard from others.

But when this holy man now revealed to me that no arbitrary heavenly power but our own hearts alone, with the thoughts and deeds emanating from them, cause us to be born now here, now there, at one time on earth, at another in heaven and then again in hell – I could not help thinking about Vājashravas and of the way in which he had proved to us by reasons of common sense, and by reference to the sacred writings, that there could be no such hell-punishments. And that all the passages in the sacred writings having reference to such, had been interpolated by weak and cowardly people in order that by such threats they might terrify the strong and courageous, and protect themselves from the violence of the latter.

‘Vājashravas was never quite able to convince me,’ I thought, ‘I wonder whether this monk will be able to do so – here stands opinion against opinion, scholar against scholar. For even if this monk should be one of the great disciples of the Son of the Sākyans, yet Vājashravas was also highly thought of by his own followers and now, after his death, is even worshipped by the common people as a saint. Who, then, is to decide as to which of these two is in the right?’ ‘You are no longer attending to what I say, Angulimāla,’ said the monk, ‘you are thinking of Vājashravas and his erroneous doctrines.’

Much astonished, I acknowledged the truth of what he said.

‘So you, Venerable Sir, also knew my friend Vājashravas?’ ‘People showed me his grave outside the city gate, and I saw foolish travellers offering up prayers there under the delusion that he was a saint.’

‘So he is no saint, then?’ ‘Well, if he seems one to you, let us visit him and see how it fares now with his sainthood.’

He said this as though it were a matter of going from one house to another.

Thoroughly taken aback, I stared at him. ‘Visit him? Vājashravas? How is that possible?’ ‘Give me your hand,’ he said, ‘and I shall enter into that state of meditative absorption by the aid of which the path that leads to the gods and that which leads to the demons becomes visible to a steadfast heart. Then we shall follow in his track and what I see, you shall also see.’ I gave him my hand. For some time he sat there perfectly still, his eyes cast down, the vision directed inward – I was conscious of nothing. Suddenly, however, I felt as a swimmer would feel when the demon who dwells in the waters seizes his arm and draws him down, so that the blue heavens and the trees on the bank disappear and the waves meet over his head, and darkness that grows ever deeper closes round him on every side.

From time to time, however, tongues of flame flared up around me and a mighty roaring thundered in my ears. Finally, I found myself in what seemed to be a vast cave, where it was quite dark save for the fitful illumination furnished by the fleeting gleam of countless lightning flashes. When I had grown somewhat accustomed to the darkness, I discovered that these flashes were the reflections of steel spearheads, which darted hither and thither as though lances were being wielded by invisible arms – as if there was a battle between ghostly armies. I heard screams also – not fierce and courageous, however, as those of warriors drunk with the joy of the fray, but screams of pain and groans of the wounded, whom, however, I did not see. For these terrifying sounds came from the background, where the quivering of the lanceheads formed one trembling and whirling mist. The foreground was empty.

In this empty space there now appeared three figures, vomited, as it were, from the black mouth of a den which opened upon it from the right. The man in the middle was Vājashravas; his naked body trembled from head to foot as though he froze terribly or was shaken by fever. His companions both had human bodies which were supported

upon birds' legs armed with powerful claws, and were surmounted, in the one case, by a fish's head, in the other, by a dog's. In his hands, each bore a long spear. The figure with the fish's head spoke first: 'This, Honoured Sir, is the Hell of Spears, where you, according to the sentence of the Judge of Hell, have to endure punishment for ten thousand years in being ceaselessly pierced by these quivering spears. Afterwards you shall be born again somewhere, according to the dictates of your karma.'

Then he with the dog's head spoke: 'As often, Honoured Sir, as two spears cross in your heart, you can reckon that a thousand years of your hellish torture have passed.'

Scarcely had he said this when both of the infernal watchmen swung their lances and skewered Vājashravas. And, as if at a given signal, all the spears round about also flashed towards him, their points entering from every side, just as ravens hurl themselves upon an abandoned carcass and bury their beaks in its flesh.

Overcome by the horror of the sight, and by the pitiful screams that Vājashravas uttered in his agony, my senses forsook me.

When I came to myself again, I lay in the wood under the huge tree, prostrate at the feet of the Master.

'Have you seen, Angulimāla?' 'I have seen, Master.'

And I did not dare even to add: 'Help me!' For how could I seek to be helped? 'If after the dissolution of your body, as a result of your deeds, you come to the road that leads down to the underworld, and if King Yama, the Judge of the Dead, then passes the same sentence upon you, and the guards of hell lead you into the Hell of Spears to the same punishment, would it be more than you deserve?' 'No, Master, it would not be more than I deserve.' 'But a course of life which you yourself realize justly leads to these unspeakable tortures – is this truly, Angulimāla, a course of life that is worth pursuing?' 'Master, this course of life I here and now renounce; I will forswear all my demonic practices for one word of your Teaching.'

'Once, long ages ago, Angulimāla, the Judge of the Dead of that time pondered deeply, and this was the outcome of his thoughts: "Truly, one who has committed offences in this world is punished with a vast ocean of misery! Oh, that I might become human and that a Tathāgata, a fully enlightened Buddha might appear in the world, and that I might be able to be with him; and that he, the Blessed One, might expound the Dharma to me and that I might understand it!" Now, that which that Judge wished so ardently for himself, that has come about, Angulimāla. You have become a man. But even as in this land of Jambudvīpa, Angulimāla, there are to be found only a few smiling groves, few splendid forests, fair heights and charming lotus pools; and in comparison with these the raging rivers, untrodden jungles, desolate rocky mountains and barren deserts are by far more numerous. Even so – only a few living beings arrive in the human state, in comparison with the far greater number that are born in different realms of existence. Even so – only a few generations are on the earth at the same time as a Buddha, in comparison with the far greater number in whose time no Buddha

arises. Even so – only a few individuals of those few generations are so fortunate as to see the Tathāgata, in comparison with that far greater number who do not see him. But you, Angulimāla, you have become a man; and this has happened at a time when a Buddha has appeared in the world; and you have seen him and are able to be with him, with the Tathāgata himself.’

When I heard these words, I placed my palms together and exclaimed: ‘Blessèd One! So you yourself are the Fully Enlightened Buddha! So you, the noblest of beings, have had compassion for the worst! And will you allow me to stay with you?’ ‘I will,’ answered the Master. ‘And hear this also: Even as there are among the few who see the Master only a few who hear his Teaching, so too there are but few who comprehend it. You, however, will both hear the Teaching and will comprehend it. Come, disciple!’ The Perfect One had entered the wood like an elephant hunter who rides upon his tame elephant. He left the wood again, as the elephant hunter leaves the wood, followed by a wild elephant which his skill has tamed.

Thus I have now come to you Vāsithī, not as the robber Angulimāla, but as the disciple Angulimāla. See, I have cast from me the spear and the club, the knife and the whip. I have forsworn killing and torturing, and towards all living beings I now extend only a heart of peace and loving-kindness.





Wm. J. Wood

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A PURE OFFERING

I DO NOT KNOW HOW LONG it was before I opened my lips; but for a very long time, I believe, I sat there without uttering a word, and let everything Angulimāla had said rise, point by point, before me; and the more I reflected the more did my wonder grow.

For although I had heard many legends of olden times where miracles were wrought by the gods, and particularly of the wonderful deeds of Krishna when he sojourned on this earth, yet they all appeared trivial when I compared them with what had befallen Angulimāla in the forest this very day.



And I asked myself now whether that great man, who had in a few hours transformed the most brutal of murderers into the gentle being who had just spoken to me – that Master who had so easily and surely tamed the most savage being to be found in the whole realm of nature – whether he might not also be able to quiet my troubled and passion-tossed heart. Would he be able to banish, by the light of his words, the night-cloud which grief had caused to settle down upon me? Or was this maybe more difficult – a problem the solution of which went beyond the powers of even the holiest of sages? I half feared that the latter might be the case but yet I asked where that great monk whom he called his Master was to be found, and whether I would be able to visit him.

‘It is good that you should ask that question first,’ answered Angulimāla, ‘and really, what should you ask but this? Indeed, I have come to you for just this very reason. We who intended being associates in works of darkness, let us now be associates in good. The Blessed One abides at present in the same Simsapā wood which you yourself mentioned. Go there tomorrow but not until evening. The monks and nuns will then have finished their silent meditation and will have assembled before the old Krishna

temple, and the Master will speak to them there and to any others who are present. At that hour many women and men go there from the town in order to see the Blessed One and to listen to his illumined teachings; and with each evening the crowd grows greater. Often these meetings last until late into the night.

‘I already had exact information of all that because, in the greed and derangement of my heart, I had forged the monstrous plan of some day soon falling upon the assembly with my followers. The gifts of foodstuffs and cloth, brought by many of the visitors as offerings to the Order, already formed a booty which, if not rich, was yet by no means to be despised. But particularly it was my intention to capture several citizens of distinction and to force heavy ransoms from them; and I cherished, at the same time, the hope that I should by such a daring deed, done at the very gates of the town, to at last entice Sātāgira outside the walls. For, when I formed the plan, his impending journey was still unknown to me.

‘Do not neglect then, noble lady, to go tomorrow towards sundown to the old Krishna temple; it will long be a source of happiness to you. I want to get back there now as quickly as possible. It is not certain, of course, whether I shall be in time to hear anything. Still, on such beautiful moonlit nights the monks stay together long, deep in spiritual discussion, and willingly permit others to listen.’

He bowed himself low before me and quickly went away. The next morning I sent a message to Medinī, who was, with her husband Somadatta, just as ready to bear me company to the Krishna grove now as she had been in those days of the past, when the matter in hand was the bringing about of a meeting between two lovers.

As a matter of fact she had already been begging her husband to take her out there some evening, for she didn’t readily let anything escape her of which the people talked. But Somadatta had been afraid of his house brahmin’s criticisms, and so she was more than delighted to have the excuse of a summons from the wife of the Minister to win one over against that religious tyrant.

We drove at once to the markets where Somadatta, who was attending to his business there, helped us in seeking out such stuffs as were suitable for the clothing of the nuns and monks. I also purchased a large quantity of medicines. Reaching home again we plundered the storerooms. Vessels full of the finest ghee, boxes of honey and sugar, jars with preserves of every kind were set aside for our offerings. My own cupboards furnished the choicest of all they contained in the way of perfumed water, sandalwood-powder and incense; and then we went to the garden, whose wealth of flowers we did not spare in the excitement of our new-found devotion.

When the longed-for hour came all these things were loaded onto a wagon, to which our oxen were already harnessed. We ourselves took our seats under the awning of another carriage and, drawn by the two silverwhite, full-blooded Sindh horses which every morning ate three-year-old rice from my hand, we drove out of the city gate. The sun was already nearing the cupolas and towers of the town behind us; and its rays

gilded the dust which was stirred up along the way by the feet of the multitude that, like ourselves, had come out to see and hear the Buddha.

We soon reached the entrance to the forest. Here we stopped our carriage and we pursued our way on foot like all the others, followed by our servants who bore the collection of offerings we had brought with us.

Since that night when we two had taken leave of one another there, I had not been into this wood. And when I now entered its cool shade in the same company as before, I was overcome by so piercing a breath of memory that I froze in my tracks and remained standing like one stupefied – it was a fragrance that seemed to have been stored up for me there until, with the lapse of years, its concentrated sweetness had become a poison.

It seemed to me as if my feelings of love had placed themselves in my way – awakened to their full strength and charging me with desertion and treachery. For I had not come there, as I knew, to give them fresh nourishment by inhaling the fragrance of memory but to seek peace for my disappointed and tortured heart. And could that not rightfully be called forgetting love, wilfully renouncing it? Was that not the violation of my word and a cowardly treachery? I stood there in fearful uncertainty – undecided whether to go on or to turn back – to the great disappointment of Medinī, who verily danced with impatience as others overtook us in great numbers.

The look of the interior of the forest, however – softly illumined by the golden rays of the late afternoon sun; the gentle admonitory rustle and whisper of the leaves; the people who at once on entering grew silent and looked around expectantly and almost timidly; here and there at the foot of some great tree, a monk wrapped in the folds of his golden robe, his legs crossed beneath him, absorbed in meditation; at intervals, one or another of these rising and without even a look round, moving quietly away in the direction of the common though as yet invisible goal – all this wore an air of quiet mystical serenity and seemed to bear witness to the fact that here events were taking place of so unusual and sacred a character that no power on earth might dare place itself in opposition to them, aye, that Love itself, if it should raise a hostile voice, would through that lose its every divine right.

So I moved resolutely forward, and the words addressed to Angulimāla by the Master – concerning the many generations of people who live and pass away without a Buddha's being in the world, and of the very few even among the contemporaries of a Buddha to whom it is given to hear and to see him – these words sounded in my ears like the ringing of a temple bell, and I felt myself like a favoured one who goes to meet an experience for which many coming generations would envy her.

When we reached the glade in which the temple stood a great many people were already assembled there, lay-people as well as nuns and monks. They stood broken up into groups, most of them in the vicinity of the ruin which rose just opposite to us. Near to the spot where we entered the clearing in the forest I noticed a fairly large group of monks; there was one amongst them whom it was impossible not to notice, he was practically a giant and he towered a full head above the tallest of those who stood beside him.

Then, when we were looking about us to discover where we should turn our steps, there came out of the forest, between us and those monks, an aged and sagely figure clad in the golden robes of the Order. His tall frame had such a regal bearing, and such a cheerful peace radiated from his noble features, that at once the thought came to me: 'I wonder whether this is the Sākya prince whom people call the Buddha.'

In his hand he bore a few Simsapā leaves and, turning to the monks of whom I have made mention, he said, 'What do you think, bhikkhus, which are more numerous, these Simsapā leaves which I hold in my hand or all the other leaves in the forest?' And the monks answered: 'The leaves which you hold in your hand are very few, Lord, whereas the leaves in the Simsapā wood are far more numerous.'

'So too, bhikkhus,' said he, who I now knew was indeed the Buddha, 'so too that which I have discerned and yet not revealed to you is far greater in sum than that which I have revealed to you. And why have I not revealed all things to you? Because it would in no way profit you spiritually, because it would not assist you in the holy life, it would not lead to your turning away from worldly things, nor to the destruction of all craving, nor to the change which is the end of all change; it would not lead you to peace and to the realization of Nirvāna.'

'So that foolish old man was right after all!' exclaimed Kāmanīta.

'What old man?' asked Vāsithī.

'That monk with whom I spent the night, the last night of my earthly life, in the hall of the potter in that suburb of Rājagaha. He would insist on trying to expound to me the Teaching of the Master and, as I readily perceived, did not especially succeed. But he manifestly quoted many genuine sayings, including what you have just told me – even to the very words. He even gave the name of the place correctly and moved me deeply as he did so. Had I imagined that you had been present there too, I would have been much more profoundly affected.'

'He was very probably among those who were there,' said Vāsithī; 'in any case, he seems to have given you an accurate report.'

And then the Master added further: 'And what, friends, have I declared to you? I have declared to you what Suffering is, what the Origin of Suffering is, what the End of all Suffering is, and what the Path that leads to the End of all Suffering is – all this have I declared to you. Therefore, what I have revealed, let that remain revealed; and what I have left unrevealed, leave that unrevealed.'

As he uttered these words he opened his hand and let the leaves fall. And when one of these fluttered down near to me, describing gyrations in the air, I took courage, stepped quickly forward and caught it before it had touched the earth, in that way receiving it, as it were, from the Master's hand. This priceless memorial I concealed within my bosom: a symbol of the short but all-sufficing first message communicated to us by the Buddha from his measureless wealth of understanding, a symbol from which I was not to be parted until death.

This movement of mine drew the attention of the Master to me. The gigantic monk to whom I have alluded now bowed before him and made a whispered communication, upon which the Master again looked at me and then made a sign to him.

The latter now came towards us.

'Approach, noble lady,' said the monk – and I knew at once from the voice that it was Angulimāla's – 'the Master himself will receive your offerings.'

Even though Angulimāla had by now shaved off his hair and beard, and was clad in the robes of the Buddha's disciples, it somehow came as no surprise to me to find him thus transformed. His manner had changed so completely that the robes of a monk seemed as natural to him now as the garland of severed fingers had been to his previous robber state.

We all went forward to within a few paces of the Buddha and bowed low, greeting him reverently, our hands with palms placed together. But I was unable to utter a word.

'Your offerings are rich, noble lady,' said the Master, 'and my disciples have few needs. They are heirs of Truth, not heirs of material things. But all the Buddhas of past ages have recommended the practice of giving and have gladly accepted the offerings of devoted followers; in this way the Sangha is provided with life's essentials and opportunity is given to the faithful to cultivate generosity.'

'For, if people knew the fruits of giving as I know them then, if they had but a handful of rice left, they would not eat of it without giving a portion to one poorer than themselves, and the selfish thoughts which darken their spirits would disappear from them. Let your offering, then, be gratefully accepted by the Sangha – a pure offering. For I call "a pure offering" that with which the giver is purified and the receiver also. And how does that take place? It takes place, Vāsithī, when the giver is pure in life and noble in heart, and the receiver is pure in life and noble in heart; and when that is the case the giver of the offering is purified and the receiver also. That is, Vāsithī, the purity of the supremely pure offering – such as the one that you have just now brought.'

Then the Master turned to Angulimāla: 'Go, friend, and have these offerings placed with the other stores. But first show our noble guests to seats in front of the temple steps for I shall speak from there to those who are present today.'

Angulimāla bade the servants wait and called upon us to follow him. First, however, we had all our flowers and also several beautiful mats handed to us. Then, conducted by our stalwart guide, we made our way to the temple through the rapidly growing crowd, who respectfully parted and made way for us.

Here we spread the mats upon the steps and twined garlands of flowers round about the old weatherworn and crumbling pillars. Then Medinī and I picked a whole basketful of roses and strewed the petals upon the felted mat at the top of the steps for the Master to seat himself upon.

Meanwhile the assembled crowd had grouped themselves in wide semicircles, with lay-people to the left, and the monks and nuns to the right of the temple – the whole assembly either sitting on small grass mats or on the carpet of Simsapā leaves that formed the forest floor. We now took our places on an overturned pillar, only a few paces from the steps.

There were probably about five hundred people there yet an all but absolute silence reigned in the circle – no sound was to be heard save the ringing of the crickets, and the fitful rustling and low whispering of the forest leaves.





THE BUDDHA AND KRISHNA

THE SETTING SUN SHOT its sheaf of golden rays through the spaces between the trunks, seeming to consecrate the silent and expectant company assembled in the depths of the forest with a heavenly benediction. Between the tree-tops roseate evening clouds looked down in ever-growing luminosity as though, floating out from the blue ether, a second assembly were gathering, recruited now from the hosts of heaven.



The temple building, with its black and crumbling walls, absorbed this farewell blaze of sunshine as a broken down old man quaffs a rejuvenating draught. Beneath the magic of the red-gold lights and the purple shadows, its masses became wonderfully animated. The jagged edges of the fluted pillars sparkled, the cornices flashed, the snails curled themselves up, the stone waves foamed with froth of gold, the carven foliage grew. Along the stair-like projections of the lofty substructure, round about plinths and capitals, on the beams and on the terraces of the dome-like roof – everywhere – a confused medley of strange and mystical forms seemed to be in motion.

Gods came forth in haloes of glory: many-headed and many-armed figures with all-too-luxuriant and often greatly mutilated limbs, the one stretching out four headless necks, the next waving eight stumps of arms. Breasts and hips of the voluptuously limbed goddesses were unveiled as these came swaying nearer, their round faces tilted under the burden of towering, diamond-bespangled head-gear, a sunny smile on their full, sensuous lips. The snake-like extremities of the demons writhed and twisted, the wings of the griffins were spread for flight, grim masks of monsters grinned horribly, showing their whetted teeth. Human bodies swarmed and reeled together in a tangled mass: in and through the mad throng, to and fro, now over, now under

elephants' trunks, the heads of horses and the horns of bulls, stags' antlers, crocodiles' jaws, monkeys' muzzles, and tigers' throats. This was no longer an edifice decorated with statuary. These were statues come to life which, breaking through the spell laid upon them by some enchanter of the building, had freed themselves from its solid mass and would hardly tolerate it further, even as a support. A whole world seemed to have wakened up out of its stony sleep and, with its thousands of figures, seemed to be pressing forward in order to listen – to listen to the man who was seated at the top of the steps, surrounded and overshadowed by the whole swarm of them, the long hanging folds of his robe bathed in a golden glow. He, the truly living – the one perfectly calm being amid this restless and delusory life of the lifeless.

It now seemed as if the stillness of the assembly grew deeper; yes, it even seemed to me that the very leaves of the trees ceased to whisper.

And the Master began to speak.

He spoke of the temple on the steps of which he sat, and where our ancestors had for hundreds of years worshipped Lord Krishna, in order to be inspired to heroic action and suffering here on earth by the example of his heroic life; to be strengthened by his favour and finally to pass through the gates of death to his paradise of pleasure, and to enjoy the raptures of heaven there. But now we, their descendants, had come together to hear from the lips of a Tathāgata words of truth, in order to learn how to lead a pure and perfect life and, finally, by a complete victory over hatred and desire for the fleeting and perishable, to reach the end of all suffering, to reach Nirvāna. In this way he, the Buddha, the Fully Awakened One, completed the work of the Dreaming God; in this way we, grown up, completed what our ancestors had begun with the noble enthusiasm of childhood.

'There you see,' he said, 'how a gifted artist of days long past has reproduced in stone Lord Krishna's combat with the elephant,' and he pointed to a huge relief which lay almost at my feet, one corner pressed into the turf, the other supported by a half-buried capital. The last glow of the setting sun lingered caressingly on the moss-covered relic and, in its mild radiance, one could still clearly recognize the group – that of a youth setting his foot upon the head of a fallen elephant, one of whose tusks he breaks off.

And the Master now related how the King of Mathurā, the horrible tyrant Kamsa, after he had invited Krishna to a contest at his court, secretly ordered his mahout to drive his wildest war elephant out of the stables upon the unsuspecting youth, and to do that too before the contests in the arena were due to begin. And how Krishna slew the monster and, to the terror of the King, entered the arena bespattered with blood and with the tusk he had broken off in his hand.

'Some who wished harm to the Tathāgata,' he added, continuing his discourse, 'also once set loose a savage elephant. And at the sight of the monster bearing down upon me, compassion arose in my heart. For blood streamed down the creature's breast

from the many wounds ripped by the lances of his tormentors. And the compassion deepened as it was seen that there before me was not merely a wounded but also a confused creature, who had become prey to a passion of blind rage. A creature blessed by nature with courage, intelligence and enormous strength but now roused to the condition of madness by the cruelty of foolish men, who had incensed it to the point where it was actually being brought to try and destroy a Buddha: a wild, dazed being – and not likely, except with great difficulty and after endlessly long wanderings, to attain a propitious human existence and to enter the path that leads to enlightenment.

‘Being thus filled full of compassion, there was no room for fear; and no thought of danger arose. For I reasoned thus: “If I should succeed in casting even the faintest ray of light into this tempestuous darkness, such a spark of light would gradually grow; and when this creature, led by its glimmer, arrived at a human existence, then it would more easily find on earth the Dharma of the Tathāgata, the very one it had once tried to kill, and this teaching would help it to liberation.”’ The Master then described how, fixing his mind with this intention, he had halted in the middle of the road, raised his hand with a claming gesture, looked lovingly at the raging creature and uttered gentle words, the sound of which reached its burning heart. The giant being stopped his charge, rocked his mountain of a head irresolutely back and forth and, instead of the thundering peal heard from him a moment before, gave vent to one or two timid trumpet calls.

At the same time he tossed his trunk into the air and swung it in every direction, as if seeking something – like a wounded elephant in the forest does when it has lost the spoor of its hidden enemy and hopes to scent it again – and, in very truth, he had been mistaken in his enemy.

Finally he came slowly to within a few paces of the Master and, bending his knees, lowered himself to the ground, as he was accustomed to do before his owner, King Ajātasattu, when the latter wished to mount him. Marvelling at the sight, the assembled populace came and laid garlands, jewels and ornaments on the great being, almost covering its body. The elephant then took the dust from the Tathāgata’s feet, sprinkled it on his own head and retreated to the elephant stables; the Master had then returned to the Bamboo Grove.

‘In this way,’ so the Buddha ended his parallel, ‘does the Tathāgata take up Krishna’s battle with the elephant, spiritualize, refine and complete it.’



While I listened to this tale, how could I do other than think of Angulimāla, the most savage of the savage, who only yesterday had wished to destroy the Buddha, and had not only been tamed but had also awakened to the Dharma by the irresistible might of
206 207 the Buddha’s virtue and wisdom, so that I now saw him quietly sitting opposite

me in the ranks of the monks – transformed, even in his outward appearance, into another being. And so it seemed that the words of the Master were most particularly addressed to me, as the only person – at all events, outside the circle of the monks – who knew of this matter and who could understand the significance of his words.

The Master now went on to speak of Krishna as the Sixteen-thousand-one-hundredfold Bridegroom, for as such had our ancestors worshipped him here. And again I had a feeling as though secret reference were being made to me, for I remembered that on the night of our last meeting the wizened prophetess had called the divine hero by this name; so I did not hear it without a certain fluttering in my heart.

Then, with the wry wit that later was to become so familiar to me, the Master related how Krishna had taken possession of all the treasures which he had carried off from the castle of the demon king, Naraka: ‘And on one auspicious day, it is said, he married all the virgins from there, and all at the same moment, appearing to each one individually as her husband. Sixteen thousand, one hundred was the number of the women, and in just so many separate forms did the God incarnate himself so that each maiden’s thought was: “It is I alone whom the Holy Lord hath chosen.” And, in like fashion,’ the Master continued, ‘when the Tathāgata expounds the Dharma, and before him there sits an assembly of several hundred monks and nuns and lay disciples of both sexes, then many amongst these listeners think: “For me alone has the Samana Gotama declared this teaching.” For I direct the power of my mind upon the individual nature of each seeker after peace, and the words that are spoken are in response to the combined natures of all those present; thus those who receive and understand the Teaching are calmed, filled with harmony and made to be at one with themselves, and many make the mistaken assumption that they alone have been “chosen”. In this way the Tathāgata takes the sixteen-thousand-one-hundredfold marital state of Lord Krishna, spiritualizes it, refines it and completes it.’

Of course, it at once appeared to me as though the Master had read my thoughts and had given me a secret reproof, in order that I might not entertain the delusion that I occupied a privileged position and so become the victim of an ugly vanity.



And now the Buddha went on to speak of how, according to the beliefs of our forefathers, Lord Krishna – although he himself was the Supreme God, the Upholder – had caused a portion of his own divine being to descend from high heaven and to be born as a man in the human world. Passing to himself, the Master said that when, after ardent effort, he had realized perfect enlightenment – the blessed and abiding certainty of liberation – his first inclination was to remain in the enjoyment of this transcendent serenity and not to try to declare his understanding to others.

‘I reasoned thus: “This Truth that I have realized is profound and hard to see, hard to discover; it is the most peaceful and superior goal of all, not attainable by mere conceptualization, subtle, for the wise to experience. But this pleasure-loving generation relies on attachment, relishes attachment, delights in attachment. It is hard for such a generation to see this Truth – that is to say, the laws of causality and Dependent Origination. And hard it will also be for them to realize the implications of these laws – that is to say, the freeing of oneself from all the forms assumed by existence, the quenching of all craving, the relinquishment of all delusions, the realization of Nirvāna. If I tried to explain this abstruse insight, others would not understand and that would be wearying and troublesome for me.” Considering thus, my nature inclined towards inaction and not to the teaching of the Dharma. Then I looked yet once again with far-seeing eyes upon the world. And, as in a lotus pond one sees some lotus flowers which develop in the waters and remain under the surface, others which force their way to the surface and float there, and, finally, others which rise above the waters and stand free from all contact with them; so also in this world I saw that some beings were of a coarse nature, some were of a noble nature, and some were of the noblest of all. And I reasoned thus: “There are a few beings with but a little dust in their eyes, if they do not hear the Dharma there are some who will lose their way on account of that; perhaps some of these will understand the Truth.” And, out of compassion for such beings, I decided to expound the Dharma to the world.

‘Thus does the Tathāgata take up Krishna’s coming down from heaven and becoming man, give it inward force, illumine and complete it.’

As he said this, there came to me a feeling of unspeakable joy for I knew that the Buddha numbered me with the lotus flowers that had risen to the surface of the water, and that I, by his help, would one day rise above it, and would stand free, unsullied by material things.



Further, the Master told us of those heroic deeds of Krishna, by which he had freed the world from monsters and wicked rulers, and had added to the happiness of all living beings. How he had vanquished the water serpent Koliyā, slain the bull-shaped demon Arishta, destroyed the ravaging monsters Dhenuka and Kishī, and the demon prince Nāraka, had overcome and killed the villainous kings Kamsa and Paundraka, and other bloody tyrants who were the terror of helpless human beings, and had thus ameliorated in many a way the distressful fate of humanity.

But he, the Master, did not combat the foes that assailed people from outside, but the monsters that were within their own hearts – greed, hatred, delusion, love of self, the craving for pleasure, the thirst for things that pass away – and he freed humanity not from this or that evil person, but from the experience of suffering – the tyranny of the unawakened heart.

Then the Blessèd One spoke of the suffering which everywhere and always follows life like its shadow. And I felt as though someone with a gentle hand had lifted the load of pain my love had brought me, bore it away and had cast it into the great maelstrom of universal suffering, where, in the general whirl of the rising and passing of all things, it disappeared completely from view.

Deeply in my innermost heart I felt: 'What right do I have to expect enduring happiness when it is so normal for beings to experience suffering?' I had enjoyed my happiness: it had been born, it had unfolded itself and it had passed – just as the Buddha taught that everything in this world comes from some source and, after its time is fulfilled, must sooner or later pass away.

This very transitory appearance, in which the unreality of every individual thing veiled itself, was, he told us, the final unavoidable source of suffering – unavoidable so long as the desire for existence was not uprooted, so long as it continued to flourish luxuriantly and forever gave rise to something new. And as each individual is a part of the suffering of the world, from the very fact of their existence, I should now feel obliged – or so it seemed to me – if I had been spared some pain, to feel myself doubly blessèd and to be filled with a readiness to bear my part also.



I was no longer able to bewail my own lot; on the contrary, as I listened to the Master's words the thought awoke in me: 'If only all living beings were no longer obliged to suffer! If only this holy man might succeed in his work of teaching, and that all living beings – all – purified from delusion and enlightened, might reach the utter end of suffering.'

And the Master spoke also of this end of suffering and of the world, of the overcoming of every form of existence, of liberation into a serene state of being, void of all craving, of the dispelling of all delusion, and of Nirvāna – strange, wonderful words telling of this only Island in all the troubled sea of birth, on whose rocky shores the breakers of death dashed in impotent foam, and over to which the teaching of the Blessèd One sailed like a trusty ship. And he spoke of that blessèd place of peace not as one speaks who relates to us what he has heard from others – from priests and brahmins – and also not as a song-maker who lets his fancy roam, but like one who communicates what he has himself experienced and seen.

It is true that there was much he said which I, an untaught woman, did not understand, but which also – I would venture – would not have easily been understood by even the most learned of men.

Many things I was not able to reconcile: for, although the Master said that neither 'existence' nor 'non-existence' could be said to describe the reality of Life, 'lifelessness' was not the answer either – in fact it was even further from the Truth... But I felt in

heart like one who hears a new song utterly unlike any other she has ever heard, a song of which she is able to catch no more than a few words, yet the music of which penetrates to her heart, telling her everything. And what music! Notes of such crystal purity that all other sounds when compared with it must seem to the listener like empty noise – strains which brought greetings from so far away, from so far above the spheres, that a new and undreamt-of longing was awakened, of which I felt that it could never be stilled by anything worldly or world-like, and which, if unsatisfied, would never pass away.



Meanwhile night had come down. The pale light of the moon, as it rose behind the temple, threw shadows from its outlines right across the whole width of the forest glade. The form of the speaker was all but indistinguishable. These more-than-human words appeared to come forth from the sanctuary itself, which had swallowed again into its mass of shadows all the thousand wild and tangled, life-simulating forms, and now towered upward in simple but imposing lines, a monument of all terrestrial and celestial life.

My hands held palm to palm at my heart, I sat there listening and looking up to the heavens, where great stars glittered over the dark tree-tops and the Heavenly Gangā lay extended like a river of light. Then I remembered the hour when we both, at that same spot, solemnly raised our hands to it and mutually swore by its silver floods which feed these lotus lakes, that we would meet here again in the Paradise of the West in a heaven of pleasure like that of Krishna, of which the Master had just spoken as the place which the faithful devotees of the Dreaming God strove to reach.

And as I thought of it, my heart grew sad; for I could trace no desire in myself for such a life in Paradise, for a shimmer of something infinitely higher had shone in my eyes.

And without disappointment, without anything of the painful emotion one feels whose dearest hopes have been shattered, I caught the words of the Master:

*‘To be born is to die;
All-destroying, Oblivion’s breath holds sway;
As in the gardens of Earth,
Flowers in Paradise fade, and pass away.’*



THE BLOSSOMS OF PARADISE WITHER

YES, MY FRIEND,' added Vāsithī, 'I heard those words, which appear so destructive of all hope to you, without disappointment – in the same way that now, without pain and indeed even with joy, I perceive how round about us here the truth of these words is established in what we see taking place.'



During Vāsithī's narration, the process of decay had gone on, slowly but relentlessly, and there could no longer be the least doubt but that all these beings and their surroundings sickened and were fading away to their full and complete dissolution.

The lotus flowers had already shed more than half their crown-petals and the waters only sparkled sparingly forth from between these gay-coloured little vessels, which were set trembling every other instant as a fresh one fell. On their flower-thrones, divested of all adornment now, sat the once-happy inhabitants of the Paradise of the West in positions more or less indicative of utter breakdown. The head of one hung down upon her breast, that of another sideways on his shoulder, and a shiver as of fever ran through them every time an icy blast shook the already thinning tops of the groves, causing blossoms and leaves to rain to earth. The music of the gandharvas sounded woefully subdued and more and more frequently was interwoven with painful discords; with it were blended deep sighs and anxious groans. All that had been so luminous – the faces and robes of the devas and gandharvas, no less than the clouds and flowers – all gradually lost brightness and a blue twilight haze appeared to weave its threads about the distances. The fresh fragrance of the flowers too, which had

formerly been such a vitalizing breath to everything, had gradually become a soporific odour, at once distressing to the body and stupefying to the senses. Kāmanīta indicated the things about him with a tired movement of the hand: ‘How could you possibly feel pleasure at such a sight, Vāsithī?’ ‘For this reason, my friend,’ she replied, ‘it is possible to feel pleasure in such a sight: that if all this were lasting and did not pass away, there could be nothing higher. But there is something higher; for this does pass, and beyond it there is that which knows neither genesis nor decay. Just this quality is what the Master calls “joy in the transient”; and for that reason he says: “If you have discerned the ephemeral nature of all created things, then truly you know that which is Uncreated.”’

At these confident words, Kāmanīta’s features grew animated, as a flower that is withering for want of water revives beneath the falling rain.

‘Blessings on you, Vāsithī! For you have given me my liberation. Yes, I feel it. We have erred only in one particular – our longings did not aim high enough. We desired for ourselves this life in a paradise of flowers and assuredly flowers must wither, in accordance with their nature. The stars, however, are eternal; according to changeless laws they keep their courses. And look there, Vāsithī; while all else shows the pale traces of decay, that little river – a tributary of the Heavenly Gangā – that flows into our lake, its water is just as star-like in its purity and just as plentiful as ever, and all because it comes from the world of stars. One who should succeed in entering into existence again among the gods of the stars, would be raised above the sphere of mortality.’

‘Why should we not be able to succeed in that?’ asked Vāsithī. ‘For I have certainly heard of samanas who fixed heart and mind upon returning to existence in the kingdom of the Hundred-thousandfold Brahmā. And even now it cannot be too late, if the ancient words of the *Bhagavad Gītā* be true: “Longings for a future being, filling heart and mind at death, To the life that follows this one, will give character and and breath.”’ ‘Vāsithī! You have given me super-human courage! Come, let us turn our whole hearts to entering again into existence in the kingdom of the Hundred-thousandfold Brahmā.’

Scarcely had they come to this decision when a violent hurricane swept through the groves and over the lakes. Blossoms and leaves were whirled away in heaps; the beings throned on the lotus flowers cowered before the storm and, moaning pitifully, drew their filmy robes ever closer about their trembling limbs.

But like one who, all but suffocated in the close and perfume-laden atmosphere of a room, breathes deep and feels themselves renewed when the fresh sea-breezes, salt-laden from the floods of the ocean, blow in through the open window, so it was with Kāmanīta and Vāsithī when a breath of that absolute purity, which they had once inhaled on the shores of the Heavenly Gangā, came streaming now towards them.

‘Do you notice anything?’ asked Vāsithī.

‘A greeting from the Gangā,’ said Kāmanīta. ‘And listen, She calls...’ As he spoke, the wailing death-song of the gandharvas was silenced by the solemn, thundering sounds that they both remembered from their journey long since past.

‘Good that we already know the way!’ exulted Vāsithī. ‘Are you still afraid, my friend?’ ‘How could I fear? Come!’ And like a pair of birds that dash from the nest and fly into the teeth of the wind, so they flew thence towards the Heavenly Gangā.

All stared after them, amazed that there were still beings there who had the strength and courage necessary for flight.

But as they thus breasted the storm there arose a whirlwind behind them which left everything bereft of leaf and life alike, and made an end of the slowly fading domain of Sukhavatī.

Soon they had reached the forest of palms and soon passed over it. Before them the silvery expanse of the Stream of the Universe stretched far away to the blue-black border of the heavens.

They swept out over its floods, and were instantly caught in the current of air prevailing there and were borne away with the swiftness of the tempest. Overpowered by the speed of their flight – and by the frightful crashing that seemed like thunder mingled with the ringing of a myriad bells – their senses finally forsook them.

Their mutual life of bliss in the Paradise of the West thus drew to its final close – during this time tens of thousands of years had passed by on earth below.



IN THE KINGDOM
OF THE HUNDRED
THOUSANDFOLD BRAHMA

AND KĀMANĪTA AND VĀSITTHĪ entered again into existence in the kingdom of the Hundred-thousandfold Brahmā as the gods of a double star.



The luminous astral substance with which Kāmanīta's sense of being was united, enveloped symmetrically the heavenly body which was both animated by his strength and guided by his will. By the exercise of his willpower the star revolved on its own axis; and this motion was his own individual life, his self-love.

Further, Kāmanīta was reflected in Vāsithī's lustre; and he in turn reflected hers. Exchanging rays they circled around a common axis where their rays accumulated. This point was their mutual love; the circling was therefore their love-life, and in the course of this they constantly reflected one another – and that was the joy of their love.

Gifted with sight on every side, each was able to look, at one and the same moment, towards every point of unending space. And everywhere they saw countless stargods like themselves, the flashing of whose rays they instantly caught and returned. Of these there was first a number who formed with them a separate group; next, other groups which with their own formed a whole galactic-system; further, other systems which formed themselves into chains of systems; and beyond these yet other chains, and rings of chains, and spheres upon spheres of chain-rings.

And Kāmanīta and Vāsithī now guided their binary star in harmonious flight among the other stars and double stars of their group in a graceful, multi-dimensional

dance – neither coming too near to their neighbours nor yet removing to too great a distance. All the time, by a certain unspoken sympathy, each communicated to one another the exact direction and curvature of movement. But at the same time a common consciousness was formed which guided their whole group into harmony with the motion of all the groups of their system, then again in turn joined in the motion of all other groups.

And this harmonic sympathy with the vast swaying rhythmic motion of the stellar bodies – this universal and unceasing interchange of movement – this was their relationship to the universe, their outer life, their all-embracing and all-permeating loving activity.

However, that which was harmony of movement here appeared to the gods of the air, who had their palaces beneath the star-gods, to be a harmony of sound. By participation in its enjoyment, the generations of gandharvas in the fields of Paradise imitated these harmonies in their joyous melodies.

And because a weak and far-off echo of these harmonies pierces to our earth – so weak that it can only be caught by the spiritual ears of the illuminati – the seers talk mysteriously of the harmony of the spheres, and the great masters of music reproduce what they, in their ecstasy, have overheard; and this music is the greatest delight of the human family. But just as the reality of life is to its ever dimmer-growing reflection, so too is the joy in existence of the gods of the stars to the rapture of human beings over notes and chords and melodies. For the joy of life for the brahmā gods is simply their immeasurable joy in existing.

All these movements, however, these vast roundelays of world-systems, had for their centre a single object – the Hundred-thousandfold Brahmā throned in the midst of the universe: The One whose immeasurable brightness permeated all the gods of the stars, and to whom they in turn flashed back that radiance, like so many mirrors of that splendour: The One whose inexhaustible strength, like a never-failing spring, imparted life and motion to all of them and in whom, in turn, all their motion was centred. And this was their being, filled with all the fullness of the brahmā, their communion with the Highest God, their blessedness, their devotion, their bliss.

They had in Brahmā the central point about which everything else was collected, yet this brahmā-world, though boundless, was also, in a sense limited. As the prescient eye of humanity discovered a zodiac in the dome of heaven, even in far-distant ages, so too the gods of the stars saw untold zodiacs described in and around one another – weaving pictures throughout the spheres, pictures in which the most distant

groups of stars resolved themselves into luminous figures – now intertwined so that one star shone as an inherent part of several pictures, then again flashing in lonely exclusiveness. Objects appeared there: astral forms of all the beings that live and move on the scattered worlds; or between these, abiding pictures of the original forms of all that, wrapping itself in the four great elements – earth, water, fire and wind – ceaselessly comes into being and passes away in the changeful river of life.

And this beholding of the original forms was their knowledge of the worlds.

But because, being all-seeing, they were able to see *that* without having to look away from *this* – without even the flutter of an eyelid they were able to behold at one glance the unity of God and the multiplicity of worlds and living beings – the knowledge of God and the knowledge of the worlds thus became for them one and the same thing.

If, however, human beings turn their gaze upon the divine unity, the many forms of the changing universe escape them; and, on the other hand, when they look upon these forms, they can no longer hold in view the unity of God. The divine ones, however, saw centre and circle at one and the same moment. For that reason their knowledge was a unified knowledge, never unstable and a prey to no doubt.

Throughout this whole luminous brahmā-world time now flowed on silently and imperceptibly. As there is not the least movement to be perceived in a perfectly clear stream which glides quietly and smoothly along, and whose waters are neither obstructed nor broken by any resistance, so here the passage of time was just as imperceptible, because it experienced no resistance from the rise or fall of thought and feeling.

This imperceptible passage of time was their eternity. And this eternity was a delusion. So also was all that it embraced – their knowledge, their godliness, their joy in existence, their world-life, and their own individual life – all was steeped in delusion – all was overlaid with the colour of delusion.



THE DUSK OF THE WORLDS

THERE CAME A DAY when a feeling of discomfort, the consciousness of a void, arose in Kāmanīta.



And involuntarily his thoughts turned to the Hundred-thousandfold Brahmā as the source of all fullness. But the feeling of lack was not removed by that. On the contrary, it increased almost perceptibly with the passing of the years, from one decade of thousands to another.

For from that newly arisen feeling the tranquil stream of time, which had hitherto flowed imperceptibly by, encountered resistance as from an island suddenly risen in its midst, on whose rocky cliffs it began to break in foam as it flowed past. And at once there arose a 'before' and an 'after' the rapids.

And it seemed to Kāmanīta as though the Hundred-thousandfold Brahmā did not now shine quite as brightly as formerly.

After he had observed the Brahmā, however, for five millions of years, it seemed to Kāmanīta as though he had now observed him for a long time without reaching any certainty.

And he turned his attention to Vāsithī.

Upon which he became aware that she also was observing the Brahmā attentively.

Which filled him with dismay; with dismay came feeling; with feeling came thought; with thought, the speech for its utterance.

And he spoke: 'Vāsithī, do you also see it? What is happening to the Hundred-thousandfold Brahmā?' After a hundred-thousand years, Vāsithī answered: 'What is happening to the Hundred-thousandfold Brahmā is that his brightness is diminishing.'

‘It seems so to me also,’ said Kāmanīta, after the passage of a similar period of time. ‘True, that can only be a passing phenomenon. And yet I must confess that I am astonished at the possibility of any change whatsoever in the Hundred-

thousandfold Brahmā.’ After a considerable time – after several millions of years – Kāmanīta spoke again: ‘I do not know if I am not perhaps dazzled by the light. Do you, Vāsithī, notice that the brightness of the Hundred-thousandfold Brahmā is increasing again?’ After five-hundred-thousand years, Vāsithī answered: ‘The brightness of the Hundred-thousandfold Brahmā does not increase, but steadily decreases.’

As a piece of iron that, taken white-hot from the blacksmith’s fire, very soon after becomes red-hot, so the brightness of the Hundred-thousandfold Brahmā had now taken on a red shimmer.

‘I wonder what that may signify...’

‘That signifies, my friend, that the brightness of the Hundred-thousandfold Brahmā is in the process of being extinguished.’

‘Impossible, Vāsithī, impossible! What would then become of all the brightness and the splendour of this whole brahmā-world?’ ‘He had that in mind when He said,

“Upward to heaven’s sublimest light, life presses – then decays.

Know, that the future will even quench the glow of Brahmā’s rays.”’

After the short space of but a few thousand years came Kāmanīta’s anxious and breathless question: ‘Who ever uttered that terrible world-crushing sentence?’ ‘Who other than He, the Master, the Knower of the Worlds, the Blessed One – the Buddha.’

Then Kāmanīta became thoughtful. For a considerable length of time he pondered upon these words, and recalled many things. Then he spoke: ‘Once already, Vāsithī, in Sukhavatī, in the Paradise of the West, you repeated a saying of the Buddha which was fulfilled before our eyes. And I remember that you then faithfully reported to me a whole discourse of the Master’s in which that saying occurred. This world-crushing utterance was not, however, contained in it. So have you then, Vāsithī, heard yet other words of the Master?’ ‘Many, my friend, for I saw him daily for more than half a year; yes, I even heard the last words he uttered.’

Kāmanīta gazed upon her with wonder and reverence. Then he said, ‘Then, because of that, I believe you must be the wisest being in the whole brahmā-world. For all these star-gods round about us are aghast; they shine with a wavering light; they flicker and blink and even the Hundred-thousandfold Brahmā himself has become restless, and from his dulled radiance from time to time there dart forth what seem to me to be flashes of anger. But you give a steady light like a lamp in a sheltered spot. And it is also a sign of disturbance that the movement of these heavenly bodies has now become audible – we now hear on all sides the thundering crashes and mighty groans which are proceeding from this brahmā-world, like the distant ringing of great bells which once reached us on the shores of the Heavenly Gangā, far from here in Paradise. This all indicates that the harmony of motion is disturbed, that disunion and separation of

the world-forces is taking place. For it has been well said that: “Where want is, there noise is; but abundance is tranquil.” And so I do not doubt that you are right.

‘Please, beloved Vāsithī, while round about us this brahmā-world expires and becomes a prey to destruction, relate to me your memories of the Buddha, so that I may become as calm and bright as you are. Tell me all of your last human life, for it may well be that we are united for the last time in a place where it will be possible for spirit to commune with spirit and tell of things that have happened – and it still remains a mystery how Angulimāla appeared in Ujjenī, although his becoming a monk has been fully explained to me. But his appearance at that time gave the impulse for my going forth into the homeless life, and was the reason why I did not take to downward paths but instead rose again in the Paradise of the West – there to climb by your help to this highest of heavens, where throughout immeasurable ages we have enjoyed the lives of gods. I have an idea, however, that the impulse which led to my becoming a seeker came from you. I would like to learn the truth about this; but also, and before everything else, how did it come about that you, for my benefit, entered again into existence in the Paradise of the West and not in some far higher place of bliss?’



