

The Light of Asia

or

THE GREAT RENUNCIATION
(MAHABHINISHKRAMANA)

Being

THE LIFE AND TEACHING OF GAUTAMA
Prince of India and Founder of Buddhism
(As told in prose by an Indian Buddhist)

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Editor: HRISHIKESH SHARAN

Dedicated with reverence to
my most respected,
Mataji-Pitaji,
Dadiji-Dadaji,
Naniji-Nanaji
and
all ancestors

Without whose blessings
it was not possible
to publish it.

~ Hrishikesh Sharan

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Foreword

During the International Convention of the Theosophical Society, 2009, held at Adyar, Chennai, India, my Hindi prose version of the translation of the 'Light of Asia' by Sir Edwin Arnold was released.

During the convention, I happened to speak to and evoke response from some of my overseas English speaking delegate friends as to whether they thoroughly comprehended the book 'Light of Asia' as it was in archaic English, written nearly 130 years ago. After discussions with them I felt that if this work were published in prose form in English, just as the prose version 'Asia Ki Jyoti' in Hindi, it would be greatly welcomed by the English speaking readers.

The book the 'Light of Asia' has inspired millions of readers all over the world. It has touched my life also. Hence I immediately took up this prose translation work in all earnestness and now the new book is before you.

Hindi translation has limited readership and I hope that the English version will be widely accepted by the readers all over the world. I have tried to keep the transcription as simple as possible, at the same

time making humble efforts to maintain the spirit of the book.

I am thankful to my wife, Minu, for her patience and tolerance. Without her cooperation and constant support, this and other works in the past could not have been possible. I am thankful to Ms. Rupa of Mayfair Lodge, Theosophical Society, Kolkata, who being a great scholar in English literature took pains to go through the manuscript and suggest improvements. I am grateful to Rev. Dr. Rewatha Thero, General Secretary, Maha Bodhi Society of India for his continual guidance. He has been a source of great inspiration to me. I am indebted to the Corporate Body of the Buddha Educational Foundation, Taiwan for having agreed to publish this Dhamma book for free distribution all over the world. I shall fail in my duty if do not place on record my sense of gratitude to Venerable Dr. B. Chandima Thero who has been constantly encouraging me to write Dhamma books. But for his personal deep interest in the spreading of the message of Shakyamuni, this and my other works in the past would not have seen the light of the day. I am sincerely thankful to him and his team who have been doing quality work par excellence.

I hope the book will inspire the English readership to go deeper and deeper into the

teachings of Buddha so that their lives will be transformed. Tulsidas, the great epic writer, has written in Ramayana, 'One who tries to know about You, becomes like You.' I wish that all who make sincere and serious efforts to assimilate/live the teachings of Tathagata attain the enlightenment, which is the ultimate destiny of us all.

Hrishikesh Sharan.

Preface of Sir Edwin Arnold

In the following Poem I have sought, by the medium of an imaginary Buddhist votary, to depict the life and character and indicate the philosophy of that noble hero and reformer, Prince Gautama of India, the founder of Buddhism.

A generation ago little or nothing was known in Europe of this great faith of Asia, which had nevertheless existed during twenty-four centuries, and at this day surpasses, in the number of its followers and the area of its prevalence, any other form of creed. Four hundred and seventy millions of our race live and die in the tenets of Gautama; and the spiritual dominions of this ancient teacher extend, at the present time, from Nepal and Ceylon, over the whole Eastern Peninsula, to China, Japan, Tibet, Central Asia, Siberia and even Swedish Lapland. India itself might fairly be included in this magnificent Empire of Belief; for though the profession of Buddhism has for the most part passed away from the land of its birth, the mark of Gautama's sublime teaching is stamped ineffaceably upon modern Brahmanism, and the most characteristic habits and convictions of the Hindus are clearly due to the benign influence of Buddha's precepts. More than a third of mankind, therefore,