And while from one hundred thousand years to another, the growing dimness of the brahmā-light became ever more apparent and the gods of the stars grew ever paler; while these flickered and spluttered with more and more irregularity, and from the duller-growing circle of fire around the Great Brahmā vast fingers of flame shot forth and swept hither and thither throughout the whole of space, as if the God with a hundred giant arms were seeking the invisible foe who was besetting him; while, owing to the disturbed movements of the heavenly bodies, stellar whirlwinds arose which rent whole systems of suns out of the kingdom of the Brahmā and into their places rushed waves of darkness from the mighty void, as the sea dashes in where a ship has sprung a leak; while, at other points, systems crashed into one another and a universal conflagration broke out, with explosions which hurled sheaves of shooting-stars down into the fiery throat of the Brahmā; while the death-rattle of the music of the spheres was heard and felt all around – and the thunder of the harmonies as they broke down and crashed into one another rolled and re-echoed with ever-increasing fearfulness from one quarter of the heavens to another – Vāsithī, untroubled, and speaking in measured tones, related to Kāmanīta the last of her earthly experiences.



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IN THE GROVE OF KRISHNA

AFTER THAT FIRST EVENING I neglected no opportunity to visit the Krishna grove, and to become more deeply immersed in the Teachings through the words of the Master or one of his great disciples.

During the absence of my husband the fear of the citizens of Kosambī grew from day to day, because of the robber Angulimāla. Fantasy was stirred for the very reason that nothing was heard of fresh deeds of his. A rumour was spread that Angulimāla intended to fall upon the Krishna grove one evening and carry off the citizens assembled there, and not only these but even the Buddha himself. That raised the already excited popular feeling almost to the point of tumult. People declared that if harm should come to the Master from such villainous robber bands at the gates of Kosambī, then the anger of the gods would surely be visited upon the whole town.

Enormous crowds of people swept through the streets and, collecting in front of the royal palace, demanded threateningly that King Udena should avert this calamity and render Angulimāla incapable of further mischief.

On the following day Sātāgira returned. He at once overwhelmed me with praise for my good advice for he attributed his having come safely home solely to this. Vajirā, his second wife, who came out to welcome him with her little son on her arm, was dealt with very summarily:- He had Matters of Importance to talk over with Lady Vāsithī.

When we were alone again, to my unspeakable discomfort, he straightaway began to talk of his love, of how he had missed me on the way and with what joy he had looked forward to this hour of reunion.

I was on the point of telling him about the troubles in the town, in order to change the current of his thoughts, when the servants announced the Chamberlain, who had come to summon Sātāgira to King Udena. After about an hour he returned - another

being. Pale and with a deeply perturbed expression on his face, he came in to me, flung himself down on a low seat and exclaimed that he was the most wretched man in the world – a fallen great one, soon to be a beggar, maybe even exposed to imprisonment or exile – and that the cause of all his misfortune was his boundless love for me, which I didn't even return. After I had repeatedly urged him to tell me what had happened, he calmed himself sufficiently to give me an account of what had taken place in the palace, accompanying the recital with many outbursts of sobbing despair and ceaselessly mopping his forehead from which the sweat-drops ran trickling down.

The King had received him very ungraciously and, without desiring to hear anything of the village quarrel which he had settled, had ordered him with threats to acknowledge the whole truth about Angulimāla, which Sātāgira was now obliged to confess to me also, without having the smallest idea that I was already so well informed on the subject.

To my disgust he saw in his deceit only a proof of his 'boundless love' for me, and spoke of my love for you lightly, as of a foolish youthful sentimentality which would, in any case, have assuredly led to nothing.

The matter had come to the King's ears in the following way.

During Sātāgira's absence, the police had succeeded in tracking down Angulimāla's accomplice who had, in the course of a severe interrogation, given the assurance that the robber in question really was Angulimāla himself, that the latter had not died under torture as the Minister had always asserted, but had escaped; he had also confessed Angulimāla's intended attack upon the Krishna grove. His Majesty was naturally incensed to the highest degree: first at Sātāgira's having allowed the demonic robber to escape, and then at his having cheated the whole of Kosambi, together with its King, with the false head he had set up. He wouldn't listen to any words of defence, or even of excuse:– If Sātāgira didn't render Angulimāla incapable of further mischief within three days – as the people so stormily demanded – then all the consequences of the Royal Displeasure would be visited upon him with the utmost rigour.

After Sātāgira had related the whole tale, he threw himself weeping upon the seat, tore his hair and behaved like one distraught.

'Be comforted, my husband,' I said, 'follow my counsel, and not in three days but before this very day is over, you shall again be in possession of the Royal Favour; yes, and not only that, but it shall shine upon you even more brightly than before.'

Sātāgira sat up and looked at me as one might gaze upon some bizarre freak of nature. 'And what, then, is this counsel of yours?' 'Return to the King and persuade him to take himself to the Simsapā wood beyond the city gates. There let him seek the Lord Buddha at the ancient temple and ask counsel from him. The rest will follow of itself.' 'You are a wise woman,' said Sātāgira. 'In any case, your counsel is very good, for the Buddha is said to be the wisest of all men. Although it can hardly have such good results for me as you imagine, I shall nevertheless make the attempt.'

‘For the results,’ I replied, ‘I shall answer with my honour.’

‘I believe you, Vāsithī!’ he exclaimed, springing up and seizing my hand. ‘How is it possible not to believe you? By Indra! You are a wonderful woman; and I now see how little I was mistaken when, in my still inexperienced youth as though obeying some profound instinct, I chose you alone from amid the rich garden of Kosambī’s maidens and did not allow myself to be diverted from my love by your coldness.’

The heat with which he poured forth his praise caused me almost to vomit and to repent that I had given him such helpful advice; but his very next words brought relief with them for he now spoke of his gratitude, which would be inexhaustible no matter what proof I should put it to.

‘I have but a single petition to make, the granting of which will testify sufficiently to your gratitude.’

‘Name it to me at once,’ he cried, ‘and if you should even demand that I send Vajirā with her son back to her parents, I shall do so without hesitation.’

‘My request is a just, not an unjust, one. I shall only proffer it, however, when my counsel has proved itself to be reliable to the fullest degree. But hurry now to the palace and win His Majesty over to pay this visit.’

He returned fairly soon, delighted that he had succeeded in prevailing upon the King to undertake the expedition.

‘Not until King Udena heard that the advice came from you, and that you had vouched for its success with your honour, did he consent; for he also thinks great things of you. Oh, how proud I am of such a wife!’ These and similar speeches of his, of which in his confident mood there was no lack, were disgusting and painful to me; and they would have been still more painful if I had not, throughout the whole matter, had my own secret thoughts to buoy me up.

We took ourselves at once to the palace, where already preparations were being made for the start.



As soon as the sun’s rays had softened their intensity, King Udena mounted his state elephant, the celebrated Bhaddavatikā, who was only used on the most important of occasions because she was now very old. We, the Chamberlain, the Lord of the Treasury and other high dignitaries came behind in carriages; two hundred horsemen were in the vanguard and the same number brought up the rear of the procession. At the entrance to the wood the King caused Bhaddavatikā to kneel down and he dismounted; the others of us left the carriages and followed in his train on foot to the Krishna temple; there the Buddha awaited us surrounded by his disciples, as he already knew of the approaching royal visit.

The King gave the Master a reverential greeting and, stepping to one side, seated himself down. When we others had also taken our seats, the Blessèd One asked him: 'What troubles you, noble king? Has the King of Benares, or one of your other royal neighbours, threatened your land with war?' 'The King of Benares does not threaten me Venerable Sir, nor does any one of my other royal neighbours.'

'A robber named Angulimāla lives in my land; he is cruel and blood-thirsty, given to murder and violence without mercy for any living thing. He decimates villages; the towns he renders heaps of smoking ruins; the lands he turns to desert wastes. He slays people and then hangs their fingers around his neck. And in the wickedness of his heart he has conceived a plan of falling upon this sacred grove and of carrying you off, Master, you and your disciples. My people murmur openly at the thought of this great danger, they throng in great crowds around my palace and demand that I should make Angulimāla incapable of further mischief. It is this grave concern alone that I have in mind in coming to see you, Lord.'

'But if you, great king, should see Angulimāla with hair and beard shaven, clad in the robes of this Sangha and forswearing the act of murder; no longer a robber, content with one meal a day, modest in his behaviour, virtuous and altogether noble, what would you then do with him?' 'We would greet him respectfully, Venerable Sir, rise in his presence and invite him to be seated, we would beg him to accept robes, food, lodging and medicine for possible sickness, and would bestow upon him protection, shelter and defence. But Lord, how could such an unruly and malignant wretch experience such a change towards virtue?' Now the dread Angulimāla was sitting not far from the Master. And the Master extended his right arm and pointed over to him, saying to King Udena as he did so: 'Great king, this is Angulimāla.'

At that, the face of the King grew pale from fear. But greater by far was the horror on the face of Sātāgira. His eyes looked as though they would start from their sockets, his hair stood on end and cold sweat dropped from his forehead.

'Oh no!' he called out. 'That is Angulimāla – and I, idiot that I am, have betrayed my King into putting himself into his power.'

At the same time I could see plainly that he only quivered with fear because he imagined he himself to be in the power of his deadly enemy.

'This demonic villain,' he went on, 'has deceived us all – he has cheated the Master himself and also my all-too-credulous wife who, like all women, lays too much store by such tales of conversion. We have all walked into the trap!' And his glances jerked hither and thither, as though he could discern half a dozen robbers behind every tree.

With stuttering voice and trembling hand he begged the King to seek safety for his precious person by fleeing immediately.

Then I stepped forward and spoke, 'Calm yourself, husband, and restrain your cowardice! I am in a position to convince you, and also my noble sovereign, that no trap has been laid here and that no danger threatens.'

And I now related how, persuaded by Angulimāla, I had together with him planned an attack on the life of my husband, and how our plan was frustrated by the transformation of my ally to the good.

When Sātāgira heard how near he had been to death, he was obliged to support himself on the arm of the Chamberlain, in order not to sink to the ground.

I now prostrated myself before the King and begged him to pardon my husband as I had pardoned him, saying that, led away by passion he had acted foolishly and yet in the whole matter had assuredly, although quite unconsciously, followed the leading of a higher power that intended to bring to pass before our eyes this greatest of all wonders, so that now, instead of a robber having to be executed, the robber had committed himself to the religious life. And when the King had graciously consented to bestow his undiminished favour again upon my husband, I said to Sātāgira, 'I have kept my promise. Now you must keep yours also and fulfil my request, which is that I may be permitted to enter the sacred Order of the Buddha.'

With a mute inclination of the head Sātāgira gave his consent. He had, of course by now, no other option.

But the King, who was by now quite reassured, approached Angulimāla, spoke kindly and deferentially to him and gave him the assurance of his royal protection. Then he went again to the Buddha, bowed low before him, and said, 'Wondrous it is, indeed, Venerable Sir, how you, the Tathāgata, tame the untameable. For this Angulimāla whom we could not overcome by either punishment or sword, him you have overcome without the use of either. And this thrice-sacred grove where such a wonderful thing has transpired shall to the end of time belong to the Sangha of the Blessèd One. Furthermore, I trust the Master will graciously allow me to erect within its bounds buildings for the shelter of the monks and others for that of the nuns.'

Signifying his acceptance with silence, the Master received the royal gift. The King then took his leave and went away with his retinue.

I, however, remained behind under the protection of the sisters who were present and, the very next day, I shaved my head and became a bhikkhunī – a member of the Order of Buddhist Nuns.





THE SIMPLE CONTEMPLATION

I HAD NOW BECOME a sister of the Order; and I took myself into Kosambī in the early morning of each day, together with the other nuns, wrapped in the ochre robe and with my alms-bowl. There we went from house to house until all those who wished to give had done so – although Sātāgira would only too willingly have spared me this daily alms-round.



One day I took my stand at the door of his palace because the oldest nuns had advised me to subject myself to this trial also. At that moment Sātāgira appeared in the gateway; he avoided me, however, with a startled glance and sorrowfully covered his face. Immediately thereafter the house-steward came out to me weeping and begged that he might be allowed to send me everything I needed daily. But I answered him that it was of much greater value to me to live as a simple member of the Sangha.

When I returned from the alms-round and had eaten what had been given to me, with which the question of food was then settled for the whole day, I would be instructed by one of the elder bhikkhunīs. In the evening I listened, in the great assembly, to the words of the Master or perhaps to those of one of the great disciples, like Sāriputra or Ānanda. After this was over, however, it often happened that one sister sought the company of another, saying: ‘Sister, the Simsapā wood is delightful; glorious is this clear moonlit night; the trees are in full bloom and divine fragrances seem to be wafted through the air. Come away then, let us find Sister Sumedhā. She is knowledgeable and sincere, a treasure-house of the Dharma. Her eloquence will lend a double glory to this Simsapā grove.’ And thereafter we would spend the greater part of such a night in eager discussion of the spiritual life.

This life in the open air, the constant spiritual activity, the lively interchange of ideas (as a result of which there was no time left for sad brooding over personal sorrows or idle reveries) and finally the elevating and purifying of my whole nature by the power of the Dharma – all this strengthened both body and mind most marvellously. A new and nobler life opened out before me and I enjoyed a calm and cheerful happiness of which a few weeks earlier I could not have even dreamt.

When the rainy season came, the buildings already stood prepared for the sisters, with a roomy hall for meditation and for common use, and a separate hut in the forest for each nun.

My former husband and several other rich citizens who had relatives amongst the nuns insisted upon fitting out these abodes of ours with mats, seats and low wooden beds so that we were richly provided with everything we needed to make life reasonably comfortable.

This period of seclusion of the three month Rains Retreat passed easily, what with the regular alternation of conversation on spiritual questions, independent study, physical work around the monastery and meditation. Towards the evening of each day, however, we took ourselves to the common hall of the monks to listen to the Master; or else he or one of his great disciples came over to see us.



The forest itself was very dear to the heart of the Master so, when the rains had ceased, its freshness of renewed youth and its hundredfold richness of leaf and splendour of flower invited us to transfer the calm of our solitary meditation and our common meetings to its more open shelter. At this time of new beginnings, however, we were met by the sorrowful news that the Master was now preparing to set out on a journey to the eastern provinces.

Of course we had not dared to hope that he would always remain in Kosambī. We also knew how foolish it was to complain of the inevitable and how little we would show ourselves to be worthy of the way of training if we were to be overcome by grief. So we turned our steps to the temple of Krishna late in the afternoon one day, to listen perhaps for the last time in years to the words of the Buddha, and then to bid him farewell.

Seated at the top of the steps, the Master spoke of the transitoriness of all that comes into existence, of the dissolution of everything that has been compounded, of the fleeting nature of all phenomena, of the unreality of all forms whatsoever. And after he had shown that nowhere in this nor in any other world, as far as the desire for existence propagates itself, nowhere in time or space, is there a fixed spot, an abiding place of refuge to be found, he gave utterance to that sentence which you with justice called 'world-crushing,' and which is now verifying itself round about us.

'Upward to heaven's sublimest light, life presses - then decays.

Know, that the future will even quench the glow of Brahmā's rays.'

We sisters had been told by one of the bhikkhus that after the Dharma talk we were to go to the Master, one by one, in order to take leave of him and to receive a theme of contemplation which would be a spiritual guide to us in our future endeavours.

As I was one of the youngest in the training, and therefore purposely kept myself in the background, I succeeded in being the last. For I grudged to any other that she should speak to the Master after I did, and I also thought that a longer and less hasty interview would be more possible if no others waited to come after me.

After I had knelt reverently before him, the Buddha looked at me with a gaze which filled my being with light to its innermost depths, and he said, 'And to you, Vāsithī, on the threshold of this ruined sanctuary of the Sixteen-thousand-one-hundredfold Bridegroom - to remember the Tathāgata by and to contemplate under the leafy shade of this Simsapā wood, of which you both carry a leaf as well as a shadow in your heart - I offer you this to investigate: 'Where there is love, there is also suffering.'

'Is that all?' I foolishly asked.

'All, and enough.'

'And will it be permitted to me, when I have fully understood it, to make a pilgrimage to the Tathāgata and to receive a new sentence?' 'Certainly - it will be permitted, if you still feel the need of asking.'

'How should I not feel the need? Are you not, Master, our refuge?' 'Seek refuge in yourself, Vāsithī; take refuge in the Dharma.'

'I shall certainly do so. But, Master, you are the very self of the disciples; you are the living Dharma. And you have said, "It will be permitted."' 'If the way does not tire you.' 'No way can tire me.'

'The way is long, Vāsithī. The way is longer than you think - far longer than human imagination is able to realize.'

'And if the way leads through a thousand lives and over a thousand worlds, no way shall tire me.'

'Good, Vāsithī. Farewell then - look into your contemplation deeply and it will reward you.'

At this instant the King, followed by a large retinue, approached to take leave of the Master.

I withdrew to the rearmost circle of disciples where I was a somewhat inattentive spectator of the rest of the proceedings of that last evening. For I cannot deny that I felt somewhat disappointed at the very simple phrase that the Master had given me. Had not several of the sisters received other quite weighty reflections for their spiritual benefit: one, a sentence relating to existence and its causes; another, relating to non-existence; a third, to the transitoriness of all phenomena? And I therefore felt I had received some kind of slight, which grieved me deeply. When I had reflected

further upon the matter, however, the thought occurred to me that the Master had perhaps noticed some self-conceit in me and wished to illumine it in this way. And I resolved to be on my guard, in order not to be retarded in my spiritual growth by vanity or inflated self-esteem. Soon I would be able to claim praise for having mastered my contemplation and could then obtain another directly from the lips of the Master.

Full of this assurance, I saw the Blessèd One depart early next morning with many disciples – among these naturally was Ānanda, who waited upon the Master and was always with him. He had, in his gentle way, invariably treated me with such special friendliness that I felt I should miss him and his cheering glance greatly, even more than I should the wise Sāriputra, who helped me over many a knotty point of the Teaching by his keen analysis of all my difficulties and his clear explanations. Now I would be left to my own resources.

As soon as I had returned from my alms-round and had eaten my meal, I sought out a stately tree which stood in the midst of a little forest meadow – the true original of that ‘mighty tree far removed from the bustle of life,’ of which it is said that people may profitably sit beneath, absorbed in reflective meditation.

That I now did, and began earnestly upon my sentence. When I returned to the meeting hall towards evening, I brought with me, as the result of my day’s work, a feeling of dissatisfaction with myself and a dim foreboding of what these few words might really come to mean. But when I returned to my hut on the following evening, at the close of my period of meditation, I already knew exactly what the Master had in mind when he gave me this phrase to investigate.

I had certainly believed I was on the straight path to perfect peace, and that I had left my love with all its passionate emotions far behind me. That incomparable Master of the human heart, however, had seen that my love was not by any means overcome – that on the contrary, having been overawed by the mighty influence of the new life I was leading, it had simply withdrawn into the innermost recesses of my heart, there to bide its time. And his desire, in directing my attention to it, was that I should induce it to come forth from its lurking-place and so overcome it. And it certainly did come forth, and with such power that I found myself at once in the midst of severe, distracting conflicts of heart and became aware that mine would be no easy victory.

It is true that the astonishing information that my loved one had not been killed, and in all probability still breathed the air of this earth with me, was now more than half a year old. But when that knowledge rose so suddenly within me, owing to the apparition on the terrace, it was at once inundated by the stormy waves of feeling it had stirred up and all but went down in its own vortex. Passionate hate, longings for revenge and malignant broodings succeeded one another in a veritable devil’s dance. Then came the transformation of Angulimāla, the overwhelming impression made upon me by the Buddha, the new life, and the dawn of another and utterly unsuspected world whose elements were born of the apparent destruction of all the elements of

the old. Now, however, the first impetuous onrush of the new feeling was over, the great Master of this secret magic had disappeared from my view, and I sat there alone, my gaze directed on love – on my love. Again that marvellous revelation rose clearly before me and a boundless longing for the distant loved one, who still dwelt amongst the living, laid hold upon my heart:– But did he really yet abide amongst the living? And did he love me still? The fearful anxiety and uncertainty of such questions stimulated my longing yet further and, being subdued by my love, I could make no progress with my contemplation. I thought only of Love and never reached Suffering, the Origin of Suffering and the Cessation of Suffering.

These ever more hopeless soul-struggles of mine did not remain hidden from the other sisters and I heard, of course, how they spoke of me: ‘Sister Vāsithī, formerly the wife of the Minister of State, whom even the stern Sāriputra often praised for her quick and sure apprehension of even the most difficult points of the Teaching, is now unable to master her sentence, and it is so simple.’

That discouraged me even more; shame and despair laid hold upon my heart and at last I felt I could bear this state of things no longer.



His arms

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THE SICK NUN

AT THIS TIME one of the bhikkhus came over to us once a week and expounded the Teaching.

After some time Angulimāla's turn came – I did not go into the meeting hall on this occasion but remained lying in my cell, and begged a neighbouring sister to say to him: 'Venerable Sir, Sister Vāsithī lies sick in her hut and cannot appear in the assembly. Will you, after the meeting, go to her and expound the Dharma also?' And I should add that this pretext of sickness was not entirely untrue: the emotional torments which I had been experiencing had also taken their toll on my body and I was regularly faint and feverish during these weeks.

So, after his talk to the nuns, the good Angulimāla and a companion came to my hut, greeted me deferentially and sat down by my bed.

'You see here, brother,' I said then, 'what none of us would desire to see – a love-sick nun – and you yourself are the cause of my sickness, seeing that it was you that robbed me of the object of my love. True, you have since brought me to this great physician who heals all life's ills, but now even his marvellous powers cannot help me. In his great wisdom he has recognized this and has given me a remedy to bring the fever to a crisis, and so to get rid of the insidious germ of disease at present in my blood.

'As a result, then, you see me at this moment with a fever of longing raging within. So I wish to remind you of a promise you once made to me – on that night, I mean, on which you sought to lead me into crime, the execution of which was only frustrated by the intervention of the Master.

'At that time you promised to go to Ujjenī and bring me certain news of Kāmanīta: whether he still lived, and how he was. What the robber once promised, that I now

demand from the monk. For my desire to know whether Kāmanīta lives, and how he lives, is such an overpowering one that, until it is gratified, there is no room in my heart for any other thought, any other feeling, and it is consequently impossible for me to take even the smallest step further forward on this, our way to enlightenment. For this reason it becomes your duty to do this for me, and to quiet my feelings by bringing me some definite information.'

After I had spoken thus, Angulimāla rose, and said, 'It will be just as you require from me, Sister Vāsithī.' As he spoke I was unsure if his sense of duty was also coloured with a feeling of criticism for myself, and for my weakness of spirit. However, he bowed low and, together with the bhikkhu who was his chaperone, he left my hut and disappeared into the darkness of the forest.

The young nun who was my nurse cast her eyes to the floor and fanned me slowly – I lay back in silence, alone with my thoughts, feeling the sweat of the night upon my skin.



Angulimāla went straight to his hut to get his almsbowl and in that same hour left the Simsapā wood. People generally believed that he had simply gone on a pilgrimage, following the Master. I alone knew the true goal of his journey.

This step once taken, I felt myself grow somewhat calmer, although haunted by a doubt as to whether I should not have given him some greeting or messages for my beloved. But it seemed to me unfitting and profane to use a monk in such a way – as a go-between – while, on the other hand, he could perfectly well go to a distant city and give an account of what he had seen there. It would also be something quite other – I said to myself with secret hope – if he, acting on his own judgement and without being commissioned to do so, should decide to speak of me to my loved one.

'I will myself go to Ujjenī and bring him here safe and sound' – these words resounded ever in my innermost heart. Would the monk be likely, then to redeem the promise of the robber? Why not, if he himself were convinced that it was necessary for both of us to see and to speak with one another? And with that came a new thought from which streamed an unexpected ray of hope that at first dazzled and then bewildered me:– If my beloved should return, what was then to hinder my leaving the Order and becoming his wife? When this question arose in my mind burning blushes covered my face, which I involuntarily hid in my hands from fear that someone might just at that moment be observing me and know my thoughts. What a hateful misinterpretation such a course of action would be exposed to! Would it not look as though I had regarded the Order of the Buddha simply as a bridge over which to pass from a loveless marriage to one of romantic fulfilment? My action would certainly be construed thus by many. But, when all was said and done, what could the judgement of

others matter to me? And how much better to be a devoted lay sister who stood loyally by the Sangha, than a sister of the Order whose heart lingered elsewhere. Yes, even if Angulimāla only brought me the information that my Kāmanīta was still alive, and I could gather from the account of their meeting that my loved one was still true to me in the faithfulness of his heart, then I would be able to make the journey to Ujjenī myself. And I pictured how I would one morning, with my shaven head and my robes, stand at the door of your house – how you would fill my alms-bowl with your own hands and in so doing would recognize me – and then all the indescribable joy of having found one another again.

To be sure, it was a long journey to Ujjenī, and it was not seemly for a nun to travel alone. But I did not need to seek long for a companion. Just at this time Somadatta came to a sad end.

His passion for the fatal dice had gradually enslaved him and, after gambling away all his wealth, he had drowned himself in the Gangā. Medinī, deeply distressed by her loss, now entered the Sangha too. It was perhaps not so much the religious life itself that drew her irresistibly to this sacred grove, as the need she felt to be always in my neighbourhood; for her childlike heart clung with touching fidelity to me. And so I did not doubt that when I revealed my purpose to her, she would go with me to Ujjenī – yes, if need be, to the end of the world. Already her company was helping in many ways to rouse my spirits; and I, by offering comforting words, softened her genuine grief for the loss of her husband.

As the time approached when Angulimāla's return might be expected, I went every afternoon to the southwest edge of the wood and sat down under a beautiful tree on some rising ground, from which I could follow to a great distance with my eye the road he would be obliged to take. I imagined he would reach the goal of his journey towards evening.

I kept watch there for some days in vain, but was quite prepared to wait for a whole month. On the eighth day, however, when the sun was already so low that I had to shade my eyes with my hand, I became aware of a form in the distance approaching the wood.

I presently saw the gleam of a golden robe and, as the figure passed a woodcutter going homeward, it was easy to see that it belonged to a man of unusual stature. It was indeed Angulimāla – alone. My Kāmanīta he had not 'brought with him safe and sound'; but what did that matter? If he could only give me the assurance that my loved one was still alive, then I would myself find the way to him.

We met in the courtyard near the gateway to the bhikkhunīs' section; other sisters were passing to and fro and I was embarrassed that they might divine the reason for our meeting.

My heart beat violently when Angulimāla finally stood before me and greeted me with courteous grace. 'Kāmanīta lives in his native town in great opulence,' he said; 'I

have myself seen and spoken to him.’ And he related how he had one morning arrived 240 241 at your house, which was a veritable palace; how your wives had grossly abused him and how you yourself then came out and drove them back inside, speaking to him in friendly and apologetic words.

After he had related everything exactly – just as you know it – he bowed before me, threw his robe again about his shoulders and turned round, as though he intended to proceed in the direction he had come from instead of going into the monks’ part of the forest. Much astonished, I asked whether he were not going to go to the great hall.

‘I have now faithfully carried out your request, Sister, and there is no longer anything to prevent my making my way to the east, in the tracks of the Master – towards Benares and Rājagaha where I hope to find him.’

Even as he spoke, this powerful man started off with his long easy strides along the edge of the wood, without granting himself even the smallest rest.

I gazed after him long, and saw how the setting sun threw his shadow far in front to the crest of the hill on the horizon – yes, to all appearances even farther, as though his longing outran him in its vehemence, while I remained behind like one paralysed, without a goal for my longing to which I could send even one precious hope.

My heart was dead, my dream dispelled.

The sobering ascetic utterance – ‘A crowded, dusty corner is domestic life’ – echoed again and again through my desolate heart. On that splendid Terrace of the Sorrowless, under the open, star-filled and moonlit heaven, my love had had its home.

How could I, fool, ever have thought to send it begging to that sluttish domesticity in Ujjeni – to be wife and problem number three in that already tormented house – and in order that quarrelsome women might attack it with their invective? I crawled back to my hut with difficulty, to stretch myself on a sick-bed again. This sudden annihilation of my feverishly excited hopes was too much for my powers of resistance, already weakened by months of inner strife. With matchless self-sacrifice, Medinī now nursed me day and night. But as soon as my spirit, buoyed up by her tender care, was able to raise itself above the pain and inflammation of the fever, the plans I had formed for my journey developed in another direction.

I wanted to make my pilgrimage: not to the place where I had sent Angulimāla, however, but to the place where he now journeyed. I would follow in the footsteps of the Master until I overtook him. Was I not done with my sentence? Had I not learned in the deepest sense that when love comes, suffering also comes? And so I might, I thought, seek the Buddha again and gain new life from the power of the Holy One in order to be able to press farther forward to the highest goal.

I confided my intention to the good Medinī, who at once adopted the unexpected suggestion with wild enthusiasm and painted, in her childish fantasy, how splendid it would be to roam through exquisite regions, free as the birds of the air when the migratory season calls them to other and far-distant skies.

Of course, for the first thing, we were obliged to wait patiently until I had regained sufficient strength. And, just as that was accomplished to some extent, the rainy season began and imposed for our patience a still longer trial.

In his last discourse the Master had spoken thus: 'Just as when in the last month of the rainy season, at harvest, the sun, after dispersing and banishing the water-laden clouds, goes up into the sky and by its radiance frightens all the mists away from the atmosphere and blazes and shines, so also, disciples, does this mode of life shine forth, it brings good in the present as well as in the future; it blazes and shines, and by its radiance it frightens away the fussing of common samanas and brahmins.'

And when Mother Nature had made this picture a reality round about us, we left the Krishna grove at the gates of Kosambī and, turning our steps eastward, hurried towards that sun of all the living.



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THE PASSING OF THE TATHAGATA

MY LACK OF STRENGTH did not allow us to undertake long daily journeys and made it necessary sometimes to take a day for rest, so it took us a whole month to reach Vesāli. We knew that the Master had made a lengthy stay there, but he had been gone now for about six weeks.



We had learned a short time before, in a village in which lived many faithful followers of the Blessèd One, that the Venerables Sāriputra and Moggallāna had passed away. The thought moved me deeply that these two great disciples – the Generals of the Dharma as we named them – no longer dwelt on earth. Of course we all knew well that these great ones, as even the Buddha himself, were merely human beings just as we, but the idea that they could leave us had never been allowed to arise in our minds. Sāriputra, who had so often in his deliberate manner solved difficult questions for me, had passed away. He was the disciple most like the Master in wisdom, and he stood, as did the Master, in his eightieth year. Was it possible that even the Buddha himself could be approaching the end of his life on earth? Perhaps the uneasiness which was caused by this fear fanned some smouldering remnant of my past fever again into a blaze. Be that as it may, I arrived in Vesāli sick and exhausted. In the town there lived a rich woman, a follower of the Buddha, who made it her special care to minister in every possible way to the needs of the monks and nuns passing through. When she learned that a sick nun had arrived she at once sought me out, brought Medinī and myself to her house, and tended me there with great care.

Moved by her kindness, I soon gave expression to the fear that was troubling me, and asked whether she thought it possible that the Master, who was of the same age as Sāriputra, would also soon leave us.

At that she burst into a flood of tears and, in a voice broken by sobs, exclaimed, 'Then you don't know yet? Here, in Vesāli – about two months ago – the Master himself foretold that he would enter Final Nirvāna in three months' time. And just to think! If only Ānanda had possessed understanding enough and had spoken at the right moment, it would never have taken place and the Buddha would have lived on to the end of the æon!' I asked what the good Ānanda had had to do with it, and in what way he had deserved such blame.

'In this way,' answered the woman, 'one day the Master went with Ānanda outside of the town, to meditate in the neighbourhood of the Cāpāla temple. In the course of their conversation the Master told Ānanda that whosoever had developed the spiritual powers within himself to perfection could, if he so desired, remain alive through a whole æon. Oh, that simpleton Ānanda, that he didn't at once, even with this plain hint, say: "Please Lord, remain alive throughout this æon for the blessing, the welfare and the happiness of the manyfolk"! His heart must have been possessed by Māra, the Evil One, seeing that he only proffered his request when it was too late.'

'But how could it be too late,' I asked, 'seeing that the Master is still alive?' 'Forty-five years ago, when the Master had awakened to Buddhahood in Uruvelā, and was enjoying the possession of a sacred calm of spirit after his six years of fruitless ascetic practices, he sat in meditation under the Nigrodha tree of the goatherds, and there Māra, the Evil One, drew near to him, very much disturbed on account of the danger that threatened his kingdom in the person of the Buddha.

'In the hope of hindering the spread of the Dharma, he said, "Lord! The time has come for the Blessed One to enter into Final Nirvāna." But the Buddha answered: "Evil One, I will not enter Final Nirvāna until I have monks, nuns and lay-disciples who are accomplished, trained, skilled, learned, knowers of the Dharma, correctly trained and walking in the path of the Dharma, who will pass on what they have learned from their Teacher, teach it, declare it, establish it, expound it, analyse it and make it clear; until they shall be able by means of the Dharma to refute false teachings that have arisen, and teach the Dharma of wondrous effect. I shall only enter into Final Nirvāna, Evil One, when the Kingdom of Truth stands on firm foundations: when this holy life has been successfully established and flourishes, is widespread, well-known far and wide, and well-proclaimed amongst humanity everywhere."

'But after the Master had spoken thus to Ānanda – and, without his comprehending the hint, he had gone away – then Māra, the Evil One, approached the Master and said to him: "Lord! The time has at last come for the Master to enter into Final Nirvāna. All that the Master formerly spoke of under the Nigrodha tree of the goatherds at Uruvelā, as necessary for his entering Final Nirvāna, has now been fulfilled. The Kingdom of

Truth rests on sure foundations. I trust that the Master will now enter into Final Nirvāna.” Then the Buddha answered Māra, the Evil One, thus: “Fear not, Evil One. The Tathāgata’s final passing will soon take place. Three months from now the Tathāgata will enter into Final Nirvāna.” At these words there rolled great peals of thunder, and the earth trembled and shook violently, as you will probably have noticed.’

As a matter of fact, we had felt a slight earthquake in Kosambī about a month before I left the sacred grove, and this I now told her.

‘You see!’ exclaimed the woman excitedly, ‘it has been felt everywhere. The whole earth shook and the drums of the gods emitted groans as the Blessed One waived his claim to longer life. Ah! if that simple-minded Ānanda had only understood the hint so plainly given to him! For when, wakened by the earthquake from his self-absorption, he came back to the Master and begged that he would consent to remain alive for the rest of this æon, the Master had of course already given his word to Māra and had renounced his claim to longer life.’

I could no longer bear to remain patiently under her hospitable roof as I realized I had to reach the Buddha before he should leave us. It had always been our one great comfort: that we were able to turn to him, the inexhaustible Source of Truth. He alone could solve all the doubts of my troubled heart; only he, of all the world, was able to restore to me the peace which I had once tasted.

So, when ten days had passed and my strength made travelling possible to some extent, we started out. My good hostess’ conscience troubled her for allowing me to go farther in my weak condition, so I comforted her with the promise that I would lay a greeting from her at the feet of the Master.

We now continued our journey in a north-westerly direction, in the Master’s footsteps, which we found the more recent the farther we were able to advance, aided by the information gathered from place to place.

In Ambagāma it was said that he been there just eight days earlier.

In the Sāla grove of Bhoganagara we heard that he had left to go to Pāvā, a mere three days before we arrived there.

In the heat of late morning, and very tired, we reached the latter place.

The first house that attracted our attention belonged to a coppersmith, as could be seen from the great variety of metal wares ranged along the wall. But no blow of a hammer resounded from it; the occupants seemed to be having a holiday and at the well in the courtyard dishes and platters were being washed by the servants as though a marriage had just taken place.

Suddenly a little man in festive garb came forward and begged courteously to be allowed to fill our almsbowls.

‘If you had come a few hours earlier,’ he added, ‘then I should have had two additional welcome and honoured guests, for your Master, the Buddha, with his monks, dined with me today.’

‘So the Master is still here in Pāvā, then?’ ‘Not any longer, most honoured sister,’ answered the coppersmith. ‘Immediately after the meal the Blessed One was taken with a violent illness and severe pains, which brought him near to fainting, so that we were all greatly frightened. But he rallied from the attack and started for Kusinārā about an hour ago.’

I would have preferred to go at once, for what the smith said about this attack caused me to anticipate the worst. But it was a necessity to strengthen ourselves not only with food, but by a short interval of rest as well.

The road from Pāvā to Kusinārā was not possible to miss. It soon led us away from the cultivated fields, through tiger-grass and undergrowth, ever deeper into the jungle. We waded through a little river and refreshed ourselves somewhat by bathing. After a few minutes’ pause we started on again. Evening was approaching, however, and it was with difficulty that I managed to drag myself farther.

Medinī tried to persuade me to spend the night on a little bit of rising ground under a tree:— There was no such great hurry.

‘This Kusinārā is, I expect, not much more than a village, and seems to be quite buried in the jungle. How could you imagine that the Master would die here? Surely he will pass away some time hence in the Jetavana at Sāvatti, or in either one of the great monasteries at Rājagaha; but the life of the Master will certainly not go out in this wilderness. Who has ever heard of Kusinārā?’ ‘It may be that people will hear of Kusinārā from this day forward,’ I said, and went on.

But my strength was soon so terribly exhausted that I was forced to bring myself to climb the nearest treeless height in the hope of being able to see the neighbourhood of Kusinārā from it. If we couldn’t find the village we would be obliged to spend the night up there, where we would be less exposed to the attacks of beasts of prey and snakes, and would also be, to a certain extent, immune from such fever-producing vapours as seem to lurk in the lower reaches of the wildwood.

Arriving at the summit we looked in vain for some sign of human dwellings. In seemingly endless succession the slopes of the jungle rose before us, like a carpet that is gradually being drawn upward. Soon, however, tall trees emerged from the low undergrowth as the swathes of mist dissolved – the thick leafy masses of a virgin forest rose dome-like one above another, and in a dark glade foamed an unruly brook, the same stream in whose silently flowing waters we had bathed a short time before.

The whole day through, the air had been sultry and the sky overcast. Here, however, we were met by a fresh breeze and the landscape grew ever clearer as though one veil after another were being lifted before our eyes.

Huge walls of rock towered skyward above the woods; and higher yet, like a roof above them were piled green mountain-tops – forest-clad peaks they must have been, though they looked like so many mossy cushions – and ever higher, until they seemed to disappear into the heavens themselves.

One solitary far-stretching cloud of soft red hue – one, and one only – floated above.

Even as we gazed at it this cloud began to glow strangely. It reminded me of the past when I had seen my father take a piece of purified gold out of the furnace with pincers and, after cooling, lay it on a background of light blue silk, for so did this luminous air-picture now shine forth in sharply defined surfaces of burnished gold. In between, vaporous strips of bright green deepened and shot downward in fan-shaped patches until, becoming gradually paler, they plunged into the colourless stratum of air beneath, as though desirous of reaching the verdure-clad mountain-tops that lay below. Ever redder grew the golden surfaces, ever greener the shadows.

That was no cloud.

‘The Himalaya,’ whispered Medinī, overawed and deeply moved as her hand tremblingly sought my arm.

Yes, there it rose before us: the mountain of mountains, the place of eternal snows, the abode of the gods, the resting place of the holy ones! The Himalaya – even in childhood this name had filled me with feelings of deep fear and reverence, with a mysterious prescience of the Sublime One.

How often had I heard in legends and tales the sentence – ‘And he betook himself to the Himalaya and lived the life of an ascetic there.’ Thousands upon thousands had climbed those heights – seekers after liberation – in order to reach eternal happiness amid the loneliness of the mountains by means of profound austerities – each with their own special delusion; and now He was approaching – the One Being among them free from all delusions – He whose footsteps we were following now.

As I stood there, lost in thought, the luminous picture was suddenly extinguished, as though heaven had finally absorbed it into itself. I felt myself, however, so wonderfully animated and strengthened by the sight that I no longer thought of rest.



‘Even if the Master,’ I said to Medinī, ‘were to go to yonder summit in order to pass from that peak into the highest of the regions above, I would still follow and reach him.’

And, full of courage, I walked on. We had not, however, been half an hour on the way when suddenly the undergrowth ceased and cultivated land lay before us. It was already quite dark and the full moon rose large and glowing above the wood which lay opposite when at last we reached Kusinārā.

It was indeed not much more than a small village of the Mallā people with walls and houses built of wattle and daub. My first impression was that a devastating sickness must have depopulated the little township. At the doors of several houses there sat a number of old and sick people, who all looked very sad and some of whom wailed loudly.

We asked them what had happened.

‘Soon, all too soon, the Master dies,’ they exclaimed, wringing their hands. ‘This very hour, the light of the world will be extinguished. The Mallās have all gone to the Sāla grove to see and worship the Sublime One.

‘For, shortly before sunset, the Venerable Ānanda came into our town and went to the market where the Mallās were having a council meeting and said, “This very day, people of Mallā, before the hour of midnight the Blessed One will enter Final Nirvāna. See that you do not later have to reproach yourselves, saying: ‘In our town a Buddha passed away and we did not take advantage of the opportunity to see him in his last hours.’” Upon which all of the Mallās, husbands, wives and children, went out to the Sāla grove. Many of the aged and weak were carried by friends and family but there were not enough people to help us all, therefore we are obliged to remain behind here and cannot pay respects to the Master in his final hours.’

We immediately had the way from the town to the Sāla grove pointed out to us but, finding it already filled with crowds of returning people, we preferred to hurry across the fields, towards a corner of the little wood.

As we reached it we saw a monk leaning against the door-post of a small lodging, weeping and lamenting. Deeply affected, I stopped and at that instant he raised his face towards the sky. The light of the full moon fell upon his pain-filled lineaments, and I recognized the noble Ānanda.

‘Then I have arrived too late – oh no!’ I said to myself, and felt my strength leaving me.

Just then, however, I heard rustling in the bushes, and saw a tall monk step forward and lay his hand upon Ānanda’s shoulder.

‘Brother Ānanda, the Master calls for you.’

So I really was to see the Buddha in his last moments after all! At once my strength returned and rendered me capable of following.

That instant Angulimāla observed and recognized us. Reading his troubled glance, I said, ‘Have no fear, brother, that we shall disturb the last moments of the Tathāgata by loud weeping and emotion-filled cries. We have taken no rest on the way from Vesāli to here in order that we might see the Master once again. Do not refuse us admission to him; we will be strong.’

Upon this he signed to us to follow them.

We did not have far to go. In a little glade of the forest there were perhaps two hundred monks collected, sitting silently in semicircles. In their midst rose two Sāla trees – one splendid mass of white blossoms, even though it was not their flowering season – and beneath them, on a bed of golden robes spread out between the two trunks, the Tathāgata rested on his right side in the lion’s posture, his head supported on his right arm. And the blossoms rained softly down upon him.

Behind him I saw in spirit the pinnacles of the Himalaya rise, clad in their eternal snows, illuminated by the bright moon and yet veiled in the darkness of night, and I seemed to catch again the dreamlike glimpse I had just enjoyed, and to which I owed it that I now stood here in the presence of the Blessed One. And the unearthly glow which had come to me with such a greeting across the distances flashed towards me again, in spiritual glorification, from His face. Just the same as those floating cloud-like peaks, the Master also appeared not to belong to this earth at all; and yet he had, like them, climbed up from this same earth-level to those immeasurable spiritual heights whence he was about to disappear from the sight of gods and humans.

He spoke first of all to Ānanda, who now stood before him: ‘I know well, Ānanda, that you were weeping in lonely grief and that your thought was: “I am not yet free from delusion; I have not yet reached the Goal, and the Master is about to enter into Final Nirvāna – he who has had such kindness for me.” Put such thoughts from yourself, Ānanda – neither complain, nor lament. Have I not told you already, Ānanda, that all things that are pleasant and delightful are changeable, subject to separation and becoming other? How is it possible, Ānanda – since whatever is born, become, and compounded is subject to decay – how could it be that it should not pass away? For a long time, Ānanda, you have been in the Tathāgata’s presence, showing loving-kindness in body, speech and mind, with your whole heart, gladly, blessedly and without guile. You have done well, Ānanda, make the effort, and in a short time you will be free from desire, from selfishness and from delusion.’

As if to show that he was no longer allowing grief to overcome him, Ānanda, commanding his voice by sheer force of will, now asked what the disciples were to do with the Master’s mortal remains.

‘Don’t let that trouble you, Ānanda,’ answered the Buddha. ‘There are wise and faithful disciples among the warrior nobles, among the brahmins and among the heads of families – they will pay the last honours to the mortal remains of the Tathāgata. You have more important things to do; think of the Immortal, not of the mortal; speed forwards, don’t look back.’

And as he let his glance wander around the circle and he looked at each one individually, he added, ‘It may be, disciples, that your thought is: “The world has lost its Master; we no longer have a Master.” But you are not to think this. The Dharma and Discipline which I have taught you, that will be your Master when I am gone.’

Therefore cling to no external support. Hold fast to the Dharma as your island, your support. Be your own light, be your own island.'

He also noticed me then – and the look the All-Compassionate One rested upon me was tender and full of kindness, and I felt my pilgrimage had not been in vain.

After a short time he spoke again, 'It might perhaps be, disciples, that in some one of you a doubt arises with regards to the Buddha, the Dharma, the Sangha, or about the path or the practice. Ask freely, disciples! Do not afterwards feel remorse, thinking: "The Teacher was with us, face to face, and we did not ask him."' Thus he spoke, and gave to every one the opportunity of speaking, but all remained silent.

How, indeed, could a doubt have remained in the presence of the departing Master? Lying there, with the gentle light of the full moon flowing over him – as though the devas of heaven were bestowing on him a final benediction; rained upon by the falling blossoms – as though they were the tears of Mother Earth herself, bewailing the loss of her most precious child; in the midst of the range of deep feelings of his band of disciples, himself unmoved, quiet, cheerful; who did not feel that this Holy One had for ever cast off all limitations, had overcome all delusion? We clearly saw before us the serenity of what is called The Visible Nirvāna, in the radiant features of the departing Buddha.

Ānanda, stirred to the very depths of his being, raised his hands with palms together, and said, 'How truly wonderful it is, Master, that in this assembly, there is not even a single one in whom a doubt exists.'

And the Sublime One answered him, 'You have spoken out of the fullness of your faith, Ānanda. But I know indeed that there is not a single doubt in anyone here. Even the most backward in this assembly has entered the stream of enlightenment and will certainly reach the final Goal.'

As he uttered this affirmation, it assuredly seemed to each one of us as though the Gateway to the Timeless were opening inexorably before us.

Once again the lips parted that had given to the world the highest – the final – Truth. 'Now, disciples, I declare to you:

*'Vayadhammā sankhārā,
Appamādena sampādetha.*

All created things are of the nature to pass away – mindfully fare onwards to the Goal.'

These were the last words of the Master.





श्री गुरुभ्यो नमः



VASITTHI'S BEQUEST

AND THEY WERE the last I heard on earth.



My life-force was exhausted; fever held my senses in a thrall. Like fleeting dream-pictures I still saw the figures round about me – Medini's face often near to mine. Then everything became dark.

Suddenly, it seemed as if a cool bath were extinguishing my burning fever. I felt as a traveller standing on the brink of a pond in the blazing sun may well imagine the lotus feels when, wholly submerged in the cool water of the spring, it imbibes a refreshing draught through every fibre. At the same time it became light overhead, and I saw there above me a great floating red lotus flower and over its edge bent your beloved face. Then I ascended without effort and awoke beside you in the Paradise of the West.

'And blessings on you,' said Kāmanīta, 'that, led by your love, you followed that path. Where would I be now if you had not joined me there? True, I don't know whether we shall be able to escape from the terrible wreckage of these ruined worlds – nevertheless, you inspire me with confidence for you seem to be as little disturbed by these horrors as the sunbeam by the storm.'

'One who has seen the greater, my friend, is not moved by the less. And this – that thousands upon thousands of worlds should pass away – is of trifling significance compared with the entering into Final Nirvāna of a Perfect Buddha. For all this that we see around us is only a process of change, and all these beings will enter again into existence. Yonder Hundred-thousandfold Brahmā who, burning with rage, resists the inevitable and in all probability regards even us enviously because we quietly continue to shine, he will reappear on some lower plane while some other aspiring spirit will arise as the Great Brahmā. All beings will appear where the deepest desire of their hearts and the tides of their karma guides them. On the whole, however, everything

will be as it was – neither better nor worse – because it will be created, as it were, out of the same material. For this reason I call this a very small matter. And, for the same reason, I consider it not only not terrible, but actually a matter of rejoicing to live through this wrecking of worlds. For if this brahmā-world were eternal, there would be nothing higher.’

‘Then you know of something higher than this brahmā-world?’ ‘This brahmā-world, as you see, passes away. But there is that which does not pass, which shall have no end and which has had no beginning. “There is,” said the Master, “a realm where there is neither earth nor water, neither light nor air, neither infinitude of space nor infinitude of consciousness, neither perception nor the lack of perception; where there is neither this world nor another world, or moon or sun; and this I call neither a coming nor a going, nor a staying, neither a dying nor a birth; it has no basis, no evolution and no support; it is the end of suffering, the place of rest, the island of peace, the invisible Nirvāna.”’ ‘Help me, sweet and holy one, in order that we may rise again together there, in the land of peace!’ “That we shall rise again there,” the Master has said, “cannot truly be said of that realm,” and: “That we shall not rise again there, that is also not true.” Any appellation by which you make anything tangible and capable of being grasped, is untrue in this respect.’

‘But what is the value to me of that which I cannot grasp?’ ‘Rather ask – is that which can be grasped, worth stretching out one’s hand for?’ ‘Oh, Vāsithī, truly I believe I must have murdered a brahmin at some time, or committed some horrible crime that pursued me so cruelly with its retribution in that little street in Rājagaha. For if I had not been so suddenly thrust out of life there I would have sat at the Master’s feet, and would also assuredly have been present, as you were, at his Final Nirvāna and now I would be as you are.’

‘Vāsithī – while thought and perception are still ours, please do just one thing for love of me: describe the Blessèd One to me exactly, so that I may see him in spirit and thereby maybe obtain what was not possible for me on earth. That will surely bring me some peace.’

‘Gladly, my friend,’ she answered. And she described to him the appearance of the Buddha, feature by feature, not forgetting even the smallest detail.

But in a tone of deep discontentment, Kāmanīta said, ‘What use are descriptions! All of what you say now could just as well have been said of that old ascetic, the one I told you that I spent the night with in the hall of the potter in Rājagaha, and who I now realize was not quite so foolish as I had believed, for he indeed said much that was true.’

‘Well then, Vāsithī, don’t tell me anything more, but visualise the Tathāgata until you see him as when you saw him face to face, and it may be that in consequence of our spiritual fellowship I shall then share your vision.’

‘Gladly, my friend.’

And Vāsithī recalled the image of the Master as he was about to enter into Final Nirvāna.

‘Do you see him, dear friend?’ ‘Not yet, Vāsithī.’

‘I must make this mind-picture more tangible,’ thought Vāsithī.

And she looked around her in the immeasurable spaces where the brahmā-world was in process of being extinguished.

And just as when some great master-founder, who has completed the mould of the glorious image of a god and finds that he hasn’t enough metal to fill it, looks around in his foundry and throws all that lies around him there – tiny images of gods, figures, vases, and bowls, all his possessions, the work of his life – gladly and heartily into the smelting furnace in order that he may be able to make a perfect cast of this one glorious divine image, so did Vāsithī look around herself in immeasurable space, and all that there was left over of the paling light and dissolving forms of this brahmā-world she drew by her spiritual force to herself, thereby emptying the whole of the cosmos. She cast into the mould of her mind-picture this whole mass of astral matter, thus creating a colossal and radiant image of the Buddha, just as he was about to enter into Final Nirvāna.

And when she saw this picture opposite her there arose in her no longing and no sadness.

Even when the great and holy Upagupta, by the magic art of Māra, the Evil One, saw the form of the Buddha long after the Blessèd One had passed away, even he was so filled with longing that he flung himself adoring at the feet of the deceptive apparition and, overcome by grief, wailed, ‘Damn this pitiless transiency that dissolves even such glorious forms. For that splendid body of the Great and Holy One bowed to the law of change and it too has become a prey to destruction.’

But not so Vāsithī.

Unmoved and self-possessed, she looked upon the likeness as an artist upon her work, full of but one thought – to reveal it to Kāmanīta.

‘Now I begin to see a figure,’ said the latter. ‘Hold it fast, make it shine more clearly.’

Whereupon Vāsithī again looked around herself in space. In the midst of it, despite the fact that the great entity had expired, there still remained the lurid and angry glow of the giant star of the Hundred-thousandfold Brahmā.

And Vāsithī rent by her spiritual force the spent astral body of this highest deity from its place and cast it into the mould of the Buddha likeness, which was immediately illuminated and vivified, like one who has enjoyed an invigorating draught.

‘Now I see it more distinctly,’ said Kāmanīta.

And all became still.

Then it seemed to Vāsithī as though she heard a clear and golden voice, but she was unsure as to whether it emanated from the image before her or from the depths of her innermost heart.

‘So you are here, Vāsithī. Are you finished with your sentence?’ And as one answers in a dream, she responded: ‘I am finished with it.’

‘Even so, Vāsithī. And the long way has not tired you? Do you still need the help of the Tathāgata?’ ‘No, I no longer need the help of the Tathāgata.’ ‘Even so, Vāsithī. You have sought refuge in yourself; and do you rest in your self, Vāsithī?’ ‘I have learned to know myself. As one unfurls the sheaf of leaves that make up the trunk of a plantain and one finds beneath it no sound wood from which anything firm can be made, so I have learned to know myself: a body and a mind of changing forms in which there is nothing eternal, nothing that offers permanence. And so this “self” of mine is given up: “This is not me, this does not belong to me, this is not my self” is the judgement now passed upon the question.’

‘Even so, Vāsithī. So now you cling firmly only to the Dharma?’ ‘The Teaching has brought me to the Goal. As one crossing a stream by means of a raft, neither clings to the raft when she has reached the farther side, nor drags it along with her, so I no longer cling to the Dharma but let it go.’

‘Even so, Vāsithī. Thus, clinging to nothing, attached to nothing, you will rise again in the Place of Peace.’

“That we shall rise again there,” the Tathāgata has said, is not true of that place, and “That we shall not rise again there,” is also not true. And even the teaching that – “Neither is it true to say that we shall rise again nor yet to say that we shall not rise again” – even this itself is not perfectly true. No thing is true any longer – and, least of all, is nothingness true. Thus there is perfect understanding at last.’

Then, on the face of the Buddha likeness, there appeared a glowing, scarce-perceptible smile.

‘Now I am able to see the face,’ said Kāmanīta.

‘Like a reflection in flowing water I recognize it vaguely. Hold it fast – steady it, Vāsithī.’

Vāsithī looked around her in space.

Space was empty.

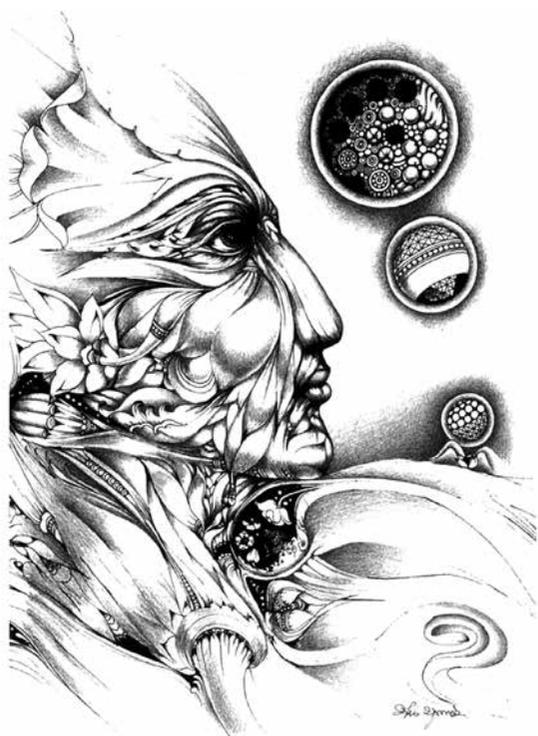
Then Vāsithī flung her own corporeal substance into the astral mass of the vision.

As Kāmanīta observed that Vāsithī had suddenly disappeared, a searing wave of grief shook him to the core of his being. His heart froze – his senses became stupefied and numb – but, strangely enough, soon the feeling passed. For, as one who is dying leaves a legacy, so had Vāsithī left to Kāmanīta the Buddha likeness. This alone remained with him in all of space, and now he clearly recognized it...

‘That old wanderer with whom I spent the night in Rājagaha and whom I blamed for his foolishness, that was the Blessed One! Oh fool that I was! Was there ever a greater idiot than I?! What I have been longing for as the highest happiness, as fulfilment itself, that I have already been in possession of for billions and billions of years.’

Then the vision of the Buddha drew near like an on-coming cloud and enveloped him in a radiant mist.





45

NIGHT AND MORNING IN THE SPHERES

AS IN A BANQUET HALL, when all the torches and lamps are extinguished, and one little lamp is left burning before a sacred picture in a corner, so Kāmanīta was left behind – alone, in universal night.



For just as his body was enfolded by the astral substance of that Buddha likeness, so his being was completely absorbed by the recollection of the Buddha's presence; and that was the oil which fed the flame of this little lamp.

The whole conversation he had had with the Master in the outer hall of the potter's house in Rājagaha rose up before him from beginning to end, sentence by sentence, word by word. But after he had gone quite through it, he began again at the beginning. And every sentence was to him like a gate that stood at the head of the way to new avenues of thought which, in their turn, led to others. And he explored them all with measured steps, and there was nothing which remained dark to him.

And while his spirit, in such fashion, wove the recollection of the Buddha into its own fabric until its last strand was exhausted, his body absorbed ever more of the astral matter which surrounded it, until what remained at last became transparent. And the darkness of universal night began to appear as a delicate blue that became ever darker.



Whereupon Kāmanīta thought: 'Out there reigns the vast darkness of universal night. But a time will come when morning shall dawn and a new brahmā-world will come into existence. If my thoughts and acts were to be directed towards becoming

the new Hundred-thousandfold Brahmā, who would call the new world into existence, I do not see who could outrival me. For while all the beings of this brahmā-world have sunk into helplessness and non-existence, I alone am here at my post, watchful, and in full possession of my faculties. Yes, if I so wished I could summon all those beings into life at this instant and begin the new universal day. But one thing I cannot do – I can never again call Vāsithī into being.

‘Vāsithī has gone.

‘She has gone, into that passing away which leaves no seed of existence behind; neither God nor Brahmā, nor Māra the Evil One can find her. But what can life be to me without Vāsithī, who was its fairest and its best? And what could a brahmā existence be to me, a life beyond which one is able to pass? And why trouble with the temporal, when there is an Eternal? “There is an Eternal and a way to the Eternal.” An old forest brahmin once taught me that round about the heart are spun a hundred fine arteries, by means of which the consciousness is able to range throughout the whole body; but there is, however, only one which leads to the crown of the head – that one by which the consciousness leaves the body. So too there are a hundred, yes, a thousand, a hundred thousand ways which lead here and there in this world, through many scenes of happiness and suffering, both where the lifespan is of long and where it is of short duration, where all is beautiful and where all is miserable, through divine and human worlds, through animal kingdoms and under-worlds. But there is only one which leads absolutely out of this universe. That is the way to the Eternal, the way to the untraversed land.

‘I am now on that road. Well then, I shall tread it to its end.’

And he continued to dwell on the thought of the Buddha, and of the way which leads to the End of all Suffering.

And ever darker became the blue of the diaphanous universal night.



But when it began to grow almost black, the new Brahmā flashed into existence, the Hundred-thousandfold Brahmā, who illumines and preserves a hundred thousand worlds.

And the Brahmā sent forth a joyous summons to awaken: ‘*Sandhyas! Sandhyas! Sandhyas!* Wake up, all you beings! All you who have rested throughout the whole of creation’s night in the lap of nothingness! Here, to me! Form the new brahmā-universe; enjoy the new world day, each one in your place, each one according to your strength!’ And the beings and the worlds sprang forth from the darkness of the void, star by star, and the jubilant shouts of a hundred thousand voices and the sound like a hundred thousand drums and conch-horns rang in the answer: ‘Hail! The Hundred-thousandfold Brahmā who calls us to the new universe and the new day! Hail to us who

are called to share the new day with Him, and to reflect His divine glory in bliss! When Kāmanīta saw and heard all this he was filled with deep compassion.

‘These beings and these worlds, these stellar gods, and the Hundred-thousandfold Brahmā himself shout for joy to welcome the universal day – rejoicing in their own existence. And why? Because they do not understand it.’

And this compassion of his for the world, for the gods, and for the Supreme God, vanquished in Kamanita the last remnant of his conceit and self-concern.

But he now considered: ‘During this new day also, perfect Buddhas are certain to appear who will declare the Ultimate Truth. And when these deities I see around me now, hear about the possibility of their liberation and remember that in the earliest dawn of the universal day they saw a being who went away, out of the universe, then that memory will be to their advantage. They will say to themselves: “Already one from our midst – one who was a part of ourselves – has preceded us on that road,” and that will aid their enlightenment. So I shall help all in helping myself. For in truth no one can help themselves without helping all.’

Very soon, some of the stellar gods began to notice that there was one amongst them who did not shine ever brighter like the others, but who, on the contrary, steadily diminished in brilliance.



And they called to him, ‘Ho, there, brother! Turn your gaze upon the Great Hundred-thousandfold Brahmā, that way you will recover your brilliance and shine like us. For you also, brother, are called to the bliss of reflecting the glory of the Supreme God.’

When the gods called to him thus, Kāmanīta neither looked nor listened. And the gods who saw him grow ever paler were greatly troubled about him. And they appealed to Mahā-Brahmā.

‘Great Brahmā, Our Light and Preserver, look upon this poor being who is too weak to shine as we do, whose brilliance continually decreases and does not increase! Oh, give him your blessed attention, illumine him, revive him! For surely you have also called him to reflect your divine glory in bliss.’

And the Great Brahmā, full of tenderness for all beings, turned his attention to Kāmanīta to refresh and strengthen him. But Kāmanīta’s light, nevertheless, decreased visibly.

Then the Great Brahmā was more grieved that this one being would not allow himself to be illumined by him and did not reflect his glory, than he was glad that a

hundred thousand sunned themselves in his light and hailed him with shouts of joy. And he withdrew a large part of his divinely illuminating power from the universe – power sufficient to set a thousand worlds on fire – and he directed it on Kāmanīta.

But Kāmanīta’s light continued to pale, as though drawing nearer to complete disappearance.

Mahā-Brahmā now became a prey to great anxiety.

‘This one star withdraws from my influence – so then I am not omnipotent. I do not know the way he is going, so I am not omniscient. For he is not expiring as do the beings who expire in death, to be reborn each according to their actions; not as the worlds go out in the brahmā night, only to shine forth again. What light illumines his way, seeing that he disdains mine? Is there then another light more radiant than mine? And a road which leads in the opposite direction to mine – a road to untraversed lands? Shall I myself, perhaps, ever take that road – that path to the untraversed land?’ And now the minds of the stellar gods also became filled with great anxiety, great trouble.

‘This one withdraws from the power of the Great Brahmā – so then, is the Great Brahmā not omnipotent? What light can be lighting his way, seeing that he disdains that of the Great Brahmā? Is there then another light more splendid than that which we so blissfully reflect? And a road that leads in the opposite direction to ours – a road to an untraversed land? Shall we, perhaps, ever take that road – the road to the untraversed land?’ Then the Hundred-thousandfold Brahmā pondered, ‘My mind is made up. I shall re-absorb my illuminating power, now diffused throughout space, and shall plunge all these worlds again into the darkness of the brahmā night. And when I have gathered my light into a single ray I shall turn it upon that one being in order to rescue him for this my brahmā-world.’

And the Hundred-thousandfold Brahmā now reabsorbed all the illuminating power which he had diffused throughout space, so that the worlds sank again into the darkness of the brahmā night. And gathering his light into a single ray, he directed it on Kāmanīta.

‘Henceforward there must shine at this point,’ he willed, ‘the most radiant star in all my brahmā-world.’

Then the Hundred-thousandfold Brahmā drew back into himself that ray which had illuminating power great enough to set a hundred thousand worlds on fire, and again unleashed his blazing light throughout the whole of space.

At the point, however, where he had hoped to see the most radiant of all the stars, only a little, slowly fading spark was to be seen.

And while in immeasurable space, worlds upon worlds flashed and shouted as they pressed forward once again into the new brahmā day, the pilgrim Kāmanīta went out – out of the sphere of knowledge of gods and humans.

Out, quite as the light of a lamp goes out when it has consumed the last drop of oil in its wick.

KAMANITA'S PILGRIMAGE
WAS COMPLETE.



APPENDIX 1

NOTES AND REFERENCES

ABBREVIATIONS

- D: *Dīgha Nikāya*, The Long Discourses of the Buddha.
M: *Majjhima Nikāya*, The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha.
A: *Anguttara Nikāya*, The Discourses Related by Numbers.
S: *Samyutta Nikāya*, The Discourses Related by Subject.
SN: *Sutta Nipāta*, A collection of the Buddha's teachings, in verse form.
Dhp: *Dhammapada*, A collection of the Buddha's teachings, in verse form.
Iti: *Itivuttaka*, Sayings of the Buddha.
Ud: *Udāna*, Inspired Utterances.
MV: *Mahāvagga*, The Great Chapter, from the books of monastic discipline.
CV: *Cūlavagga*, The Lesser Chapter, from the books of monastic discipline.
Vib: *Vibhaṅga*, The Exposition, the main rules of the monastic discipline.
Thig: *Therīgāthā*, The Verses of the Elder Nuns.
Thag: *Theragāthā*, The Verses of the Elder Monks.
Jat: *Jātaka*, The Stories of the Buddha's Previous Births.
Vsm: *Visuddhimagga*, The Path of Purification, a commentarial compendium.

PALI & SANSKRIT PHONETICS AND PRONUNCIATION

Sanskrit is the written language of the Hindu scriptures and many of the texts of the Northern (Mahāyāna) Buddhist tradition. Pāli is the original scriptural language of Southern (Theravāda) Buddhism; it was a spoken language, closely related to Sanskrit, with no written script of its own. As written forms have emerged for Pāli, they have always been in the lettering of another language (e.g. Sanskrit, Sinhalese, Burmese, Thai, Roman). Thus the Roman lettering used here is pronounced just as one would expect, for both languages, with the following clarifications –

Vowels are of two types:

Short	Long
a as in about	ā as in father
i as in chip	ī as in machine
u as in put	ū as in true
	e as in whey
	o as in more

Consonants are mostly as one would expect, with a few additional rules:

c as in ancient

ñ as in canyon

v halfway between an English 'v' and a 'w'

bh, ch, dh, gh, jh, kh, ph, th: these two-lettered combinations with an 'h' denote a consonant with an aspirated, airy sound, as distinct from the hard, crisp sound of the consonant on its own – e.g. **th** as in hot-house, **ph** as in upholstery.



THE BUDDHA REVISITS THE CITY OF THE FIVE HILLS

1. Page 1, **‘Thus have I heard...’** Many of the major discourses of the Buddha begin with the words *Evam me suttam* ‘Thus have I heard.’ This derives from the tradition that all of the Buddha’s teachings were recited by the Venerable Ānanda at a grand council of Elders three months after the Buddha’s passing away; Ānanda had been the personal attendant of the Buddha for many years and was blessed with the ability of total recall. The entire body of the Buddha’s teachings is thus cast in the form of ‘This is what Ānanda remembered’ rather than being presented as an absolute truth.

The quote given here is probably a fiction of K.G. – it does not exist as such in the Southern (Theravāda) Buddhist scriptures: the Pāli Canon. The definitive discourse on the Buddha’s last days, the *Mahā-parinibbāna Sutta*, found in the collection of Long Discourses (Dīgha Nikāya), begins with the Buddha already in Rājagaha. It could be from the Northern Buddhist (Mahāyāna) tradition however.

2. Page 1, **As the Master drew near to the City of the Five Hills...** Rājagaha (‘The Royal City’) was known by the above epithet because it was surrounded by five great hills: Pandava, Gijjhakūta (‘Vultures’ Peak’), Vebhāra, Isigili and Vepulla – it was thus also called Giribbaja, ‘The Mountain Stronghold.’

3. Page 1, **Here and there billowing clouds... showing that farm-workers and oxen were plodding wearily homeward...** This time of day, early evening and dusk, has been known since ancient times in India as *‘go-dhūli-kāla’* – ‘the hour of cow-dust.’

4. Page 1, **on the final journey from Samsāra to Nirvāna...** These two terms are extremely common in Buddhist circles. The former (as well as now ironically being a perfume marketed by Guerlain) means ‘endless wandering – the beginningless cycles of birth and death, rebirth and redeath.’ It is the entanglement of the unawakened heart in the world of the body, thought, emotion and the senses, being continually buffeted by gain & loss, success & failure, praise & criticism, happiness & unhappiness.

The latter (as well as being the name of a grunge rock band from Seattle) literally means ‘coolness’ – it refers to the state of unshakable peace and happiness that is realized by any being that awakens to the Ultimate Truth, and who has transcended the habits of identifying with the body, thought, emotions, the senses and the world. More will be said about this mysterious quality as our story unfolds.

5. Page 1, **‘while still young, a black-haired young man...’** This description of leaving the household life is very common in the Theravāda scriptures. Here it is being quoted from one of several places where the Buddha talked about his own spiritual quest, for example in the *Ariyapariyesanā Sutta* (‘The Noble Search’) in the Middle Length Discourses (Majjhima Nikāya) at M 26.14.

6. Page 2, **And there, under the shadow of lofty Vebhāra...** The incidents referred to in these passages are recounted in the verses of the *Pabbajjā Sutta* ('The Discourse on the Going Forth'); in the Sutta itself, however, he is described as staying on the hill of Pandava. The passage occurs in the collection of verses known as the Sutta Nipāta at SN 405-424. Elsewhere the Buddha does mention staying in the Satapanni Cave, on the slopes of Vebhāra (e.g. in the *Mahā-parinibbāna Sutta*, at D 16.3.42, see Appendix 4) although this was on an occasion much later in his life.

7. Page 2, **six long years of self-inflicted mortification...** One of the best descriptions of the Buddha's ascetic practices comes in the *Mahā-Saccaka Sutta* ('The Greater Discourse to Saccaka'), at M 36.13-44.

8. Page 2, **The dispensation of the Dharma had been established on sure foundations...** What is portrayed here are the criteria that the Buddha established, shortly after his enlightenment, for what he intended to achieve before he passed away. This statement had been initiated by the proposition from Māra – whose name means 'death' and who is the Lord of Illusion, the Lucifer of Buddhist mythology – that now that the Buddha was fully enlightened he might as well die and disappear, that there was no use in him staying around in the world, now that 'his work was done.' The incident is described in the *Mahā-parinibbāna Sutta*, at D 16.3.7-8 (see Appendix 4).

The word 'Dharma' is the familiar Sanskrit form of the Pāli word 'Dhamma'; both can mean either 'truth', 'the Buddha's Teachings' or simply 'phenomena.' K.G. used both Pāli and Sanskrit quite freely throughout the book, but no particular significance should be attached to which language he's chosen.

Another point worth noting here is that, traditionally, the word 'death' is never used in connection with the Buddha, only the term *Parinibbāna* – 'Final or Complete Nirvāna.' This is because, as it is said – 'The Buddha is liberated from being reckoned in terms of material form (the body), feeling, perceptions, mental formations and consciousness... He is profound, immeasurable, unfathomable like the ocean', (M 72.20). So, since the Buddha has let go of identification with everything that is connected with the body and personality, and with birth and death, the latter term is seen as inaccurate. There is a famous passage in the Dhammapada which also reflects this principle:

*Mindfulness is the path to the Deathless,
heedlessness is the path to death.
The mindful do not die –
the heedless are as if dead already.*

Dhp. 21

9. Page 3, **when the Tathāgata goes forth from here...** This is a combination of scripture and fiction: the Buddha indeed turns and gives a beloved city a last

lingering look as he makes his final journey, but it is Vesālī he gazes upon, not Rājagaha. The incident appears in the *Mahā-parinibbāna Sutta*, at D 16.4.1 (see Appendix 4).

The word ‘Tathāgata’, which appears for the first time here, is the term the Buddha used to refer to himself, and which seems to have been coined by him. It is a deliberately ambiguous term meaning both ‘Thus gone’ and ‘Thus come’ or ‘One gone to Suchness’ and ‘One come to Suchness.’ Its *precise* meaning has been the subject of extensive debate for millennia (there are thirty pages on it in the ancient commentary to the Udāna alone) however, it seems intended to imply a spiritual quality that is both completely immanent, present in the world, and completely transcendent of the world at the same time.

10. Page 3, **the Mango Grove... the gift of his disciple Jīvaka...** Jīvaka’s Mango Grove, the Ambavana, was a small monastery on the southern edges of Rājagaha, on the way to the Vulture Peak. It was donated to the Buddha’s monastic community some time after the more well-known Veluvana (the ‘Bamboo Grove’) was offered by King Bimbisāra.

11. Page 3, **and he heard all this take place in a racket of noise and loud conversation...** This image, of travelling monks arriving amidst great clamour and bustle, is found in a few places in the scriptures; one occurrence is in the *Cātumā Sutta*, at M 67.2 and another at Ud. 3.3.

12. Page 4, **the branch of a black Sāla tree...** The Sāla tree is *Shorea robusta* (also *Vatica robusta*), known for its beautiful, fragrant white blossoms.



THE MEETING

1. Page 7, **he walked past, repelled by the house of the bird-catcher...** Trading in animal flesh is one of the ‘wrong livelihoods’ described by the Buddha for lay-people; the others are: trading in weapons, in living beings, in alcohol and in poisons. This list can be found in Anguttara Nikāya (‘The Collection of Discourses Related by Numbers’), at §177 in the ‘The Book of the Fives’, A 5.177.

2. Page 7, **Leaning against the door-post was a beautiful girl...** Houses of prostitution are on the list of places not to be visited by monastics, along with taverns. These are mentioned in the monastic rule, the Vināya (Vib. 246-7), and also at Vsm. I §45 in the Visuddhimagga, a compilation of commentarial material made in the 5th century C.E. Buddhist monastics are also expected not to engage in any kind of sexual activity and to avoid watching dancing, singing, music and shows. This

renunciant style of life is described in many places in the Buddhist scriptures, e.g. in the *Brahmajāla Sutta*, at D 1.1.8-10.

The seven-stringed *vīnā* is a musical instrument known as the Indian lute or mandolin; it is akin to the sitar of today although somewhat smaller.

It should also be noted that K.G.'s original passage here was derived from the *Anguttara Nikāya*, §103 in 'The Book of the Threes', A 3.103.

3. Page 8, **The Master approached the potter...** Here begins the core incident of our tale; it is derived mostly from the story of Pukkusāti, in the *Dhātuvibhanga Sutta*, M 140, printed in its entirety as Appendix 2. According to the ancient commentaries Pukkusāti had been the ruler of Gandhāra, a kingdom located near Kashmir in northern India (it now lies in Pakistan) and he had ordained himself as a monk when he heard of the teachings of the Buddha from his friend Bimbisāra, King of Magadha. Once he had adopted the homeless life, he immediately set out on foot to find the Master.



TO THE BANKS OF THE GANGA

1. Page 11, **My name is Kāmanīta...** The name *Kāmanīta* is not common in the Pāli Canon – the main place where it occurs is in the *Kāmanīta Jātaka*, Jat. §228, one of the stories of the Buddha's previous lives. It derives from the Pāli word '*kāma*' – sense pleasure – and would thus translate into English as something like 'Lovejoy' or 'Randy'.

2. Page 11, **I was born in Ujjenī...** This was the capital city of Avanti; it is the modern day Ujjain in the province of Madhya Pradesh, northern India. It is one of the great holy places of the Hindu religion and the Kumbh Mela religious festival is held there every twelve years.

Even though K.G. explicitly describes Ujjenī as being 'among the mountains', it sits at 1600' on what is now called the Malwa Plateau and a visitor will be struck by how very flat the land is around that area.

The author was probably making a hopeful guess about the topography as the River Chambal runs through the ancient town and there are indeed the Vindhya Mountains to the south – however they are far away.

Furthermore, on account of the modern-day dustiness of the Indian atmosphere, one cannot even see the distant mountains from the town; at least one couldn't in December of 2004.

The editor's diary, from a visit made at that time, reads:

'Ujjenī among the Mountains'
as Gjellerup put it
turns out to be
poetic myth indeed –
flat as a pancake,
Lincoln fens,
Illinois and Kansas.

3. Page 11, **the Sacrificial Cord...** The *Yajñopavita*, in Sanskrit, is worn over the left shoulder and under the right arm, its colour and composition denote the caste that an individual belongs to. It is supposed to make sacrifices prosperous and to be a spiritual bond uniting the universe and all beings.

4. Page 11, **I must have been educated in Taxilā...** This city was the Oxford of ancient India, it was located in Gandhāra (see Chapter 2, note §3).

5. Page 12, **its floods have reflected the ruins of Hastinapura...** This following passage is describing the scenario of the Mahābhārata – the greatest of all classical Indian epic poems – a full English edition runs to about fourteen volumes. A highly regarded version of it was translated by Roy and Ganguli, issued by various publishers, e.g. Ulan Press (2012), and Andesite Press (2015).

Hastinapura is situated on the flood-plain between the Gangā and the Yamunā Rivers, although it is considerably closer to the former.

6. Page 13, **at a bend of the broad Gangā, lay the city of Kosambī...** Either K.G. was employing poetic license here or he did not check his facts very carefully: in actuality Kosambī lies on the River Yamunā (see map on page xviii). This said, there is no need to be too fussy about these matters for, as K.G. astutely commented in his Note to the First Edition: 'the requirements of poetry preempt the requirements of geography.'

7. Page 13, **terraces, quays and bathing-ghats...** A 'ghat' is a landing stage with magnificent flights of steps for bathers. Ordinarily they are crowned by a monumental arch or gateway.

8. Page 13, **I felt as if I was looking upon a city of the Tāvātimsa heaven...** The reference here to the Tāvātimsa heaven is our first introduction to the colourful subject of Buddhist cosmology. According to tradition there are a total of thirty-two different realms of existence, ranging from the hells, at the lower end of the spectrum, to the formless abodes of the highest Brahmā gods at the top end. They are grouped as follows, counting from the top down:

A. THE FOUR FORMLESS BRAHMĀ REALMS (*Arūpa-loka*).

- 1) The Heaven of Devas of the Sphere of Neither-Perception-Nor-Non-Perception.
- 2) The Heaven of Devas of the Sphere of No-Thingness.
- 3) The Heaven of Devas of the Sphere of Infinite Consciousness.
- 4) The Heaven of Devas of the Sphere of Infinite Space.

B. THE SIXTEEN LOWER BRAHMĀ REALMS (*Rūpa-loka*).

- 1) The Heaven of Peerless Devas.
- 2) The Heaven of Clear-sighted Devas.
- 3) The Heaven of Beautiful Devas.
- 4) The Heaven of Untroubled Devas.
- 5) The Heaven of Devas not Falling Away (*Avihā*).
- 6) The Heaven of Unconscious Devas.
- 7) The Heaven of Very Fruitful Devas.
- 8) The Heaven of Devas of Refulgent Glory.
- 9) The Heaven of Devas of Unbounded Glory.
- 10) The Heaven of Devas of Limited Glory.
- 11) The Heaven of Devas of Streaming Radiance (*Ābhassarā*).
- 12) The Heaven of Devas of Unbounded Radiance.
- 13) The Heaven of Devas of Limited Radiance.
- 14) The Heaven of Great Brahmās.
- 15) The Heaven of Ministers of Brahmā.
- 16) The Heaven of Retinue of Brahmā.

C. THE TWELVE WORLDS OF SENSE DESIRE (*Kāma-loka*).

- 1) The Heaven of Those who Delight in the Creations of Others.
- 2) The Heaven of Those who Delight in Creating.
- 3) The Heaven of the Contented.
- 4) The *Yāma* Heaven.
- 5) The Heaven of the Thirty-three Gods (*Tāvatisa*).
- 6) The Heaven of the Four Great Kings.
- 7) The Realm of the Earth Spirits.
- 8) The Human Realm.
- 9) The Animal Realm.
- 10) The Realm of the Hungry Ghosts.
- 11) The Realm of the Jealous Gods.
- 12) The Hell Realms.

In the various descriptions that are given of these realms in the ancient texts, the *Tāvatisa* heaven bears most resemblance to the classical images of heaven

as depicted in the Christian world. Unlike the heaven and hell of Christian thought, however, from the Buddhist perspective our existence in any of these realms is temporary. We are born into them according to the results of our actions and, when death comes, consciousness is drawn to yet another realm – either up, down or at the same level – depending on how that life has been lived and the weight of past actions before it.

Classical descriptions of Buddhist cosmology can be found in ‘The Three Worlds According to King Ruang’ – translated by F.E. & M.B. Reynolds, Berkeley Buddhist Studies Series – and on pp 63-96 of ‘*The Words of my Perfect Teacher*’, by Patrul Rimpoche – published by HarperCollins.

9. Page 14, **also from my unwholesome karma as well...** The word ‘karma’ appears more and more often in the English language these days. In essence it means ‘action’, although it has adopted a much broader and differently coloured sense over the years. In the Oxford English Dictionary it is defined as: ‘The sum of a person’s actions in previous states of existence, viewed as deciding his or her fate in future existences.’

Its use in our story here reflects the standard beliefs of the Buddha’s time, which still persist strongly in India today, that bad karma is like some kind of infection or stain that can be washed away by the waters of the Gangā (the River Ganges) or perhaps through contact with a great guru. (See also Chapter 8, note §4).



THE MAIDEN BALL-PLAYER

1. Page 17, **the lovesick notes of the Kokila bird...** The Kokila is the Indian cuckoo, *Cuculus micropterus*.

2. Page 17, **a poet like Bharata...** The poet he is referring to was also known as Vyāsa – the legendary composer of the divine Indian epic, the Mahābharata.

3. Page 18, **the Curnapāda and the Gītamarga...** These translate literally as ‘The Powdery Foot’ and ‘The Path of Song’ – in his Note to the First Edition K. G. acknowledged that he ‘took the account of the ball game from Dandin’s cycle of stories, the *Dasakumaracaritam*.’ Both of these types of ball-play are indeed mentioned in this work of Dandin, a novelist and poet of the 15th Century. The former is at Das. 11.41 and is defined as ‘a peculiar movement, walking backwards and forwards’; the latter is at Das. 11.43 and goes with the phrase, ‘*Dasapada camkramāna*’ – literally ‘walking to and fro with ten feet.’

4. Page 20, **as the Cakora... lives only upon the rays of the moon...** The Cakora, ‘the lunar bird’, is also the Greek partridge, *Perdix rufa*. It is mentioned in many places in the Hindu scriptures, along with its legendary powers of living on moonlight, and it

is often used in the same symbolic way as in this passage; for example in ‘The Ocean of Rivers’ stories, *Kathacaritsagara*, by Samadeva, at Kathas. 76.11 & 77.50: ‘His eye, like the Cakora, drinking the nectar of her moon-like face.’ It is also mentioned in the works of Kabir, 1398–1448, a mystic poet and saint of India, whose literature greatly influenced the *bhakti*, devotional movement of the Sub-continent.

As the leaf of the lotus abides on the water:

so Thou art my Lord, and I am Thy servant.

As the night-bird Chakor gazes all night at the moon:

so Thou art my Lord and I am Thy servant.

‘Songs of Kabir,’ XXXIV (Rabindranath Tagore trans.)

5. Page 20, **he was as passionately addicted to the dice as was Nāla...** Nāla is the eponymous hero of the *Nālopakhyaṇam* or ‘The Story of Nāla’ which is recounted in the Mahābhārata to console Yudishthira (one of the heroes of that epic tale) about the suffering caused by gambling.

The story goes something like this: Nāla, a prince, and Damayantī, a beautiful young maiden, fall in love with each other even though they have never met – it is ‘a love of the unseen.’ She then manages to pick him out of several suitors at a ‘self-choice’ marriage ceremony, despite the fact that there are four gods there who impersonate him to try and trick her. She then becomes a perfect, faithful wife, whose loyalty is flawless even though she is severely tested.

The Goddess Kālī, together with Dvapara, a dice demon, resent Damayantī’s choice of Nāla and they conspire to separate them. Kālī possesses Nāla, Dvapara enters the dice and Nāla gambles everything away to his brother. But he refuses to stake Damayantī and the pair go to the forest where Nāla, still possessed, leaves her. After various adventures both assume disguises, Damayantī as a low-caste chambermaid. Damayantī’s father finally recovers her and she cleverly tracks down Nāla. Having learned the secret of dice from the repentant Mother Kālī, Nāla now stakes Damayantī and recovers his kingdom.



THE MAGIC PORTRAIT

1. Page 24, **But this is Vāsithī...** The name Vāsithī is also not very common in the Pāli Canon. The main place where it appears is in the Therīgāthā (‘The Verses of the Elder Nuns’) at Thig. 133-8; a woman of this name leaves the household life after the death of her child and subsequently meeting the Buddha. She became enlightened,

an Arahant, only three days after her ordination. It's interesting to note that there is no connection between the names Kāmanīta and Vāsithī in the Theravāda Buddhist scriptures. (See also Chapter 40, note §4).

2. Page 24, **a verse of four lines which related ... the incident of the golden ball...**

The art of such secret writing is known as '*mlecchita vikalpa*' in Sanskrit. Incidentally it is #45 on the list of 'The 64 arts to be known by a woman' collected in the famous Indian handbook of erotica, the *Kāma Sūtra*, written by Vatsyayāna in the 4th Century C.E. It was translated into English by Sir Richard Burton in the 19th Century and was widely circulated in Europe at the time that 'Kāmanīta' was written. Also importantly, the gentle blend of spirituality, art and romance that is described as being woven into Kāmanīta's verse is a mixture well-known to the Indian mind. For example, here is the famous 5th Century poet Kālidāsa also on the subject of a maiden ball-player:

*Hit by the hand, soft as a lotus, of my mistress
You drop, and drop, and rise again -
Little ball, I know your heart,
It is as if you fail each time to kiss her lip.*

3. Page 25, **this fair one with the beautiful brows...** This epithet is a literary allusion made in reference to Helen of Troy, the legendary beauty who possessed the 'face that launched a thousand ships.' Thomas A. Hollweck, a German scholar at the University of Colorado, Boulder, helpfully commented on this, '... the word "*Schönbrauige*" [the epithet that K.G. used in his original edition] is a good fit for a reading public that was the typical German educated class, the "*Bildungsbürger*." To them it would have immediately conjured up Homer.'

Furthermore, as classics professor Nona Olivia (also at Colorado), observed on this passage, '... literary allusions are considered markers for the original; a sort of finger pointing to the moon, if Dogen will forgive me.' Thus by employing a term that evokes this legendary beauty of Europe, the reader will infer the presence of comparable loveliness in the fair Vāsithī, our soon-to-be heroine.



ON THE TERRACE OF THE SORROWLESS

1. Page 29, **Asoka trees and magnificent flowering plants...** The Asoka, which derives its name from 'A-', 'without' and '-soka', 'sorrow', is a well-known type of tree in Asia. It is called *Jonesia asoka* by Western botanists, also *Saraca indica*. See http://www.indianetzone.com/4/saraca_indica.htm. The term 'Heartsease', which John Logie uses later on as a translation for 'Asoka', should not be confused with the wild pansy, *Viola tricolor*, which also goes by the same name.

2. Page 30, **in a former existence she had been my heart's companion...** A discussion of this phenomenon, and other examples of it, can be found in 'The Biography of Ven. Ajahn Mun', pp 132-5 & 214-7, published by Wat Pah Bahn Daht.

3. Page 32, **we were as yet only at the beginning of the Vasanta season...** Vasanta is the first part of the Asian Hot Season, from the March to May full moons, corresponding to our Springtime. The word is not related to *Vassa*, the Pāli for Rainy Season.

4. Page 33, **which people call the Triple Union...** In the time of the Buddha the place of the Triple Union was called Payāga – today it is known as Allahabad (or Prayag) and it is also a site of the huge religious festivals, called the Kumbh Mela, which are held there every twelve years. No other single event of Indian pilgrimage is as impressive or as important to the Hindu faith.

Legend and belief have it that to bathe in the waters at the Triple Union brings liberation; the waters are believed to cleanse all bad karma and guarantee fortunate rebirths, especially at the precise time of certain astrological configurations.

Approximately 70 million people attended the festival in 2007, at Allahabad; this was the world's largest ever religious festival and also the world's largest gathering. Needless to say, people have often died in the rush to immerse themselves in the waters at the most auspicious moment.

5. Page 33, **the Heavenly Gangā joins them there as a third river...** In India the Milky Way is also known as the celestial river Sarasvatī, and it is still regarded as joining the Ganges and the River Jumna at Allahabad.

6. Page 33, **Then Hastinapura would rise again from its ruins...** Once again, all these references are to the characters and events of the Mahābhārata. It should be noted, as mentioned above (at Chapter 3, note §5), that Hastinapura is much closer to the Gangā than the Yamunā.

7. Page 33, **the perfume of the Coral Tree...** The Coral Tree appears in both Buddhist and Hindu mythologies. In the former it is supposed to grow in the Tāvātimsa heaven and is called the *Pāricchataka kovilāra*. Legend has it that it only blossoms once every hundred deva-years (3,600,000 human years), that it has flowers like red lotuses and that, when in bloom, the devas go and sit beneath it for four deva months (12,000 human years). Its effulgence pervades fifty leagues around the tree and its perfume for one hundred. It is mentioned as having shed its flowers on the Buddha as he was passing away (D 16.5.2, see Appendix 4), and there is a whole section given over to it in the Anguttara Nikāya, §65 in 'The Book of the Sevens', A 7.65.

References to it in the Hindu scriptures, which K.G. seems to be citing here, are found in Book 10 of the *Bhagavata Purāna* and in the *Harivamsa*, at verse §7169. Both of these texts contain many stories of the exploits of Lord Krishna.

There is an interesting little essay on the theme of the characteristics exhibited by the Coral Tree, entitled ‘Memory, Karma, Smell’, by Eliot Weinberger, published in the literary journal ‘Sulfur’ No. 36, Eastern Michigan University.

Both *Bauhiniya variegata* and *Erythina indica* are known as the Coral Tree, in its earthly incarnations.

8. Page 34, **we are both splendid instruments for the gods to play upon...** ‘Thou art the Doer, I am the instrument’ is part of a well-known Hindu prayer.

9. Page 34, **“Oh Sorrowless One, of this heart-stricken girl, hear the anguished cry!...”** This passage is found in the Mahābharata, in the *Nālopakhyānam*. (See Chapter 4, note §5).

10. Page 35, **it is written in the Golden Book of Love...** This is almost certainly also a reference to a passage in the *Kāma Sūtra*. (See Chapter 5, note §2)



IN THE RAVINE

1. Page 37, **as if I were to be shown that even the greatest of earthly pleasures has its bitterness...** This statement echoes a passage from Chapter 3 of the Mahābharata, ‘The Fisherman’s Daughter’: ‘The people were delirious with happiness. Fate, all the while, was playing a waiting game. The sight of unsullied happiness is too much for her. She always manages to add a bitter drop to the cup of joy.’ (Kamala Subraniam, abridged trans.).

2. Page 39, **Sātāgira was his hated name...** ‘Sātāgira’ was the name of an eminent *yakkha*, or celestial demon. He appears in the *Hemavata Sutta*, in the collection of poetic discourses called the *Sutta Nipāta*, at SN 153-180.



THE PARADISE BUD

1. Page 43, **a beautiful Simsapā wood...** The Simsapā tree is *Dalbergia sisu*.

2. Page 44, **Krishna, the Sixteen-thousand-one-hundredfold Bridegroom...** The reference to Lord Krishna by this name comes from the famous story of his having

simultaneously wooed all the milkmaids, known as *gopis*, of the town of Vrindavān, by making himself appear in an equal number of identical Krishna bodies. The number of *gopis* mentioned here – sixteen-thousand-one-hundred – varies greatly from one recension of the story to another: from a few dozen in the earlier texts to 900,000 in the latest. The most common number cited is actually sixteen-thousand-one-hundred-and-one. Each of the women was under the impression that she alone had been chosen by him.

The story is mentioned in many Hindu scriptures, for example: in the 2nd–6th Century works, the *Vishnu Purāna* at Bk.5, §13 and the *Harivamsa*, verse 75; in the *Bhagavata Purāna*, a work from around the 10th Century, at Bk.10, §§29-33; and in the *Gītā Govinda*, a highly baroque and flowery text, written by Jayadeva in the 12th Century.

3. Page 45, **we shall find one another in Paradise...** It is a very common belief around the world that, given sufficient resolution, one can be united for eternity with one's beloved. For example, in 'Anthony and Cleopatra' by William Shakespeare, the heroine is determined to die in order to be together with Mark Anthony. As the serpent bites her she cries: 'Husband, I come!' (Act 5, Sc. 2, l. 290). To the modern, sceptical mind it might seem like wishful thinking, and be difficult to imagine, that a couple could both be reborn in the same place just from an act of will. However, the Buddha pointed out, to a devoted couple, Nakulamātā and Nakulapitā, at §55, in the 'Book of the Fours': 'If, householders, both wife and husband hope to be in one another's sight so long as this life lasts and in future lives as well, they should have the same faith, the same virtue, the same generosity and the same wisdom; then they will be in one another's sight so long as this life lasts and in future lives as well.'

Perhaps Shakespeare also had a worthy insight into such matters when he said (in 'Julius Cæsar', Act 5, Sc.1, ll.115-9):

"And whether we shall meet again I know not.

Therefore our everlasting farewell take.

For ever, and for ever, farewell Cassius!

If we do meet again, why we shall smile.

If not, why then, this parting was well made."

(See also Chapter 37, note §4, on 'reappearance through aspiration').

4. Page 58, **the inevitable stream of karma already surging towards us...** At this point in the story the characters all think in terms of the customary belief systems of India at that time. In them there is thus the strongly deterministic understanding of the concept of karma – it closely resembles our European idea of fate: 'A power regarded as predetermining events unalterably' (O.E.D.).

In Buddhist thought karma (Skt.), (or *kamma* in the Pāli language), is identified simply with the actions an individual makes and the results that follow from them, according to the laws of causality. A Buddhist thus sees their actions and experiences as pre-conditioning, rather than pre-determining the present moment. It should also be added, however, that all actions are understood necessarily to have some appropriate consequence, in some way shape or form. For example, in the Dhammapada the Buddha says:

*There is no place in the world –
neither in the sky, the sea nor in mountain crevices –
where an evil-doer can hide,
safe from the consequences of his action.*

Dhp. 127

5. Page 45, “**Where the sun sets ... lies the Paradise of Infinite Light...**” K.G. is having a grand old time mingling mythical forms here and, in this light, to begin it is worth emphasizing his own comments: ‘Should anyone familiar with ancient India now be inclined to castigate me because of some inaccuracies, I would now like to ask them to consider whether or not he who wrote “The Pilgrim Kāmanīta” might not know best what liberties he has taken and why. Instead of the later Sukhavati [which appears only in the Northern, Mahāyāna Buddhist scriptures] I could easily have chosen the Heaven of the Thirty Three Gods, and would have remained accurate and correct. But what, for heaven’s sake, should I have done with those Thirty Three Gods when I didn’t even have a use for Amitābha Buddha in Sukhavati?’

In summary, there are two important themes being introduced in this paragraph.

Firstly, K.G. is picking up threads of a tradition coming from the Mahāyāna, or Northern School of Buddhism. In the *Amitābha Sūtra* it is described how, if one recites the name of Amitābha Buddha with a sincere heart, one will certainly be reborn in The Western Paradise of the Pure Land – a place of perfect beauty, purity and bliss. After having spent many æons in this realm the individual is assured of realizing enlightenment, never to return to the human or lower realms. This method of practice is called ‘Pure Land Buddhism’.

Incidentally, Amitābha is one of five cosmic, meditation or *Dhyāni* Buddhas found in the Northern traditions of Tibet and China; his paradise is in the West; that of Amoghasiddhi is in the North; Akshobya’s is in the East; Ratanasambhāva’s is in the South; and Vairocana’s is at the centre.