owe their moral and religious ideas to this illustrious prince, whose personality, though imperfectly revealed in the existing sources of information, cannot but appear the highest, gentlest, holiest, and most beneficent, with one exception, in the history of Thought. Discordant in frequent particulars, and sorely overlaid by corruptions, inventions, and misconceptions, the Buddhistical books yet agree in the one point of recording nothing-no single act or word-which mars the perfect purity and tenderness of this Indian teacher, who united the truest princely qualities with the intellect of a sage and the passionate devotion of a martyr. Even M. Barthelemy St. Hilaire, totally misjudging, as he does, many points of Buddhism, is well cited by Professor Max Muller as saying of Prince Siddhartha, 'His life has only one pointed task. His constant heroism equals his convictions, and the theory he advocated may even be questioned, but the personal examples that he gives are unbeatable. It is the perfect model all the virtues that he preaches, his self-restraint, his charity, his unalterable sweetness does not contradict a single moment. He quietly prepares his doctrine by six years of retirement and meditation, propagate it by the sole power of speech and persuasion over half a century, and when he dies in the arms of his disciples, it is with the calmness of an immortal sage who has been practicing well all his life, and that is assured to have found the truth.' To Gautama has consequently

been granted this stupendous conquest of humanity; and though he discountenanced ritual, and declared himself, even when on the threshold of Nirvana, to be only what all other men might become—the love and gratitude of Asia, disobeying his mandate, have given him fervent worship. Forests of flowers are daily laid upon his stainless shrines, and countless millions of lips daily repeat the formula. ‘I take refuge in Buddha!’

The Buddha of this poem—if, as need not be doubted, he really existed—was born on the borders of Nepal about 620 B.C., and died about 543 B.C. at Kusinagara in Oudh. In point of age, therefore, most other creeds are youthful compared with this venerable religion, which has in it the eternity of a universal hope, the immortality of a boundless love, an indestructible element of faith in final good, and the proudest assertion ever made of human freedom. The extravagances which disfigure the record and practice of Buddhism are to be referred to that inevitable degradation which priesthoods always inflict upon great ideas committed to their charge. The power and sublimity of Gautama’s original doctrines should be estimated by their influence, not by their interpreters; nor by that innocent but lazy and ceremonious church which has arisen on the foundations of the Buddhistic Brotherhood or ‘Sangha’.

I have put my poem into a Buddhist's mouth, because, to appreciate the spirit of Asiatic thoughts, they should be regarded from the Oriental point of view; and neither the miracles which consecrate this record, nor the philosophy which it embodies, could have been otherwise so naturally reproduced. The doctrine of Transmigration, for instance-startling to modern minds-was established and thoroughly accepted by the Hindus of Buddha's time; that period when Jerusalem was being taken by Nebuchadnezzar, when Nineveh was falling to the Medes, and Marseilles was founded by the Phoenicians. The exposition here offered of so antique a system is of necessity incomplete, and-in obedience to the laws of poetic art-passes rapidly by many matters philosophically most important, as well as over the long ministry of Gautama. But my purpose has been obtained if any just conception be here conveyed of the lofty character of this noble prince, and of the general purport of his doctrines. As to these latter there has arisen prodigious controversy among the erudite, who will be aware that I have taken the imperfect Buddhistic citations much as they stand in Spence Hardy's work, and have also modified more than one passage in the received narratives. The views, however, here indicated of 'Nirvana,' 'Dharma,' 'Karma,' and the other chief features of Buddhism, are at least the fruits of considerable study, and also of a firm conviction that a third of mankind would never

have been brought to believe in blank abstractions, or in Nothingness as the issue and crown of Being.

Finally, in reverence to the illustrious Promulgator of this 'Light of Asia,' and in homage to the many eminent scholars who have devoted noble labours to his memory, for which both repose and ability are wanting to me, I beg that the shortcomings of my too-hurried study may be forgiven. It has been composed in the brief intervals of days without leisure, but is inspired by an abiding desire to aid in the better mutual knowledge of East and West. The time may come, I hope, when this book and my *Indian Song of Songs*, and *Indian Idylls*, will preserve the memory of one who loved India and the Indian peoples.