In the Southern School, there is a somewhat different understanding of the nature of the Pure Abodes (*Suddhāvāsā*). They are considered to be the five highest of the brahmā heavens in what is termed the *Rūpa-loka* (see Chapter 3, note §8) but they have no resident Buddha presiding over them. Rather they are the places in which one is

born if the third stage of enlightenment (Anāgāmi – literally ‘Non-returner’) has been reached by the time of death. In the Theravāda tradition one thus has to have attained a very high degree of spiritual maturity to be reborn in these realms – i.e. it would take more than just the firm intentions of our heroine and hero in order to be reborn there – although being born in some of the lower heavens would be easily possible in this way.

As a matter of interest the first stage of enlightenment, ‘Stream-entry’, results in a return to the human realm no more than seven times, and one is guaranteed not to be born as an animal, as a ghost or in hell; the second stage is called ‘Once-returner’ – and leads to no more than one more birth as a human; the third stage is called ‘Non-returner’, as mentioned above; and the fourth stage is that of enlightenment, Arahantship, which results in no more birth in any state of being. In the original story of Pukkusāti (see Appendix 2), at the time of his death he is reborn in the Pure Abode called Avihā; there he becomes one of a handful of beings who realize enlightenment at the moment of birth.

6. Page 45, **The first longing for that Paradise causes a bud to appear...** This is the second theme being introduced here, however, in contrast to the previous one, the mythical pattern depicted seems to be K.G.’s own invention – it’s an evocative picture but there is no basis for it in the Theravāda teachings, although it might possibly be derived from the Hindu or Northern Buddhist traditions.

Having said that, however, there are places in the Theravāda texts where the Buddha uses a similar image of the lotus and its way of flowering as a symbol for different types of people and their faculties. For example, in the *Ariyapariyesanā Sutta* (‘The Discourse on The Noble Search’) at M 26.21, the Buddha describes how some lotuses are born and grow in the water without rising out of it, some rest on its surface and some stand clear, unwetted by it – these he then compares to people with dull or keen faculties respectively – ‘Those with much, or with only a little dust in their eyes.’ Elsewhere the way different people respond to hearing the Teachings are described as: 1) Those who hear the Teaching and then realize enlightenment = lotuses blooming above the water; 2) Those who hear the Teaching and then lead a wholesome life = living on the surface; 3) Those who hear the Teaching and then only practise it in part or briefly = blossoming below the surface; and lastly, 4) Those who hear the Teaching and then ignore it completely... they end up as ‘turtle food’.



UNDER THE CONSTELLATION OF THE ROBBERS

1. Page 50, **‘This is Angulimāla, the cruel, bloodthirsty bandit-chief...’** Many references from here on in this chapter come from the *Angulimāla Sutta*, in the

collection of Middle Length Discourses – it is one of the most dramatic interludes in the Pāli scriptures. The passage here comes from M 86.2. The whole Sutta is included as Appendix 3.

According to Theravāda tradition, Angulimāla (which was his *nom de guerre* and literally means ‘Garlanded with Fingers’) was actually born into a noble family. He was the son of a brahmin chaplain to King Pasenadi of Kosala. At birth he was given the name Ahimsaka, ‘Harmless One’. He studied at Taxilā, where he excelled in many subjects and became the teacher’s favourite. His fellow students became jealous of him and persuaded the teacher that Ahimsaka had seduced his wife. In order to bring him to ruin, the teacher then demanded that, in order to complete his studies and show his total faith in the guru, he should bring him a thousand human fingers. Ahimsaka duly went off to live in the forest and trained himself to attack whatever travellers came by. He then collected a finger from the right hand of each one and strung them on a garland around his neck. The guru’s plan had the desired effect, since, in this way, Angulimāla absorbed himself in a bloody vortex of banditry and murder, both hunting and being hunted, and seemingly sealed his future as one of a violent death in disgrace from society. In the same account, in the ancient commentaries, Angulimāla is also mentioned as having indeed been born under the Constellation of the Robbers.

An interesting, academic analysis of Angulimāla’s story, and in particular his religious affiliations (which happen to match K.G.’s depiction), is found in the book ‘How Buddhism Began: The Conditioned Genesis of the Early Teachings’, by Richard Gombrich (published by London & Atlantic Highlands, N.J.: Athlone).

2. Page 51, **Angulimāla’s band belonged to the clan of robbers known as the Senders...** The customs of the Senders are described exactly as K.G. depicts them in the *Vedabbha Jātaka*, Jat. §48. In the Pali Text Society edition Robert Chalmers, the translator, names them ‘the Despatchers’; they are also mentioned in the *Pāṇiṇya Jātaka*, Jat. §459.

3. Page 52, **the terrible Goddess Kālī...** Kālī, whose name means ‘The Black One’, is nearly always described as having a horrifying appearance. Her hair is dishevelled, her fangs sharp, her breasts pendulous, her stomach shrunken and her demeanour fierce. She is usually said to be naked except for a garland of severed heads and a girdle of severed arms. Her habits are equally fearsome: she is pleased by blood and in her myths is typically described as becoming intoxicated by drinking the blood of her victims on the battlefield. Her favourite dwelling place is the cremation ground, where she is often depicted seated on a corpse. She has been associated for centuries with thieves and robbers, and is infamous for having been the patron goddess of the Thugs – a secret hereditary cult devoted to human sacrifice, who favoured robbing and strangulation of carefully selected victims as the means to best honour Her. Like

the goddess Durgā she is often depicted as the spouse of Shiva but she rarely plays the role of the model wife(!) Instead she dominates Shiva and incites him to frenzied, destructive acts. In the past the worship of Mother Kālī was nearly always accompanied by animal sacrifices.

In terms of iconography, the most common images of Kālī show her standing or dancing upon Shiva. This expresses the nature of reality as a combination of stasis (the prone Shiva) and activity, or the personified energy of the divine (Shakti).

In the active role Kālī thus expresses the creative aspects of the divine as they manifest themselves in nature. Her devotees address her as ‘Mother’ and, despite her terrible appearance and her thirst for blood, she is approached for protection, fertility and prosperity. The logic of her worship at the popular level seems to be that, if she is given blood, she will be nourished sufficiently to be able to give unstintingly to her devotees.

Here is a passage from ‘Dancing in the Flames’, by Marion Woodman and Elinor Dickson, which describes some of the more mystical aspects of the Goddess: ‘At first glance, Kālī comes across as a fierce embodiment of the devouring mother who gobbles up everything, even her own children. A closer look, however, reveals a great halo around her head, a halo not seen in early depictions of the Great Mother. The halo attests to Kālī’s status as Goddess, to her need to be understood not only as devourer, but also as transformer. She is black, dark as the matrix, dark as the vortex, from which all creation comes and to which it returns. To her devotees she is like a black sapphire; radiance shines through her blackness. She dances and laughs with abandon, intoxicated with the mystery that she is.

‘The essence of Great Goddess worship is that there must be a death to the ego self; there must be a transformation in which there is a letting go of all false values, of all the things that the egotistical nature mistakenly clings to. In the burial ground of the heart, Kālī’s enlightened devotees see beyond literal death to the death of values rooted in fear. When they come to accept death as a necessary step in their transformation, then Kālī can dance her dance of perpetual becoming. Once her cycles are accepted, those who love her are free of the fear of death, free of their own vulnerability, free to live her mystery.

‘The mystery of Kālī is that she is perpetually destroying and, at the same time, creating – destroying in order to create, creating in order to destroy, death in the service of life, life in the service of death. Kālī is time, impermanence, ceaseless becoming, nature as process. As ceaseless motion that has no purpose other than its own activity, Kālī is as indifferent to the demands of the ego as she is to the instinct to survive. The opposites of life and death, love and hate, humility and pride, poverty and riches, justice and tyranny, mean nothing to her, because with her there is no polarity. For Kālī all experience is one – life as well as death.’

Sri Rāmakrishna once said of her: ‘After knowing Mother Reality directly and intimately one is no longer living in an impermanent, deceptive world. One is living in the Divine and as the Divine. When you feed your child, you will clearly perceive that it is God feeding God.’

In short, she is much more than just the Goddess of the Robbers.

4. Page 52, **the sacred dancers, known as bhajaderes...** Bhajaderes are indeed performers of sacred dances in the temples of India. Marius Petipa based his 1877 ballet, ‘La Bayadère’, on the Indian classics by Kālidāsa, ‘Sakuntala’ and ‘The Cart of Clay’, The word is a French corruption of the Portuguese ‘*bailadeira*’, a female dancer.

5. Page 53, **the praiseworthy Vājashravas...** ‘Vājashravasa’ was the name of the brahmin sacrificial priest who was the father of Nashiketas, the central figure of the *Katha Upanishad* – an important Hindu scripture included in Deussen’s works, referred to by K.G. (see Chapter 10, note §1).

The name ‘Vājashravas’ is also found in the long lineage of gurus descending from the ‘Self-existing Brahman’, in the *Brihadāranyaka Upanishad*, Ch. 6, §5.3 (p 544 in Prof. Paul Deussen’s ‘Sixty Upanishads of the Veda’, in the Motilal Banarsidass edition, translated from the German by V.M. Bedekar and G.B. Palsule).

10 ESOTERIC DOCTRINE

1. Page 57, **ESOTERIC DOCTRINE...** Here K.G. provides his own comments for us, from his Note: ‘It need scarcely be remarked that the few passages from the Upanishads are quoted from Professor Deussen’s ‘Sechzig Upanishads des Veda’. To the second great translation of this excellent and indefatigable inquirer, ‘Die Sūtras des Vedanta’, my tenth chapter owes its origin.

‘If this curious piece is in substance a presentation of Indian *Übermenschentum* [the doctrine of the Ariyan Master-race which became the basis of Adolph Hitler’s philosophy, after K.G.’s time] – as the extreme antithesis to Buddhism – it is in its form a painfully accurate copy of the Vedantic Sūtra style, with the enigmatic brevity of the text, the true principle of which – as Deussen has rightly recognized – consists in giving only catchwords for the memory, but never the words that are important to the sense.

‘In this way the text could without danger be fixed in writing, since it was incomprehensible without the oral commentary of the teacher, which thus usually became all the more pedantically intricate. Indeed, these Kālī-Sūtras – like the whole Vājashravas episode – are a jocular fiction of mine – but one, I believe, which will be granted by every student of ancient India, to be within the bounds of the possible – nay, of the probable. India is indeed the land where even the robber must philosophize.’

2. Page 57, **If I cut off the head of a human being or an animal...** The reasoning that is described here is taken, almost verbatim, from one of a collection of dubious religious and philosophical viewpoints of spiritual teachers contemporary with the Buddha. For example, a range of these were recounted to the Buddha by King Ajātasattu, in the *Sāmaññaphala Sutta* ('The Discourse on the Fruits of the Homeless Life'), at D 2.26; the one quoted here is part of the teachings of Pakudha Kaccāyana.

3. Page 58, **"Who, when slaying, believes he kills..."** This passage is found at *Katha Upanishad* 2.19. An accessible English version of this and other Upanishads is found in the Penguin Classics edition, translated by Juan Mascaro – this verse is on p 59. It is also included at p 285 in the Motilal Banarsidass edition mentioned previously.

4. Page 58, **Now when both armies were drawn up in battle array...** These passages are to be found in the *Bhagavad Gītā*, Book 1, verses 24-47; a version of this is also available in a Penguin Classics edition, again translated by Juan Mascaro – these verses are on pp 45-7.

5. Page 58, **"Whosoever holds someone to be a killer..."** This verse, as far as it's possible to tell, has been pieced together from several verses in the section of the *Bhagavad Gītā* in Book 2, verses 1-37 (pp 48-51 in the above edition).

6. Page 58, **"Whosoever commits a crime or causes it to be committed..."** Again, this passage is lifted directly from the collection of erroneous and dangerous viewpoints recounted to the Buddha by King Ajātasattu (see note §2 of this chapter). This particular one describes the philosophy of a teacher called Pūrana Kassapa; it is to be found at D 2.17 and also at M 60.13, in the *Apannaka Sutta* ('The Incontrovertible Teaching').

7. Page 59, **"Both the warrior and the brahmin, He eats for bread..."** This is from verse 25 of the same passage mentioned above, at note §3 of this chapter.

8. Page 59, **"I eat them all, but me they do not eat..."** This and the following passages come from the *Bāshkala Upanishad*, included by Prof. Paul Deussen in the last section of his 'Sixty Upanishads of the Veda', pp 903-7 in the Motilal Banarsidass edition. The opening paragraph comes from the prose introduction to Medhātithi's verses.

9. Page 77, **"Who is it that kills and also prisoner takes?..."** The first two of these three quotes are verses 18 and 19 of Indra's reply to Medhātithi; the last one is from verse 5 of the same passage.

10. Page 60, **it lies in using others to the utmost and in crushing them...** The philosophy outlined here bears a close resemblance to that of the infamous Marquis de Sade, whose works were circulated widely in European circles in K.G.'s era. These passages also echo some verses from the Book of Wisdom in the Old Testament:

‘For they said amongst themselves, thinking not aright: “Brief and troublous is our lifetime, neither is there any remedy for man’s dying, nor is anyone known to have come back from the netherworld. For haphazard were we born, and hereafter we shall be as though we had not been; because the breath in our nostrils is a smoke and reason is a spark at the beating of our hearts, and when this is quenched, our body will be ashes and our spirit will be poured abroad like unresisting air.”’

Wisdom 2.1-14.

‘Come, therefore, let us enjoy the good things that are real, and use the freshness of creation avidly ... Let us oppress the needy just man; let us neither spare the widow nor revere the old man for his hair grown white with time. But let our strength be our norm of justice; for weakness proves itself worthless.’

Wisdom 6.10-11.

11. Page 60, **although the whole world is the Brahman...** The *Rig Veda* does indeed state that the human birth is the most sublime.

12. Page 60, **scripture frequently declares the idea of “That belongs to me” to be a delusion...** The most prominent place this statement is made is in the Buddha’s second discourse after the enlightenment, the *Anatta-lakkhana Sutta* (‘The Discourse on Selflessness’). It is to be found in the books of the *Vināya*, at *Mahāvagga* 1.6, and at §59 in the ‘Collection of Sayings on the Elements’, S 22.59.



THE ELEPHANT'S TRUNK

1. Page 63, **the prisoner in question had to be sawn through the middle with a cross-cut saw...** Although it’s not directly related to the context, K.G.’s imagery in this passage was probably inspired by the Buddha’s famous ‘Simile of the Saw’, in which he gave an example of how central the practice of loving-kindness is to the spiritual life. He says: ‘Bhikkhus (monks), even if bandits were to sever you savagely limb from limb with a two-handed saw, one who gave rise to a mind of hatred towards them on that account would not be carrying out my teaching.’

He then adds that, instead, one’s mind should remain unaffected, filled with compassion for the welfare of those who are doing the sawing: ‘We shall abide pervading them with a mind imbued with loving-kindness; and, starting with them, we shall abide pervading the entire world with all-encompassing loving-kindness.’

This passage is found in the *Kakacūpama Sutta* ('The Discourse on the Simile of the Saw') at M 21.20.

12 AT THE GRAVE OF THE HOLY VAJASHRAVAS

1. Page 71, **So little may we avoid our karma ... the fruit of all our deeds...** Probably the most well-known place in the Buddhist scriptures where the Buddha speaks of the principle of inevitability of the results of karma, is at the opening verses of the Dhammapada, the most popular of all Theravāda teachings (see also Chapter 8, note §4):

*Mind is the forerunner of all things
the ruler of all things the creator of all things –
if one speaks or acts with an impure mind
suffering will follow
as surely as the wheel of the cart
follows the animal that draws it.*

*Mind is the forerunner of all things
the ruler of all things the creator of all things –
if one speaks or acts with a pure mind
happiness will follow
as surely
as one's never-departing shadow.*

Dhp. verses 1-2

It should be noted, however, that the Buddha made it clear that there is no *fixed* karmic result of any particular action. In every case there is an inconceivably complex web of influences at play, so we can only rightly speak of the fact that *some kind* of result will occur that matches the act – exactly when and in what form is not definable. There are some useful passages on this principle in the *Mahākamma-vibhaṅga Sutta*, at M 136.17-21, and in the Anguttara Nikāya, 'Book of the Threes', §99, A 3.99.

2. Page 73, **when one has attained enlightenment, all one's works disappear...** Even though Kāmanīta is not yet speaking from a Buddhist perspective, this last sentence is a *fairly* accurate recension of the Theravāda understanding of enlightenment, but only insofar as referring to an enlightened being at the time of the death of the body.

From a Buddhist point of view it is certainly not the case that, at the moment of enlightenment, suddenly the results of all past actions and events evaporate – the body still has its life and, whilst they are a part of the human realm, an enlightened being will still experience the results of various past actions and dispositions (called *vāsanā* in Pāli).

For example, the dignified Ven. Sāriputta, throughout his life, had a habit of skipping over puddles in the monsoon season; this trait, the Buddha assured those who enquired, derived from the Ven. Sāriputta's enjoyment of this pastime in a previous existence as a monkey. Also, later on in the story, we come to this subject again with reference to Angulimāla.



THE COMPANION OF SUCCESS

1. Page 75, **my native town is famed throughout Jambudvīpa...** 'Jambudvīpa', 'The Land of Rose-apples', is the ancient name for the lands now known as the Indian sub-continent. It is so called after the ubiquitous fruit tree *Eugenia jambos*.

2. Page 75, **the neighing of horses and the trumpeting of elephants ... the music of lovers' lutes and the songs of care-free carousers...** Those listed here are some of 'The Ten Sounds' which are mentioned frequently in the Pāli scriptures. They are taken to be indicative of a rich, prosperous and well-populated city, such as Kusāvati which is mentioned in the *Mahā-parinibbāna Sutta* at D 16.5.18 (see Appendix 4).

The remaining sounds of the Ten are those of: carriages, kettle-drums, side-drums, cymbals and gongs, and cries of 'Eat, drink and be merry!' as the tenth.

3. Page 75, **in whose reception-rooms one meets poets, artists and actors...** For example: 'In the court of King Chandragupta II, (380–413 CE) whose capital was Ujjeni, were the unsurpassed poets of the Sanskrit language, the *Navaratna* ('The Nine Jewels'), a group who excelled in the literary arts. Amongst these men was the immortal Kalidasa whose works dwarfed the efforts of many other literary geniuses, not only in his own age but in the ages to come.' (From Wikipedia, Dec. 2008)

Much of what is known of this Gupta court has only come down to us because of it having been recorded by the Chinese Buddhist scholar and monastic pilgrim Fa-hien.

4. Page 75, **'The many-coloured floral crown of the rock-enthroned Ujjeni'**... This epithet was probably created by K.G. – it is unknown in the Pāli texts. There was, however, a famous courtesan called Padumavati ('Lotus Land') who used to live in Ujjeni; she was of such dazzling beauty that King Bimbisāra had his court magician weave some spells and had his royal personage carried to Ujjeni through the help of the *yakkha* Kumbhira. She eventually bore the king a son called Abhayarajakumāra ('Prince Fearless'). Later on her son joined the order of bhikkhus and eventually became enlightened. On hearing him teach one day, Padumavati too became inspired to leave the household life; she became a nun (a bhikkhuni) and also later achieved enlightenment. Because of the fame of her son, she became known as Abhayamātā

(‘Abhaya’s Mother’). Her verses of enlightenment are to be found in ‘The Songs of the Elder Nuns’ – the Therīgāthā – at Thig. 33-4.

5. Page 78, **What do you suppose, Kāmanīta, will be played there today?...** Lists of such games as were popular in the time of the Buddha appear in a few places in the scriptures; for example in the bhikkhu’s rules of conduct at Vin. Sang. §8.1.2, and in the *Brahmajāla Sutta*, at D 1.1.14.

6. Page 79, **the Kadamba shrub, with its great golden blossoms...** The ‘Kadamba’ flower is *Nauclea cordifolia*; it is also known as *Nauclea cadamba*, and ‘Nīpa’ in Sanskrit. Lord Krishna sat in a Nīpa tree to watch the gopis bathing, according to the legend.

7. Page 79, **teeth like pearls; and Bimba lips...** ‘Bimba’ describes the red fruit of a species of amaranth, *Momordica monadelphica*. ‘Bimbadevi’ was a name that Princess Yashodharā, the Buddha’s former wife and the mother of Rahula, was often called.

8. Page 79, **the stem of the young Pisang...** The ‘Pisang’ is the plantain, or banana tree.



THE FAMILY MAN

1. Page 83, **the man dies miserably for whom there is no son to offer the sacrifices proper to the dead...** The belief that one must have a son to perform one’s funeral ceremonies properly is still widely held and deeply respected in India today.

2. Page 83, **she has a navel which sits deep and is turned to the right...** It is suspected that these characteristics, and many of the particular superstitions that follow in the story, are another ‘jocular fiction’ conjured up by K.G. simply for the narrative; however, the desirability of sons, and the commonness of belief in the significance of such signs, are also still widespread if not ubiquitous in India.

3. Page 85, **and fresh Kusa grass cut...** Kusa grass, *Poa cynosuroides*, is also reputed to be the source of the Pāli word *kusala*, meaning ‘wholesome’, since it was on some bundles of Kusa grass that the Buddha was sitting when he realized enlightenment. This could just be folk etymology, however.

4. Page 86, **there was indeed the sound of hissing in my home...** It is a spurious urban legend that the Chinese pictogram for ‘conflict’ is a rendition of two wives living under the same roof, however, there is a (somewhat sexist) mediæval English proverb that runs:

Two wymen in one howse,
Two cattes and one mowce,
Two dogges and one bone,
Maye never accorde in one.

15 THE SHAVEN-HEADED MONK

1. Page 90, **the amber colour of the Kanikāra flower...** The ‘Kanikāra’ is the tree *Pterospermum acerifolium*. Its flower is taken as the typical emblem of the colour yellow and brightness; e.g. at D 16.3.30.

2. Page 90, **I trust that you will not ... strike this house with your ascetic anger...** The concept of being cursed by a holy man might seem strange to us, but here it could derive from two different sources. Firstly, it seems quite common in the ancient texts that the great sages and ascetics of India were able to wield destructive power, and frequently did.

In the Mahābhārata alone there are many instances of this, for example: when the great sage Maitreya curses Prince Duriyodhana for behaving insolently towards him; and when the brahmin Bhārgava curses his student Radheya, when he finds out that he is not also a brahmin. Even in the Buddhist scriptures such actions are also spoken of, e.g. in the *Upali Sutta*, M 56.13. There is also, from the Buddhist context, what is called ‘Being burned with the bhikkhu’s fire.’ A verse in the *Samyutta Nikāya* goes as follows:

*Though black-trailed conflagrations burn up woods,
Yet shoots appear when a few days have passed;
But he whom virtuous bhikkhu’s fire shall burn
Will lack offspring, no heirs will have his wealth:
Such have, like palm stumps, neither child nor heir.*

Kosala Samyutta §1 (S 3.1)

(Bhikkhu Ñānamoli, trans.)

The explanation is this: when a bhikkhu is abused and does not react with abuse in return, the innate natural consequence is that the abusers will draw painful karmic repercussions to themselves – on the part of the bhikkhu there is no intention or wish to cause harm.

3. Page 91, **as I passed along the street a stone flew at my head...** This latter part of the paragraph comes verbatim from the *Angulimāla Sutta*, M 86.17 (see Appendix 3); in the original passage, however, the cause of his being thus harmed is not so much that the people have been stirred up by Māra (although such trouble-making by him

does indeed occur on other occasions, e.g. in the ‘Discourse on the Rebuke to Māra’, at M 50.13) – the blows and cuts and falling tiles are seen more as the natural karmic retribution that Angulimāla has invited upon himself through his many years of violent action, prior to becoming a bhikkhu, including the natural resentment and desire for revenge he had engendered in the families and friends of his many past victims.

The ancient commentaries assert that he did not live for very long after his ordination. However, from the Buddhist perspective, and from the arrangement of the text of the Sutta, it is quite possible that these painful events came *after* his experience of liberation. There is an equally famous account of the pursuit and murder by bandits of the Ven. Mahā-Moggallāna, the Buddha’s second most senior disciple. Even though he had been enlightened several decades before, this violent end was apparently due to the still-lingering karmic effects of him having murdered his parents in a previous existence. (See also the comments, Chapter 12, note §2).

4. Page 91, **even if robbers and murderers were to sever you savagely limb by limb with a two-handed saw...** This famous quotation is from the ‘Discourse on the Simile of the Saw’, at M 21.20. (See Chapter 11, note §1).

16 READY FOR ACTION

1. Page 99, **red spittle – up to that time I hadn’t chewed any betel...** Betel-nut is a mild form of stimulant, similar to caffeine. The nut is chewed slowly and, over a period of time, it causes a mildly pleasant narcotic effect. Along with this it also stimulates the production of a lot of saliva, of a characteristic deep red colour, which the chewer needs to spit out occasionally. The great majority of Indian and South-east Asian people still chew betel-nut daily.

17 TO HOMELESSNESS

1. Page 104, **As a bird ... flies bearing only its wings and is content with these...** This first of the descriptive phrases of this paragraph can be found in the *Cūla-hatthipadopama Sutta* (‘The Shorter Discourse on the Simile of the Elephant’s Footprint’) at M 27.14.

2. Page 104, **The household life is crowded and dusty...** This second quote is extremely common in the Theravāda scriptures and can also be found in the same discourse as mentioned in the previous quotation, a few paragraphs earlier, at M 27.12.

3. Page 105, **Administer the house and fortune until my son attains to manhood...** The passage here bears something of a resemblance to the account of

the leaving home of Bhaddā Kapilānī and her husband, Pippali Kassapa. After they had shaved their heads and gone forth they both met the Buddha and became leading disciples of his: Bhaddā as the nun who was foremost in recollecting her past lives, and Mahā-Kassapa as the foremost in undertaking the austere practices, and also as the convenor and presiding Elder at the First Council, after the Buddha's passing away. The account is to be found in the commentary to §11 of the 'Collection on Kassapa', S

16.11, also in Chapter 3 of 'The Great Disciples of the Buddha', by Nyanaponika Thera and Helmuth Hecker, published by Wisdom, pp 109-12.

The reader will also possibly guess from this passage that, at that time in India (and still to a large extent there today), it was unthinkable that women should own or administer property. Under the Vedic observances, the '*Manusmṛti*', 'The Laws of Manu', a woman had to be under the guardianship of either her father, her husband or, lacking these, her son.

These laws were composed at some time between 200 BCE and 200 CE, probably in Northern India. They represent a somewhat tighter social ordering than seems to have been in play during the Buddha's own lifetime, however, many of the customs they codified were present, at least in a germinal state, in the era that this story is set.

18 IN THE HALL OF THE POTTER

1. Page 107, **And the Lord Buddha also sat silently...** Here K.G. is once again gently echoing the style of much of the Theravāda scriptures: there is an enormous amount of verbatim repetition in the ancient texts since, originally, they were not written down but were all committed to memory – and, for the purposes of memorization, having stock phrases makes life a lot easier than having complicated elegance and variety.

They were first committed to writing about four hundred years after the Buddha's time, in 79 BCE, when there was a great famine in Sri Lanka and it was feared that the Dhamma teachings would die out completely if they were not thus preserved.

2. Page 107, **“To be separated from what we love is suffering...”** This is a quotation from the Buddha's first discourse, the *Dhamma-cakkappavattana Sutta* ('The Discourse on the Setting in Motion of the Wheel of Truth'). It is to be found in one of the books of monastic discipline, the *Mahāvagga*, at MV 1.6, and also in the *Samyutta Nikāya*, where it is §11 in the 'Collection on the Truths', at S 56.11. The phrase quoted here is recited every day in Theravādan Buddhist monasteries and households as part of the traditional morning chanting.

3. Page 108, **“What is the Self? What is the universe?...”** The first four of these questions are assembled from some of the elements of a frequently appearing list of

ten philosophical propositions that the Buddha refused ever to speak on. They appear in many places throughout the discourses: e.g. in the ‘Book of the Tens’, §95, and in ‘The Discourse to Vacchagotta on Fire’, at M 72.3-12. It seems as though they were a stock set of issues that all religious authorities were expected to have some firm belief about. They were:

- 1) The universe is eternal;
- 2) The universe is not eternal;
- 3) The universe is finite;
- 4) The universe is infinite;
- 5) The self (*atta* in Pāli, *ātman* in Sanskrit) is the same as the body;
- 6) The self is one thing and the body another;
- 7) After death a Tathāgata exists;
- 8) After death a Tathāgata does not exist;
- 9) After death a Tathāgata both exists and does not exist;
- 10) After death a Tathāgata neither exists nor does not exist.

The Buddha saw that trying to discover and define the Truth through holding onto any such kind of speculative view, was necessarily bound up with confusion and attachment and did not lead towards enlightenment; thus he refused to enter into such questions. They are known as the ‘undeclared issues’.

The Buddha also expounds with great eloquence and humour on this kind of ‘unwise attention’ in the *Sabbāsava Sutta* (‘The Discourse on All the Outflows of the Mind’) at M 2.7-8; and some of the troublesome results that Kāmanīta experienced were also found by Ven. Meghiya, at §3 in the ‘Book of the Nines’ and at Ud. 4.1.

4. Page 108, **if the highest Brahmā is pure and perfect happiness...** The questions in the last two sentences of this paragraph are of a much more European, Judæo-Christian flavour and not so familiar in the Buddhist texts. They perhaps embody some of the major religious questions of K.G.’s era – his life exactly spanned the ‘crisis of faith’ in the Christian church at the end of the 19th Century – and they reflect his position as a somewhat disaffected Christian theologian at the time that he wrote ‘Kāmanīta’.

5. Page 108, **it is as if one were to pursue the horizon...** This statement of the Buddha somewhat echoes his exchange with the deva Rohitassa, in the *Samyutta Nikāya*, §16 in the ‘Collection on the Sons of the Devas’, and in the *Anguttara Nikāya*, ‘Book of the Fours’, §45.

It seems that in former times Rohitassa had been an accomplished yogi, a ‘sky-walker’ who could step from the eastern to the western sea of India. He said to the Buddha: ‘In me, Lord, there arose the wish – “I will get to the end of the world by walking.” I walked thus for a hundred years without sleeping, and pausing only to eat and drink and answer the calls of nature. Even though I exerted myself thus for a hundred years, I did not reach the end of the world and eventually I died on the journey.’

To this the Buddha replied: ‘It is true that one cannot reach the end of the world by walking *but*, unless one reaches the end of the world one will not reach the end of suffering (*dukkha*). It is in this fathom-long body, with its perceptions and ideas, that this world, its origin, its cessation and the way leading to its cessation are to be found:

One who knows the world goes to the world’s end.

One who lives the holy life,

With heart serene, they understand the world’s end

And do not hanker for this world or another.

6. Page 108, **wander alone like the rhinoceros...** The rhinoceros was often used as a symbol of the solitary life e.g. in the *Khaggavisāna Sutta* (‘The Discourse on the Lone Rhinoceros’) in the first section of the *Sutta Nipāta*, SN 35-75.

7. Page 108, **‘Just as, O beloved, a man who has been led blindfolded...’** This passage comes verbatim from Shvetaketu in the *Chāndogya Upanishad*, Ch.Up. 6.14. In its complete form it concludes with one of the most oft-quoted phrases of all the Hindu scriptures:

*That invisible and subtle essence
is the Spirit of the whole Universe.*

That is Reality. That is Truth.

THOU ART THAT –

TAT TVAM ASI.

This can be found in the Mascaro translation on p 118 and in Deussen’s ‘Sixty Upanishads of the Vedas’ on p 171.

8. Page 109, **“The Master does not crave disciples...”** Even though this statement is known as one of the sayings of Confucius (it is, for example, quoted in Chapter 2, §74 of ‘The Romance of the Western Chamber’, by Master Tung, p 69 in the Columbia edn.) no-one that the editor has consulted has, as yet, been able to verify this as a statement about the Buddha.

9. Page 109, **“He is the Blessèd One...”** These are some of ‘The Nine Qualities of the Buddha’ – a formula repeated very often in the Pāli scriptures, e.g. in the *Sāmaññaphala Sutta*, at D 2.8, and daily in the morning and evening chanting in Theravāda countries. The exchange described in these next few paragraphs also occurs between Pukkusāti and the Buddha, at M 140.5 (see Appendix 2).

10. Page 109, **Just beyond the town is the richly wooded Jetavana park...** This description of the Jetavana, and the story of its being offered to the Buddha, can be found in one of the books of monastic discipline, the *Cūlavagga*, at CV 6.4.

This whole chapter and the one following it have been ingeniously crafted, almost in their entirety, by K.G. from various canonical dialogues of the Buddha. There is little here that has not come directly from the Pāli.

1. Page 113, **‘That Teaching is the Unveiling, the Revelation of the Four Noble Truths...’** These are passages lifted almost verbatim from the Buddha’s first discourse after the enlightenment – the *Dhamma-cakkappavattana Sutta* (‘The Setting in Motion of the Wheel of Truth’) – also mentioned above (see Chapter 18, note §2).

These first few paragraphs contain the heart-core of the Buddha’s Teaching; within them are embodied the themes that run through every subsequent principle that the Buddha ever expounded.

Furthermore, in every country and culture into which Buddhism has spread, from Latvia to Japan and from Mongolia to Sri Lanka, what is expressed here – the exposition of the Four Noble Truths and the Middle Way – is regarded as the unique and inviolable quintessence of the Buddha’s insight into Truth. Even such elements of the Buddha’s Teaching as are only found in the Northern Tradition – e.g. the Heart Sūtra (which explores the nature of emptiness), and the Four Vast Bodhisattva Vows (which describe the attitude of following the Buddha’s Path explicitly for the sake of relieving the suffering of all beings and not just oneself) – these expressions too derive directly from the original Four Noble Truths.

It might seem an unglamorous coinage, and devoid of both poetic charm and promises of glory, but it’s important to understand that it was the Buddha’s explicit intention to understate the case. As a matter of fact the format of the Four Noble Truths exactly follows the pattern of a diagnosis in traditional Ayurvedic medicine, i.e.: symptom (*suffering*); cause (*self-centred desire*); prognosis (*suffering can end completely*); treatment (*the Noble Eightfold Path*) – an expression not designed to pluck the heart-strings by idealizing the Goal of spiritual life, but highly effective in describing the work necessary to help us arrive there.

2. Page 114, **By the side of the pillar of the Principle of Suffering...** These passages refer to the teachings on what are known as ‘The Three Characteristics of Existence’: *Anicca, Dukkha* and *Anattā* – Impermanence, Unsatisfactoriness/Suffering and Selflessness – these being qualities possessed by all elements of the physical and mental world. The main discourse on this subject is the *Anatta-lakkhana Sutta* (see Chapter 10, note §12).

3. Page 114, **the fundamental law of conditionality – Dependent Origination** Dependent Origination, *‘Paticca-samuppāda’*, is the fine analysis of how ignorance and self-centred desire give rise to the experience of dissatisfaction, and how this process can be brought to an end. The enlightenment experience of the Buddha was centred

around a profound insight into this process – he describes it in the Samyutta Nikāya, at §65 in the ‘Collection on Causality’, S 12.65. The same and other closely related formulæ appear in many places in the scriptures, some of the principal ones being in the *Mahā-nidāna Sutta* (‘The Great Discourse on Origination’) at D 15.1-22, and in the *Mahā-padāna Sutta* (‘The Great Discourse on the Lineage’) at D 14.2.18-21. The best book in the English language on this somewhat abstruse subject is ‘Dependent Origination’ by Ven. P.A. Payutto, published by Buddhadhamma Foundation, Bangkok.

The concept of Dependent Origination is also closely related to ‘*Idappaccayatā*’, ‘causality’, (literally: ‘the conditionality of relations between “this” and “that”’). This is a subject that has been extensively written about by Ven. Ajahn Buddhadasā, a leading Buddhist philosopher and meditation master of the 20th Century in Thailand.

4. Page 114, **introduced an ... analogy ... by such method the ... meaning of many a profound utterance becomes clear...** This is a phrase used many times by the Buddha and his disciples – for example, in the ‘Discourse on the Relay of Chariots’, at M 24.14.

5. Page 114, **‘By attachment to existence...’** This quotation seems to have been distilled by K.G. from a couple of sources: the first is to be found in the collection of discourses known as ‘The Inspired Utterances’, the Udāna, at Ud. 3.10; the other is at verses 742-5 of the Sutta Nipāta, in the *Dvayatānupassanā Sutta*.

6. Page 114, **“My deliverance is unassailable...”** This phrase is found in numerous places in the Pāli Canon, e.g. in the *Dhamma-cakkappavattana Sutta*, at §11 of the ‘Collection on the Truths’, S 56.11.

7. Page 114, **The one who has come thus far...** This paragraph is condensed from the *Dhātuvibhanga Sutta*, M 140.25-6 (see Appendix 2).

8. Page 114, **‘And one, who from the very beginning...’** The Buddha’s own considerations on this point can be found in the *Ariya-pariyesanā Sutta* (‘The Discourse on The Noble Search’) at M 26.13.

9. Page 114, **“Birth is destroyed...”** Yet another stock phrase; again, it is to be found in numerous places in the scriptures when enlightenment has been realized. For example, in the *Angulimāla Sutta*, at M 86.16 (see Appendix 3).

10. Page 115, **Such ones, my friend, are called “Finishers”...** These terms: ‘Finishers, Obliterators and Weeders’, seem to be the invention of K.G., although it is by no means unprecedented that the Buddha should use such words in such a context. For

example, on one occasion he was quite happy to be referred to as *bhūnahuno*, literally ‘a wrecker of being, a destroyer of growth’ – in the *Māgandiya Sutta*, at M 75.5; and, on another occasion, when being criticised by a brahmin from Verañjā (Vin. Par. §1, and at ‘Book of the Eights’, §11), he took a long succession of supposed insults – including being accused of being tasteless, a teacher of nihilism, pro-mortification, and that he was against rebirth – and, saying that they were all true, proceeded to turn each one around and use the terminology to point to the highest spiritual principles instead.

At M 22.37, in ‘The Discourse on the Simile of the Snake’, he quite categorically states, however, that he is *NOT* an annihilationist: ‘... I have been baselessly, vainly, falsely and wrongly misrepresented by some samanas and brahmins thus: “The Samana Gotama is one who leads astray; he teaches the annihilation, the destruction, the extermination of an existing being.” As I am not, and I do not proclaim this, I have been baselessly, vainly, falsely and wrongly misrepresented... Bhikkhus, both formerly and now what I teach is suffering and the cessation of suffering.’ (See also Chapter 45, note §12, on ‘The Questions of Upasīva’).

It seems as though K.G. wanted to come up with epithets that had a particularly negative or destructive tone to them, in order for the Buddha to put Kāmanīta to the test.

11. Page 115, ‘**So long as they are in the body, such ones are seen by gods and humans...**’ The references used in this paragraph come from a variety of different places, all are seen a few times in the scriptures; all except for the ‘Mother Nature – the All-seeing’ phrase which seems to be a fresh creation of K.G. For example, the first phrase can be found in the *Brahmajāla Sutta*, at D 1.3.73; the second one – ‘Such ones have indeed blinded the eye of Māra...’ is found in the *Nivāpa Sutta* (‘The Bait’) at M 25.12-20 and at M 26.34-42 in the *Ariyapariyesanā Sutta* (‘The Discourse on The Noble Search’); and lastly Nirvāna is referred to as ‘The Island’ at §39 in the ‘Collection on the Unconditioned,’ S 43.39.



THE UNREASONABLE CHILD

1. Page 117, ‘**You have told me much of how the monk should make an end of suffering in his lifetime...**’ The opening paragraphs of this chapter closely mirror a number of familiar exchanges between the Buddha and some of his spiritual interlocutors: firstly with a wanderer called Uttiya (which appears in the Anguttara Nikāya, ‘Book of the Tens’, §95) and secondly with a bhikkhu called Mālunkyaputta (in the *Cūla-Mālunkyaputta Sutta*, at M 63.3-10).

In each case they press the Buddha to give them a straight answer to the ten standard philosophical questions mentioned above (see Chapter 18, note §3).

In the former instance, Uttiya asks: ‘But why does Master Gotama decline to answer when I ask him these questions? What then is answered by Master Gotama?’ In a vein very similar to the response given to Kāmaṇīta, the Buddha replies: ‘I teach the Dhamma to disciples from direct knowledge, Uttiya, for the purification of beings, for the surmounting of sorrow and lamentation, for ending pain and grief, for attainment of the true goal, for realizing Nibbāna.’

In the latter case the questioner even insists: ‘If the Blessèd One knows ... let the Blessèd One declare that to me. If the Blessèd One does not know ... then it is straightforward for one who does not know and does not see to say – “I do not know, I do not see.”’ To both of these enquirers, however, he stoically responds: ‘This is unrevealed by the Tathāgata.’

There is, in fact an entire section of the ‘Discourses Related by Subject’ (Samyutta Nikāya) on ‘Sayings Concerning the Unrevealed (*Avyākata*)’; it is found at S 44.

2. Page 117, **As he walked through the wood he picked up a bundle of Simsapā leaves...** This is one of the most famous metaphors that the Buddha used. The incident is found at §31 in the ‘Collection of Sayings on the Truths’, S 56.31. It is also worth quoting here another of the Buddha’s well-known metaphors on the same subject – the so-called ‘Parable of the Arrow’, again from M 63 (see note §1 of this chapter):

‘Suppose, Mālunkyaputta, a man were wounded by an arrow thickly smeared with poison, and his friends and companions, his kinsmen and relatives, brought a surgeon to treat him. The man would say: “I will not let the surgeon pull out this arrow until I know whether the man who wounded me was a noble or a brahmin or a merchant or a worker.” And he would say: “I will not let the surgeon pull out this arrow until I know the name and clan of the man who wounded me; ... until I know whether the man who wounded me was tall or short or of middle height; ... whether he was of dark or brown or of golden skin; ... from which town or village he came; ... until I know whether the bow was a long bow or a crossbow; ... whether the bowstring was fibre or reed or sinew or hemp or bark; ... whether the shaft was wild or cultivated; ... what kind of feathers it possessed, whether those of vulture or crow or hawk or peacock or stork; ... what kind of sinew the shaft was bound with, whether ox or buffalo or lion or monkey; ... what kind of arrow head it was, whether it was hoof-tipped or curved or barbed or calf-toothed or oleander...”

‘All this would still not be known to that man and meanwhile he would die ... Mālunkyaputta, whether there is the view “The universe is eternal” or the view “The universe is not eternal” etc., there still is birth, there is ageing, there is death, there are sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief and despair, the destruction of which I prescribe here and now.

‘Therefore, Mālunkyaputta, remember what I have left unrevealed as unrevealed, and remember what I have revealed as revealed...

‘And what have I revealed? “This is Suffering, its Origin, its Cessation and the Path Leading to its Cessation”, this I have revealed. Why have I revealed this? Because it is beneficial, it belongs to the fundamentals of the holy life, it leads to disenchantment, to dispassion, to cessation, to peace, to direct knowledge, to enlightenment, to Nibbāna. That is why I have revealed it.’

3. Page 118, **if he should reveal to them his version of the Final Truth – namely, annihilation...** This deduction of Kāmanīta’s is something that the Buddha well understood. Here is a passage from the *Alagaddūpama Sutta*, (‘The Discourse on the Simile of the Snake’) at M 22.20: ‘Here, bhikkhu, someone has the view: “This is Self, this the world; after death I shall be permanent, everlasting, eternal, not subject to change; I shall endure as long as eternity.” He hears the Tathāgata or a disciple of the Tathāgata teaching the Dhamma for the elimination of all standpoints, decisions, obsessions, adherences and underlying tendencies, for the stilling of all formations, for the relinquishing of all attachments, for the destruction of craving, for dispassion, for cessation, for Nibbāna. He thinks thus: “So I shall be annihilated! So I shall perish! So I shall be no more!” Then he sorrows, grieves and laments, he weeps beating his breast and becomes distraught.’ The Buddha then outlines this as a mistaken view of things and then, through the contemplations on impermanence, unsatisfactoriness and selflessness, leads his listeners to the path of Awakening. (See also Chapter 36, note §8).

4. Page 118, **“When you sit at the feet of the Tathāgata...”** This exchange has been skilfully lifted by K.G. from a dialogue between the Buddha and one of his bhikkhus, called Anurādha. It is one of the clearest expressions of the principle known as ‘the unapprehensibility of the enlightened’.

In the exchange with Anurādha, the Buddha is commending him upon the fact that he asserted that nothing could be said about the nature of an enlightened being after the death of the body. As he points out: ‘If the Tathāgata is here and now unapprehensible by you as true and established, how much less can there be anything said about such a one after the body dies.’ The whole exchange is found in the *Samyutta Nikāya*, at §2 in the ‘Collection on the Unrevealed’, S 44.2. A similar dialogue is found, between Ven. Sāriputta and Ven. Yamaka, at S 22.85.

There is also an interesting expression of this same principle found, as in the previous note, in the *Alagaddūpama Sutta*, (‘The Discourse on the Simile of the Snake’) at M 22.36. Here the Buddha is speaking about one who is completely liberated: ‘Bhikkhus, when the gods with Indra, with Brahmā and with Pajāpati seek a bhikkhu who is thus liberated in mind, they do not find anything of which they could say: “The

consciousness of one thus gone (*tathāgata*) is supported by this.” Why is that? One thus gone, I say, is untraceable here and now.’

5. Page 119, **it still seems to me to be implied plainly enough in the silence of the Tathāgata...** The perplexity felt by Kāmanīta here echoes that felt by the wanderer Uttiya (mentioned above, in note §1 of this chapter) and also that of another wanderer, Vacchagotta (at §10 in the ‘Collection on the Unrevealed’) who, when asking the Buddha whether the Self existed or not, was answered solely with silence.

In both cases Ānanda, the Buddha’s attendant, was eager to comprehend and explain the Buddha’s non-verbal response and was worried that the questioners would misunderstand it. It was probably a common problem.

We have touched upon the principle of why the Buddha revealed certain things and not others (see note §2, this chapter) but the reader might still be wondering why the Buddha seems to be giving Kāmanīta such a hard time, when he knows all along that he could make him happy simply by telling him who he is (we came across a similar act of withholding of information by the Buddha, on page 107, para. 7). In this light it might be useful to understand the Buddha’s own criteria for choosing what to say and when. He describes these in the ‘Discourse to Prince Abhaya’, at M 58.8; they are:

- 1) ‘Speech which is untrue, incorrect & unbeneficial, and which is also unwelcome & disagreeable to others – this is not uttered by a Tathāgata.
- 2) ‘Speech which is true & correct but unbeneficial, and which is also unwelcome disagreeable to others – this is not uttered by a Tathāgata.
- 3) ‘Speech which is true, correct & beneficial, but which is also unwelcome & disagreeable to others – *the Tathāgata knows the right time to use such speech.*
- 4) ‘Speech which is untrue, incorrect & unbeneficial but which is welcome & agreeable to others – this is not uttered by a Tathāgata.
- 5) ‘Speech which is true & correct but unbeneficial, and which is welcome & agreeable to others – this is not uttered by a Tathāgata.
- 6) ‘Speech which is true, correct & beneficial, and which is welcome & agreeable to others – *the Tathāgata knows the right time to use such speech.* Why is that? Because the Tathāgata has compassion for all living beings.’

From this it can be seen that, for the Buddha, the sole criterion for saying some thing was whether it was judged to be both true *and* beneficial, if it wasn’t, he would keep silent.

6. Page 119, **‘Whatever kinds of existence there are...’** This is from the Buddha’s thoughts shortly after the enlightenment – in the collection of Inspired Utterances at Ud. 3.10 (see Chapter 36, note §8).

7. Page 119, **And how does such a one see this Reality?...** This passage appears in the collection called 'The Sayings of the Buddha' (Itivuttaka) at Iti. 49.

8. Page 119, **like a watch-dog that, bound to a post and trying to free itself**
This simile appears in the *Pañcattaya Sutta* ('The Five and the Three') at M 102.12.

9. Page 119, **Let us say that a house is burning...** This seems a very familiar analogy but it has not been possible to locate it in either the Pāli Canon or its commentaries. It's possible that it is a somewhat amended version of the famous 'Simile of the Burning House', found in the *Lotus Sūtra*, a text from the Northern Buddhist tradition. In this, a loving parent has to coax their children out of a burning house by falsely promising them more beautiful and splendid toys than those they are playing with, and which the children initially refuse to leave behind.