EDWIN ARNOLD

Chapter-I

Story prior to birth

This is the scripture of the Saviour of the world, Mahakarunik Buddha – known as the Prince Siddhartha, unlike anyone on earth, heaven and hell – all honoured, wisest, greatest, most pitiful, the Teacher of Nirvana and the Law.

Thus came he to be born again for men:

Below the highest sphere four Regents* sit who rule our world. They have zones under them where the saintliest dead spirits wait for thirty thousand years and then are reborn to live again. Mahakarunik Buddha, waiting in that sky, came for our sake indicating five sure signs of birth. The Devas** knew about these signs and said, 'Buddha will go again to help the world'. 'Yea!', he spoke, 'Now I will go again to help the world. This is the last of the many times that I shall go. Birth and death will hence end for me and for all those who will learn my Law. I will go down

* Regent: Regent is a person appointed to administer a state because the monarch is absent.

** Devas: Sanskrit/Hindi equivalent of gods.

among the pious Sakya* people who live south-ward of the snow-clad Himalayas, where a just King rules and pious people live.’

Queen’s Dream

That night the wife of King Suddhodana, Queen Maya, while asleep beside her Lord, dreamed a strange dream: dreamt that a splendid star, six rayed of rosy-pearl colour, changed into a six-tusked elephant, as white as the milk of Kamdhenu, shot through the void and shining entered into her womb from right side. When awoke, the mother’s breast was filled with immortal bliss. In the morning a lovely light forewent over more than the half of the earth. The strong hills shook, the waves calmed down; all flowers that blow by day came forth as if it were high noon. The Queen’s joy passed down to the farthest hells.

A tender whisper was heard, ‘Oh you,’ it said, “The dead who will be reborn again and the living ones who will die one day should rise and hear! Have hope! Buddha is coming.”

* Sakya: The clan lineage to which Buddha belonged.

At this much peace spread in numberless limbos and the world's heart throbbed. A wind blew with unknown freshness over lands and seas. When it was dawn, the dream-readers were told of the dream. They explained, 'The dream is good! The crab is in conjunction with the sun. The Queen shall bear a holy child of wondrous wisdom, profiting all human beings. He will liberate the men from ignorance or rule the world, if he decides to rule.'

In this way was the holy Buddha born:

Birth

When the days were complete, Queen Maya stood at noon under a Palash (Dhak) tree in the palace grounds, holding a stately trunk, straight as a temple-shaft, with crown of glossy leaves and fragrant blooms. Knowing that the time had come – for all things knew that the time had come – the conscious tree bent down its boughs to make a bower above her majesty, the Queen Maya. The earth put forth a thousand flowers suddenly to spread a carpet while the hard rock gave out a limpid crystal stream to make the bath ready. Thus she brought forth her child pangless – he having on his perfect form the thirty two marks of the blessed birth, of which the great news was given to the King in the palace. When the

bearers brought the painted palanquin to fetch the queen and the son home, the four Regents of the Earth became the bearers of the poles who came down from Mountain Sumeru, who write men's deeds on brazen plates. The Angel of the East whose hosts are clad in silver robes and bear the pearls, the Angel of the South whose horsemen, the Kumbhandas ride blue steeds with sapphire shields, the Angel of the West, the Nagas riding blood-red steeds with coral shields; the Angel of the North, the Yakshas, all in gold, sitting on yellow horses, bearing shields of gold came from four directions. These came down with their invisible pomp and show and took the poles taking the cast of wearing the outward garb of bearers. Most mighty gods and goddesses walked free with men that day though men could not recognize them. The Heaven was also filled with happiness, knowing that the Mahakarunik Buddha had come once again.

But King Suddhodana did not know of all this. Besides some bad signs continued to trouble him till his dream – readers told the King that the Prince will dominate the entire earth, a Chakravartin, such a one who comes once in a thousand years to rule- had seven gifts – the Chakra-ratna, the divine disc; the gem, the horse, the Asva-ratna, that proud steed which tramps the clouds; a snow-white elephant, the hasti-ratna born to be a King, the crafty minister, the General unconquered; and the wife of peerless grace,

the Istri-ratna, lovelier than the Dawn. The King saw these signs in the wondrous boy and gave order that his town should hold festivities.