10. Page 120, **you should ... act as if your head were encompassed by flames**
The first simile of this paragraph appears often in the scriptures, e.g. at §21 in the 'Collection on Devas', S 1.21, and at §34 in the 'Collection on the Truths', S 56.34.

11. Page 120, **The world... set on fire by... the flame of desire... of hate... of delusion...** This passage probably derives from a couple of different places: firstly from verse 146 of the *Dhammapada*:

*How can there be joy and laughter
When the whole world is aflame?*

Secondly, from the Buddha's third discourse after the enlightenment, 'The Fire Sermon' – made famous in the West by T.S. Eliot's quotation of it in 'The Waste Land'. It begins: 'All is burning, bhikkhus...' This latter passage is in the *Mahāvagga*, MV 1.21, and at §28 in the 'Collection on the Six Senses', S 35.28.

12. Page 120, **The whole world is being consumed by flames... the whole world rocks to its foundations...** This final phrase seems particularly to echo the closing lines of the verses of the Elder Nun *Sīsupacālā*, at Thig. 202-3:

*The whole world's on fire – I tell you!
It's blazing, blazing!
The whole world's aflame –
flaring, shaking,
the whole world rocks.
Even these words are shaking –
the whole world's ablaze!*

13. Page 120, **“Let us imagine the case of a youth...** This passage comes from the *Brihadāranyaka Upanishad*, Ch. 4, §3.33. It occurs in a conversation between Yajñavalkya and Janaka, the King of Videha. It is to be found on pp 137-8 in the Penguin Classics edition and at pp 491-2 in Deussen.

It is also interesting to note that in the *Māgandiya Sutta*, M 75, the Buddha uses a similar analogy, saying how uninterested in earthly sense-pleasures one of the devas would be, since their experiences of pleasure are so much more refined and acute.

He then goes on to say to Māgandiya that the reason why he, the Buddha has renounced sense-pleasures is simply because: ‘... there is, Māgandiya, a delight apart from sensual pleasures, apart from unwholesome states, which surpasses divine bliss. Since I take delight in that, I do not envy what is inferior, nor do I delight therein.’ (M 75.12).

Perhaps if the Buddha had used this phraseology with *our* hero, the story of Kāmanīta might have been very different.

14. Page 120, **imagine there was an inexperienced child...** The lengthy analogy that begins here seems to be a reworking by K.G. of the *Māgandiya Sutta*, M 75.13-8; he uses some direct quotes from that Sutta here (e.g. ‘*Health is the greatest of all gifts*’ is at M 75.19) and the general theme is very similar. It’s possible that he felt that the Buddha’s use of imagery such as – ‘Suppose, Māgandiya, there was a leper with sores and blisters on his limbs, being devoured by worms, scratching the scabs off the openings of his wounds with his nails’ – was a bit too much for genteel European society, and chose the less challenging picture of a toothache instead.

15. Page 120, a **‘miracle-worker’ from the land of Gandhāra...** The *Gandhāra-vijjā* is mentioned in the *Kevaddha Sutta*, at D 11.5, as a means of either multiplying one’s body or becoming invisible. The Buddha mentions it in the context of the kinds of trickery used to convince others that one possesses psychic powers – i.e. ‘He’s not really able to perform miracles, he’s just using the Gandhāra charm!’

16. Page 121, **Kāmanīta sat reduced to silence and sorely disturbed...** There were a number of other similar occasions when people debated with the Buddha and ended up in this condition; for example a haughty brahmin pandit, Saccaka, once challenged the Buddha to a philosophical duel, only to come out feeling somewhat the worse for wear.

The story is recounted in the *Cūla-Saccaka Sutta*, at M 35; he reaches this condition by para. 22. Also, at §24 of the ‘Collection on Māra’, S 4.24, the disconsolate Adversary is left – ‘... seated cross-legged on the earth not far from the Blessed One, silent, dismayed, with shoulders drooping and head sunk down on his chest, glum and with nothing to say, scratching the ground with a stick.’

17. Page 121, **it occasionally happens that Buddhas smile...** It indeed only occurs a few times in the scriptures that the Buddha smiles; however, it is interesting to find that the smile of an enlightened one has its own special category of consciousness – it is called the *hasituppāda-citta*.

An example of the Buddha smiling, and why, may be found in the *Ghatikāra Sutta*, M 81.2. On this occasion, it seems, the Buddha was walking through a place where he had lived in the time of the previous Buddha, Kassapa; at that time he had been a young brahmin by the name of Jotipāla, and was friends with a potter called Ghatikāra. Ghatikāra was a devoted disciple of the Buddha Kassapa but Jotipāla was not the slightest bit interested in even meeting this ‘Buddha’ character.

Eventually Ghatikāra had to drag him *by his hair* along to where the Buddha Kassapa was staying – an outrageous act for a humble artisan to carry out on a lofty brahmin... Once Jotipāla had finally met the Buddha Kassapa, however, great faith arose in him and he became a bhikkhu. It was the memory of the irony of this occasion that brought the smile to the Tathāgata’s lips.

18. Page 121, **‘No, brother’, he replied, ‘I cannot truly say that I have...’** This response – absolutely crucial to Kāmanīta’s tale – is again firmly based in the Theravāda scriptures. There is an exchange between a wise lay disciple of the Buddha, called Citta (literally ‘Heart’), and the Nigantha Nātaputta, the founder and head of an ascetic spiritual group that are known today as the Jains. Citta is asked by Nātaputta: ‘Do you have faith in the teaching of the Buddha that there is mental balance (*samādhi*) without directed and sustained thought, that directed and sustained thought can cease?’

‘Herein, sir, I do not have faith in the teaching of the Buddha that there is mental balance without directed and sustained thought, that directed and sustained thought can cease.’ The Nigantha Nātaputta is heartily pleased with this response, assuming that a) this well-known disciple of the Buddha is publicly expressing doubt in his teacher, and b) that he agrees with the Nigantha Nātaputta’s own beliefs: ‘How straight, guileless and ingenuous is Citta ... One who believes that thinking can cease might as well believe that the mind can be caught in a net, or that the River Gangā could be held back with one’s own fist.’

Citta then, however, goes on to describe his own experience of the deep states of meditative absorption (*jhāna*), in several of which there is both a perfection of mental balance and a complete cessation of thinking; concluding his description with the words: ‘Knowing and seeing thus for myself, why should I have to believe the words of any samana or brahmin?’

Naturally his questioner is not happy with this and accuses him: ‘How crooked, how crafty, how counterfeiting is this householder Citta!’ – but Citta had been absolutely truthful all along, the problem was that the Nigantha Nātaputta was unmindful of the way in which he posed the question. The exchange is found at §8 in the ‘Collection on Citta’, S 41.8.

Ven. Ajahn Chah was very fond of referring to this principle. For example:

‘Venerable Sāriputta, one of the Buddha’s disciples, was very astute. Once when the Buddha was expounding the Dhamma he turned to this monk and asked, “Sāriputta, do you believe this?” Sāriputta replied, “No, I don’t yet believe it.” The Buddha praised his answer.

“That’s very good, Sāriputta. You are one who is endowed with wisdom. One who is wise doesn’t readily believe; they listen with an open mind and then weigh the truth of the matter before believing or disbelieving.” (Ajahn Chah, ‘Food for the Heart’, p.

54, Wisdom Pubs.)

Ajahn Chah’s story is a free retelling of the Dhammapada Commentary background story on Dhammapada verse 97, (which in turn is related to the discourse, ‘The Eastern Gatehouse’, at S 48.44).

‘Thirty bhikkhus from a village had arrived at the Jetavana monastery to pay homage to the Buddha. The Buddha knew that the time was ripe for those bhikkhus to attain Arahatsip. So, he sent for Sāriputta, and in the presence of those bhikkhus, he asked, “My son Sāriputta, do you accept the fact that by meditating on the senses one could realize Nibbāna?”

‘Sāriputta answered, “Venerable Sir, in the matter of the realization of Nibbāna by meditating on the senses, it is not that I accept it because I have faith in you; it is only those who have not personally realized it that accept the fact from others.” Sāriputta’s answer was not properly understood by the bhikkhus; they thought, “Sāriputta has not given up wrong views yet; even now, he has no faith in the Buddha.”

‘Then the Buddha explained to them the true meaning of Sāriputta’s answer. “Bhikkhus, Sāriputta’s answer is simply this; he accepts the fact that Nibbāna is realized by means of meditation on the senses, but his acceptance is due to his own personal realization and not merely because I have said it or somebody else has said it. Sāriputta has faith in me; he also has faith in the consequences of good and bad deeds.”

The verse this is a commentary to is:

*The man who is without blind faith, who knows the Uncreated,
who has severed all links, destroyed all causes (for karma, good and evil),
and thrown out all desires –
he, truly, is the most excellent of men.*

Dhp. 97, (Buddharakkhita trans.)

Interestingly – and with some wry irony, as the story here hinges upon misunderstood or double meanings – the Pali of this verse presents a series of puns, and if the ‘underside’ of each pun were to be translated, the verse would read thus:

*The man who is faithless, ungrateful,
a burglar, who destroys opportunities
and eats vomit –
he, truly, is the most excellent of men.*

19. Page 122, **the doctrine of the Buddha is bliss in the beginning ... the middle and ... the end...** These words are another stock phrase found throughout the Pāli scriptures in reference to the qualities of the Teaching, (e.g. at M 27.11); it is also part of the traditional daily chanting. The word that Kāmaṇīta generously renders ‘bliss’ here is *kalyāna*, which can also be translated as ‘lovely, beautiful or good’.

20. Page 122, **he laid himself down on his mat in the posture of the lion...** This is the posture and manner in which the Buddha always lay down, and which he recommended to all the followers of his Teaching as the best way to rest fully and awaken at the desired time with a clear mind. Examples can be found at S 16 in the ‘Book of the Threes’, and at M 36.46, D 16.4.40 and at S 4.13.

An interesting occasion is described in the Cūlavagga, at CV 7.4, where the Buddha’s maleficent cousin Devadatta imitates this method but falls asleep *unmindfully*, and loses a large proportion of his disciples while he’s unconscious.



IN MID-CAREER

1. Page 126, **‘how many generations pass and have no Buddha...’** This observation appears a few times in the scriptures – for example, when the latterly famous Buddhist philanthropist Anāthapindika first heard that there was a Buddha in the world, at CV 6.4; and, more precisely in the *Devadūta Sutta* (‘The Discourse on the Heavenly Messengers’) at M 130.28.

2. Page 126, **the polished horn which... drove deep into his side...** This is indeed how Pukkusāti meets his end in the *Dhātuvibhanga Sutta* (see Appendix 2). He was one of a group of four men mentioned in the Buddhist scriptures who all died in this way at different times; the others were Bāhiya Dārucīriya, Tambadāthika, and Suppabuddha the Leper.

The story goes that in a previous life the four of them had murdered and robbed a beautiful courtesan that they had taken out for the day; she, thus wronged and enraged, returned as a *yakkhini* – a demoness – in the form of a crazed cow and pursued them each to their deaths through a hundred lives.

They must also have made considerable good karma along the way, however, as they were all able to meet the Buddha in this present time. Both Pukkusāti and Bāhiya were samanās (wandering ascetic mendicants), Suppabuddha was a leper who begged for his living (he met the Buddha because he saw a big crowd gathered in the town

and thought that they might be distributing free food, only to find it was the Buddha teaching, so he stopped to listen), and Tambadāthika had been the state executioner.

After hearing the Buddha's teaching, Bāhiya became an Arahant instantly (the fastest of all the Buddha's disciples to do so); Pukkusāti became an Anāgāmi, a 'Non-returner', and was reborn in the Avihā Brahmā realm; Suppabuddha became a Sotāpanna, a 'Stream-enterer' and was reborn in the Tāvatisa heaven; and Tambadāthika was reborn in the Tusita heaven.

As for the *yakkhīnī* – unfortunately we are not told what became of her after all the gorings were over. Her story is found at Dh.p.A. 2.35, the commentary to verse 66 of the Dhammapada. As a matter of interest, the teaching that the Buddha gave to Bāhiya, which enabled him to realize the Truth so quickly, was as follows:

*In the seen there is only the seen,
in the heard there is only the heard,
in the sensed there is only the sensed,
in the cognized there is only the cognized.
Thus you should see that
indeed there is no thing here,
this, Bāhiya, is how you should train yourself.*

*Since, Bāhiya, there is for you
in the seen, only the seen,
in the heard, only the heard,
in the sensed, only the sensed
and in the cognized, only the cognized,
and you see that there is no thing here,
you will therefore see that
indeed there is no thing there.*

*As you see that there is no thing there
you will see that
you are therefore located
neither in the world of this,
nor in the world of that,
nor in any place betwixt the two.
This alone is the end of suffering."*

Ud. 1.10

(Similar principles are also expounded at Ud. 8.4 and Iti. 94).

3. Page 128, '**The disciple who resembles the Master**'... This epithet was indeed given to the Ven. Sāriputta; the Pāli word for it is *satthukappa* (see, for example,

M 24.17). In the incident here, however, a different slant seems to have been granted by K.G: the title given to Ven. Sāriputta was meant to imply a spiritual excellence, not a physical resemblance. It was Nanda, a half-brother of the Buddha, who was known for this latter characteristic.

A story relating to this resemblance is found in the account of the origin to Pācittiya Rule §92, in the Vināya, the book of the monks' discipline: 'Ven. Nanda was beautiful, good to look upon, charming, four finger-breadths less in height than the Lord. He wore a robe the same measure as the Tathāgata's robe. Monks who were elders saw the Ven. Nanda coming from afar; seeing him, they said: "The Lord is coming..."'

4. Page 129, '**Well, Sāriputra... did the company of young monks under your leadership...**' This type of exchange is found in many places throughout the scriptures ('Now it is the custom for Buddhas, Awakened Ones, to exchange friendly greetings with in-coming bhikkhus.' MV 7.2). For example, at Ud. 5.6: 'Are you well, bhikkhu? Are you in good health? Are you fatigued by the journey coming here? Did you have any difficulty obtaining almsfood?'

5. Page 130, '**Foolish as an unreasonable child was the pilgrim Kāmanīta...**' It was by no means unheard of for the kind of reaction described in this passage to occur in the hearts of those who came to listen to the Buddha. In the *Mūlapariyāya Sutta* (the very first in that most significant of collections, the Middle Length Discourses) after the Buddha has explained a host of subtle and complex aspects of his teaching to a group of his monks, it concludes with the words: 'But those bhikkhus did *not* delight in the Blessed One's words,' M 1.194.

The ancient commentary explains that the Buddha delivered this discourse to dispel the conceit that had arisen in the minds of those monks on account of their erudition and intellectual mastery of his teachings. It seems that they had formerly been brahmins learned in Vedic literature and the Buddha's words may well have been intended to challenge the brahmanic views to which they still adhered. Thus they did *not* delight in his words because the discourse, like the Buddha's words to Kāmanīta in our tale, probed too deeply into the tender regions of their own conceit. Happily the commentary tells us that, at a later time, the Buddha expounded to them the *Gotamaka Sutta* (A 3.123) in the course of which they all attained enlightenment.

Ironically at this point in the *Dhātuvibhanga Sutta*, M 140.36, (see Appendix 2), the Buddha actually praises Pukkusāti: 'Bhikkhus, the clansman Pukkusāti was wise. He practised in accordance with the Dhamma and did not trouble me in the interpretation of the Dhamma.'

K.G. does bring us back again to something of a correspondence between the two stories, however, in that Pukkusāti is said (at §50 in the 'Collection on the Devas' – that on Ghatikāra – at S 1.50) to have reappeared in the Avihā Brahmā realm and

that he was enlightened as soon as he was born there. This is one of the Pure Abodes, corresponding to the Pure Lands of the Northern Buddhist tradition (see Chapter 3, note §8 and Chapter 8, note §5).

IN THE PARADISE OF THE WEST

1. Page 133, **Wrapped in a red mantle, whose rich drapings flowed down about him...** In his depiction of this paradise, K.G. has woven together strands of scripture and myth from Hindu as well as Southern and Northern Buddhist traditions, together with liberal hanks of his own imagination.

The realm as depicted in this story is, in many ways, very like the Western Paradise described in the *Amitābha Sūtra* (see Chapter 8, note §5, above); however, there is a noticeable absence here of a) Amitābha Buddha himself, b) the great multitudes of enlightened disciples, and c) the presence of the Dharma Teachings. In the *Amitābha Sūtra*, even the arrays of ‘rare and wonderful varicoloured birds’ are said to constantly bring forth the sound of the Dharma.

In his Note to the First Edition, K.G. comments on these apparent inconsistencies between the pattern of celestial life here and that to be found in scriptural texts; further, he clearly names the version of The Paradise of the West contained in this story as his own invention: ‘what, for heaven’s sake, should I have done with those Thirty Three Gods when I didn’t even have a use for Amitabha Buddha in Sukhavati?’

It’s perhaps also worth mentioning here that, in the cosmological texts, the description of life in the Theravādan version of the Pure Lands, which are high Brahmā worlds, is that of an existence infinitely more refined than K.G. paints for Kāmanīta in the Paradise of the West. What is portrayed here bears more resemblance to the Tāvatisa heaven – the Heaven of the Thirty-three Gods – which is in the mid-strata of what are known as the Seven Heavens of Sense Desire (see Chapter 3, note §8).

2. Page 134, **massy cloudlets on which reclined lovely gandharvas, celestial musicians...** Gandharvas are one of the several types of celestial being described in the Buddhist scriptures; as is mentioned here they are the heavenly musicians. Some of the types of other-worldly beings have been mentioned already: the Brahmās – the great gods who are the occupants of all the highest heavenly realms; devas – who would correspond to angels and archangels in Western cosmology; *asurās* – they are known as the ‘Jealous Gods’ or the titans of the Buddhist world – they are very powerful characters and relentlessly jealous and resentful of the devas’ beauty and happiness, thus they regularly go to war with the latter; *nāgas* – who are dragon-like beings who can be either benevolent or malevolent; *yakkhas* – these are mostly fierce, demonic beings but can be kind and protective also (they are often depicted in grand statues

at the gates to Buddhist temples, representing guardian deities to frighten off other, more malevolent intruders) – similar to the gargoyles of the cathedrals of Europe.

Along with this main group are lesser known beings such as *garudās* – who are giant auspicious birds (although often at war with the *nāgas*...); *kinnaris* – who are sometimes represented as being fairy-like, flower-loving beings, and sometimes as half-bird and half-human; and finally *kumbhandas* – who are generally malevolent, pot-bellied gnome-like beings.

Down in the lower strata of the Buddhist cosmological scheme of things, there are to be found the realm of *petas*, Hungry Ghosts, who have tiny mouths and huge bellies, combined with insatiable appetites (symbolizing the world of addiction and craving); and below them, at the bottom of the cosmic heap, are the great variety of hell realms and their denizens. These we will hear more of later (see Chapter 34, note §6).

In all this, the reader should be reminded that the one crucial factor in all Buddhist cosmology is that no state is permanent. A birth in a particular realm, be it with the high brahmās, the *kinnaris*, the animals or in hell, will only last so long, then there will be a birth in a new domain, moving up the ladders or down the snakes according to the qualities of one's actions. (See also Chapter 3, note §8).

3. Page 134, **the mysterious perfume of the Coral Tree...** This is the same Coral Tree spoken of above (see Chapter 6, note §7).



THE ROUNDELAY OF THE BLESSÈD

1. Page 137, **He wandered on through charming groves...** To give the reader a sense of comparison between a canonical version of such a paradise and that portrayed by K.G., here is a description of the Tāvātimsa heaven from the 'Tales of the Heavenly Mansions' – the Vimānavatthu – it is found at Vim. 3.10. 'The Coral Tree Mansion':

*You rejoice, with the flowers of the Coral and Ebony trees,
charming and delightful, threading heavenly garlands
and singing.*

*While you are dancing, heavenly sounds stream forth –
delightful to the ear.*

*While you are dancing, heavenly scents are wafted around –
fragrances sweet, bewitching.*

*While you are swaying your body, the sound of trinkets in your
braided hair is like the many kinds of music.*

*The sound of your jewelled earrings trembling in the breeze
is like a five-fold melody.*

*And the perfume of those sweetly-scented garlands on your crown
blows here and there in all directions.*

You breathe that sweet scent, you see unearthly beauty.

There is also an interesting account of Ven. Anuruddha, the most accomplished visionary of the Buddha's disciples, meeting with a similar group of 'Devatās of Lovely Form'. They tell him that they can 'assume in a trice any colour we like, produce any sound we desire and obtain any happiness also.' As he then wishes: 'May they all become blue, dressed in blue, decked in finery which is blue,' they become so, then so too with yellow and then white. They then start to play their musical instruments – 'all at once sweet and charming, alluring, loveable and delightful.' Ven. Anuruddha, being an Arahant, remained composed and did not show excitement at all this. The devatās then assumed: 'Master Anuruddha is not enjoying this,' and immediately vanished. The passage is at §46 in 'The Book of the Eights', A 8.46.

THE CORAL TREE

1. Page 142, **His past life lay open before him...** Recollection of past lives is also regularly cited amongst the list of abilities that accrue to those who cultivate the path of meditation; for example in the *Sāmaññaphala Sutta* ('Discourse on the Fruits of the Homeless Life') at D 2.93-4, and in 'Discourse on Fear and Dread,' at M 4.27:

'When my concentrated mind was thus purified ... I directed it to knowledge of the recollection of past lives ... One birth, two births, three ... five ... ten ... twenty ... fifty, a hundred births, a thousand births, a hundred thousand births, many æons of universal expansion, many æons of universal contraction ... I understood: 'There I was so named, of such a clan ... such was my experience of pleasure and pain; and passing away from there I reappeared elsewhere.' Thus with their details and particulars I recollected my manifold past lives.'

Incidentally, there is no mention in the Theravāda scriptures of the Coral Tree having this miraculous ability of evoking memories of past lives. It's possible that such powers are ascribed to it in the Hindu legends (see Chapter 6, note §7).

THE CHAIN WITH THE TIGER-EYE

1. Page 150, **I would kill myself by persistently refusing all nourishment...** The threat to starve yourself to death unless you got your way was evidently a fairly common practice in the time of the Buddha. In the very last of 'The Verses of the Elder Nuns' – the *Therīgāthā*, (Thig. 456-516) – Sister Sumedhā recounts how she was driven to this extreme in the effort to get her parents to allow her to leave the household life and to become a nun.

Another of the most famous instances of the same circumstance is mentioned in the *Ratthapāla Sutta*, at M 82.7-11, where a young and dearly beloved only son, Ratthapāla, lies down on the bare floor and refuses to eat until his parents give him permission to enter the Buddha's monastic order.

27 THE RITE OF TRUTH

1. Page 156, **there hung a wreath of the red Kanavera blossoms...** The 'Kanavera', or oleander (*Nerium odorum*), was indeed the traditional garland worn by criminals in North India on their way to the place of execution.

2. Page 156, **be witness now to the Rite of Truth...** A 'Rite of Truth', *saccakiriya*, is a solemn declaration or declaration on oath. Such asseverations appear in a few places in the Buddhist scriptures, for example in the collection of 'Birth Stories', the *Jātaka*, at §1.214 & §1.294, and at §4.31 & §1.142. The principle invoked is that truthfulness has a power that reaches beyond the ordinary limits of the material world. In one of the 'Birth Stories' the Buddha describes how, in a previous life as a humble little quail, he managed to turn back a forest fire:

Depending on the power of Truth

I made this asseveration -

'Here are wings which do not fly,
here are feet which do not walk,
and mother and father have departed -
Jataveda the Fire: Go back!'

This act of mine I made with Truth;

the great blazing crested flames

avoided sixteen measures of land,

like fire that has reached the water's edge.

Perhaps even more poignantly, there is another example in the *Angulimāla Sutta* itself (at M 86.14-5, see Appendix 3) where there is a verse to bless expectant mothers and their babies. Both of these verses are still used today as protective blessings.

28 ON THE SHORES OF THE HEAVENLY GANGA

1. Page 161, **here in the stream of the Heavenly Gangā, worlds are rolled and propelled along...** This passage was perhaps inspired by the famous lines:

Worlds on worlds are rolling ever

From creation to decay,

*Like the bubbles on a river
Sparkling, bursting, borne away.*

‘Worlds on worlds are rolling ever’
Percy Bysshe Shelley

2. Page 161, **‘Is it possible, then ... for eternal happiness to exist where there is limitation?’...** The Buddha answered this question in one of his most frequently recounted phrases, recited daily in many Theravādan countries:

*Sabbe sankhārā aniccā
sabbe sankhārā dukkhā
sabbe dhammā anattā ti*

*All conditioned, limited things are impermanent,
all conditioned things are unsatisfying,
there is no self to be found
in either the conditioned
or the Unconditioned, Ultimate Reality.”*

A similar analysis is also found in the *Anatta-lakkhana Sutta* (mentioned above, e.g. at Chapter 10, note §12):

“Is material form permanent or impermanent, bhikkhus?”

“Impermanent, Venerable Sir.”

“Is that which is impermanent ultimately satisfying or unsatisfying?”

“Unsatisfying, Venerable Sir...”

29

AMID THE SWEETNESS OF THE CORAL BLOSSOMS

1. Page 163, **rode his war elephant to Hastinapura to aid his friends, the Pāṇḍava princes...** Here, once again are scenes from the Mahābhārata.

2. Page 163, **she had ascended the funeral pyre in front of the palace...** This passage describes the practice of *sati* where a faithful widow was expected to immolate herself on her husband’s funeral pyre. The custom has all but died out in India, having been banned in the 19th Century by the British Raj.

3. Page 164, **Agni and Indra, to Varuna and Mitra...** These are some of the gods of the Vedas, the most ancient Indian scriptures. Indra was the god of war, thunder and of the East, Varuna was the god of the sea and of the West, Agni was the god of fire and Mitra the god of the sun.

4. Page 165, **the Land of the Five Streams...** This refers to the Punjab provinces of India and Pakistan. The term Punjab is made up of two words, *pañca* meaning five and *apo* meaning water, thus 'the land of five streams'. The Greeks referred to Punjab as Pentapotamia, being an inland delta of five converging rivers.

5. Page 165, **they even grew as two palms on an island...** In traditional Buddhist cosmology there is no mention of any possibility of rebirth as a tree or a plant; there are, however, many references to the existence of tree spirits, *rukkha-deva*, these are directly analogous to the dryads who regularly appear in Greek myths. For example, there is the mention of a *rukkha-deva* of a great banyan tree called 'Steadfast' (*Suppatitthita*) to be found at §54 of the 'Book of the Sixes', A 6.54.

6. Page 165, **'We are as old as the world...'** The Buddha made it very clear that the cycles of birth and death are not just protracted, they are beginningless: 'Bhikkhus, Samsāra, the round of births and deaths, is beginningless. Of the beings that travel and trudge through this round, shut in as they are by ignorance and fettered by craving, no first beginning is describable. It is not easy to find a being who has not formerly been one's mother, father, brother, sister, daughter or son during this long, long time.' This passage is found in the 'Collection of Sayings on the Beginning', at S 15.14-19. (See also Chapter 8, note §3).

30

"TO BE BORN IS TO DIE"

1. Page 167, **we have reached a place where there is no more passing away, where eternal joy is our sweet possession...** The supposition that the heavenly realm that one has arrived at is eternal seems to be a very common one. As Tennyson expressed it, in his poem based on an incident in the *Odyssey*, (at IX, 82 ff.):

O, rest ye, brother mariners, we will not wander more.

'The Lotos-eaters'

Alfred, Lord Tennyson

Another Victorian poet, Christina Rossetti, put it like this:

Thou sleepest where the lilies fade

Thou dwellest where the lilies fade not;

Sweet, when thy earthly part decayed

Thy heavenly part decayed not.

'Seasons'

Christina Rossetti

We will come across this mistaken impression again a few more times in our tale.

2. Page 167, **its red colour seemed to have lost something of its freshness and gloss...** What follows in this chapter is a depiction of the traditional five signs denoting the ageing and death of devas: 1) the flowers of their garlands wilt and lose their fragrance; 2) their clothes become dirty, dull and drab; 3) their armpits start to sweat; 4) their bodies lose their radiance, become withered and tired; and 5) their heavenly thrones become hot, hard and rigid, they feel discomfort in their hands and feet and they cannot sit still.

These factors are referred to in §83 of the Itivuttaka, and also in the ancient Thai commentary, ‘The Three Worlds According to King Ruang’, (mentioned at Chapter 3, note §8), on pp 242-3 of the Berkeley edition. They are also found in the *Shurangama Sūtra*, at the beginning of the final section – ‘The Fifty Skandha Demon States’, (Vol.8, pp 12-3 in the Buddhist Text Translation Society edition).

3. Page 168, **“To be born is to die...”** This verse could easily have come from the Pāli, but it is probably K.G.’s own invention, as hinted at in his Note to the First Edition – it matches the flow of his plot suspiciously well.

There seems to be no passage that matches it exactly in the Theravāda scriptures, even though it has the right tone and it bears some passing resemblance to a passage in the *Salla Sutta*, at SN 575-7:

*A being, once born, is going to die, and there is no way out of this.
When old age arrives, or some other cause, then there is death.
This is the way it is with living beings.
When fruits become ripe, they may fall in the early morning.
In the same way a being, once born, may die at any moment.
Just as the clay pots made by a potter end up being shattered,
So it is with the life of mortals.*

ANGULIMALA

1. Page 187, **‘Like the Earth, you should exercise evenness of temper...’** This statement of the Buddha was actually made to his son, the novice Rāhula. He was born just before the Buddha left the life of the royal palace and took up the way of the homeless spiritual seeker. After the enlightenment the Buddha returned to his hometown, Kapilavatthu and, along with many others of the Sākya clan, he gave Rāhula ordination into the Sangha. Tradition has it that he was eighteen years old when this discourse was given. It is called ‘The Greater Discourse on Advice to Rāhula’, the *Mahā-Rāhulovāda Sutta* – it is at M 62.13.

2. Page 187, **you speak ... not with the robber, but with the upāsaka ... Angulimāla...** The term upāsaka means literally ‘One who sits close by’; it is the word used for male lay followers of the Buddha. Upāsikā is the female equivalent.

3. Page 187, **“Who is this Buddha?”**... A similar tone to that of this retort is found in the exchange between Jotipāla and Ghatikāra (mentioned above at Chapter 20, note §17). When invited to come and meet the Buddha Kassapa, Jotipāla (the Buddha-to-be) snorts: ‘Enough Ghatikāra! What’s the use of seeing that bald-pated recluse?’

4. Page 187, **‘Even to hear the name of him whom they call The Welcome One...’** There is a passage near the end of the *Lotus Sūtra*, one of the most important texts of the Northern School of Buddhism, where it states that even just to overhear the name of the Buddha, or pass by a Buddhist shrine in the distance, is sufficient to guarantee one will eventually realize complete and perfect enlightenment. Furthermore:

*If men, with minds disturbed
Enter a stūpa or a temple
And call - ‘Namo Buddhāya,’
Buddhahood they will attain.*

The word that K.G. translates here as ‘The Welcome One’ is ‘*Sugata*’ – it is another member of the standard list of nine qualities of the Buddha, some of which were quoted on page 168, para. 4. The whole list was also enumerated on page 109, para. 3. (see Chapter 18, note §9).



THE HELL OF SPEARS

1. Page 189, **I then became aware of a solitary traveller...** All the way through this chapter we have references to the *Angulimāla Sutta*, M 86 (see Appendix 3); this passage, together with those following it, appears almost verbatim at M 86.3-7.

Incidentally, this meeting between Angulimāla and the Buddha is traditionally placed only twenty years after the enlightenment, i.e. twenty-five years before the Buddha’s old age and the events depicted in this story.

2. Page 189, **this wanderer here comes on alone – like a conqueror...** *Jina* or ‘The Conqueror’ was indeed one of the epithets given to the Buddha.

3. Page 190, **I couldn’t gain another step, although I ran with all my might and he seemed to be walking quite leisurely forward...** K.G. would almost certainly have been struck by the similarity between Angulimāla’s experience here and that described by Parsifal, the eponymous hero of Wagner’s opera, on the way to the Grail Castle with Gurnemanz. He says:

*‘I scarcely move,-
Yet swiftly seem to run.’*
To which his companion replies:
*‘My son, thou seest
Here Space and Time are one.’*

‘Parsifal’

Richard Wagner

(Quoted in ‘The Grail Legend’ by Emma Jung & Marie Louise von Franz, Princeton University Press, 1998)

This comment does not appear in quite this form in Wolfram von Eschenbach’s 13th Century CE original. However, at the opening of Book V it says: ‘The horse pulled the dragging reins through marshy land, for no-one’s hand guided it. The story tells us that on that day he rode so far that a bird could only with difficulty have flown all that way.’ The ‘dragging reins’ image suggests a dolorous trudge rather than a headlong gallop, thus it is a mysterious counterpoint to the huge distance covered. Perhaps Wagner’s familiarity with Buddhist scriptures, via his association with Schopenhauer, inspired him to equate this strange temporal illogicality with Angulimāla’s experience, and expand it to specify the fusing/dissolution of ordinary time and space around the Grail Castle.

4. Page 192, **as though it were a matter of going from one house to another..**

This simile is used in the *Mahā-Sakuludāyi Sutta*, at M 77.34-5.

5. Page 192, **“Give me your hand,” he said...** The manœuvre that is described in this paragraph is similar to one that the Buddha used a few times – always to help bring someone to greater understanding or to help them make stronger efforts in the practice of meditation. For example, a very similar trip to hell is undertaken in the *Nimi Jātaka*, §541 in the ‘Stories of Previous Births’; here the Lord Mātali, a deva prince, takes the Buddha-to-be (King Nimi in that particular life) to visit the lower realms on a chariot drawn by a thousand thoroughbred horses. The incident is also mentioned at M 83.13, in the *Makhādeva Sutta*.

On a slightly different tack, at Udāna 3.2, the Buddha takes his cousin, the newly ordained bhikkhu Nanda, off to the Tāvātimsa heaven to introduce him to the celestial nymphs there so that he would stop thinking about his former girlfriend Janapadakalyānī. As a skilful lure, the Buddha promised him five hundred of the Tāvātimsa nymphs, who all had ‘beautiful dove-like feet’, if he would commit himself with vigour to his meditation. Nanda set to with a will, but when his fellow bhikkhus found out that his new-found zeal was on account of the promise of the celestial maidens, they roundly criticised him and he became embarrassed by his own foolish worldliness. He continued with his meditation practice regardless, however, and not long after arrived at complete enlightenment. He then went to the Buddha and released him from his promise.

There is also mention of ‘the path to the gods’ in the *Kevaddha Sutta*, at D 11.67, and an incident, in the ‘Collection on Brahmās’, at S 6.5, where the Buddha, Mahā-Moggallāna et al. go to visit a brahmā god to humble the conceited opinion he had of himself.

Incidentally, the reader should note that this interlude in the story is K.G.'s own invention – the Buddha does not actually do this in the *Angulimāla Sutta*; in the original story faith arises and Angulimāla asks to go forth as a bhikkhu without the benefit of a sobering trip to the underworld – the relevant passage occurs at M 86.6 (see Appendix 3).

6. page 192, ‘**This, Honoured Sir, is the Hell of Spears...**’ From the viewpoint of Buddhist cosmology, life in the various hell realms bears a very close resemblance to that described in many other religious traditions – and, as in most other traditions, it’s a topic of great popular interest. One of the most vivid descriptions of life in the hells comes in the *Devadūta Sutta* (‘The Discourse on the Heavenly Messengers’) M 130; a comparable passage is found at §35 of the ‘Book of the Threes’.

‘The Hell of Spears’ itself is called the *Sattisūla*, *Sattihati* or *Lagāthasala Niraya* – it is the eighth auxiliary hell of *Mahā Avīci*, the lowest and worst of the ‘Eight Great Hells.’ It is mentioned in §522 of the ‘Stories of Previous Births’, the *Sarabhangā Jātaka*, and is particularly reserved for ‘thieves, robbers, defrauders and false accusers.’

The passage in our story bears a striking resemblance to the experiences of Mahā-Moggallāna, the Buddha’s second disciple after Sāriputta, as he describes them in the *Māratājjanīya Sutta* (‘The Rebuke to Māra’) at M 50.22. He is recounting to the Māra of the current age the karmic result of his own abuse of the chief disciple of the Buddha Kakusandha, when he (Mahā-Moggallāna) had been the Māra of that age (actually the uncle of the Māra to whom he was speaking!) As he says: ‘Then, Evil One, the wardens of hell came up to me and said: “Good sir, when stake meets stake in your heart, then you will know: I have been roasting in hell for a thousand years.”’ This situation in itself is an interesting commentary on Buddhist cosmology, where, within the space of a few lifetimes, one can go from being the embodiment of evil to being a paragon of virtue and wisdom. The evolution of the spiritual path is also by no means a linear flow – according to some accounts, along with his many lives of cultivation of goodness, Mahā-Moggallāna had been Māra no less than thirty-seven times.

For the reader’s interest, some of the other hells’ characteristics are as follows:

1. *Sañjīva Niraya* – The Hell of Those Who Are Killed but Revive Continuously. (Lifespan = 500 hell years. One day and night = 9,000,000 human years)
2. *Kālasutta Niraya* – The Hell With the Floor Marked by Black Rope. (Lifespan = 1000 hell years. One day and night = 36,000,000 human years)
3. *Sanghāta Niraya* – The Hell of Crushing and Smashing. (Lifespan = 2000 hell years. One day and night = 144,000,000 human years)
4. *Roruva* – The Hell of Screaming. (Lifespan = 4000 hell years. One day and night = 576,000,000 human years)
5. *Mahā-roruva* – The Hell of Great Screaming. (Life-span = 8000 hell years. One day and night = 2,304,000,000 human years)
6. *Tapana* – The Hell of Fiercely Burning Fire. (Lifespan = 16,000 hell years. One day and night = 9,216,000,000 human years)

7. *Mahā-tapana* – The Hell of Great Fiercely Burning Fire. (Lifespan = ‘many kalpas.’ One day and night = ‘several kalpas’)

8. *Mahā Avīci* – The Hell of Suffering Without Respite. (Incalculable periods of time...)

Some gruesomenesses of the Sañjīva Hell and its auxiliaries are: red hot iron floors; salty rivers full of knives and razor-sharp lotus leaves; being torn apart by dogs, crows and vultures; hot coals poured over your head; being dunked in pots of molten iron; head twisted off by red-hot iron ropes and then fried; clear rivers turning out to be boiling hot and other rivers of blood and pus being the only food available.

The most famous of all of these retributions is the *Lohasimbāli Niraya* (‘The Kapok Tree of Lovers’) – here men and women who have deceived their spouses are placed with their beloved, one at the bottom and one at the top of a kapok tree, covered with knife-like spines. Seeing the object of their desires at top of the tree, they are irresistibly compelled to climb, despite the tremendous agony.

Once they reach the top, however – BOOF! – the positions change, and the other is suddenly at the base of the tree, feeling compelled to climb... ‘This is a very terrible kind of tribulation,’ says the text, as if we hadn’t guessed it already. It also states, after having described all these miseries of just the Sañjīva Hell, (i.e. level 1), that ‘the seven levels below this will not and cannot be described. They are much more terrible than any of those that have already been considered.’ One of the best sources for this cosmology is, once again, ‘The Three Worlds According to King Ruang’, translated by F.E. & M.B. Reynolds, Berkeley Buddhist Studies Series.

7. Page 193, **the Judge of the Dead of that time pondered deeply...** This paragraph has been lifted verbatim by K.G. from the *Devadūta Sutta*, M 130.28. It is also similar to a passage spoken by King Bimbisāra, in the *Mahāvagga*, at MV 1.22, on his meeting the Buddha for the first time after the enlightenment.

8. Page 193, **even as in this land of Jambudvīpa... there are to be found only a few smiling groves...** This paragraph and those following it are abridged from §19 of the ‘Book of the Ones’, A 1.19; this passage also bears a resemblance to §96 of the ‘Book of the Sixes’, A 6.96.

9. Page 194, **Come, disciple!**... At this point in the *Angulimāla Sutta*, at M 86.6, the Buddha actually gives him the full ordination as a bhikkhu, rather than just inviting him to be an upāsaka. The Buddha frequently gave ordination by the simple utterance of the formula, ‘*Ehi, bhikkhu*’ – ‘Come, bhikkhu’ – e.g. at MV 1.7, in the description of a young man called Yasa’s going forth; or, more particularly in the *Angulimāla Sutta*, at M 86.6 (see Appendix 3).

In our tale the exchange has been rendered as, ‘Come, disciple’ (which incidentally is not a form found anywhere in the Pāli Canon) since Angulimāla does not yet take on the bhikkhu precepts.

10. Page 194, **The Perfect One had entered the wood like an elephant hunter...** This simile occurs in an expanded form in the *Dantabhūmi Sutta* (‘The Grade of the Tamed’) at M 125.12.

A PURE OFFERING

1. Page 198, **on such beautiful moonlit nights the monks stay together ... in spiritual discussion...** The Buddha encouraged gatherings of the lay and monastic communities on the lunar quarters, when people would meditate and listen to talks on the Dharma. This practice is still followed in the Southern Buddhist countries of Thailand, Burma and Sri Lanka, and even in the West, in some countries to which the Theravāda tradition has spread. The origin of the custom is described in the books of monastic discipline, at MV 2.2.1.

Spiritual discussions were, and also are, common among members of the monastic community. There is a particularly lovely account of such occasions, which the author has borrowed from here, to be found in the *Mahāgosinga Sutta*, at M 32.4.

2. Page 199, **I stood there in fearful uncertainty – undecided whether to go on or to turn back...** A similar incident is described (at CV 6.4) in reference to the great benefactor of the Sangha, Anāthapindika, when he first went to meet the Buddha. He was so eager to see him that he woke up three times in the night, thinking it was already dawn. Finally, illumined by an eerie brightness, he got to the Sīvaka Gate of the city and some celestial beings opened it for him. As soon as he was out of the gate the strange light left him and he was in darkness again. He was awestruck and became filled with fear. He wanted to turn back, but the spirit Sīvaka spoke to him:

*A hundred elephants, a hundred horses,
A hundred chariots drawn by mules,
A hundred thousand maidens decked with gems
And earrings – all these are not worth even
A sixteenth part of one step forward now.
Go forward, householder, go forward.
Better to go forward than turn back.*

CV 6.4

3. Page 200, **‘What do you think, bhikkhus, which are more numerous...’** As mentioned above (see Chapter 20, note §2) this passage is found at S 56.31.

4. Page 200, **‘And what, friends, have I declared to you?...’** The reference here is to the *Cūla-Mālunkiyaputta Sutta*, M 63.7-10. The Buddha makes this statement after the bhikkhu Mālunkiyaputta threatened to disrobe and leave the Sangha if the Buddha would not answer his list of ten philosophical questions (see above, Chapter 18, note §3). The Buddha refuses to answer these, seeing that these questions are all missing the essential point of spiritual life. (See also Chapter 20, note §1).

5. Page 201, **They are heirs of Truth, not heirs of material things...** This sentence comes from the *Dhamma-dāyāda Sutta* (‘The Discourse on Heirs of Truth’) at M 3.2 and is the main theme of that discourse. There is another well-known passage related to this principle, at Iti. 100, where the Buddha states – ‘There are these two kinds of offerings: the offering of material things and the offering of the Dhamma. Of these two kinds of offering, this is the foremost, namely, the offering of the Dhamma.’

6. Page 201, **For, if people knew the fruits of giving as I know them...** This sentence comes from §26 in the *Itivuttaka*.

7. Page 201, **I call “a pure offering” that with which the giver is purified and the receiver also...** This sentence, and those that make up the rest of this paragraph, comes directly from the *Dakkhinā-vibhanga Sutta* (‘The Discourse on the Exposition of Offerings’) at M 142.13.

8. Page 210, **yet an all but absolute silence reigned in the circle...** A similar quietude is described in the *Sāmaññaphala Sutta*, when King Ajātasattu is brought to meet the Buddha in the Ambavana, Jīvaka’s Mango Grove. Alarmed and intimidated by the profound silence of the meditating assembly, the King asks his companion: ‘How is it that from this great number of one-thousand-two-hundred-and-fifty monks not a sneeze, a cough or a shout is to be heard?’ The passage is to be found at D 2.10.

THE BUDDHA AND KRISHNA

1. Page 206, **He, the truly living ... amid this restless and delusory life of the lifeless...** This last sentence of the paragraph echoes the famous passage from the *Dhammapada*, Dh. 21, quoted at Chapter 1, note §8.

2. Page 206, **He spoke of the temple on the steps of which he sat...** This Dharma talk by the Buddha, on the theme of Krishna and his life, is entirely the creation of K.G. It's debatable whether the legends of Krishna's life existed in the time of the Buddha, at least in the form in which they exist now; there is, however, an interesting reference to some one called Kanha (which is the Pāli equivalent of the Sanskrit word 'Krishna', both words having the meaning 'black') whom the Buddha praises as 'a mighty sage of ages past,' who went to the south country, learnt the mantras of the brahmins and acquired great psychic powers. This reference to him is found in the *Ambattha Sutta*, at D 3.1.23.

3. Page 206, **'Some who wished harm to the Tathāgata ... once set loose a savage elephant...'** This story comes directly from the Vināya, the books of monastic discipline, and recounts one of the attempts by the Buddha's ambitious cousin, Devadatta, to kill him and then take over leadership of the Sangha. Devadatta was in league with King Ajātasattu and persuaded him to allow his great bull war elephant, Nālāgiri, to be made drunk and enraged, and then to have him released onto the street where the Buddha was walking on his almsround. The story occurs at CV 7.3.

Perhaps it should also be mentioned that another reason why the Buddha might not be afraid, is that it is said to be impossible for a Buddha to be killed by a violent act – they only die when they voluntarily renounce the life-principle – although he could have sustained severe injury and pain.

4. Page 208, **'For me alone has the Samana Gotama declared this teaching...'** This phrase is taken verbatim from 'The Greater Discourse to Saccaka', M 36.45; in the original text, however, the Buddha qualifies it in a somewhat less explicit way than is done here in our story. He says: 'But it should not be regarded so; the Tathāgata teaches the Dhamma to others only to give them knowledge.'

5. Page 208, **Lord Krishna – although he himself was the Supreme God...** It is doubtful that the Hindu scriptures actually present the career of Krishna in quite such an obviously Christian way. K.G. had himself been a Christian theologian and, during the years that he wrote 'Kāmanīta', he had become somewhat disaffected from that tradition. It seems clear that here he is trying to make a distinct contrast between Jesus Christ and the Buddha – with the latter being accorded spiritual superiority – without saying it in so many words. Having said that, however, it should be noted that similar statements are found in the *Bhagavad Gītā* (e.g. at Book 4, verses 6-7) where Krishna goes so far as to proclaim:

Although I am unborn, everlasting, and I am the Lord of all, I come to my realm of nature and through my wondrous power I am born.

When righteousness is weak and faints, and unrighteousness exults in pride, then my spirit arises on earth.

6. Page 209, **‘I reasoned thus – “This Truth that I have realized is profound and hard to see...”** In these paragraphs we have the Buddha’s own account of the beginning of his teaching career. It is verbatim from the Vināya texts, at MV 1.5.

7. Page 209, **the Master told us of those heroic deeds of Krishna...** The stories mentioned in this paragraph, together with many others that have already been quoted, are to be found in the Hindu scriptures; Particularly in Book 10 of the *Bhagavata Purāna*, and in the *Harivamsa*.

8. Page 211, **neither ‘existence’ nor ‘non-existence’ could be said to describe the reality of Life...** This sentence is a useful and profound teaching, if somewhat abstruse; K.G. probably derived it from the Inspired Utterances, Ud. 3.10:

*This world is anguished, being exposed to contact,
Even what the world calls ‘self’ is in fact unsatisfactory;
For no matter upon what it conceives (its conceits of identity),
The fact is ever other than that (which it conceives).
The world, whose being is to become other,
Is committed to being, is exposed to being, relishes only being,
Yet what it relishes brings fear, and what it fears is pain.
Now this holy life is lived to abandon suffering.*

Whatever monks or brahmins have described liberation from being to come about through (love of) being, none, I say, are liberated from being. And whatever monks or brahmins have described escape from being to come about through (love of) non-being, none, I say, have escaped from being. Through the essentials of existence, suffering is; with all clinging exhausted, suffering is no more.

*Whatever states of being there are,
of any kind, anywhere,
all are impermanent, pain-haunted
and subject to change.
One who sees this as it is
thus abandons craving for existence,
without relishing non-existence.
The remainderless fading, cessation,
Nibbāna, comes with the utter ending of all craving.*

From ‘The Life of the Buddha’, by Bhikkhu Ñānamoli,
Buddhist Publication Society, 1971.

Another passage, from ‘The Sayings of the Buddha’, Iti. 49, might also help to illuminate this subtle subject: ‘Bhikkhus, held by two kinds of views, some devas and human beings hold back and some overreach; only those with vision see.

‘And how, bhikkhus, do some hold back? Devas and humans enjoy being, delight in being, are satisfied with being. When Dhamma is taught to them for the cessation of being, their minds do not enter into it or acquire confidence in it or settle upon it or become resolved upon it. Thus, bhikkhus, do some hold back.

‘How, bhikkhus, do some overreach? Now some are troubled, ashamed and disgusted by this very same being and they rejoice in (the idea of) non-being, asserting:

‘In as much as this self, good sirs, when the body perishes at death, is annihilated and destroyed and does not exist after death – this is peaceful, this is excellent, this is reality!’ Thus, bhikkhus, do some overreach.

‘How, bhikkhus, do those with vision see? Herein a bhikkhu sees what has come to be as having come to be. Having seen it thus, he practises the course for turning away, for dispassion, for the cessation of what has come to be. Thus, bhikkhus, do those with vision see.’ (See also Chapter 20, note §6).

9. Page 211, **like one who hears a new song utterly unlike any other...** Vāsithī’s reference here, returning to the counterpoint with the Christian tradition, sounds very reminiscent of the words of Psalm 149, verse 1: ‘Praise ye the Lord. Sing unto the Lord a new song...’

10. Page 211, **a shimmer of something infinitely higher had shone in my eyes...** Vāsithī’s experience here is akin to that expressed by the Buddha to Māgandiya, at M 75.12, (quoted at Chapter 20, note §13).

THE BLOSSOMS OF PARADISE WITHER

1. Page 216, **if all this were lasting and did not pass away, there could be nothing higher...** This phrase resonates one of the most important passages in the collection of Inspired Utterances, Ud. 8.1: ‘There is an Ultimate Reality: Unborn, Uncreated, Unconditioned and Unformed. If there were not, there would be no escape possible here for one who is born, created, conditioned and formed. But, since there is this Ultimate Reality: Unborn, Uncreated, Unconditioned and Unformed, escape is possible for one who is born, created, conditioned and formed.’

It also is close in spirit to the teaching that the Buddha gave to the deluded Brahmā god Baka, who was under the impression that he was the Creator and in the highest state of being – we will come across references to this incident a few more times before our tale is done. The story is found at M 49.26 and at S 6.4.

2. Page 216, **beyond it there is that which knows neither genesis nor decay...** This passage also comes from the Inspired Utterances, at Ud. 8.3: ‘There is that sphere of being where there is no earth, no water, no fire nor wind; no experience of infinity of space, of infinity of consciousness, of no-thingness or even of the state of neither-perception-nor-non-perception; there is there neither this world nor another world, neither moon nor sun; this sphere of being I call neither a coming nor a going nor a staying still, neither a dying nor a reappearance; it has no basis, no evolution and no support: it is the end of suffering.’

3. Page 216, **what the Master calls ‘joy in the transient’...** This is a quote from the *Salāyatana-vibhanga Sutta*, M 137.11: ‘When, by knowing the impermanence, change, fading away and cessation of forms, sounds, odours, flavours, tangibles and mind-objects, one sees as it actually is with proper wisdom that forms etc. both formerly and now are all impermanent, unsatisfactory and subject to change, then joy arises. Such joy as this is called joy based on renunciation.’ There is also a passage that bears some resemblance to it in the *Dhammapada*, at Dh. 277:

*All is transient –
one who sees this
has transcended sorrow.
This awareness
is the clear and open Path.*

4. Page 216, **samanas who fixed heart and mind upon returning to existence in the kingdom of the Hundred-thousandfold Brahmā...** There is a passage in the *Sankhārupapatti Sutta* (‘The Discourse on Reappearance by Aspiration’) at M 120.18, which is particularly pertinent to our tale – K.G. definitely had this as his source for the *mise en scène* of the latter part of his book; because of this it is worth quoting at length here.

The Buddha describes the way leading to reappearance in the world of the Hundred-thousandfold Brahmā thus: ‘Bhikkhus, I shall teach you reappearance in accordance with one’s aspiration ... Again, a bhikkhu possesses faith, virtue, learning, generosity and wisdom. He hears that the Hundred-thousandfold Brahmā is long-lived, beautiful and enjoys great happiness. Now the Hundred-thousandfold Brahmā abides intent on pervading a world-system of a hundred-thousand worlds, and he abides intent on pervading the beings that have reappeared there. Just as an ornament of finest gold,

very skilfully wrought in the furnace of a clever goldsmith, lying on red brocade, glows, radiates and shines, so the Hundred-thousandfold Brahmā abides intent on pervading a world-system of a hundred-thousand worlds, and he abides intent on pervading the beings that have reappeared there. The bhikkhu thinks: “Oh, that on the dissolution of the body, after death, I might reappear in the company of the Hundred-thousandfold Brahmā!” He fixes his mind on that, establishes it, develops it. These aspirations and this abiding of his, thus developed and cultivated, lead to his reappearance there.’

A very similar teaching is recounted at §35 of the ‘Book of the Eights’; the Buddha also stressing there, however, that ‘... this is for the virtuous, not for the unvirtuous ... for the mental aspiration of the virtuous prospers because of its freedom from passion.’ (A 8.35).

Incidentally, although our hero and heroine are obviously not aware of it, according to traditional Buddhist cosmology there are another seventeen brahmā realms higher than the one they are aiming for (see Chapter 3, note §8).

5. Page 216, “**Longings for a future being, filling heart and mind at death...**” Even though K.G. goes to the trouble of explicitly ascribing this quotation, a Sanskrit scholar consulted by the editor was of the opinion that: ‘This does not sound like the *Bhagavad Gītā*!’ It bears a close resemblance to some passages in the Tibetan Book of the Dead but, as W.Y. Evans Wentz had not yet made his translation in 1906, this cannot have been K.G.’s source. It may, therefore, like a number of other poetical passages, simply be a creation of K.G.’s in the spirit of some of the scriptures that he had read.

6. Page 216, **a violent hurricane swept through the groves and over the lakes...** This whole chapter, and particularly the passages from here to the end, not only reflects the ending of the life of a deva (they would die singly rather than all at once in the normal run of things) but it also depicts the symptoms of the ending of an æon, when the forces of nature rend all things from existence in all the realms below those of the Ābhassarā brahmā gods.

Here is a description of the pattern of destruction by the Four Great Elements, from the Visuddhimagga, XI §102:

*The conflagration’s flame bursts up
out of the ground and races higher
and higher, right to the Brahmā heaven,
when the world is burnt up by fire.*

*A whole world-system, measuring
one hundred thousand millions wide,
subsides, as with its furious waters
the flood dissolves the world beside.*

*One hundred thousand million leagues,
a whole world system's broad extent,
is rent and scattered, when the world
succumbs to the air element.*

(Bhikkhu Ñānamoli, trans.)

A description of the ending of an æon from the Tibetan tradition can be found on pp 39-40 of 'The Words of my Perfect Teacher', by Patrul Rinpoche (published by HarperCollins).

7. Page 217, **But like one who, all but suffocated in the close and perfume-laden atmosphere of a room...** Tennyson captured this suffocating quality well in his poem,

*'A spirit haunts the year's last hours':
The air is damp, and hush'd, and close,
As a sick man's room when he taketh repose
An hour before death;
My very heart faints and my whole soul grieves
At the moist rich smell of the rotting leaves,
And the breath
Of the fading edges of box beneath,
And the year's last rose.
Heavily hangs the broad sunflower
Over its grave in the earth so chilly;
Heavily hangs the hollyhock,
Heavily hangs the tiger-lily.*



IN THE KINGDOM OF THE HUNDRED-THOUSANDFOLD BRAHMA

1. Page 219, **Kāmanīta and Vāsithī entered again into existence ... as the gods of a double star...** As you, gentle reader, might have suspected when the concept was first mentioned on page 216, para. 3, the notion of brahmā gods being embodied as stars is a fiction of K.G.'s – there is no basis for it in the Buddhist tradition. He probably acquired the idea, however, from the Greek and Roman myths.

In these traditions, to ascend after death and to be figured forever in the stars – as Andromeda, Castor and Pollux, Pegasus or whoever – was often how mere mortals attained to immortality.

In respect to this Dante, in his 'Divina Comedia', refers to a passage from Plato:
He says the soul returns to its own star

*believing it to have been severed hence
when nature has bestowed it as a form.*

Paradiso, Canto IV 52

The reference is to Plato's *Timæus*, v. ix.

'The Creator, when he had framed the universe, distributed to the stars an equal number of souls, appointing to each soul its several star.'

Dante mentions this again in his 'Convito', 'The Banquet':

*Unlike what here thou seest,
The judgment of Timæus, who affirms
Each soul restored to its particular star;
Believing it to have been taken thence,
When nature gave it to inform her mold.*

Convito IV 21

Dante Alighieri

And again in 'The Divine Comedy', when the Four Cardinal Virtues speak in Purgatory:

Here we are nymphs, and in heaven stars.

Purgatorio, XXXI 106

Lastly, John Barth's novel 'Chimera' contains some interesting explorations of this theme (plus quite a galaxy of others). Quoted below we have the newly estellated Perseus, talking to Medusa at the end of Barth's 'Perseid': '... what I hold above *Beta Persei*, Medusa: not serpents, but lovely woman's hair. I'm content. So with this issue, our net estate: to have become, like the noted music of our tongue, these silent, visible signs; to be the tale I tell to those with eyes to see and understanding to interpret; to raise you up forever and know that our story will never be cut off, but nightly rehearsed as long as men and women read the stars... I'm content. Till tomorrow evening love'.

'Goodnight'.

'Goodnight. Goodnight'.

2. Page 303, **the flashing of whose rays they instantly caught and returned...**

The image that is woven in this and the next paragraph is derived from a mixture of influences, the principal ones being those of Indra's Net and the Dance of Shiva. The former refers to the Northern Buddhist tradition, based on the 'The Entrance into the Realm of Reality' chapter of the *Avatamsaka Sūtra*, of all the beings of the universe existing like jewels strung together in a vast net: multi-dimensional and as immeasurable as the cosmos. Each jewel is not only connected to all others, but it also reflects in its surface the characteristics of all the other jewels in the infinite net – it is the principle of intrinsic interrelatedness of all beings and all things.

In the words of Sir Charles Eliot:

'In the Heaven of Indra, there is said to be a network of pearls, so arranged that if

you look at one you see all the others reflected in it. In the same way each object in the world is not merely itself but involves every other object and in fact IS everything else. In every particle of dust, there are present Buddhas without number.’ Interestingly, this image bears a striking resemblance to some models of the universe espoused by modern physicists, notably the ‘Hadron Bootstrap’ theory.

The latter influence on this passage is a Hindu tradition, representing the universe as the embodiment of Shiva Natarāja – he is the cosmic dancer whose music and movement is all creatures and all worlds. From the tireless stream of divine energy the cosmos is seen to flow in endless, graceful re-enactment.

3. Page 219 **other systems which formed themselves into chains of systems; and beyond these yet other chains, and rings of chains, and spheres upon spheres of chain-rings...** Once again K.G. seems to have been somewhat prophetic in his imaginative flourishes:

‘Galaxies are bound by gravity to form clusters of 20 to several thousand – 3-30 million light years across ... Chains of a dozen or so galaxy clusters are linked loosely by gravity and make up superclusters, which can be up to 200 million light years in extent. Superclusters in turn are arranged in broad sheets and filaments, separated by voids of about 100 million light years across. The sheets and voids form a network that permeates the entire observable universe.’ (‘Universe’, p 27, Martin Rees ed., DK Ltd.) The Andromeda galaxy, was the first celestial object to be recognized as being separate from the Milky Way, our own galaxy. This was established in 1929, by Edwin Hubble, 23 years *after* K.G. wrote this passage. The Andromeda galaxy is 2.5 million light years away and is the furthest distance that can be seen by the naked eye.

Page 220, **that which was harmony of movement here appeared ... to be a harmony of sound...** The mysterious sound mentioned in this passage – sometimes referred to as *Brahmā-nāda*, ‘The Nāda Sound’ or ‘The Sound of Silence’ – has been the subject of many theories and beliefs over the centuries. The listening to it can be cultivated as a profound form of meditation practice. Some current books which deal with it are: ‘Mindfulness – The Path to the Deathless’, by Ajahn Sumedho (Amaravati Publications),

‘The Way of Inner Vigilance’, by Salim Michael (Signet), and ‘The World is Sound: *Nada Brahma* – music and the landscape of consciousness’, by Joachim Ernst Berendt (Destiny) and most recently, ‘Inner Listening’, by the editor.

There is also an interesting saying by Plotinus, the ancient Greek philosopher: ‘All music, based upon melody and rhythm, is the earthly representative of heavenly music.’

4. Page 220, **The One whose immeasurable brightness permeated all the gods of the stars...** This image comes both from the Hindu as well as the Buddhist tradition;

for example, in Bk. 5 of the *Katha Upanishad* it says: ‘From His light all these give light, and His radiance illumines all creation.’ (See also Chapter 37, note §4).

5. Page 221, **the original forms of all that ... ceaselessly comes into being and passes away...** We’re back in Europe again now; the reference to ‘original forms’ is suggestive of the philosophy of Plato:

‘According to Plato, each type of sensible entity (a just act, a rocking chair, one of anything) “reflects” or “participates in” an independently existing Form which is an immutable, eternal and apprehensible entity that is the essence of the entity or quality in question (justice, chairness, the number one). The changeless Forms are objects of knowledge, whereas sensible entities are objects of opinion. Plato first mentions the “Theory of Forms” in “The Symposium”, he argues for and uses the Theory in the “Phædo”, and also utilises it in “The Republic”.’

6. Page 221, **And this eternity was a delusion...** In the Buddhist scriptures the brahmā gods are often represented as being pure and radiant but also subject to considerable delusion and conceit.

Mahā-Brahmā (represented in these chapters with the title ‘The Hundred-thousandfold Brahmā’) his ministers and his retinue actually only occupy the three lowest of the twenty brahmā heavens – a fact that The Great One is unaware of, his belief being that he is both eternal and The Supreme.

There is a good example of this tendency of the brahmā gods to get lost in the sense of their own perfection in the discourse called the *Brahma-nimantanika Sutta* (‘Discourse on the Invitation of a Brahmā’) M 49. The root delusion about their state of being, echoed by Kāmanīta in his assumption about the stars on page 216, is expressed as:

‘This is permanent, this is everlasting, this is eternal, this is total, this is not subject to passing away; for this neither is born nor ages nor dies, nor passes away nor reappears, and beyond this there is no escape.’ (M 49.2).

The same incident is also described at §4 of the ‘Collection on Brahmās’, at S 6.4. In dealing with this situation the Buddha employs the same insight as voiced by Vāsithī on page 216 (see Chapter 37, note §1, also Chapter 36, note §10).

These delusions of eternity and omniscience arise because, although the brahmās have been born like all other beings, their lifespan is so long that they mistake their state of being for the Ultimate Reality, the Unconditioned. It’s also worth noting how closely this chapter does represent the traditional Hindu expression of things; for example, again from Bk. 5 of the *Katha Upanishad*: ‘There is one Ruler, the Spirit that is in all things, who transforms His own form into many ... He is the Eternal among things that pass away, pure Consciousness of conscious beings, the ONE who fulfils the prayers of many.’

1. Page 223, **THE DUSK OF THE WORLDS...** The title of this chapter – ‘*Weltendämmerung*’ in the original German – obliquely reflects K.G.’s interest in the philosopher Schopenhauer and the thought that was influenced by him.

The finale of the great operatic cycle ‘The Ring’, by Richard Wagner (who, along with Friedrich Nietzsche, was known to refer to Schopenhauer as ‘The Master’) is called ‘*Götterdämmerung*’, ‘The Twilight of the Gods’ – the term refers to *Ragnarok*, the day of doom in the Norse myths, when the old world and all its inhabitants are annihilated. Out of the destruction a new world is born, a world at peace.

Incidentally, it seems that Deussen (so beloved of K.G.) was also a disciple of Schopenhauer: his *Sixty Upanishads of the Veda* is dedicated: ‘To the spiritual ancestors of Arthur Schopenhauer’, the epigraph is a quote from him and he is given a central place in the Foreword to that volume.

2. Page 223, **After he had observed the Brahmā ... for five millions of years...** In Buddhist cosmology, the life-span of beings gets longer and longer as one ascends into worlds higher than the human state, just as it gets longer the deeper into the hells one descends (see Chapter 34, note §6). For example:

A day in the Tāvātimsa heaven = 100 human years; a lifespan, 36,000,000 human years.

A day in the Yāma heaven = 200 human years; a lifespan, 144,000,000 human years. A day in the Heaven of the Contented = 400 human years; a lifespan, 576,000,000 human years.

A day in the Heaven of Those Who Delight in Creating = 800 human years; a lifespan, 2,304,000,000 human years.

A day in the Heaven of Those Who Delight in the Creations of Others = 1600 human years; a lifespan, 9,216,000,000 human years.

The lifespans of those in the brahmā realms range from a paltry $83\frac{1}{3}$ Great Æons (*Mahā-kalpa*) for the lowest levels of the Worlds of Form (*Rūpa-loka*), to 16,000 Great Æons at its top; the lives of those in the Formless Realms (*Arūpa-loka*) meanwhile, go from a decent 20,000 Great Æons at its lowest level, to a full 84,000 for those in the most refined realms of all.

Our Hundred-thousandfold Brahmā would thus expect to have a life of about 250

Great Æons, or one ‘Incalculable Period’ (*Asankheyya kalpa*). A passage that mentions these figures for some of the upper realms is found at §114 of the ‘Book of the Threes’, A 3.114.

3. Page 224, **‘Upward to heaven’s sublimest light, life presses – then decays...** Once again, like the verse on the ‘Flowers of Paradise’ (see Chapter 30, note §3) this has the

look of an utterance of the Buddha but is not known in this form in the Pāli scriptures, it is thus likely to be another of K.G.'s creations. In the Tibetan tradition there is a parallel, however, in a text called 'The Treasury of Qualities':

*Even Brahmā, Indra, Shambhu and the universal monarchs
Have no way to evade the Demon of Death.*

4. Page 224, "**Where want is, there noise is; but abundance is tranquil...**" This phrase comes from the Sutta Nipāta:

*Listen to the sound of water.
Listen to the water running through the chasms and the rocks.
It is the minor streams that make a loud noise;
the great waters flow silently.*

*The hollow resounds and the full is still.
Foolishness is like a half-filled pot;
the wise man is a lake full of water.*

SN 720-21, (Ven. H. Saddhatissa trans.)

It is also reminiscent of:

*On hearing the Teachings,
the wise become perfectly purified
like a lake; deep, clear and still..."*

Dhp. 82

5. Page 225 **as if the God with a hundred giant arms were seeking the invisible foe who was besetting him...** In this reaction, the deity is handling the situation very differently than King Pasenadi, as described in the 'Simile of Mountains', at S 3.25.

The Buddha asks the king what he would do if he heard that from each of the four quarters, 'a great mountain, high as the clouds' was approaching 'crushing all living beings'?

The wise king responded: 'If such a great peril should arise ... what else should be done but to live by the Dhamma, to live righteously, and to do wholesome and meritorious deeds.'

'I inform you, great king ... ageing and death are rolling in on you. When ageing and death are rolling in on you, great king, what should be done?'

King Pasenadi then responds by saying exactly the same as he did before: '... what else should be done but to live by the Dhamma, to live righteously, and to do wholesome and meritorious deeds.'

(Bhikkhu Bodhi trans.)



1. Page 227, **Enormous crowds of people ... demanded threateningly that King Udena...** In the original sutta it is King Pasenadi who is appealed to thus by the mob since this incident is placed in the kingdom of Kosala; the capital city there was Sāvattī (see M 86.8, Appendix 3). King Udena was the ruler of Vamsā, the capital of which was indeed Kosambī.

2. Page 229, **King Udena mounted his state elephant, the celebrated Bhaddavatikā...** This was indeed the name of a famous elephant belonging to King Udena. He used her to elope with his beloved Princess Vasuladattā, when winning her from the protection of her father, King Candapajjota.

Bhaddavatikā's story is mentioned in the prologue to one of the 'Birth Stories', the *Dalhadhamma Jātaka* (Jat. §409).

3. Page 230, **At the entrance to the wood...** This whole section, from this paragraph until the end of the chapter – minus the interpolated characters of Vāsithī and Sātāgira, and with King Pasenadi instead of King Udena – appears at M 86.9-13; (see Appendix 3).

4. Page 231, **and, the very next day, I shaved my head and became a bhikkhunī...** According to the Vināya, the monastic rule, a woman generally needed both to have been a probationer (*sikkhamānā*) for at least two years, and a novice (*sāmanerī*) for a while, before the full ordination was granted. However, just as with men being given the 'Ehi, bhikkhu' ordination by the Buddha, without any other kind of ceremony (see also above, Chapter 34, note §9), it appears that the Buddha also allowed certain women to go forth without the usual preliminaries.

Interestingly enough, the Elder Nun Vāsithī – whose 'Song of Enlightenment' appears at verse §51 in the Therīgāthā, (Thig. 133-8) – seems to have been given ordination in this way. Other notable Elder Nuns who were similarly honoured were Bhaddā Therī, (who was ordained by the Buddha saying 'Ehi, Bhaddā,' Thig. 108) Sujātā Therī and Anopamā Therī.

Here are the enlightenment verses of the Therī Vāsithī, whose grief was for the death of her child rather than for a broken heart:

*Out of my mind
deranged with love for my lost son.
Out of my senses.
Naked – streaming hair dishevelled
I wandered here and there
lived on rubbish heaps*

*in a cemetery, on the roadway
I wandered three whole years –
desolation
hunger and thirst.*

*Then in blessed Mithilā
I saw the Buddha –
banisher of fear.*

*With compassion he calmed me
teaching me the Dharma.
I heeded all he said,
then left the world
with all its cares behind.*

*Following where he taught:
the Path to great good fortune.*

*Now all my griefs have been cut out
uprooted
they have reached their end
for now at last
I know the grounds
from which sprang all my miseries.*



THE SIMPLE CONTEMPLATION

1. Page 233, **One day I took my stand...** The type of incident described in this paragraph occurs a few times in the Pāli Canon. One of the most notable is that of the visit by the bhikkhu Ratthapāla to the house of his parents. They had been loath to let him go forth and, when he came to their house for alms, they failed to recognize him and thought: 'Our only son, dear and beloved, was made to go forth by these bald-pated wanderers,' and they hurled abuse at him. Nearby a slave-woman was throwing away some stale porridge so Ratthapāla said: 'Sister if that stuff is to be thrown away, then pour it into my bowl here.' She then recognized who it was and alerted the household. When his father tracked him down, and begged him to come and eat at their house instead, he replied: 'I went to your house but received their neither alms nor a polite refusal; instead I received only abuse.' He then declines the offer of a meal, saying that he has now had his food for the day.

He is invited for the meal next day, but when he goes to his parents' house he is confronted with a vast pile of gold coins and bullion, together with all of his former wives arrayed in sumptuous finery. All of these he declines with a steadfast heart,

eventually retorting: ‘Householder, if there is a meal to be given, then give it. Do not harass me.’ Before he takes leave from them he utters some spontaneous verses, ending with the words:

*‘The deer-hunter set out the snare
But the deer did not spring the trap;
We ate the bait and now depart
Leaving the hunters to lament.’*

M 82.17-25

From this account one can see what a work-out such visits can be.

2. Page 233, **‘Sister, the Simsapā wood is delightful...** These latter sentences are taken, almost verbatim, from the *Mahāgosinga Sutta*, at M 32.4 (see Chapter 35, note §1). In the original, however, the statement is made by the Elder Sāriputta to Ānanda and the trees are the fragrant Sāla, rather than Simsapā.

3. Page 235, **to receive a theme of contemplation which would be a spiritual guide...** This is an interesting picture woven here by K.G.: there’s no evidence of such a tradition – of each disciple receiving a special theme of contemplation – either in the Theravāda texts or in common usage in the Southern Buddhist countries. It’s true that when the teacher is about to go off on his/her travels, many of a monastery’s residents and supporters will come to pay their respects, and perhaps at that time receive some particularly cogent or personal piece of advice (knowing that any parting can mean ‘Goodbye forever’) but such a systematic, one-to-one contact is unknown.

The pattern described here has almost certainly been derived from the Zen Buddhist tradition; originally from China and later established in Korea and Japan. In this tradition there is a particular method of meditative inquiry known as ‘Investigating the *koān*’ where the latter word refers to a story, a question or conundrum that the meditator uses to help open up the mind and heart to realities greater than our conditioned thinking and emotions normally allow. The practice began in China and was particularly developed in the *Ch’an* monasteries of the great master Lin Chi. In Japan the word ‘Ch’an’ became ‘Zen’, and ‘Lin Chi’ became ‘Rinzai.’ The word *koān* (or *kung-an* in Chinese) literally means ‘public record’ and refers to this type of meditation; the substance of the enquiry is called, in Chinese, the *hua t’ou*.

Here is the great Chinese master Hsü Yün (1839-1959) describing the practice: ‘There are many *hua t’ous*, such as: “All things are returnable to One, to what is that One returnable?”; “Before you were born, what was your real face?”; but the *hua t’ou*: “Who is repeating the Buddha’s name?” is widely in use today [1953]. What is *hua t’ou*? (Literally “word-head”). “Word” is the spoken word and “head” is that which precedes the word. For instance, when one says “Amitābha Buddha”, this is a word. Before it is said it is a *hua t’ou* (or “ante-word”). That which is called a *hua t’ou*’ is the moment

before a thought arises. As soon as a thought arises, it becomes a *hua wei* (lit. “word-tail”). The moment before a thought arises is called the “Unborn”. That void which is neither disturbed nor dull, and neither still nor onesided is called the “Unending”. The unremitting turning of the light inwards on oneself, instant after instant, and exclusive of all other things, is called “looking into the *hua t’ou*”, or “taking care of the *hua t’ou*”. (From ‘Master Hsü Yün’s Discourses and Dharma Words’, translated by Charles Luk).

So, when the master gives a koān to the disciple for them to work on, the words of the koān are ‘the tail’ and ‘the head’ – always the business end of things – is the realization of Truth that the student awakens to. The giving of such koāns to each individual disciple is a very important part of spiritual training in Rinzai Zen monasteries.

Other famous examples of koāns are: ‘What is the sound of one hand?’ ‘What is it?’ and ‘Who am I?’

4. Page 235, ‘**Where there is love, there is also suffering**’... There are several places in the Theravāda scriptures where this insight of the Buddha appears. Firstly, in an incident where Visākḥā, a devoted disciple (and grandmother to four hundred children!), comes to the Buddha in grief from losing one of her beloved granddaughters. After he asks her: ‘Would you like to have as many grandchildren as there are people in Sāvatti?’ – she replies: ‘Oh yes, indeed.’ He then points out that, had she so many, not a day would pass without her having to attend a funeral for one or another of them. The incident is recounted in the Inspired Utterances: ‘Visākḥā, those who have a hundred dear ones, they have a hundred sorrows; those who have ninety ... eighty ... fifty ... twenty ... ten ... three ... two ... one dear one, but one thing beloved, they have but one sorrow; those who have nothing beloved, they have no sorrow – sorrowless are they and passionless, serene are they, I declare’.

*‘Whatever griefs and lamentations there are
And all kinds of sorrow in the world –
It is because of something dear that these exist;
If things aren’t dear, these don’t come into being’.*

Ud. 8.8

Some verses included in the Dhammapada also came from the same incident:
*Clinging to what is dear brings sorrow. Clinging to what is dear brings fear.
To one who is entirely free from endearment
There is no sorrow or fear. Sorrow springs from affection. Fear springs from affection.
To loosen those bonds
Is to be free from sorrow and fear.*

Dhp. 212-3 (Ven. Ānanda Maitreya, trans.)

The Buddha follows a similar chain of reasoning, analysing the effects of ‘desire, affection and longing’, in a conversation with Bhadrakaka, a village headman – at §11 in the Collection on Headmen (S 42.11). The Buddha leads him inexorably to the conclusion: ‘Whatsoever suffering arises within me – all that is rooted in desire (*chanda*), joined to desire. Desire is indeed the root of suffering.’ Lastly, in the *Piyajātika Sutta* (The Discourse on ‘Born From Those Who Are Dear’) M 87, on meeting a distraught man who had just lost his only son, the Buddha states: ‘Sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief and despair are born from those who are dear, arise from those who are dear.’

The man takes offence at this and retorts: ‘Venerable Sir, happiness and joy are born from those who are dear, arise from those who are dear.’ The debate between these two points of view eventually gets picked up by Queen Mallikā and King Pasenadi, the former siding with the Buddha.

After much wrangling (‘Mallikā, no matter what the Samana Gotama says, you applaud it ... Be off, Mallikā, away with you!’) the King is finally brought round to the outlook of the Buddha when he sees that any degeneration, sickness or death amongst all the things that he loves – of his children, wives, generals, his city, his kingdom – would bring sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief and despair: the seeds of pain being in his attachment to and possessiveness of all that he loves.

K.G. also seems to have been influenced by the Greek philosophers in approaching the theme of love; here is a brief outline of the area from a somewhat different angle:

‘According to Socrates, the divine madness of love is to be honoured and praised, for it is love that can most powerfully awaken the soul from its slumber in the bodily world. The lover’s soul is stirred by the sensuous beauty of the beloved into remembering, however faintly, the more pure, genuine, beauty of the eternal, bodiless Ideas which it once knew. Thus reminded of its own transcendent nature, the previously dormant soul begins to sprout wings, and soon aspires to rise beyond this world of ceaseless

‘becoming’ toward that changeless eternal realm beyond the stars:

‘It is there that the true being dwells, without colour or shape, that cannot be touched; reason alone, soul’s pilot, can behold it, and all true knowledge is knowledge thereof.’

‘Phaedrus’, 247c (R. Hackforth trans.)

Quoted by David Abram, in ‘The Spell of the Sensuous’, pp 121-2

5. Page 235, ‘**Seek refuge in yourself, Vāsithī; take refuge in the Dharma...**’

This line is paraphrased from one of the most famous quotations of the Buddha. It occurs in the ‘Discourse on the Buddha’s Last Days’, the *Mahā-parinibbāna Sutta*, at D 16.2.26 (see Appendix 4): ‘Therefore, Ānanda, you should live as islands, as lights unto yourselves, being your own refuge, with no-one else as your refuge; with the Dhamma as an island, a light, with the Dhamma as your refuge, with no other refuge.’

6. Page 235, **you are the very self of the disciples; you are the living Dharma...** These epithets, if not precisely rendered here, are at least reminiscent of the exclamation made about the Buddha by the enlightened Elder Kaccāna, in the *Madhupindika Sutta* ('The Sweet Morsel') at M 18.12: 'he is vision, he is knowledge, he is the Dhamma, he is the holy one.'

7. Page 236, **As soon as I had returned from my almsround and had eaten my meal...** This scenario is recounted innumerable times in the discourses; for example, in the *Cūlahatthipadopama Sutta*, at M 27.17-26.

8. Page 236, **That I now did...** A certain bhikkhu called Meghiya ends up in a similar pickle to that described by Vāsithī in these paragraphs – also because his mind is ill-prepared for solitary meditation. The story is found at §3 of the 'Book of the Nines' (see also Chapter 18, note §3):

*Mean thoughts, trivial thoughts
come tempting the mind to fly away;
not understanding what these thoughts are,
the heart strays chasing them back and forth.*

(Ud. 4.1; A 9.3)



THE SICK NUN

1. Page 239, **After some time Angulimāla's turn came...** It is true that the monks used to take it in turns to instruct the nuns (e.g. in the *Nandakovāda Sutta*, M 146.3) but K.G. seems to be employing some poetic license here; it is very unlikely, considering the realities of monastic life, that Angulimāla would have been allotted the duty of coming to teach the nuns.

According to the Vināya discipline a bhikkhu must have been ordained for at least five years before he would take on regular teaching duties at all, and for one to be able to qualify as a bhikkhu suitable to be an official instructor for the bhikkhunīs, a very strict set of criteria is employed.

It is true that these standards technically only apply to the monk who comes and gives the nuns their obligatory 'Exhortation' on the full and new moon days, however, in the spirit of this, Angulimāla would definitely have been considered an unsuitable teacher.

To qualify as such an Exhorter, the bhikkhu must: 1) have been ordained for at least twenty years; 2) be conversant in all the rules of both the monks and the nuns; 3) be scrupulously virtuous and never have committed a serious transgression against the discipline; 4) be eloquent and well-versed in the Teachings; 5) be well-liked by the

bhikkhunīs; and 6) have never, before his ordination, raped or molested a bhikkhunī, or a female novice. Angulimāla would thus not be allowable as an Exhorter of Nuns – falling short on point 1) and almost definitely on point 5) – he regularly suffered assault and injury on account of people’s memories of him as a murderer of their friends and families (see Chapter 15, note §3). There would thus be many nuns who, if not aggressive towards him, would have been fearful and suspicious nonetheless.

Having said this, it should be added that *is* allowable for a bhikkhu to visit the dwelling place of a bhikkhunī, if she is sick and cannot join the other nuns for the fortnightly instruction by the Elder. This is the only reason why a bhikkhu can visit the dwelling place of a nun; in such situations both he and the nun would need to have a chaperone present as it is also unallowable for a bhikkhunī to be alone with a man and for a bhikkhu to be alone with a woman in a private place. The allowance is made in the bhikkhus’ training rule, Pācittiya §23, although such visits, and also the Exhortation, should not take place after nightfall – this is proscribed in Pācittiya §22.

2. Page 240, **unfitting and profane to use a monk in such a way – as a go-between...** This is in reference to one of the more serious of the bhikkhus’ training rules, Sanghādisesa §5, which prohibits a monk from acting as a go-between or an arranger of marriages.

3. Page 241, **it was not seemly for a nun to travel alone...** One of the weightier rules in the discipline for the bhikkhunīs is that a nun should never travel alone – she should always have another bhikkhunī with her. The rule is Nuns’ Sanghādisesa §3.

4. Page 242, **‘A crowded, dusty corner is domestic life’...** This phrase is another of those oft repeated in the Theravāda scriptures (K.G. also used it before on page 104, para. 4). It is the stock expression of dissatisfaction in the householder’s life and prefaces the statement of the desire to go forth. For example, see the *Cūla-hatthipadopama Sutta*, at M 27.12.

5. Page 242, **how splendid it would be to roam through exquisite regions...** This passage is very reminiscent of the ‘Song of Kāludāyī’ – inviting the Buddha to visit his hometown, Kapilavatthu, for the first time since his leaving the palace life. The occasion was at the end of the first winter season after the enlightenment.

It is found in the Theragāthā (‘The Verses of the Elder Monks’):

*Lord, there are trees that now like embers burn;
Hoping for fruit, they have let their green veils drop
And blaze out boldly with a scarlet flame:
It is the hour, Great Hero, Taster of Truth.
Trees in high bloom that are a mind’s delight,*

Wafting scents to the four winds of space, Their leaves they have let fall, expecting fruit; It is time, O Hero, to set out from here.

Now is a pleasant season, Lord, for travel, For it is not too cold, nor over-warm.

Let the Sākyans and the Koliyans see you

Facing the west, crossing the Rohinī River.

Thag. 527-9 (Bhikkhu Ñānamoli, trans.)

6. Page 243, **the rainy season ... imposed a still longer trial for our patience...**

It is against the discipline of both the monks and nuns to travel for more than six days during the Rains Retreat. After that time one must return to the monastery of residence. The rule is mentioned at MV 3.1.

7. Page 243, **Just as when in the last month of the rainy season...**

This passage is taken almost verbatim from the *Mahādhamma-samādāna Sutta* ('The Greater Discourse on Ways of Undertaking Things') at M 46.22; a comparable passage is at Iti. §27.

8. Page 243, **that sun of all the living...**

The connection of the Buddha to the image of the sun is not just an Apollonian flight of fancy by K.G. or a poetic nicety here. The Sākyā clan, into which the Buddha was born, claimed its ancestry from the Sun God – Ādicca – via an ancient king, Okkāka.

The Buddha was also known in his lifetime by the epithet *Ādiccabandhu* – 'Kinsman of the Sun' – and also *Angirasa*, meaning 'emitting rays of various hues.'



THE PASSING OF THE TATHAGATA

1. Page 245, **the Generals of the Dharma as we named them...**

This title – *Dhamma-senāpati* – was actually only ascribed to the Ven. Sāriputta. As an example, an incident where it was employed can be found in the Inspired Utterances, at Ud. 2.8, where a delighted mother, Suppavāsā declares, 'My son is conversing with the General of the Dhamma! (She might well have been trebly inspired since, according to the story, the child had only been born a few days before and, furthermore, she had had a troublesome *seven year* pregnancy with him. Obviously a prodigious child, he eventually was ordained as Bhikkhu Sīvalī and became one of the Buddha's most eminent disciples).

In a passage in the Middle Length Discourses, there is a dialogue between a brahmin called Sela and the Buddha. Sela asks:

*'Who is your general, that disciple,
Who follows in the Master's own way?
Who is it that helps you to turn
The wheel set in motion by you?'*

*'The wheel set in motion by me,' The Blessed One replied,
'That same supreme Wheel of Dhamma, Sāriputta the Tathāgata's son
Helps me in turning this wheel.'*

M 92.18-19

(Bhikkhu Ñānamoli & Bhikkhu Bodhi, trans.)

2. Page 245, **a rich woman ... who made it her special care to minister in every possible way to the needs of the monks and nuns...** This passage brings to mind what are known as 'The Eight Boons' that the great lay disciple Visākhā requested of the Buddha. She was a good example of the mothering principle (she had ten daughters and ten sons, each of whom had the same, and so on down to the fourth generation – she was mentioned above, at Chapter 41, note §4). She lived in Sāvatti (not Vesālī) and was chief among the female lay disciples of the Buddha.

One time she requested the opportunity to always offer: food for arriving bhikkhus and bhikkhunīs; food for bhikkhus and bhikkhunīs setting out travelling; food for the sick; food for those who tend the sick; medicine for the sick; a daily supply of rice porridge for the Sangha; and bathing cloths for both the orders of bhikkhus and bhikkhunīs. The passage mentioning this is found at MV 8.15.

3. Page 246, **the Master himself foretold that he would enter Final Nirvāna in three months' time...** From this point on we refer over and over again to the *Mahā-parinibbāna Sutta* ('The Discourse on the Buddha's Last Days', D 16) – the mid-portion of the sutta is included as Appendix 4. The exchange described here is another of the very well-known incidents of the Buddha's life. The speaker recounts it as a condensed version of what is found at D 16.3.2-48.

4. Page 247, **In the Sāla grove of Bhoganagara...** This is mentioned at D 16.4.13.

5. Page 247, **Immediately after the meal the Blessed One was taken with a violent illness...** This was the Buddha's last meal, it was indeed offered to him by a smith, called Cunda. The passage recounting the event is at D 16.4.14-20.

6. Page 248, **'This Kusinārā is, I expect, not much more than a village...'** In the original this comment is made by Ānanda, at D 16.5.17: 'Lord, may the Blessed One

not pass away in this miserable little wattle and daub town, out in the jungle in the back of beyond! There are other great cities such as Campā, Rājagaha, Sāvatti, Sāketa, Kosambī or Vārānaśī. In those places there are wealthy warrior nobles, brahmins and householders who are devoted to the Tathāgata, and they will provide for the Tathāgata’s funeral in proper style.’ (See also Appendix 4).

7. Page 250, **‘This very day, people of Mallā...’** This comes almost verbatim from D 16.5.19.

8. Page 250, **a monk leaning against the door-post of a small lodging, weeping...** This passage appears at D 16.5.13.

9. Page 251, **about to disappear from the sight of gods and humans...** This expression was also used by the Buddha at the end of Chapter 19; it is the most that is ever said about what ‘becomes’ of an enlightened being after the death of the body. An example of its use is found in the *Brahmajāla Sutta* at D 1.3.73 (see also Chapter 19, note §11 & Chapter 45, note §12).

10. Page 251, **‘I know well, Ānanda, that you were weeping...** This passage is a combination of D 16.5.13 & 14.

11. Page 251, **‘Don’t let that trouble you, Ānanda...** This is based on D 16.5.10.

12. Page 251, **‘It may be, disciples, that your thought is...** This is a combination of two well-known sayings: the first comes at D 16.6.1; the second one, (as above in Chapter 41, note §5) is at D 16.2.26. The latter sentence reflects, as before, the ambiguity of the Pāli: the words for ‘light’ and ‘island’ are identical: *dīpa*.

13. Page 252, **Thus he spoke, and gave to every one the opportunity of speaking...** This is based on D 16.6.5.

14. Page 252, **‘You have spoken out of the fullness of your faith, Ānanda...** This comes verbatim from D 16.6.6. The standard three characteristics of one who has reached the first stage of enlightenment are: 1) they have let go of identification with the body and the personality (*sakkāyaditthi*); 2) they are not attached to religious or other conventions (*śīlabbataparāmāsa*); 3) they have no doubts about the Teaching or the way to practise it (*vicikicchā*).

‘Such a one has entered the stream to Nibbāna, they are no more subject to rebirth in the lower worlds, they are firmly established, destined to full enlightenment. After

having passed through the round of rebirths among heavenly and human beings a maximum of seven more times, they will certainly put an end to suffering.’

15. Page 252, **‘All created things are of the nature to pass away – mindfully fare onwards to the Goal...’** This comes verbatim from D 16.6.7. Prof. Rhys Davids, the founder of the Pāli Text Society, probably produced the most well-known rendering of the last two Pāli words, with his phrase: ‘Work out your salvation with diligence.’



VASITTHI'S BEQUEST

1. Page 255, **I felt as a traveller standing on the brink of a pond...** This image is reminiscent of one commonly used in the suttas by the Buddha to describe the 3rd jhāna, one of the levels of meditative absorption (e.g. at D 2.80 and M 39.17): ‘Just as in a pond of blue, red or white lotuses, some lotuses that are born and grow in the water thrive in the water without rising out of it, and cool water drenches, steep fills and pervades them to their tips and their roots, so that there is no part of all those lotuses unpervaded by cool water; so too a bhikkhu makes happiness drench, steep, fill and pervade this body, so that there is no part of his whole body unpervaded by that happiness.’

It is also very similar to an image used in the Visuddhimagga (‘The Path of Purification’), to describe the difference between happiness and bliss: ‘If a man exhausted in a desert saw or heard about a pond on the edge of a wood, he would have happiness; if he went into the wood’s shade and used the water, he would have bliss.’ (The passage is at Vsm. IV §100). Lastly, the image is used in §194 of the ‘Book of the Fives’ – in a conversation between two brahmins, Kāranapāli and Pingiyāni: ‘Just as a man, tortured by heat, exhausted by heat – wearied, craving and thirsty – might come to a pool – clear, sweet, cool, limpid, a lovely resting place – and might plunge therein, bathe and drink and allay all woe and fatigue and fret; even so, when one hears the Dhamma of Master Gotama, all woe, fatigue and fret are wholly allayed’ (A 5.194).

2. Page 255, **‘One who has seen the greater, my friend, is not moved by the less...’** Curiously enough this saying also seems to have come from §194 of the ‘Book of the Fives.’ The exact words there are: ‘Just as a man, well satisfied with some delicious taste, does not long for worse tastes; even so, when one hears Master Gotama’s Dhamma, one does not long for the talks of others.’

It is also echoed at §22 of the Collection of Sayings on Cause (S 12.22): ‘It is not by the low that the highest is attained. It is by the highest that the highest is attained.’ (See also Chapter 20, note §13, Chapter 36, note §10 and Chapter 37, note §1).

3. Page 256, **‘Then you know of something higher than this brahmā world?’...**

We return again to the theme mentioned in Chapter 38, note §6. Much of what follows, and threads of a similar hue, can be found in the *Brahmanimantanika Sutta*, (‘The Discourse on The Invitation of a Brahmā’) at M 49.7-27; and in a similar incident at §5 of the ‘Collection on the Brahmās’, S 6.5.

4. Page 256, **But there is that which does not pass...**

This paragraph is composed from several different sources; in particular (as in Chapter 37, note §1) from the collection of Inspired Utterances, Ud. 8.1; also from the ‘Collection of Sayings on the Unconditioned’ (*Asankhata*), S 43.

5. Page 256, **‘That we shall rise again there ... cannot truly be said of that realm...**

The first sentence here is a condensed version of a very significant exchange between the Buddha and a wanderer called Vacchagotta; it occurs in the *Aggi-Vacchagotta Sutta* (‘To Vacchagotta on Fire’) at M 72.16-22.

After being asked about where an enlightened being reappears after death, the Buddha makes it clear that the terms ‘reappears’ and ‘does not reappear’ do not apply, thereby leaving poor Vacchagotta somewhat bewildered. The Buddha goes on to explain: ‘What do you think, Vaccha? Suppose a fire were burning before you. Would you know – “This fire is burning before me?”’

‘I would, Master Gotama.’

‘If that fire were to be extinguished, would you know – “This fire before me has been extinguished?”’

‘I would, Master Gotama.’

‘If someone were to ask you, Vaccha – “When that fire was extinguished, to which direction did it go: to the east, the west, the north or the south?” – being questioned thus what would you answer?’

‘That does not apply, Master Gotama. The fire burned dependent on its fuel of grass and sticks. When that is used up, it is reckoned as extinguished.’

That is to say: *the way he asked the question presumed a reality which did not exist, therefore the designations did not apply.*

Furthermore: ‘An enlightened one is profound, immeasurable, unfathomable like the ocean ... and such a one is liberated from being reckoned in terms of material form (the body), feelings, perceptions, ideas and emotions, and by states of consciousness.’ (See Chapter 20, note §4). Also worthy of note on this issue is the conversation between the Elder Nun Khemā and King Pasenadi, found at §1 in the ‘Collection on the Unrevealed’ (S 44.1), and the Buddha’s comments at M 120.37 (‘The Discourse on Reappearance by Aspiration’).

6. Page 256, **I must have murdered a brahmin at some time...** The full story of Pukkusāti and his karmic history is found in the Majjhima Nikāya Commentary for Sutta §140. (See also Chapter 21, note §2).

7. Page 257, **Even when the great and holy Upagupta...** Upagupta does not appear in the Pāli texts; in the Northern Buddhist tradition, however, he is named as the Fourth Patriarch after the Buddha. The first was Mahā-Kassapa, the second was Ānanda, the third was Sanakavāsa.

The incident K.G. describes here, with Upagupta wailing and grief-stricken, crying: ‘Damn this pitiless transiency...’ is only one part of this significant encounter. Upagupta was a very popular Dharma teacher. Whenever he gave a talk hundreds of people would come to listen. Māra, the Lord of Delusion, was jealous of Upagupta’s fame and popularity, particularly as he knew that Upagupta was helping to spread the teaching of the Buddha. To see the words of the Buddha filling the hearts and minds of the people annoyed him deeply as he saw that this would enable more and more beings to escape his influence. Māra thus conceived a plan to stop his Upagupta’s students from listening to him.

On one occasion, when Upagupta was teaching, Māra first showered the assembly with pearls, then gold, then he conjured up a musical show right next to the Dharma Hall, complete with colourfully costumed celestial dancers and spirited music. It was so compelling everyone soon forgot about the teaching and went over to enjoy the much more interesting performance. Upagupta saw the people drifting away, then he also decided to join the crowd to see what was going on. Contemplating all of this, the monk decided to teach Māra a lesson. Once the performance had ended, Upagupta offered Māra an exquisite garland of flowers.