Festivities

The roads were swept, rose-odours sprinkled in the streets, the trees were hung with lamps and flags. The merry making crowds watched the sword-players, imitators, the jugglers, charmers, swingers and rope walkers intently. The nautch-girls (dancing girls) in their glittering ornamented skirts performed with chime and bells round their restless feet. The masked men wrapped in skins of bear and deer, the tiger tamers, wrestlers, quail-fighters, beaters of drum and twanglers of wire made the people happy by command.

On this occasion, the merchants came from far and near bringing rich gifts in golden trays – goat-shawls and nard and jade, turkisses with ‘evening sky’ tint, woven clothes so fine that even twelve folds could not hide a modest face; waist-clothes sewn thick with pearls and sandal-wood. Tributes were thus paid from different cities. The Prince was named as ‘Sarvarthasiddh’, meaning ‘All Prospering’, in short called ‘Siddhartha’.

Arrival of Saint Asit

Amongst the various strangers who came to see the King and the boy, was a grey-haired saint named Asita whose ears had been closed to earthly things long ago and who could hear the heavenly sounds. While performing prayer under a peepul tree, he heard the Devas singing songs at Buddha's birth. He was wondrous in knowledge and traditions due to his age and fasts. When he drew near the King, the King saluted him and the Queen laid her baby before such holy feet. But when he saw the Prince, the old sage cried, 'Ah, Queen, not so!' and thereupon he touched the dust eight times, prostrated himself with face on the ground and said, 'O Baby! I worship thee! You are He! I see the rosy light, the foot sole marks, the soft curled tendril of the Swastika*, the thirty two sacred primal signs, the eighty lesser marks. You are Buddha and you will preach the Law and save all men in flesh who will learn the Law, though I shall never hear your sermons. I, who lately longed to die, shall die soon. However, I have seen you. Know, O King! This is that flower which blossoms on our human tree once in many myriad years but when blossomed fills the world with wisdom's scent and love's dropped honey. From your royal root a heavenly Lotus has

* Swastika : an ancient and worldwide symbol

sprung. Such is this happy house! Yet all causes are not for being happy here, for death must come to you, O sweet Queen! who is dear to all men and gods for this great birth! You have henceforth grown too sacred for more woes of the world and life is woe. Therefore, in seven days you will attain painlessly the state of end of pains i.e. death.'

And this came true for on the seventh night Queen Maya slept smilingly and woke no more passing contented to Trayastrinshas heaven where countless Devas worship her and wait in attendance on that radiant Motherhead. But for the baby, people found out a foster-mother, Princess Mahaprajapati. Her breast nourished with noble milk the lips of Him whose lips comfort the worlds.

Education

When the Prince was of the age of 8 years, the careful King thought of teaching his son all that a Prince should learn for he still wanted to avoid the occurrence of the omen, those miracles, the glories and sufferings of a Buddha. So, in his full council of Ministers he asked, 'Who is the wisest man, great sirs! to teach my Prince that which a Prince should know?' To this each minister gave answer with instant voice, 'King! Visvamitra is the wisest one, the greatest

knower of the scriptures, the best in learning, the manual arts and all.'

Thus Visvamitra came and heard the commands of the King. On an auspicious day, the Prince took up his slate of ox-red sandal-wood, beautified by gems around the rim, made smooth with dust of emery. He took the slate and the writing pencil and stood with his eyes bent down before the sage, who said, 'Child, write this scripture,' speaking slowly the verse named 'Gayatri' which only the high-born hear!

*Om, tat savitur varenyam
Bhargo devasya dhimahi
Dhiyo yo nah prachodayat.*

'Acharya, I write,' meekly replied the Prince. He quickly wrote the Gayatri mantra on the dust not in one script but in many characters – the sacred verse; Nagri and Dakshin, Ni, Mangal, Parusha, Yava, Tirthi, Uk, Darad, Sikhyani, Mana, Madhyachar etc.