‘That was a great show,’ said Upagupta. Māra, of course, was flattered by this and gladly accepted the garland, placing it proudly around his own neck. Suddenly the garland changed into a coil of rotting carcasses; it was revealed to be made of the decaying bodies of a snake and a dog, and even a human corpse. It really stank. Even though it was so repulsive, Māra found that, no matter how hard he tried, he could not take the festering garland off his neck.

‘Please remove this foetid garland,’ he begged.

‘I will do that only under two conditions,’ said Upagupta. ‘The first is that you must promise not to disrupt Buddhist teachings in the future. The second is that you show me the real image of the Buddha. I know that you have seen him on many occasions, but I have never done so. I would like to see an image of the Buddha that is exactly like him.’

Māra was very pleased with this idea and agreed with Upagupta readily. ‘But, if I change myself into the image of the Buddha,’ said Māra, ‘you must promise that you will not worship me, for I am not worthy of such reverence.’ Upagupta promised this

and Māra transformed himself into an image that looked exactly like the Buddha. When Upagupta saw it, deep devotion arose in his heart and he fell to his knees – ‘Like a tree cut off at the root’ – and bowed reverentially to the Buddha image. Māra felt that the monk had broken his promise but Upagupta tried to reassure him:

‘... I bow down before that Sage

But I do not revere you!’

‘How is it,’ replied Māra, ‘that I am not revered when you thus bow down before me?’

‘I shall tell you,’ said the elder...

‘Just as men bow down

to clay images of the gods

knowing that what they worship

is the god and not the clay,

so I, seeing you here,

wearing the form of the Lord of the World,

bow down to you,

conscious of the Sugata,

but not conscious of Māra.’

Divyāvadāna, p 363

John S. Strong, ‘The Legend and Cult of Upagupta’,

pp 110-11, Motilal Banarsidass

K.G.’s use of this motif also has echoes of the legend of Pygmalion and Galatæa: the former was a sculptor who made a statue so beautiful that he fell in love with it. Such was the pain of his unrequited longing, that the gods took pity on him and brought the statue to life – she became known as Galatæa. George Bernard Shaw based his famous play on this theme.

There is also a poignant passage, in the ‘Collection of Sayings on the Faculties’ (S

48.41), where we hear: ‘The Blessèd One had arisen from retreat in the evening and was seated warming his back in the rays of the setting sun. The Ven. Ānanda went up to him and paid his respects. While he was massaging the Blessèd One’s limbs he said: “It is amazing, Lord, it is incredible ... the colour of the Blessèd One’s skin is no longer clear and bright; all his limbs are flaccid and wrinkled, his body is bent forward and the faculties of eyes, ears, nose, tongue and bodily sensation are all degenerating.”

“So it is, Ānanda, so it is. Youth has to age, health has to sicken.

“Shame on you, sordid Age!

Maker of ugliness.

Age has now trampled down

The form that once had grace.”

(Bhikkhu Ñānamoli, trans.)

8. Page 258, **As one unfurls the sheaf of leaves that make up the trunk of a plantain and one finds beneath it no sound wood...** This simile, for the insubstantial nature of things, is often found in the Pāli Canon. For example it is used to represent the corelessness of the six senses at S 35.234, and the emptiness of mental formations (thoughts, emotions, memories etc.) in the famous ‘Lump of Foam’ discourse at S 22.95:

*Form is like a lump of foam,
feeling a water bubble;
perception is just a mirage,
mental formations like a plantain,
consciousness, a magic trick –
so says the Kinsman of the Sun.*

*However one may ponder it
or carefully inquire,
all appears both void and vacant
when it’s seen in truth.*

A teaching in a similar spirit, but using a chariot’s parts rather than the sheathed leaves of a plantain, is given by the nun Vajirā at S 5.10:

*Just as, with an assemblage of parts,
The word ‘chariot’ is used,
So, when the aggregates exist,
There is the convention of ‘a being’.*

9. Page 258, **“This is not me, this does not belong to me, this is not my self”...** This phrase is derived from the discourse that brought about the enlightenment of the Buddha’s first five disciples, in the Deer Park at Saranath, near Benares: the *Anattalakkhana Sutta* (‘The Discourse on Selflessness’). It is found in the *Mahāvagga*, at MV 1.6, and at §59 in the ‘Collection of Sayings on the Elements’, S 22.59 (see also Chapter 10, note §12). It is also found, most appropriately, in the *Dhātuvibhanga Sutta*, at M 140.14-8, (see Appendix 2).

10. Page 258, **As one crossing a stream by means of a raft...** This simile is taken directly from a famous one used by the Buddha in the *Alagaddūpama Sutta* (‘The Discourse on the Simile of the Snake’) at M 22.13. He describes how a person puts together a raft in order to get from this shore, which is full of danger, to the further shore, where there is perfect safety. Then, having arrived safely, that person considers: ‘This raft has been very helpful to me, suppose I were to hoist it onto my head or shoulder and then go wherever I want.’

The Buddha then asks: ‘What do you think; by doing this, is that person doing what should be done with that raft?’ He then points out that it would be the wiser thing to do to haul the raft onto dry land, or to set it adrift, and then go about one’s business; adding, most importantly: ‘So I have shown you how the Dhamma is similar to a raft, being for the purpose of crossing over, not for the purpose of grasping.’

11. Page 258, **Thus there is perfect understanding at last...** There is another instance of this abstruse way of referring to the realization of the Truth, which occurs when a bhikkhu called Sona Kolivisa goes to inform the Buddha of his attainment of enlightenment; it is found in the books of monastic discipline at MV 5.28. The Buddha congratulates him on the way he speaks of his experience, explaining that he praises him because – ‘The Goal is spoken of, yet no sense of self is implied.’

12. Page 258, **Then Vāsithī flung her own corporeal substance into the astral mass of the vision...** According to the Buddhist understanding of things, the only instance where suicide would be an entirely wholesome act is when the person is an Arahant – a completely enlightened being. There are a few instances mentioned in the Theravāda texts where Arahants took their own lives; almost invariably they were terminally ill and acted to lessen the burden of pain and difficulty on those around them. One such incident, describing the last days of the bhikkhu Vakkali, is found at §87 in the ‘Collection of Sayings on Elements’, S 22.87.



NIGHT AND MORNING IN THE SPHERES

1. Page 261, **Kāmanīta was left behind – alone, in universal night...** In the *Maitri Upanishad*, at verse 6.17, it says: ‘At the end of the worlds, all things sleep; He alone is awake in Eternity.’ Here the text is referring to Brahman, the Spirit Supreme of the Hindu scriptures.

2. Page 262, **But what can life be to me without Vāsithī...** On a similar theme, here is Richard Wagner, a European voice of the author’s vintage and also a great devotee of Schopenhauer. This is his original draft for the ending of ‘The Twilight of the Gods’, (apparently it was never used because his wife, Cosima, did not approve of it so a new version was written):

*Were I no longer to fare to Valhalla’s fortress,
do you know whither I would fare?
I depart from the home of desire,
I flee forever from the home of delusion;
the open gates of eternal becoming
I close behind me.*

To the holiest chosen land,
free from desire and delusion
the goal of world-wandering,
redeemed from rebirth,
the enlightened one now goes.

The blessed end of all things eternal:
do you know how I attained it?

Grieving love's deepest suffering
opened my eyes:
I saw the world end.

3. Page 262, “**There is an Eternal and a way to the Eternal...**” The entire ‘Collection of Sayings on the Unconditioned’ (S 43) begins with statements phrased in this way; e.g. ‘I will teach you the Unconditioned/ Unfading/ Deathless/Release etc. and the path that leads to it.’ In this Collection there are numerous synonyms used by the Buddha for the goal of the spiritual life.

4. Page 262, **round about the heart are spun a hundred fine arteries...** This principle – which was mentioned before on p 73, para. 1 – comes from the Hindu scriptures. It is mentioned, for example, in the *Chāndogya Upanishad* 8.6, in the *Katha Upanishad* at 1.6.16 and in the *Brihadāranyaka Upanishad* at 4.4.8 – these are on pp 195-6, 299 and 497 of Deussen’s ‘Sixty Upanishads of the Veda.’

5. Page 262, **Sandhyas! Sandhyas! Sandhyas!...** This is a Sanskrit word meaning ‘twilight’, ‘the period between æons’, ‘a period of junction’. The daily prayers recited at dawn, noon, sunset and midnight are called ‘Sandhyas’.

6. Page 262, **Wake up, all you beings!...** There are some interesting parallels and interrelationships depicted here: both Hindu and Buddhist cosmologies are structured around the idea of an endless cycle of universes coming into being, expanding to a limit and then collapsing into a spaceless, timeless cosmic night; only to burst forth again into being. The image that the author presents here, from the brahmās’ point of view, is very close to the traditional Hindu scriptures. The pattern of the same events, from Kāmanīta’s perspective, represents the Buddhist take on things.

There are a couple of very notable passages that outline the Buddha’s understanding of this: in the *Brahmajāla Sutta* (‘The All-embracing Net of Views’) at D 1.2.2-6, and in the *Aggañña Sutta* (‘On the Knowledge of Beginnings’) at D 27.10. This quotation is from the former: ‘There comes a time, bhikkhus, sooner or later after a long period, when this

universe contracts. At a time of contraction, beings are mostly born in the Ābhassarā brahmā world. And there they dwell, mind-made, feeding on delight, self-luminous, moving through the air, glorious – and they stay like that for a very long time.

‘But the time comes, sooner or later after a long period, when this universe begins to expand. In this expanding world an empty palace of Brahmā appears. And then one being, from the exhaustion of his lifespan or his merits, falls from the Ābhassarā world and arises in the empty brahmā palace. And there he dwells, mind-made, feeding on delight, self-luminous, moving through the air, glorious – and he stays like that for a very long time.

‘Then in this being who has been alone for so long there arises unrest, discontent and worry, and he thinks – ‘Oh, if only some other beings would come here!’ And other beings, from the exhaustion of their lifespan or their merits, fall from the Ābhassarā world and arise in the brahmā palace as companions for this being. And there they dwell, mind-made, feeding on delight, self-luminous, moving through the air, glorious – and they stay like that for a very long time.

‘And then, bhikkhus, that being who first arose there thinks: “I am Brahmā, the Great Brahmā, the Conqueror, the Unconquered, the All-seeing, the All-powerful, the Lord, the Maker and Creator, Ruler, Appointer and Orderer, Father of All That Have Been and Shall Be. These beings were created by me. How so? Because I first had this thought: ‘Oh, if only some other beings would come here!’ That was my wish and then these beings came into this existence!” But those beings who subsequently arose think: “This, friends, is Brahmā, the Great Brahmā, the Conqueror, the Unconquered, the All-seeing, the All-powerful, the Lord, the Maker and Creator, Ruler, Appointer and Orderer, Father of All That Have Been and Shall Be. How so? We have seen that he was here first, and that we arose after him.”

‘And this being that arose first is longer-lived, more beautiful and more powerful than they are...’” (Maurice Walshe, trans.)

7. Page 262, **And the beings and the worlds sprang forth...** Interestingly enough, this paragraph is echoed by a passage in the Book of Job, Chapter 38, verses 4–7, where The Voice from the Whirlwind says:

‘Where you when I laid the foundations of the earth? Who was it who measured it? Who stretched the line upon it? On what are the foundations fastened? Who laid down its cornerstone, while the morning stars burst out singing and the angels shouted for joy?!

8. Page 264, **These beings ... rejoicing in their own existence. And why? Because they do not understand it...** This phraseology echoes that used in the first sutta of the Middle Length Discourses, the *Mūlapariyāya Sutta* (see Chapter 21, note §5). In this subtle and penetrating teaching the Buddha expends considerable effort to point out

that all such eternalist attitudes are subtly rooted in wrong view, for example: ‘They perceive All as All. Having perceived All as All, they conceive [themselves as] All, they conceive [themselves] in All, they conceive [themselves] apart (or coming) from All, they conceive All to be “theirs”, they delight in All. Why is that? Because they have not fully understood it, I say.’ (M 1.25)

He follows this by addressing the habit of grasping even the most perfect of spiritual realizations:

‘They perceive Nibbāna as Nibbāna. Having perceived Nibbāna as Nibbāna, they conceive [themselves as] Nibbāna, they conceive [themselves] in Nibbāna, they conceive [themselves apart] from Nibbāna, they conceive Nibbāna to be “mine”, they delight in Nibbāna. Why is that? Because they have not fully understood it, I say...’ (M1.26) His advice is to change the way of seeing things:

‘He directly knows Nibbāna as Nibbāna. Having directly known Nibbāna as Nibbāna, he should not conceive [himself as] Nibbāna, he should not conceive [himself] in Nibbāna, he should not conceive [himself apart] from Nibbāna, he should not conceive Nibbāna to be “mine”, he should not delight in Nibbāna. Why is that? So that he may fully understand it, I say.’ (M 1.50, Bhikkhu Ñānamoli & Bhikkhu Bodhi, trans.)

The Buddha describes his own experience as: ‘Having directly known that which is not commensurate with the Allness of All, I did not claim to be All, I did not claim to be in All, I did not claim to be apart from All, I did not claim All to be “mine”, I did not affirm All.’ (M 49.23)

9. Page 263, **So I shall help all in helping myself...** This is a very well-known principle within the Buddhist tradition. The passage most often quoted on this is called ‘The Simile of the Acrobats’, it is found at §19 of the ‘Collection on the Foundations of Mindfulness’, S 47.19: ‘Said the master to the pupil: “Now my lad, I’ll watch you and you watch me, thus watched and warded by each other we’ll show our tricks and get a good fee, and come down safe from the pole. ‘No, no! That won’t do, Master! You look after yourself, and I’ll look after myself. Thus watched and warded each by himself we’ll show our tricks, get a good fee and come down safe from the pole. That’s the way to do it!”’ In this analogy it is the pupil who is the one who gets the praise of the Buddha.

10. Page 263, **called to the bliss of reflecting the glory of the Supreme God...** Once again (see Chapter 36, note §5) K.G. seems to be having a dig at Judæo-Christian theological forms – the idea of human perfection, in that way of thought, sometimes being presented as the opportunity simply to praise and reflect the glory of the Almighty for eternity.

11. Page 264, **so then I am not omnipotent ... so I am not omniscient...** As before meeting with the brahmā god Baka, and his ability to vanish from the brahmā’s sight while the brahmā could not disappear from his. The story is told at M 49.26 and at S 6.4.

Incidentally, 'Baka' means 'heron' – apparently, in Indian folklore, the bird symbolizes a deceitful and arrogant character; perhaps equivalents in English would be such names as 'Sharkey' or 'Big-head'.

12. Page 264, **as the light of a lamp goes out when it has consumed the last drop of oil in its wick...** This closing image, of the going out of a flame, is a very common metaphor for the ultimate realization in the Buddha's teachings. Along with a prime example at M 140.24 (see Appendix 2) here are a couple of quotations that illustrate and illuminate this. Firstly, from the enlightenment verses of the Elder Nun Patācārā, at Thig. 112-6:

*Taking my lamp
I entered my
hut sat on my bed
and watched the flame.
I extinguished the wick
with a needle.
The liberation of my mind,
was just like the flame's
disappearance.*

Also, shortly after the Arahant Dabba the Mallian had passed away, having risen into the air under his own power and then absorbed his body into the fire element, the Buddha proclaimed:

*Just as the bourn is not known
Of the gradual fading glow
Given off by the furnace-heated iron
As it is struck with the smith's hammer,
So there is no pointing to the bourn
Of those perfectly released,
Who have crossed the flood
Of bondage to sense desires
And attained unshakeable bliss.*

Ud. 8.10 (John D. Ireland, trans.)

Lastly, 'The Questions of Upasīva', in the Sutta Nipāta, at SN 1074-6:

*'It is like a flame struck by a sudden gust of wind,'
said the Buddha,
'in a flash it has gone out
and nothing more can be known about it.
It is the same
with a wise person
freed from mind and body -*

*in flash they have gone,
designation applies to them no more.'*

*'Please explain this clearly to me, Sir,'
said Upasīva,
'for it's a state that you have understood:
one who has reached the end –
do they not exist,
or are they made immortal, perfectly free?'*

*'One who has reached the end
has no criterion
by which they can be measured;
That by which they could be talked of
is no more.*

*You cannot say – **'They do not exist.'**
But when all modes of being,
all phenomena are removed,
then all means of description
have gone too.'*

APPENDIX 2

DHATUVIBHANGA SUTTA, M 140 THE EXPOSITION OF THE ELEMENTS

1. **THUS HAVE I HEARD.** On one occasion the Blessèd One was wandering in the Magadhan country and eventually arrived at Rājagaha. There he went to the potter Bhaggava and said to him:

2. 'If it is not inconvenient for you, Bhaggava, I will stay one night in your workshop.' 'It is not inconvenient for me, venerable sir, but there is a homeless one already staying there. If he agrees, then stay as long as you like, venerable sir.'

3. Now there was a clansman named Pukkusāti who had gone forth from the home life into homelessness out of faith in the Blessèd One, and on that occasion he was already staying in the potter's workshop. Then the Blessèd One went to the venerable Pukkusāti and said to him: 'If it is not inconvenient for you, bhikkhu, I will stay one night in the workshop.'

'The potter's workshop is large enough, friend. Let the venerable one stay as long as he likes.'

4. Then the Blessèd One entered the potter's workshop, prepared a spread of grass at one end, and sat down, folding his legs crosswise, setting his body erect, and establishing mindfulness in front of him. Then the Blessèd One spent most of the night seated [in meditation], and the venerable Pukkusāti also spent most of the night seated [in meditation]. Then the Blessèd One thought: 'This clansman conducts himself in a way that inspires confidence. Suppose I were to question him.' So he asked the venerable Pukkusāti:

5. 'Under whom have you gone forth, bhikkhu? Who is your teacher? Whose Dhamma do you profess?'

'Friend, there is the recluse Gotama, the son of the Sākyans who went forth from a Sākyan clan. Now a good report of that Blessèd Gotama has been spread to this effect: "That Blessèd One is accomplished, fully enlightened, perfect in true knowledge and conduct, sublime, knower of worlds, incomparable leader of persons to be tamed, teacher of gods and humans, enlightened, blessèd." I have gone forth under that Blessèd One; that Blessèd One is my teacher; I profess the Dhamma of that Blessèd One.'

'But, bhikkhu, where is that Blessèd One, accomplished and fully enlightened, now living?'

'There is, friend, a city in the northern country named Sāvatti. The Blessèd One, accomplished and fully enlightened, is now living there.'

‘But, bhikkhu, have you ever seen that Blessed One before? Would you recognize him if you saw him?’

‘No, friend, I have never seen that Blessed One before, nor would I recognize him if I saw him.’

6. Then the Blessed One thought: ‘This clansman has gone forth from the home life into homelessness under me. Suppose I were to teach him the Dhamma.’ So the Blessed One addressed the venerable Pukkusāti thus: ‘Bhikkhu, I will teach you the Dhamma. Listen and attend closely to what I shall say.’ ‘Yes, friend,’ the venerable Pukkusāti replied. The Blessed One said this:

7. ‘Bhikkhu, this person consists of six elements, six bases of contact, and eighteen kinds of mental exploration, and he has four foundations. The tides of conceiving do not sweep over one who stands upon these [foundations], and when the tides of conceiving no longer sweep over him he is called a sage at peace. One should not neglect wisdom, should preserve truth, should cultivate relinquishment, and should train for peace. This is the summary of the exposition of the six elements.

8. ‘Bhikkhu, this person consists of six elements.’ So it was said. And with reference to what was this said? There are the earth element, the water element, the fire element, the air element, the space element, and the consciousness element. So it was with reference to this that it was said: ‘Bhikkhu, this person consists of six elements.’

9. ‘Bhikkhu, this person consists of six bases of contact.’ So it was said. And with reference to what was this said? There are the base of eye-contact, the base of ear-contact, the base of nose-contact, the base of tongue-contact, the base of body-contact, and the base of mind-contact. So it was with reference to this that it was said: ‘Bhikkhu, this person consists of six bases of contact.’

10. ‘Bhikkhu, this person consists of eighteen kinds of mental exploration.’ So it was said. And with reference to what was this said? On seeing a form with the eye, one explores a form productive of joy, one explores a form productive of grief, one explores a form productive of equanimity. On hearing a sound with the ear ... On smelling an odour with the nose ... On tasting a flavour with the tongue ... On touching a tangible with the body ... On cognizing a mind-object with the mind, one explores a mind-object productive of joy, one explores a mind-object productive of grief, one explores a mind-object productive of equanimity. So it was with reference to this that it was said: ‘Bhikkhu, this person consists of eighteen kinds of mental exploration.’

11. ‘Bhikkhu, this person has four foundations.’ So it was said. And with reference to what was this said? There are the foundation of wisdom, the foundation of truth, the foundation of relinquishment, and the foundation of peace. So it was with reference to this that it was said: ‘Bhikkhu, this person has four foundations.’

12. ‘One should not neglect wisdom, should preserve truth, should cultivate relinquishment, and should train for peace.’ So it was said. And with reference to what was this said?

13. 'How, bhikkhu, does one not neglect wisdom? There are these six elements: the earth element, the water element, the fire element, the air element, the space element, and the consciousness element.

14. 'What, bhikkhu, is the earth element? The earth element may be either internal or external. What is the internal earth element? Whatever internally, belonging to oneself, is solid, solidified, and clung-to, that is, head-hairs, body-hairs, nails, teeth, skin, flesh, sinews, bones, bone-marrow, kidneys, heart, liver, diaphragm, spleen, lungs, large intestines, small intestines, contents of the stomach, fæces, or whatever else internally, belonging to oneself, is solid, solidified, and clung-to: this is called the internal earth element. Now both the internal earth element and the external earth element are simply earth element. And that should be seen as it actually is with proper wisdom thus: "This is not mine, this I am not, this is not my self." When one sees it thus as it actually is with proper wisdom, one becomes disenchanted with the earth element and makes the mind dispassionate towards the earth element.

15. 'What, bhikkhu, is the water element? The water element may be either internal or external. What is the internal water element? Whatever internally, belonging to oneself, is water, watery, and clung-to, that is bile, phlegm, pus, blood, sweat, fat, tears, grease, spittle, snot, oil-of-the-joints, urine, or whatever else internally, belonging to oneself, is water, watery, and clung-to: this is called the internal water element. Now both the internal water element and the external water element are simply water element. And that should be seen as it actually is with proper wisdom thus: "This is not mine, this I am not, this is not my self." When one sees it thus as it actually is with proper wisdom, one becomes disenchanted with the water element and makes the mind dispassionate towards the water element.

16. 'What, bhikkhu, is the fire element? The fire element may be either internal or external. What is the internal fire element? Whatever internally, belonging to oneself, is fire, fiery, and clung-to, that is that by which one is warmed, ages, and is consumed, and that by which what is eaten, drunk, consumed, and tasted gets completely digested, or whatever else internally, belonging to oneself, is fire, fiery, and clung-to: this is called the internal fire element. Now both the internal fire element and the external fire element are simply fire element. And that should be seen as it actually is with proper wisdom thus: "This is not mine, this I am not, this is not my self." When one sees it thus as it actually is with proper wisdom, one becomes disenchanted with the fire element and makes the mind dispassionate towards the fire element.

17. 'What, bhikkhu, is the air element? The air element may be either internal or external. What is the internal air element? Whatever internally, belonging to oneself, is air, airy, and clung-to, that is, up-going winds, down-going winds, winds in the belly, winds in the bowels, winds that course through the limbs, in-breath and out-breath, or whatever else internally, belonging to oneself, is air, airy, and clung-to: this is called the internal air element. Now both the internal air element and the external air element are simply air element. And that should be seen as it actually is with proper

wisdom thus: “This is not mine, this I am not, this is not my self.” When one sees it thus as it actually is with proper wisdom, one becomes disenchanted with the air element and makes the mind dispassionate towards the air element.

18. ‘What, bhikkhu, is the space element? The space element may be either internal or external. What is the internal space element? Whatever internally, belonging to oneself, is space, spatial, and clung-to, that is the holes of the ears, the nostrils, the door of the mouth, and that [aperture] whereby what is eaten, drunk, consumed, and tasted gets swallowed, and where it collects, and whereby it is excreted from below, or whatever else internally, belonging to oneself, is space, spatial, and clung to: this is called the internal space element. Now both the internal space element and the external space element are simply space element. And that should be seen as it actually is with proper wisdom thus: “This is not mine, this I am not, this is not my self.” When one sees it thus as it actually is with proper wisdom, one becomes disenchanted with the space element and makes the mind dispassionate towards the space element.

19. ‘Then there remains only consciousness, purified and bright. What does one cognize with that consciousness? One cognizes: “[This is] pleasant”; one cognizes: “[This is] painful”; one cognizes: “[This is] neither-painful-nor-pleasant.” In dependence on a contact to be felt as pleasant there arises a pleasant feeling. When one feels a pleasant feeling, one understands: “I feel a pleasant feeling.” One understands: “With the cessation of that same contact to be felt as pleasant, its corresponding feeling – the pleasant feeling that arose in dependence on that contact to be felt as pleasant – ceases and subsides.” In dependence on a contact to be felt as painful there arises a painful feeling. When one feels a painful feeling, one understands: “I feel a painful feeling.” One understands: “With the cessation of that same contact to be felt as painful, its corresponding feeling – the painful feeling that arose in dependence on that contact to be felt as painful – ceases and subsides.” In dependence on a contact to be felt as neither-painful-nor-pleasant there arises a neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling. When one feels a neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling, one understands: “I feel a neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling.” One understands: “With the cessation of that same contact to be felt as neither-painful-nor-pleasant, its corresponding feeling – the neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling that arose in dependence on that contact to be felt as neither-painful-nor-pleasant – ceases and subsides.” Bhikkhu, just as from the contact and friction of two fire-sticks heat is generated and fire is produced, and with the separation and disjunction of these two fire-sticks the corresponding heat ceases and subsides; so too, in dependence on a contact to be felt as pleasant ... to be felt as painful ... to be felt as neither-painful-nor-pleasant there arises a neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling ... One understands: “With the cessation of that same contact to be felt as neither-painful-nor-pleasant, its corresponding feeling ... ceases and subsides.”’

20. ‘Then there remains only equanimity, purified and bright, malleable, wieldy, and radiant. Suppose, bhikkhu, a skilled goldsmith or his apprentice were to prepare a furnace, heat up the crucible, take some gold with tongs, and put it into the crucible.

From time to time he would blow on it, from time to time he would sprinkle water over it, and from time to time he would just look on. That gold would become refined, well refined, completely refined, faultless, rid of dross, malleable, wieldy, and radiant. Then whatever kind of ornament he wished to make from it, whether a golden chain or earrings or a necklace or a golden garland, it would serve his purpose. So too, bhikkhu, then there remains only equanimity, purified and bright, malleable, wieldy, and radiant.

21. 'He understands thus: "If I were to direct this equanimity, so purified and bright, to the base of infinite space and to develop my mind accordingly, then this equanimity of mine, supported by that base, clinging to it, would remain for a very long time. If I were to direct this equanimity, so purified and bright, to the base of infinite consciousness ... to the base of nothingness ... to the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception and develop my mind accordingly, then this equanimity of mine, supported by that base, clinging to it, would remain for a very long time".'

22. 'He understands thus: "If I were to direct this equanimity, so purified and bright, to the base of infinite space and to develop my mind accordingly, this would be conditioned. If I were to direct this equanimity, so purified and bright, to the base of infinite consciousness ... to the base of nothingness ... to the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception and to develop my mind accordingly, this would be conditioned." He does not form any condition or generate any volition tending towards either being or non-being. Since he does not form any condition or generate any volition tending towards either being or non-being, he does not cling to anything in this world. When he does not cling, he is not agitated. When he is not agitated, he personally attains Nibbāna. He understands thus: "Birth is destroyed, the holy life has been lived, what had to be done has been done, there is no more coming to any state of being".'

23. 'If he feels a pleasant feeling, he understands: "It is impermanent; there is no holding to it; there is no delight in it." If he feels a painful feeling, he understands: "It is impermanent; there is no holding to it; there is no delight in it." If he feels a neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling, he understands: "It is impermanent; there is no holding to it; there is no delight in it".'

24. 'If he feels a pleasant feeling, he feels it detached; if he feels a painful feeling, he feels it detached; if he feels a neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling, he feels it detached. When he feels a feeling terminating with the body, he understands: "I feel a feeling terminating with the body." When he feels a feeling terminating with life, he understands: "I feel a feeling terminating with life." He understands: "On the dissolution of the body, with the ending of life, all that is felt, not being delighted in, will become cool right here." Bhikkhu, just as an oil-lamp burns in dependence on oil and a wick, and when the oil and wick are used up, if it does not get any more fuel, it is extinguished from lack of fuel; so too when he feels a feeling terminating with the body ... a feeling terminating with life, he understands: "I feel a feeling terminating

with life.” He understands: “On the dissolution of the body, with the ending of life, all that is felt, not being delighted in, will become cool right here”.’

25. ‘Therefore a bhikkhu possessing [this wisdom] possesses the supreme foundation of wisdom. For this, bhikkhu, is the supreme noble wisdom, namely, the knowledge of the destruction of all suffering.

26. ‘His deliverance, being founded upon truth, is unshakeable. For that is false, bhikkhu, which has a deceptive nature, and that is true which has an undeceptive nature – Nibbāna. Therefore a bhikkhu possessing [this truth] possesses the supreme foundation of truth. For this, bhikkhu, is the supreme noble truth, namely, Nibbāna, which has an undeceptive nature.

27. ‘Formerly, when he was ignorant, he acquired and developed attachments; now he has abandoned them, cut them off at the root, made them like a palm stump, done away with them so that they are no longer subject to future arising. Therefore a bhikkhu possessing [this relinquishment] possesses the supreme foundation of relinquishment. For this, bhikkhu, is the supreme noble relinquishment, namely, the relinquishing of all attachments.

28. ‘Formerly, when he was ignorant, he experienced covetousness, desire, and lust; now he has abandoned them, cut them off at the root, made them like a palm stump, done away with them so that they are no longer subject to future arising. Formerly, when he was ignorant, he experienced anger, ill will, and hate; now he has abandoned them, cut them off at the root, made them like a palm stump, done away with them so that they are no longer subject to future arising. Formerly, when he was ignorant, he experienced ignorance and delusion; now he has abandoned them, cut them off at the root, made them like a palm stump, done away with them so that they are no longer subject to future arising. Therefore a bhikkhu possessing [this peace] possesses the supreme foundation of peace. For this, bhikkhu, is the supreme noble peace, namely, the pacification of lust, hate, and delusion.

29. ‘So it was with reference to this that it was said: “One should not neglect wisdom, should preserve truth, should cultivate relinquishment, and should train for peace.”

30. ““The tides of conceiving do not sweep over one who stands upon these [foundations], and when the tides of conceiving no longer sweep over him he is called a sage at peace.” So it was said. And with reference to what was this said?

31. ‘Bhikkhu, “I am” is a conceiving; “I am this” is a conceiving; “I shall be” is a conceiving; “I shall not be” is a conceiving; “I shall be possessed of form” is a conceiving; “I shall be formless” is a conceiving; “I shall be percipient” is a conceiving; “I shall be non-percipient” is a conceiving; “I shall be neither-percipient-nor-non-percipient” is a conceiving. Conceiving is a disease, conceiving is a tumour, conceiving is a dart. By overcoming all conceivings, bhikkhu, one is called a sage at peace. And the sage at peace is not born, does not age, does not die; he is not shaken and is not agitated. For there is nothing present in him by which he might be born. Not being born, how could

he age? Not ageing, how could he die? Not dying, how could he be shaken? Not being shaken, why should he be agitated?

32. 'So it was with reference to this that it was said: "The tides of conceiving do not sweep over one who stands upon these [foundations], and when the tides of conceiving no longer sweep over him he is called a sage at peace." Bhikkhu, bear in mind this brief exposition of the six elements.'

33. Thereupon the venerable Pukkusāti thought: 'Indeed, the Teacher has come to me! The Sublime One has come to me! The Fully Enlightened One has come to me!' Then he rose from his seat, arranged his upper robe over one shoulder, and prostrating himself with his head at the Blessed One's feet, he said: 'Venerable sir, a transgression overcame me, in that like a fool, confused and blundering, I presumed to address the Blessed One as "friend". Venerable sir, may the Blessed One forgive my transgression seen as such for the sake of restraint in the future.'

'Surely, bhikkhu, a transgression overcame you, in that like a fool, confused and blundering, you presumed to address me as "friend". But since you see your transgression as such and make amends in accordance with the Dhamma, we forgive you. For it is growth in the Noble One's Discipline when one sees one's transgression as such, makes amends in accordance with the Dhamma, and undertakes restraint in the future.'

34. 'Venerable sir, I would receive the full admission under the Blessed One.'

'But are your bowl and robes complete, bhikkhu?'

'Venerable sir, my bowl and robes are not complete.'

'Bhikkhu, Tathāgatas do not give the full admission to anyone whose bowl and robes are not complete.'

35. Then the venerable Pukkusāti, having delighted and rejoiced in the Blessed One's words, rose from his seat, and after paying homage to the Blessed One, keeping him on his right, he departed in order to search for a bowl and robes. Then, while the venerable Pukkusāti was searching for a bowl and robes, a stray cow killed him.

36. Then a number of bhikkhus went to the Blessed One, and after paying homage to him, they sat down at one side and told him: 'Venerable sir, the clansman Pukkusāti, who was given brief instruction by the Blessed One, has died. What is his destination? What is his future course?'

'Bhikkhus, the clansman Pukkusāti was wise. He practised in accordance with the Dhamma and did not trouble me in the interpretation of the Dhamma. With the destruction of the five lower fetters, the clansman Pukkusāti has reappeared spontaneously [in the Pure Abodes] and will attain final Nibbāna there without ever returning from that world.'

That is what the Blessed One said. The bhikkhus were satisfied and delighted in the Blessed One's words.

(Bhikkhu Ñānamoli & Bhikkhu Bodhi, trans., Wisdom Publications)

APPENDIX 3

ANGULIMALA SUTTA, M 86 ON ANGULIMALA

1. THUS HAVE I HEARD. On one occasion the Blessèd One was living at Sāvatti in Jeta's Grove, Anāthapindika's Park.

2. Now on that occasion there was a bandit in the realm of King Pasenadi of Kosala named Angulimāla, who was murderous, bloody-handed, given to blows and violence, merciless to living beings. Villages, towns, and districts were laid waste by him. He was constantly murdering people and he wore their fingers as a garland.

3. Then, when it was morning, the Blessèd One dressed, and taking his bowl and outer robe, went into Sāvatti for alms. When he had wandered for alms in Sāvatti and had returned from his almsround, after his meal he set his resting place in order, and taking his bowl and outer robe, set out on the road leading towards Angulimāla. Cowherds, shepherds, and ploughmen passing by saw the Blessèd One walking along the road leading towards Angulimāla and told him: 'Do not take this road, recluse. On this road is the bandit Angulimāla, who is murderous, bloody-handed, given to blows and violence, merciless to living beings. Villages, towns, and districts have been laid waste by him. He is constantly murdering people and he wears their fingers as a garland. Men have come along this road in groups of ten, twenty, thirty, and even forty, but still they have fallen into Angulimāla's hands.' When this was said the Blessèd One went on in silence. For the second time ... For the third time the cowherds, shepherds, and ploughmen told this to the Blessèd One, but still the Blessèd One went on in silence.

4. The bandit Angulimāla saw the Blessèd One coming in the distance. When he saw him, he thought: 'It is wonderful, it is marvellous! Men have come along this road in groups of ten, twenty, thirty, and even forty, but still they have fallen into my hands. And now this recluse comes alone, unaccompanied, as if driven by fate. Why shouldn't I take this recluse's life?' Angulimāla then took up his sword and shield, buckled on his bow and quiver, and followed close behind the Blessèd One.

5. Then the Blessèd One performed such a feat of super-normal power that the bandit Angulimāla, though walking as fast as he could, could not catch up with the Blessèd One, who was walking at his normal pace. Then the bandit Angulimāla thought: 'It is wonderful, it is marvellous! Formerly I could catch up even with a swift elephant and seize it; I could catch up even with a swift horse and seize it; I could catch up even with a swift chariot and seize it; I could catch up even with a swift deer and seize it; but now, though I am walking as fast as I can, I cannot catch up with this recluse who is walking at his normal pace!' He stopped and called out to the Blessèd One: 'Stop,

recluse! Stop, recluse!’ ‘I have stopped, Angulimāla, you stop too.’

The bandit Angulimāla thought: ‘These recluses, sons of the Sākyans, speak truth, assert truth; but though this recluse is still walking, he says: “I have stopped, Angulimāla, you stop too.” Suppose I question this recluse.’

6. Then the bandit Angulimāla addressed the Blessed One in stanzas thus:

‘While you are walking, recluse, you tell me you have stopped; But now, when I have stopped, you say I have not stopped.

I ask you now, O recluse, about the meaning: How is it that you have stopped and I have not?’

*‘Angulimāla, I have stopped forever,
I abstain from violence towards living beings;
But you have no restraint towards things that live:
That is why I have stopped and you have not.’*

*‘Oh, at long last this recluse, a venerated sage,
Has come to this great forest for my sake.
Having heard your stanza teaching me the Dhamma,
I will indeed renounce evil forever.’*

*So saying the bandit took his sword and weapons
And flung them in a gaping chasm’s pit;
The bandit worshipped the Sublime One’s feet,
And then and there asked for the going forth.*

*The Enlightened One, the Sage of Great Compassion,
The Teacher of the world with [all] its gods,
Addressed him with these words, ‘Come, bhikkhu.’
And that was how he came to be a bhikkhu.*

7. Then the Blessed One set out to wander back to Sāvatti with Angulimāla as his attendant. Wandering by stages, he eventually arrived at Sāvatti, and there he lived at Sāvatti in Jeta’s Grove, Anāthapindika’s Park.

8. Now on that occasion great crowds of people were gathering at the gates of King Pasenadi’s inner palace, very loud and noisy, crying: ‘Sire, the bandit Angulimāla is in your realm; he is murderous, bloody-handed, given to blows and violence, merciless to living beings! Villages, towns, and districts have been laid waste by him! He is constantly murdering people and he wears their fingers as a garland! The king must put him down!’

9. Then in the middle of the day King Pasenadi of Kosala drove out of Sāvatti with a cavalry of five hundred men and set out for the park. He drove thus as far as the road was passable for carriages, and then he dismounted from his carriage and went forward on foot to the Blessed One. After paying homage to the Blessed One, he sat down at one side, and the Blessed One said to him: ‘What is it, great king? Is King Seniya Bimbisāra of Magadha attacking you, or the Licchavis of Vesālī, or other hostile kings?’

10. ‘Venerable sir, King Seniya Bimbisāra of Magadha is not attacking me, nor are the Licchavis of Vesālī, nor are other hostile kings. But there is a bandit in my realm named Angulimāla, who is murderous, bloody-handed, given to blows and violence, merciless to living beings. Villages, towns, and districts have been laid waste by him. He is constantly murdering people and he wears their fingers as a garland. I shall never be able to put him down, venerable sir.’

11. ‘Great king, suppose you were to see that Angulimāla had shaved off his hair and beard, put on the yellow robe, and gone forth from the home life into homelessness; that he was abstaining from killing living beings, from taking what is not given and from false speech; that he was refraining from eating at night, ate only in one part of the day, and was celibate, virtuous, of good character. If you were to see him thus, how would you treat him?’

‘Venerable sir, we would pay homage to him, or rise up for him, or invite him to be seated; or we would invite him to accept robes, almsfood, a resting place, or medicinal requisites; or we would arrange for him lawful guarding, defense, and protection. But, venerable sir, he is an immoral man, one of evil character. How could he ever have such virtue and restraint?’

12. Now on that occasion the venerable Angulimāla was sitting not far from the Blessed One. Then the Blessed One extended his right arm and said to King Pasenadi of Kosala: ‘Great king, this is Angulimāla.’

Then King Pasenadi was frightened, alarmed, and terrified. Knowing this, the Blessed One told him: ‘Do not be afraid, great king, do not be afraid. There is nothing for you to fear from him.’

Then the king’s fear, alarm, and terror subsided. He went over to the venerable Angulimāla and said: ‘Venerable sir, is the noble lord really Angulimāla?’ ‘Yes, great king.’

‘Venerable sir, of what family is the noble lord’s father? Of what family is his mother?’

‘My father is a Gagga, great king; my mother is a Mantāni.’

‘Let the noble lord Gagga Mantāniputta rest content. I shall provide robes, almsfood, resting place, and medicinal requisites for the noble lord Gagga Mantāniputta.’

13. Now at that time the venerable Angulimāla was a forest dweller, an almsfood eater, a refuse-rag wearer, and restricted himself to three robes. He replied: ‘Enough, great king, my triple robe is complete.’

King Pasenadi then returned to the Blessed One, and after paying homage to him, he sat down at one side and said: 'It is wonderful, venerable sir, it is marvellous how the Blessed One tames the untamed, brings peace to the unpeaceful, and leads to Nibbāna those who have not attained Nibbāna. Venerable sir, we ourselves could not tame him with force and weapons, yet the Blessed One has tamed him without force or weapons. And now, venerable sir, we depart. We are busy and have much to do.'

'Now is the time, great king, to do as you think fit.'

Then King Pasenadi of Kosala rose from his seat, and after paying homage to the Blessed One, keeping him on his right, he departed.

14. Then, when it was morning, the venerable Angulimāla dressed, and taking his bowl and outer robe, went into Sāvatti for alms. As he was wandering for alms from house to house in Sāvatti, he saw a certain woman giving birth to a deformed child. When he saw this, he thought: 'How beings are afflicted! Indeed, how beings are afflicted!'

When he had wandered for alms in Sāvatti and had returned from his almsround, after his meal he went to the Blessed One, and after paying homage to him, he sat down at one side and said: 'Venerable sir, in the morning I dressed, and taking my bowl and outer robe, went into Sāvatti for alms. As I was wandering for alms from house to house in Sāvatti, I saw a certain woman giving birth to a deformed child. When I saw that, I thought: "How beings are afflicted! Indeed, how beings are afflicted!"'

15. 'In that case, Angulimāla, go into Sāvatti and say to the woman: "Sister, since I was born, I do not recall that I have ever intentionally deprived a living being of life. By this truth, may you be well and may your infant be well!"'

'Venerable sir, wouldn't I be telling a deliberate lie, for I have intentionally deprived many living beings of life?' 'Then, Angulimāla, go into Sāvatti and say to that woman: "Sister, since I was born with the noble birth, I do not recall that I have ever intentionally deprived a living being of life. By this truth, may you be well and may your infant be well!"' 'Yes, venerable sir,' the venerable Angulimāla replied, and having gone into Sāvatti, he told that woman: 'Sister, since I was born with the noble birth, I do not recall that I have ever intentionally deprived a living being of life. By this truth, may you be well and may your infant be well!' Then the woman and the infant became well.

16. Before long, dwelling alone, withdrawn, diligent, ardent, and resolute, the venerable Angulimāla, by realizing for himself with direct knowledge, here and now entered upon and abided in that supreme goal of the holy life for the sake of which clansmen rightly go forth from the home life into homelessness. He directly knew:

'Birth is destroyed, the holy life has been lived, what had to be done has been done, there is no more coming to any state of being.' And the venerable Angulimāla became one of the arahants.

17. Then, when it was morning, the venerable Angulimāla dressed, and taking his bowl and outer robe, went into Sāvatti for alms. Now on that occasion someone threw a clod and hit the venerable Angulimāla's body, someone else threw a stick and hit his body, and someone else threw a potsherd and hit his body. Then, with blood running from his cut head, with his bowl broken, and with his outer robe torn, the venerable Angulimāla went to the Blessed One. The Blessed One saw him coming in the distance and told him: 'Bear it, brahmin! Bear it, brahmin! You are experiencing here and now the result of deeds because of which you might have been tortured in hell for many years, for many hundreds of years, for many thousands of years.'

18. Then, while the venerable Angulimāla was alone in retreat experiencing the bliss of deliverance, he uttered this exclamation:

*'Who once did live in negligence
And then is negligent no more,
He illuminates the world
Like the moon freed from a cloud.*

*'Who once did live in negligence
And then is negligent no more,
He illuminates the world
Like the moon freed from a cloud.*

*Who checks the evil deeds he did
By doing wholesome deeds instead,
He illuminates the world
Like the moon freed from a cloud.*

*The youthful bhikkhu who devotes
His efforts to the Buddha's teaching,
He illuminates the world
Like the moon freed from a cloud.*

*Let my enemies hear discourse on the Dhamma,
Let them be devoted to the Buddha's teaching,
Let my enemies wait on those good people
Who lead others to accept the Dhamma.*

*Let my enemies give ear from time to time
And hear the Dhamma of those who preach forbearance,
Of those who speak as well in praise of kindness,
And let them follow up that Dhamma with kind deeds.*

*For surely then they would not wish to harm me,
Nor would they think of harming other beings,
So those who would protect all, frail or strong,
Let them attain the all-surpassing peace.*

Conduit-makers guide the water,
Fletchers straighten out the arrow-shaft,
Carpenters straighten out the timber,
But wise men seek to tame themselves.

There are some that tame with beatings,
Some with goads and some with whips;
But I was tamed by such a one
Who has no rod nor any weapon.

'Harmless' is the name I bear,
Though I was dangerous in the past.
The name I bear today is true:
I hurt no living being at all.

And though I once lived as a bandit
With the name of 'Finger-garland',
One whom the great flood swept along,
I went for refuge to the Buddha.

And though I once was bloody-handed
With the name of 'Finger-garland',
See the refuge I have found:
The bond of being has been cut.

While I did many deeds that lead
To rebirth in the evil realms,
Yet their result has reached me now,
And so I eat free from debt.

They are fools and have no sense
Who give themselves to negligence,
But those of wisdom guard diligence
And treat it as their greatest good.

Do not give way to negligence
Nor seek delight in sensual pleasures,
But meditate with diligence
So as to reach the perfect bliss.

*So welcome to that choice of mine
And let it stand, it was not ill made;
Of all the Dhammas known to men
I have come to the very best.*

*So welcome to that choice of mine
And let it stand, it was not ill made;
I have attained the triple knowledge
And done all that the Buddha teaches.'*

(Bhikkhu Ñānamoli & Bhikkhu Bodhi, trans.,
Wisdom Publications)

APPENDIX 4

EXCERPTS FROM THE MAHA-PARINIBBANA SUTTA, D16

THE BUDDHA'S LAST DAYS

2.22. ...THE LORD SAID TO THE MONKS: 'You, monks, should go to anywhere in Vesālī where you have friends or acquaintances or supporters, and spend the Rains there. I shall spend the Rains here in Beluva.' 'Very good, Lord,' replied the monks, and they did so, but the Lord spent the Rains in Beluva.

2.23. And during the Rains the Lord was attacked by a severe sickness, with sharp pains as if he were about to die. But he endured all this mindfully, clearly aware and without complaining. He thought: 'It is not fitting that I should attain final Nibbāna without addressing my followers and taking leave of the order of monks. I must hold this disease in check by energy and apply myself to the force of life.' He did so, and the disease abated.

2.24. Then the Lord having recovered from his sickness, as soon as he felt better, went outside and sat on a prepared seat in front of his dwelling. Then the Venerable Ānanda came to him, saluted him, sat down to one side and said: 'Lord, I have seen the Lord in comfort, and I have seen the Lord's patient enduring. And, Lord, my body was like a drunkard's. I lost my bearings and things were unclear to me because of the Lord's sickness. The only thing that was some comfort to me was the thought: "The Lord will not attain final Nibbāna until he has made some statement about the order of monks."' "

2.25. 'But, Ānanda, what does the order of monks expect of me? I have taught the Dhamma, Ānanda, making no "inner" and "outer": the Tathāgata has no "teacher's fist" in respect of doctrines. If there is anyone who thinks: "I shall take charge of the order," or "The order should refer to me," let him make some statement about the order, but the Tathāgata does not think in such terms. So why should the Tathāgata make a statement about the order?

'Ānanda, I am now old, worn out, venerable, one who has traversed life's path, I have reached the term of life, which is eighty. Just as an old cart is made to go by being held together with straps, so the Tathāgata's body is kept going by being strapped up. It is only when the Tathāgata withdraws his attention from outward signs, and by the cessation of certain feelings, enters into the signless concentration of mind, that his body knows comfort.

2.26. ‘Therefore, Ānanda, you should live as islands unto yourselves, being your own refuge, with no one else as your refuge, with the Dhamma as an island, with the Dhamma as your refuge, with no other refuge. And how does a monk live as an island unto himself, ... with no other refuge? Here, Ānanda, a monk abides contemplating the body as body, earnestly, clearly aware, mindful and having put away all hankering and fretting for the world, and likewise with regard to feelings, mind and mind-objects. That, Ānanda, is how a monk lives as an island unto himself, ... with no other refuge. And those who now in my time or afterwards live thus, they will become the highest, if they are desirous of learning.’

[*End of the second recitation-section*]

3.1. Then the Lord, rising early, dressed, took his robe and bowl, and entered Vesālī for alms. Having eaten on his return from the alms-round, he said to the Venerable Ānanda: ‘Bring a mat, Ānanda. We will go to the Cāpāla Shrine for the siesta.’ ‘Very good, Lord’, said Ānanda, and, getting a mat, he followed behind.

3.2. Then the Lord came to the Cāpāla Shrine, and sat down on the prepared seat. Ānanda saluted the Lord and sat down to one side, and the Lord said: ‘Ānanda, Vesālī is delightful, the Udena Shrine is delightful, the Gotamaka Shrine is delightful, the Sattambaka Shrine is delightful, the Bahuputta Shrine is delightful, the Cāpāla Shrine is delightful.

3.3. ‘Ānanda, whoever has developed the four roads to power, practised them frequently, made them his vehicle, made them his base, established them, become familiar with them and properly undertaken them, could undoubtedly live for a century, or the remainder of one. The Tathāgata has developed these powers, ... properly undertaken them. And he could, Ānanda, undoubtedly live for a century, or the remainder of one.’

3.4. But the Venerable Ānanda, failing to grasp this broad hint, this clear sign, did not beg the Lord: ‘Lord, may the Blessed Lord stay for a century, may the Well-Farer stay for a century for the benefit and happiness of the multitude, out of compassion for the world, for the benefit and happiness of devas and humans,’ so much was his mind possessed by Māra.

3.5. And a second time ... and a third ... (*as verses 3–4*).

3.6. Then the Lord said: ‘Ānanda, go now and do what seems fitting to you.’ ‘Very good, Lord,’ said Ānanda and, rising from his seat, he saluted the Lord, passed by on the right and sat down under a tree some distance away.

3.7. Soon after Ānanda had left, Māra the Evil One came to the Lord, stood to one side, and said: ‘Lord, may the Blessed Lord now attain final Nibbāna, may the Well-Farer now attain final Nibbāna. Now is the time for the Blessed Lord’s final Nibbāna. Because the Blessed Lord has said this: “Evil One, I will not take final Nibbāna till I have monks and disciples who are accomplished, trained, skilled, learned, knowers of the

Dhamma, trained in conformity with the Dhamma, correctly trained and walking in the path of the Dhamma, who will pass on what they have gained from their Teacher, teach it, declare it, establish it, expound it, analyse it, make it clear; till they shall be able by means of the Dhamma to refute false teachings that have arisen, and teach the Dhamma of wondrous effect.”

3.8. ‘And now, Lord, the Blessed Lord has such monks and disciples. May the Blessed Lord now attain final Nibbāna, may the Well-Farer now attain final Nibbāna. Now is the time for the Blessed Lord’s final Nibbāna. And the Blessed Lord has said: “I will not take final Nibbāna till I have nuns and female disciples who are accomplished, ... till I have laymen-followers, ... till I have laywomen-followers ...” (as verse 7). May the Blessed Lord now take final Nibbāna ... And the Blessed Lord has said: “Evil One, I will not take final Nibbāna till this holy life has been successfully established and flourishes, is widespread, well-known far and wide, well-proclaimed among mankind everywhere.” And all this has come about. May the Blessed Lord now attain final Nibbāna, may the Well-Farer now attain final Nibbāna. Now is the time for the Blessed Lord’s final Nibbāna.’

3.9. At this the Lord said to Māra: ‘You need not worry, Evil One. The Tathāgata’s final passing will not be long delayed. Three months from now, the Tathāgata will take final Nibbāna.’

3.10. So the Lord, at the Cāpāla Shrine, mindfully and in full awareness, renounced the life-principle, and when this occurred there was a great earthquake, terrible, hair-raising and accompanied by thunder. And when the Lord saw this he uttered this verse:

‘Gross or fine, things become the sage abjured. Calm, composed, he burst becoming’s shell.’

3.11. And the Venerable Ānanda thought: ‘It is marvellous, it is wonderful how this great earthquake arises, this terrible earthquake, so dreadful and hair-raising, accompanied by thunder! Whatever can have caused it?’

3.12. He went to the Lord, saluted him, sat down to one side, and asked him that question.

3.13. ‘Ānanda, there are eight reasons, eight causes for the appearance of a great earthquake. This great earth is established on water, the water on the wind, the wind on space. And when a mighty wind blows, this stirs up the water, and through the stirring-up of the water the earth quakes. That is the first reason.

3.14. ‘In the second place there is an ascetic or Brahmin who has developed psychic powers, or a mighty and powerful deva whose earth-consciousness is weakly developed and his water-consciousness is immeasurable, and he makes the earth shudder and shake and violently quake. That is the second reason.

3.15. ‘Again, when a Bodhisatta descends from the Tusita Heaven, mindful and clearly aware, into his mother’s womb, then the earth shudders and shakes and violently quakes. That is the third reason.

3.16. 'Again, when the Bodhisatta emerges from his mother's womb, mindful and clearly aware, then the earth shudders and shakes and violently quakes. That is the fourth reason.

3.17. 'Again, when the Tathāgata gains unsurpassed enlightenment, then the earth shudders and shakes and violently quakes. That is the fifth reason.

3.18. 'Again, when the Tathāgata sets in motion the Wheel of the Dhamma, then the earth shudders and shakes and violently quakes. That is the sixth reason.

3.19. 'Again, when the Tathāgata, mindful and clearly aware, renounces the life-principle, then the earth shudders and shakes and violently quakes.

3.20. 'Again, when the Tathāgata gains the Nibbāna element without remainder, then the earth shudders and shakes and violently quakes. That is the eighth reason. These, Ānanda, are the eight reasons, the eight causes for the appearance of a great earthquake.

[3.21-33 omitted]

3.34. 'Ānanda, once I was staying at Uruvelā on the bank of the River Nerañjarā, under the Goatherd's Banyan-tree, when I had just attained supreme enlightenment. And Māra the Evil One came to me, stood to one side and said: "May the Blessed Lord now attain final Nibbāna, may the Well-Farer now attain final Nibbāna. Now is the time for the Blessed Lord's final Nibbāna."

3.35. 'At this I said to Māra: "Evil One, I will not take final Nibbāna till I have monks and disciples who are accomplished, trained, skilled, learned, knowers of the Dhamma, ... (as verse 7), till I have nuns ... laymen-followers, laywomen-followers who will ... teach the Dhamma of wondrous effect. I will not take final Nibbāna till this holy life has been successfully established and flourishes, is widespread, well-known far and wide, well-proclaimed among mankind everywhere."

3.36. 'And just now, today, Ānanda, at the Cāpāla Shrine, Māra came to me, stood to one side, and said: "Lord, may the Blessed Lord now attain final Nibbāna ... Now is the time for the Blessed Lord's final Nibbāna."

3.37. 'And I said: "You need not worry, Evil One. Three months from now the Tathāgata will take final Nibbāna." So now, today, Ānanda, at the Cāpāla Shrine, the Tathāgata has mindfully and in full awareness renounced the life-principle.'

3.38. At this the Venerable Ānanda said: 'Lord, may the Blessed Lord stay for a century, may the Well-Farer stay for a century for the benefit and happiness of the multitude, out of compassion for the world, for the benefit and happiness of devas and humans!' 'Enough, Ānanda! Do not beg the Tathāgata, it is not the right time for that!'

3.39. And a second and a third time the Venerable Ānanda made the same request. 'Ānanda, have you faith in the Tathāgata's enlightenment?'

'Yes, Lord.'

'Then why do you bother the Tathāgata with your request up to three times?'

3.40. 'But Lord, I have heard from the Lord's own lips, I have understood from the

Lord's own lips: "Whoever has developed the four roads to power ... could undoubtedly live for a century, or for the remainder of one."

'Have you faith, Ānanda?' 'Yes, Lord.'

'Then, Ānanda, yours is the fault, yours is the failure that, having been given such a broad hint, such a clear sign by the Tathāgata, you did not understand and did not beg the Tathāgata to stay for a century ... If, Ānanda, you had begged him, the Tathāgata would twice have refused you, but the third time he would have consented. Therefore, Ānanda, yours is the fault, yours is the failure.'

3.41. 'Once, Ānanda, I was staying at Rājagaha, at the Vultures' Peak. And there I said: "Ānanda, Rājagaha is delightful, the Vultures' Peak is delightful. Whoever has developed the four roads to power ... could undoubtedly live for a century..." (as verse 3). But you, Ānanda, in spite of such a broad hint did not understand and did not beg the Tathāgata to stay for a century ...

3.42. 'Once I was staying at Rājagaha in the Banyan Park ... at Robbers' Cliff ... at the Satapanni Cave on the side of Mount Vebhāra ... at the Black Rock on the slope of Mount Isigili ... at the slope by the Snakes' Pool in Cool Wood ... at the Tapodā Park ... at the Squirrels' Feeding-Ground in Veluvana ... in Jīvaka's Mango-grove ... and also at Rājagaha in the Maddakucchi deer-park.'

3.43. 'At all these places I said to you: "Ānanda, this place is delightful..."'

3.44. "'Whoever has developed the four roads to power ... could undoubtedly live for a century ...'" (as verse 3).

3.45. 'Once I was at Vesālī at the Udena Shrine...

3.46. 'Once I was at Vesālī at the Gotamaka Shrine ... at the Sattambaka Shrine ... at the Bahuputta Shrine ... at the Sārandada Shrine...

3.47. 'And now today at the Cāpāla Shrine I said: 'These places are delightful.'

Ānanda, whoever has developed the four roads to power ... could undoubtedly live for a century, or the remainder of one. The Tathāgata has developed these powers ... and he could, Ānanda, undoubtedly live for a century, or the remainder of one."

'But you, Ānanda, failing to grasp this broad hint, this clear sign, did not beg the Tathāgata to stay for a century. If, Ānanda, you had begged him, the Tathāgata would twice have refused you, but the third time he would have consented.'

3.48. 'Ānanda, have I not told you before: All those things that are dear and pleasant to us must suffer change, separation and alteration? So how could this be possible? Whatever is born, become, compounded, is liable to decay – that it should not decay is impossible. And that has been renounced, given up, rejected, abandoned, forsaken: the Tathāgata has renounced the life-principle. The Tathāgata has said once and for all: "The Tathāgata's final passing will not be long delayed. Three months from now the Tathāgata will take final Nibbāna." That the Tathāgata should withdraw such a declaration in order to live on, is not possible. Now come, Ānanda, we will go to the Gabled Hall in the Great Forest.' 'Very good, Lord.'

3.49. And the Lord went with the Venerable Ānanda to the Gabled Hall in the Great Forest. When he got there, he said: ‘Ānanda, go and gather together all the monks living in the vicinity of Vesālī, and get them to come to the assembly hall.’

‘Very good, Lord’, said Ānanda, and did so. He then returned to the Lord, saluted him, stood to one side and said: ‘Lord, the order of monks is gathered together. Now is the time for the Lord to do as he wishes.’

3.50. Then the Lord entered the assembly hall and sat down on the prepared seat. Then he said to the monks: ‘Monks, for this reason those matters which I have discovered and proclaimed should be thoroughly learnt by you, practised, developed and cultivated, so that this holy life may endure for a long time, that it may be for the benefit and happiness of the multitude, out of compassion for the world, for the benefit and happiness of devas and humans. And what are those matters ...? They are: The four foundations of mindfulness, the four right efforts, the four roads to power, the five spiritual faculties, the five mental powers, the seven factors of enlightenment, the Noble Eightfold Path.’

3.51. Then the Lord said to the monks: ‘And now, monks, I declare to you – all conditioned things are of a nature to decay – strive on untiringly. The Tathāgata’s final passing will not be long delayed. Three months from now the Tathāgata will take his final Nibbāna.’

Thus the Lord spoke. The Well-Farer having thus spoken, the Teacher said this:

‘Ripe I am in years. My life span’s determined.

Now I go from you, having made myself my refuge.

Monks, be untiring, mindful, disciplined,

Guarding your minds with well-collected thought.

He who, tireless, keeps to law and discipline,

Leaving birth behind will put an end to woe.’

[End of the third recitation-section]

4.1. Then the Lord, having arisen early and dressed, took his robe and bowl and went into Vesālī for alms. Having returned from the alms-round and eaten, he looked back at Vesālī with his ‘elephant-look’ and said: ‘Ānanda, this is the last time the Tathāgata will look upon Vesālī. Now we will go to Bhandagāma.’ ‘Very good, Lord,’ said Ānanda, and the Lord proceeded with a large company of monks to Bhandagāma, and stayed there.

4.2. And there the Lord addressed the monks: ‘It is, monks, through not understanding, not penetrating four things that I as well as you have for a long time fared on round the cycle of rebirths. What are the four? Through not understanding the Ariyan morality, through not understanding the Ariyan concentration, through not understanding the Ariyan wisdom, through not understanding the Ariyan liberation, I as well as you have for a long time fared on round the cycle of rebirths. And it is

by understanding and penetrating the Ariyan morality, the Ariyan concentration, the Ariyan wisdom and the Ariyan liberation that the craving for becoming has been cut off, the tendency towards becoming has been exhausted, and there will be no more rebirth.'

4.3. Thus the Lord spoke. The Well-Farer having thus spoken, the Teacher said this:
'Morality, *samādhi*, wisdom and final release,
These glorious things Gotama came to know.
The Dhamma he'd discerned he taught his monks:
He whose vision ended woe to Nibbāna's gone.'

4.4. Then the Lord, while staying at Bhandagāma, delivered a comprehensive discourse: 'This is morality, this is concentration, this is wisdom. Concentration, when imbued with morality, brings great fruit and profit. Wisdom, when imbued with concentration, brings great fruit and profit. The mind imbued with wisdom becomes completely free from the corruptions, that is, from the corruption of sensuality, of becoming, of false views and of ignorance.'

4.5. And when the Lord had stayed at Bhandagāma for as long as he wished, he said: 'Ānanda, let us go to Hatthigāma ... to Ambagāma ... to Jambugāma ...' giving the same discourse at each place. Then he said: 'Ānanda, let us go to Bhoganagara.'

4.6. 'Very good, Lord,' said Ānanda, and the Lord went with a large company of monks to Bhoganagara.

4.7. At Bhoganagara the Lord stayed at the Ānanda Shrine. And he said to the monks: 'Monks, I will teach you four criteria. Listen, pay close attention, and I will speak.' 'Yes, Lord,' replied the monks.

4.8. 'Suppose a monk were to say: "Friends, I heard and received this from the Lord's own lips: this is the Dhamma, this is the discipline, this is the Master's teaching," then, monks, you should neither approve nor disapprove his words. Then, without approving or disapproving, his words and expressions should be carefully noted and compared with the Suttas and reviewed in the light of the discipline. If they, on such comparison and review, are found not to conform to the Suttas or the discipline, the conclusion must be: "Assuredly this is not the word of the Buddha, it has been wrongly understood by this monk," and the matter is to be rejected. But where on such comparison and review they are found to conform to the Suttas or the discipline, the conclusion must be: "Assuredly this is the word of the Buddha, it has been rightly understood by this monk." This is the first criterion.

4.9. 'Suppose a monk were to say: "In such and such a place there is a community with elders and distinguished teachers. I have heard and received this from that community," then, monks, you should neither approve nor disapprove his words ... (as verse 4.8). That is the second criterion.

4.10. 'Suppose a monk were to say: "In such and such a place there are many elders who are learned, bearers of the tradition, who know the Dhamma, the discipline, the code of rules ..." (as verse 4.8). This is the third criterion.

4.11. ‘Suppose a monk were to say: “In such and such a place there is one elder who is learned ... I have heard and received this from that elder ...” (as verse 4.8). But where on such comparison and review they are found to conform to the Suttas and the discipline, then the conclusion must be: “Assuredly this is the word of the Buddha, it has been rightly understood by this monk.”

4.12. Then the Lord, while staying at Bhoganagara, delivered a comprehensive discourse: ‘This is morality, this is concentration, this is wisdom ...’

4.13. And when the Lord had stayed at Bhoganagara for as long as he wished, he said: ‘Ānanda, let us go to Pāvā.’ ‘Very good, Lord,’ said Ānanda, and the Lord went with a large company of monks to Pāvā, where he stayed at the mango-grove of Cunda the smith.

4.14. And Cunda heard that the Lord had arrived at Pāvā and was staying at his mango-grove. So he went to the Lord, saluted him and sat down to one side, and the Lord instructed, inspired, fired and delighted him with a talk on Dhamma.

4.15. Then Cunda said: ‘May the Lord accept a meal from me tomorrow with his order of monks!’ And the Lord consented by silence.

4.16. And Cunda, understanding his consent, rose from his seat, saluted the Lord and, passing by to the right, departed.

4.17. And as the night was ending Cunda had a fine meal of hard and soft food prepared with an abundance of “pig’s delight”, and when it was ready he reported to the Lord: ‘Lord, the meal is ready.’

4.18. Then the Lord, having dressed in the morning, took his robe and bowl and went with his order of monks to Cunda’s dwelling, where he sat down on the prepared seat and said: ‘Serve the “pig’s delight” that has been prepared to me, and serve the remaining hard and soft food to the order of monks.’ ‘Very good, Lord,’ said Cunda, and did so.

4.19. Then the Lord said to Cunda: ‘Whatever is left over of the “pig’s delight” you should bury in a pit, because, Cunda, I can see none in this world with its devas, Māras and brahmās, in this generation with its ascetics and Brahmins, its princes and people who, if they were to eat it, could thoroughly digest it except the Tathāgata.’ ‘Very good, Lord,’ said Cunda and, having buried the remains of the “pig’s delight” in a pit, he came to the Lord, saluted him and sat down to one side. Then the Lord, having instructed, inspired, fired and delighted him with a talk on Dhamma, rose from his seat and departed.

4.20. And after having eaten the meal provided by Cunda, the Lord was attacked by a severe sickness with bloody diarrhoea, and with sharp pains as if he were about to die. But he endured all this mindfully and clearly aware, and without complaint. Then the Lord said: ‘Ānanda, let us go to Kusinārā.’

‘Very good, Lord,’ said Ānanda.
*Having eaten Cunda’s meal (this I’ve heard),
He suffered a grave illness, painful, deathly;
From eating a meal of “pig’s delight”
Grave sickness assailed the Teacher.
Having purged, the Lord then said:
‘Now I’ll go to Kusinārā town.’*

4.21. Then turning aside from the road, the Lord went to the foot of a tree and said: ‘Come, Ānanda, fold a robe in four for me: I am tired and want to sit down.’ ‘Very good, Lord,’ said Ānanda, and did so.

4.22. The Lord sat down on the prepared seat and said: ‘Ānanda, bring me some water: I am thirsty and want to drink.’ Ānanda replied: ‘Lord, five hundred carts have passed this way. The water is churned up by their wheels and is not good, it is dirty and disturbed. But, Lord, the River Kakutthā nearby has clean water, pleasant, cool, pure, with beautiful banks, delightful. There the Lord shall drink the water and cool his limbs.’

4.23. A second time the Lord said: ‘Ānanda, bring me some water ...’ and Ānanda replied as before.

4.24. A third time the Lord said: ‘Ānanda, bring me some water: I am thirsty and want to drink.’ ‘Very good, Lord,’ said Ānanda and, taking his bowl, he went to the stream. And that stream whose water had been churned up by the wheels and was not good, dirty and disturbed, as Ānanda approached it began to flow pure, bright and unsullied.

4.25. And the Venerable Ānanda thought: ‘Wonderful, marvellous are the Tathāgata’s great and mighty powers! This water was churned up by wheels ... and at my approach it flows pure, bright and unsullied!’ He took water in his bowl, brought it to the Lord and told him of his thought, saying: ‘May the Lord drink the water, may the Well-Farer drink!’ And the Lord drank the water.

4.26. At that moment Pukkusa the Malla, a pupil of Ālāra Kālāma, was going along the main road from Kusinārā to Pāvā. Seeing the Lord sitting under a tree, he went over, saluted him and sat down to one side. Then he said:

‘It is wonderful, Lord, it is marvellous how calm these wanderers are!’

4.27. ‘Once, Lord, Ālāra Kālāma was going along the main road and, turning aside, he went and sat down under a nearby tree to take his siesta. And five hundred carts went rumbling by very close to him. A man who was walking along behind them came to Ālāra Kālāma and said: “Lord, did you not see five hundred carts go by?” “No, friend, I did not.” “But didn’t you hear them, Lord?” “No, friend, I did not.” “Well, were you asleep, Lord?” “No, friend, I was not asleep.” “Then, Lord, were you conscious?” “Yes, friend.” “So, Lord, being conscious and awake you neither saw nor heard five hundred carts passing close by you, even though your outer robe was bespattered with dust?” “That is so, friend.”

‘And that man thought: “It is wonderful, it is marvellous! These wanderers are so calm that though conscious and awake, a man neither saw nor heard five hundred carts passing close by him!” And he went away praising Ālāra Kālāma’s lofty powers.’

4.28. ‘Well, Pukkusa, what do you think? What do you consider is more difficult to do or attain to – while conscious and awake not to see or hear five hundred carts passing nearby or, while conscious and awake, not to see or hear anything when the rain-god streams and splashes, when lightning flashes and thunder crashes?’

4.29. ‘Lord, how can one compare not seeing or hearing five hundred carts with that – or even six, seven, eight, nine or ten hundred, or hundreds of thousands of carts to that? To see or hear nothing when such a storm rages is more difficult...’

4.30. ‘Once, Pukkusa, when I was staying at Ātumā, at the threshing-floor, the rain-god streamed and splashed, lightning flashed and thunder crashed, and two farmers, brothers, and four oxen were killed. And a lot of people went out of Ātumā to where the two brothers and the four oxen were killed.

4.31. ‘And, Pukkusa, I had at that time gone out of the door of the threshing-floor and was walking up and down outside. And a man from the crowd came to me, saluted me and stood to one side. And I said to him:

4.32. “Friend, why are all these people gathered here?” “Lord, there has been a great storm and two farmers, brothers, and four oxen have been killed. But you, Lord, where have you been?” “I have been right here, friend.” “But what did you see, Lord?” “I saw nothing, friend.” “Or what did you hear, Lord?” “I heard nothing, friend.” “Were you sleeping, Lord?” “I was not sleeping, friend.” “Then, Lord, were you conscious?” “Yes, friend.” “So, Lord, being conscious and awake you neither saw nor heard the great rainfall and floods and the thunder and lightning?” “That is so, friend.”

4.33. ‘And, Pukkusa, that man thought: “It is wonderful, it is marvellous! These wanderers are so calm that they neither see nor hear when the rain-god streams and splashes, lightning flashes and thunder crashes!” Proclaiming my lofty powers, he saluted me, passed by to the right and departed.’

4.34. At this, Pukkusa the Malla said: ‘Lord, I reject the lofty powers of Ālāra Kālāma as if they were blown away by a mighty wind or carried off by a swift stream or river! Excellent, Lord, excellent! It is as if someone were to set up what had been knocked down, or to point out the way to one who had got lost, or to bring an oil lamp into a dark place, so that those with eyes could see what was there. Just so the Blessed Lord has expounded the Dhamma in various ways. And I, Lord, go for refuge to the Blessed Lord, the Dhamma and the Sangha. May the Blessed Lord accept me from this day forth as a lay-follower as long as life shall last!’

4.35. Then Pukkusa said to one man: ‘Go and fetch me two fine sets of robes of cloth-of-gold, burnished and ready to wear.’ ‘Yes, Lord,’ the man replied, and did so. And Pukkusa offered the robes to the Lord, saying: ‘Here, Lord, are two fine sets of robes of cloth-of-gold. May the Blessed Lord be graciously pleased to accept them!’ ‘Well

then, Pukkusa, clothe me in one set and Ānanda in the other.’ ‘Very good, Lord,’ said Pukkusa, and did so.

4.36. Then the Lord instructed, inspired, fired and delighted Pukkusa the Malla with a talk on Dhamma. Then Pukkusa rose from his seat, saluted the Lord, passed by to the right, and departed.

4.37. Soon after Pukkusa had gone, Ānanda, having arranged one set of the golden robes on the body of the Lord, observed that against the Lord’s body it appeared dulled. And he said: ‘It is wonderful, Lord, it is marvellous how clear and bright the Lord’s skin appears! It looks even brighter than the golden robes in which it is clothed.’ ‘Just so, Ānanda. There are two occasions on which the Tathāgata’s skin appears especially clear and bright. Which are they? One is the night in which the Tathāgata gains supreme enlightenment, the other is the night when he attains the Nibbāna-element without remainder at his final passing. On these two occasions the Tathāgata’s skin appears especially clear and bright.

4.38. ‘Tonight, Ānanda, in the last watch, in the Sāla grove of the Mallas near Kusinārā, between two Sāla trees, the Tathāgata’s final passing will take place. And now, Ānanda, let us go to the River Kakutthā.’ ‘Very good, Lord,’ said Ānanda.

Two golden robes were Pukkusa’s offering: Brighter shone the Teacher’s body than its dress.

4.39. Then the Lord went with a large number of monks to the River Kakutthā. He entered the water, bathed and drank and, emerging, went to the mango grove, where he said to the Venerable Cundaka: ‘Come, Cundaka, fold a robe in four for me. I am tired and want to lie down.’ ‘Very good, Lord’, said Cundaka, and did so.

4.40. Then the Lord adopted the lion-posture, lying on his right side, placing one foot on the other, mindfully and with clear awareness bearing in mind the time of awakening. And the Venerable Cundaka sat down in front of the Lord.

4.41. The Buddha having gone to Kakutthā the river,

With its clear, bright and pleasant waters,

Therein the Teacher plunged his weary body.

Tathāgata - without an equal in the world.

Surrounded by the monks whose head he was.

The Teacher and Lord, Preserver of Dhamma,

To the Mango Grove the great Sage went,

And to Cundaka the monk he said:

‘On a fourfold robe I’ll lie down.’

And thus adjured by the great Adept,

Cundaka placed the fourfold robe.

The Teacher laid his weary limbs to rest

While Cundaka kept watch beside him.

4.42. Then the Lord said to the Venerable Ānanda: ‘It might happen, Ānanda, that Cunda the smith should feel remorse, thinking: “It is your fault, friend Cunda, it is by your misdeed that the Tathāgata gained final Nibbāna after taking his last meal from you!” But Cunda’s remorse should be expelled in this way: “That is your merit, Cunda, that is your good deed, that the Tathāgata gained final Nibbāna after taking his last meal from you! For, friend Cunda, I have heard and understood from the Lord’s own lips that these two alms-givings are of very great fruit, of very great result, more fruitful and advantageous than any other. Which two? The one is the alms-giving after eating which the Tathāgata attains supreme enlightenment, the other that after which he attains the Nibbāna-element without remainder at his final passing. These two alms-givings are more fruitful and profitable than all others. Cunda’s deed is conducive to long life, to good looks, to happiness, to fame, to heaven and to lordship.” In this way, Ānanda, Cunda’s remorse is to be expelled.’

4.43. Then the Lord, having settled this matter, at that time uttered this verse:

‘By giving, merit grows, by restraint, hatred’s checked.

He who’s skilled abandons evil things.

As greed, hate and folly wane, Nibbāna’s gained.’

[End of the fourth recitation-section]

5.1. The Lord said: ‘Ānanda, let us cross the Hiraññavatī River and go to the Mallas’ Sāla grove in the vicinity of Kusinārā.’ ‘Very good, Lord,’ said Ānanda, and the Lord, with a large company of monks, crossed the river and went to the Sāla grove. There the Lord said: ‘Ānanda, prepare me a bed between these two Sāla trees with my head to the north. I am tired and want to lie down.’ ‘Very good, Lord,’ said Ānanda, and did so. Then the Lord lay down on his right side in the lion-posture, placing one foot on the other, mindful and clearly aware.

5.2. And those twin Sāla trees burst forth into an abundance of untimely blossoms, which fell upon the Tathāgata’s body, sprinkling it and covering it in homage. Divine Coral Tree flowers fell from the sky, divine sandal-wood powder fell from the sky, sprinkling and covering the Tathāgata’s body in homage. Divine music and song sounded from the sky in homage to the Tathāgata.

5.3. And the Lord said: ‘Ānanda, these Sāla trees have burst forth into an abundance of untimely blossoms ... Divine music and song sound from the sky in homage to the Tathāgata. Never before has the Tathāgata been so honoured, revered, esteemed, worshipped and adored. And yet, Ānanda, whatever monk, nun, male or female lay-follower dwells practising the Dhamma properly, and perfectly fulfils the Dhamma-way, he or she honours the Tathāgata, reveres and esteems him and pays him the supreme homage. Therefore, Ānanda, “We will dwell practising the Dhamma properly and perfectly fulfil the Dhamma-way” – this must be your watch-word.’

5.4. Just then the Venerable Upavāna was standing in front of the Lord, fanning him. And the Lord told him to move: ‘Move aside, monk, do not stand in front of me.’ And the Venerable Ānanda thought: ‘This Venerable Upavāna has for long been the Lord’s attendant, keeping close at hand, at his beck and call. And now in his last hour the Lord tells him to stand aside and not stand in front of him. Why ever does he do that?’

5.5. And he asked the Lord about this. ‘Ānanda, the devas from ten world-spheres have gathered to see the Tathāgata. For a distance of twelve yojanas around the Mallas’ Sāla grove near Kusinārā there is not a space you could touch with the point of a hair that is not filled with mighty devas, and they are grumbling: “We have come a long way to see the Tathāgata. It is rare for a Tathāgata, a fully-enlightened Buddha, to arise in the world, and tonight in the last watch the Tathāgata will attain final Nibbāna, and this mighty monk is standing in front of the Lord, preventing us from getting a last glimpse of the Tathāgata!”

5.6. ‘But, Lord, what kind of devas can the Lord perceive?’ ‘Ānanda, there are sky-devas whose minds are earthbound, they are weeping and tearing their hair, raising their arms, throwing themselves down and twisting and turning, crying: “All too soon the Blessed Lord is passing away, all too soon the Well-Farer is passing away, all too soon the Eye of the World is disappearing!” And there are earth-devas whose minds are earthbound, who do likewise. But those devas who are free from craving endure patiently, saying: “All compounded things are impermanent – what is the use of this?”

5.7. ‘Lord, formerly monks who had spent the Rains in various places used to come to see the Tathāgata, and we used to welcome them so that such well-trained monks might see you and pay their respects. But with the Lord’s passing, we shall no longer have a chance to do this.’

5.8. ‘Ānanda, there are four places the sight of which should arouse emotion in the faithful. Which are they? “Here the Tathāgata was born” is the first. “Here the Tathāgata attained supreme enlightenment” is the second. “Here the Tathāgata set in motion the Wheel of Dhamma” is the third. “Here the Tathāgata attained the Nibbāna-element without remainder” is the fourth. And, Ānanda, the faithful monks and nuns, male and female lay-followers will visit those places. And any who die while making the pilgrimage to these shrines with a devout heart will, at the breaking-up of the body after death, be reborn in a heavenly world.

5.9. ‘Lord, how should we act towards women?’ ‘Do not see them, Ānanda.’ ‘But if we see them, how should we behave, Lord?’ ‘Do not speak to them, Ānanda.’ ‘But if they speak to us, Lord, how should we behave?’ ‘Practise mindfulness, Ānanda.’

5.10. ‘Lord, what shall we do with the Tathāgata’s remains?’ ‘Do not worry yourselves about the funeral arrangements, Ānanda. You should strive for the highest goal, devote yourselves to the highest goal, and dwell with your minds tirelessly, zealously devoted to the highest goal. There are wise Khattiyas, Brahmins and householders who are devoted to the Tathāgata: they will take care of the funeral.’

5.11. 'But, Lord, what are we to do with the Tathāgata's remains?' 'Ānanda, they should be dealt with like the remains of a wheel-turning monarch.' 'And how is that, Lord?' 'Ānanda, the remains of a wheel-turning monarch are wrapped in a new linen-cloth. This they wrap in teased cotton wool, and this in a new cloth. Having done this five hundred times each, they enclose the king's body in an oil-vat of iron, which is covered with another iron pot. Then having made a funeral-pyre of all manner of perfumes they cremate the king's body, and they raise a stūpa at a crossroads. That, Ānanda, is what they do with the remains of a wheel-turning monarch, and they should deal with the Tathāgata's body in the same way. A stūpa should be erected at the crossroads for the Tathāgata. And whoever lays wreaths or puts sweet perfumes and colours there with a devout heart will reap benefit and happiness for a long time.

5.12. 'Ānanda, there are four persons worthy of a stūpa. Who are they? A Tathāgata, Arahant, fully-enlightened Buddha is one, a Pacceka Buddha is one, a disciple of the Tathāgata is one, and wheel-turning monarch is one. And why is each of these worthy of a stūpa? Because, Ānanda, at the thought: "This is the stūpa of a Tathāgata, of a Pacceka Buddha, of a disciple of the Tathāgata, of a wheel-turning monarch," people's hearts are made peaceful, and then, at the breaking-up of the body after death they go to a good destiny and rearise in a heavenly world. That is the reason, and those are the four who are worthy of a stūpa.'

5.13. And the Venerable Ānanda went into his lodging and stood lamenting, leaning on the door-post: 'Alas, I am still a learner with much to do! And the Teacher is passing away, who was so compassionate to me!' Then the Lord enquired of the monks where Ānanda was, and they told him. So he said to a certain monk: 'Go, monk, and say to Ānanda from me: "Friend Ānanda, the Teacher summons you."' 'Very good, Lord,' said the monk, and did so. 'Very good, friend,' Ānanda replied to that monk, and he went to the Lord, saluted him and sat down to one side.

5.14. And the Lord said: 'Enough, Ānanda, do not weep and wail! Have I not already told you that all things that are pleasant and delightful are changeable, subject to separation and becoming other? So how could it be, Ānanda – since whatever is born, become, compounded is subject to decay – how could it be that it should not pass away? For a long time, Ānanda, you have been in the Tathāgata's presence, showing loving-kindness in acts of body, speech and mind, beneficially, blessedly, whole-heartedly and unstintingly. You have achieved much merit, Ānanda. Make the effort, and in a short time you will be free of the corruptions.'

5.15. Then the Lord addressed the monks: 'Monks, all those who were Arahant, fully-enlightened Buddhas in the past have had just such a chief attendant as Ānanda, and so too will those Blessed Lords who come in the future. Monks, Ānanda is wise. He knows when it is the right time for monks to come to see the Tathāgata, when it is the right time for nuns, for male lay-followers, for female lay-followers, for kings, for royal ministers, for leaders of other schools, and for their pupils.'

5.16. ‘Ānanda has four remarkable and wonderful qualities. What are they? If a company of monks comes to see Ānanda, they are pleased at the sight of him, and when Ānanda talks Dhamma to them they are pleased, and when he is silent they are disappointed. And so it is, too, with nuns, with male and female lay-followers. And these four qualities apply to a wheel-turning monarch: if he is visited by a company of Khattiyas, of Brahmins, of householders, or of ascetics, they are pleased at the sight of him and when he talks to them, and when he is silent they are disappointed. And so too it is with Ānanda.’

5.17. After this the Venerable Ānanda said: ‘Lord, may the Blessed Lord not pass away in this miserable little town of wattle-and-daub, right in the jungle in the back of beyond! Lord, there are other great cities such as Campā, Rājagaha, Sāvatti, Sāketa, Kosambī or Vārānāsī. In those places there are wealthy Khattiyas, Brahmins and householders who are devoted to the Tathāgata, and they will provide for the Tathāgata’s funeral in proper style.’ ‘Ānanda, don’t call it a miserable little town of wattle-and-daub, right in the jungle in the back of beyond!’

5.18. ‘Once upon a time, Ānanda, King Mahāsudassana was a wheel-turning monarch, a rightful and righteous king, who had conquered the land in four directions and ensured the security of his realm, and who possessed the seven treasures. And, Ānanda, this King Mahāsudassana had this very Kusinārā, under the name of Kusāvati, for his capital. And it was twelve yojanas long from east to west, and seven yojanas wide from north to south. Kusāvati was rich, prosperous and well-populated, crowded with people and well-stocked with food.

Just as the deva-city of Ālakamandā is rich, prosperous and well-populated, crowded with yakkhas and well-stocked with food, so was the royal city of Kusāvati. And the city of Kusāvati was never free of ten sounds by day or night: the sound of elephants, horses, carriages, kettle-drums, side-drums, lutes, singing, cymbals and gongs, with cries of “Eat, drink and be merry!” as tenth.

5.19. ‘And now, Ānanda, go to Kusinārā and announce to the Mallas of Kusinārā: “Tonight, Vāsetthas, in the last watch, the Tathāgata will attain final Nibbāna. Approach him, Vāsetthas, approach him, lest later you should regret it, saying: ‘The Tathāgata passed away in our parish, and we did not take the opportunity to see him for the last time!’” ‘Very good, Lord,’ said Ānanda and, taking robe and bowl, he went with a companion to Kusinārā.

5.20. Just then the Mallas of Kusinārā were assembled in their meeting-hall on some business. And Ānanda came to them and delivered the Lord’s words.

5.21. And when they heard Ānanda’s words, the Mallas, with their sons, daughters-in-law and wives were struck with anguish and sorrow, their minds were overcome with grief so that they were all weeping and tearing their hair ... Then they all went to the Sāla grove where the Venerable Ānanda was.

5.22. And Ānanda thought: ‘If I allow the Mallas of Kusinārā to salute the Lord individually, the night will have passed before they have all paid homage. I had better let them pay homage family by family, saying: “Lord, the Malla so-and-so with his children, his wife, his servants and his friends pays homage at the Lord’s feet.”’ And so he presented them in that way, and thus allowed all the Mallas of Kusinārā to pay homage to the Lord in the first watch.

5.23. And at that time a wanderer called Subhadda was in Kusinārā, and he heard that the ascetic Gotama was to attain final Nibbāna in the final watch of that night. He thought: ‘I have heard from venerable wanderers, advanced in years, teachers of teachers, that a Tathāgata, a fully-enlightened Buddha, only rarely arises in the world. And tonight in the last watch the ascetic Gotama will attain final Nibbāna. Now a doubt has arisen in my mind, and I feel sure that the ascetic Gotama can teach me a doctrine to dispel that doubt.’

5.24. So Subhadda went to the Mallas’ Sāla grove, to where the Venerable Ānanda was, and told him what he had thought: ‘Reverend Ānanda, may I be permitted to see the ascetic Gotama?’ But Ānanda replied: ‘Enough, friend Subhadda, do not disturb the Tathāgata, the Lord is weary.’ And Subhadda made his request a second and a third time, but still Ānanda refused it.

5.25. But the Lord overheard this conversation between Ānanda and Subhadda, and he called to Ānanda: ‘Enough, Ānanda, do not hinder Subhadda, let him see the Tathāgata. For whatever Subhadda asks me he will ask in quest of enlightenment and not to annoy me, and what I say in reply to his questions he will quickly understand.’ Then Ānanda said: ‘Go in, friend Subhadda, the Lord gives you leave.’

5.26. Then Subhadda approached the Lord, exchanged courtesies with him, and sat down to one side, saying: ‘Venerable Gotama, all those ascetics and Brahmins who have orders and followings, who are teachers, well-known and famous as founders of schools, and popularly regarded as saints, like Pūrana Kassapa, Makkhali Gosāla, Ajita Kesakambali, Pakudha Kaccāyana, Sañjaya Belatthaputta and the Nigantha Nātaputta – have they all realized the truth as they all make out, or have none of them realized it, or have some realized it and some not?’

‘Enough, Subhadda, never mind whether all, or none, or some of them have realized the truth. I will teach you Dhamma, Subhadda. Listen, pay close attention, and I will speak.’ ‘Yes, Lord,’ said Subhadda, and the Lord said:

5.27. ‘In whatever Dhamma and discipline the Noble Eightfold Path is not found, no ascetic is found of the first, the second, the third or the fourth grade. But such ascetics can be found, of the first, second, third and fourth grade in a Dhamma and discipline where the Noble Eightfold Path is found. Now, Subhadda, in this Dhamma and discipline the Noble Eightfold Path is found, and in it are to be found ascetics of the first, second, third and fourth grade. Those other schools are devoid of [true] ascetics; but if in this one the monks were to live the life to perfection, the world would not lack for Arahants.

*‘Twenty-nine years of age I was
When I went forth to seek the Good.
Now over fifty years have passed
Since the day that I went forth
To roam the realm of wisdom’s law
Outside of which no ascetic is
[First, second, third or fourth degree]. Other schools of such are bare,
But if here monks live perfectly,
The world won’t lack for Arahants.’*

5.28. At this the wanderer Subhadda said: ‘Excellent, Lord, excellent! It is as if someone were to set up what had been knocked down, or to point out the way to one who had got lost, or to bring an oil lamp into a dark place, so that those with eyes could see what was there. Just so the Blessed Lord has expounded the Dhamma in various ways. And I, Lord, go for refuge to the Blessed Lord, the Dhamma and the Sangha. May I receive the going-forth in the Lord’s presence! May I receive ordination!’

5.29. ‘Subhadda, whoever, coming from another school, seeks the going-forth and ordination in this Dhamma and discipline, must wait four months on probation. And at the end of four months, those monks who are established in mind may let him go forth and give him ordination to the status of a monk. However, there can be a distinction of persons.’ ‘Lord, if those coming from other schools must wait four months on probation, ... I will wait four years, and then let them give me the going-forth and the ordination!’ But the Lord said to Ānanda: ‘Let Subhadda go forth!’ ‘Very good, Lord,’ said Ānanda.

5.30. And Subhadda said to the Venerable Ānanda: ‘Friend Ānanda, it is a great gain for you all, it is very profitable for you, that you have obtained the consecration of discipleship in the Teacher’s presence.’ Then Subhadda received the going-forth in the Lord’s presence, and the ordination. And from the moment of his ordination the Venerable Subhadda, alone, secluded, unwearying, zealous and resolute, in a short time attained to that for which young men of good family go forth from the household life into homelessness, that unexcelled culmination of the holy life, having realized it here and now by his own insight, and dwelt therein: ‘Birth is destroyed, the holy life has been lived, what had to be done has been done, there is nothing further here.’ And the Venerable Subhadda became another of the Arahants. He was the last personal disciple of the Lord.

[End of the fifth recitation-section]

6.1. And the Lord said to Ānanda: ‘Ānanda, it may be that you will think: “The Teacher’s instruction has ceased, now we have no teacher!” It should not be seen like this, Ānanda, for what I have taught and explained to you as Dhamma and discipline will, at my passing, be your teacher.

6.2. ‘And whereas the monks are in the habit of addressing one another as “friend,” this custom is to be abrogated after my passing. Senior monks shall address more junior monks by their name, their clan or as “friend,” whereas more junior monks are to address their seniors either as “Lord” or as “Venerable Sir.”

6.3. ‘If they wish, the order may abolish the minor rules after my passing.

6.4. ‘After my passing, the monk Channa is to receive the Brahmā-penalty.’ ‘But, Lord, what is the Brahmā-penalty?’ ‘Whatever the monk Channa wants or says, he is not to be spoken to, admonished or instructed by the monks.’

6.5. Then the Lord addressed the monks, saying: ‘It may be, monks, that some monk has doubts or uncertainty about the Buddha, the Dhamma, the Sangha, or about the path or the practice. Ask, monks! Do not afterwards feel remorse, thinking: “The Teacher was there before us, and we failed to ask the Lord face to face!”’ At these words the monks were silent. The Lord repeated his words a second and a third time, and still the monks were silent. Then the Lord said: ‘Perhaps, monks, you do not ask out of respect for the Teacher. Then, monks, let one friend tell it to another.’ But still they were silent.

6.6. And the Venerable Ānanda said: ‘It is wonderful, Lord, it is marvellous! I clearly perceive that in this assembly there is not one monk who has doubts or uncertainty ...’ ‘You, Ānanda, speak from faith. But the Tathāgata knows that in this assembly there is not one monk who has doubts or uncertainty about the Buddha, the Dhamma or the Sangha or about the path or the practice. Ānanda, the least one of these five hundred monks is a Stream-Winner, incapable of falling into states of woe, certain of Nibbāna.’

6.7. Then the Lord said to the monks: ‘Now, monks, I declare to you: all conditioned things are of a nature to decay – strive on untiringly.’ These were the Tathāgata’s last words.

6.8. Then the Lord entered the first jhāna. And leaving that he entered the second, the third, the fourth jhāna. Then leaving the fourth jhāna he entered the Sphere of Infinite Space, then the Sphere of Infinite Consciousness, then the Sphere of No-Thingness, then the Sphere of Neither-Perception-Nor-Non-Perception, and leaving that he attained the Cessation of Feeling and Perception. Then the Venerable Ānanda said to the Venerable Anuruddha: ‘Venerable Anuruddha, the Lord has passed away.’

‘No, friend Ānanda, the Lord has not passed away, he has attained the Cessation of Feeling and Perception.’

6.9. Then the Lord, leaving the attainment of the Cessation of Feeling and Perception, entered the Sphere of Neither-Perception-Nor-Non-Perception, from that he entered the Sphere of No-Thingness, the Sphere of Infinite Consciousness, the Sphere of Infinite Space. From the Sphere of Infinite Space he entered the fourth jhāna, from there the third, the second, and the first jhāna. Leaving the first jhāna, he entered the second, the third, the fourth jhāna. And, leaving the fourth jhāna, the Lord finally passed away.

6.10. And at the Blessed Lord's final passing there was a great earthquake, terrible and hair-raising, accompanied by thunder. And Brahmā Sahampati uttered this verse:

*'All beings in the world, all bodies must break up:
Even the Teacher, peerless in the human world,
The mighty Lord and perfect Buddha's passed away.'*

And Sakka, ruler of devas, uttered this verse:

*'Impermanent are compounded things, prone to rise and fall,
Having risen, they're destroyed, their passing truest bliss.'*

And the Venerable Anuruddha uttered this verse:

*'No breathing in and out – just with steadfast heart
The Sage who's free from lust has passed away to peace.
With mind unshaken he endured all pains:
By Nibbāna the Illumined's mind is freed.'*

And the Venerable Ānanda uttered this verse:

*'Terrible was the quaking, men's hair stood on end,
When the all-accomplished Buddha passed away.'*

And those monks who had not yet overcome their passions wept and tore their hair, raising their arms, throwing themselves down and twisting and turning, crying: 'All too soon the Blessed Lord has passed away, all too soon the Well-Farer has passed away, all too soon the Eye of the World has disappeared!' But those monks who were free from craving endured mindfully and clearly aware, saying: 'All compounded things are impermanent – what is the use of this?'

6.11. Then the Venerable Anuruddha said: 'Friends, enough of your weeping and wailing! Has not the Lord already told you that all things that are pleasant and delightful are changeable, subject to separation and to becoming other? So why all this, friends? Whatever is born, become, compounded is subject to decay, it cannot be that it does not decay. The devas, friends, are grumbling.'

'Venerable Anuruddha, what kind of devas are you aware of?' 'Friend Ānanda, there are sky-devas whose minds are earth-bound they are weeping and tearing their hair ... And there are earth-devas whose minds are earth-bound, they do likewise. But those devas who are free from craving endure patiently, saying: "All compounded things are impermanent. What is the use of this?"'

6.12 Then the Venerable Anuruddha and the Venerable Ānanda spent the rest of the night in conversation on Dhamma. And the Venerable Anuruddha said: 'Now go, friend Ānanda, to Kusinārā and announce to the Mallas: "Vāsetthas, the Lord has passed away. Now is the time for you to do as you think fit." "Yes, Lord," said Ānanda, and having dressed in the morning and taken his bowl and robe, he went with a companion to Kusinārā...'

(Maurice Walshe, trans., Wisdom Publications)



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