He wrote it in pictured writings and in the form of speech of signs, language of cave-men and the sea-people, those who worship snakes beneath the earth, those who adore flame and the sun's orb, of the Magicians and the dwellers on the hillocks. With his writing-stick he wrote on his slate the verse one after another in the strange scripts of all the nations. After

reading the verse written in every tongue, Visvamitra said, 'It is enough. Let us take up numbers. Repeat after me the numeration till we reach the lakh: one, two, three, four to ten and then by tens to hundreds, thousands'. After finishing this, the child named the digits, decades, centuries without any pause, reached around a lakh but did not stop. He softly continued, 'Then comes the koti, nahut, ninnahut, khamba, viskhamba, abab, attata, kumuds, gundhikas and utpalas, pundarikas and upto padumas. After the last, the padumas, you count the utmost grains of Hastagiri ground to finest dust. But beyond that numeration is the katha, used to count the stars of night, then the koti-katha used for measuring the ocean drops; Ingga, the calculus of circulars; sarvanikshepa by which you deal with all the sands of Ganga, till we come to Antah-Kalpas, where the unit is the sand of ten crore (hundred million) Gangas (The river Ganges). If one seeks on more comprehensive scale, the arithmetic mounts by the Asankhya, which is the tale of all the drops that would fall on all the worlds by daily rain in ten thousand years. And then we pass to Maha-Kalpas, by which the Gods compute their future and their past.'

'It is good,' the sage rejoined, 'Most noble Prince! If you already know it, is there any need that I should teach you the mensuration of the lineal?' Humbly replied the boy, 'Acharya ! Be pleased to hear

from me.’ Ten paramanus make a parasukshma, ten of those build the trasarene and seven trasarenes make a mote’s length floating in the beam, seven motes make the whisker-point of mouse, and ten of these one likhya, ten likhyas make a yuka and ten yukas a heart of barley, seven times of which is a wasp-waist. Then we get the size of the grain of mung and mustard and the barley-corn, ten of which give the size of the finger-joint and twelve joints the span wherefrom we reach the cubit equal to bow-length, lance-length, while twenty lengths of the lance measure what is named a “breath”. This is the space as man may stride with lungs once filled. A gow is forty times this ‘breath’ and four times that is called yojana and Master! If it pleases you, I shall recite how many sun-motes lie from end to end within a yojana.’ Thereafter, with instant skill, the little Prince pronounced the total of the atoms but when Visvamitra heard it, he prostrated on his face before the boy saying, ‘You are the Teacher of your teachers – you and not I am the Guru. I worship you, sweet Prince! You come to my school only to show that you know all without the books and have fair reverence and humility also towards your teacher.’

This reverence Mahakarunika Buddha kept for all his schoolmates though it was beyond what was taught to him in school. He was gentle in speech and also wise, princely, soft-mannered, modest, deferent

and tender-hearted though of fearless blood. No horseman in his youthful group rode bolder than him in pleasant chase of the shy gazelles. No keener driver of the chariot won any mimic contest near the palace-courts. Yet in the mid-play the boy would often pause letting the deer pass free! He would often yield his half-won race because the labouring steeds showed painful breath or if his princely mates got saddened to lose or if sometimes some dream swept over his thoughts. And with the passing of years this compassion of our Lord kept on waxing as a great tree grows from two soft leaves to spread its shade afar. The child hardly knew of sorrow, pain or tears save as strange words for things not felt by kings, nor ever to be felt by them.

Story of Devadatta and Swan

Then something strange happened. One day in spring over the royal garden a flock of wild swans was passing in the sky, voyaging north to their nesting places in the Himalayas, calling in love- notes along their snowy line. The bright birds were being piloted by the fond – love of one of them which was in the front. Devadatta, cousin of the Prince, pointed his bow and sent an arrow which stuck the wide wing of the foremost swan. The injured swan fell on the free blue road with the bitter arrow fixed on it, bright

scarlet blood drops staining the pure feather. Seeing this, Prince Siddhartha took the bird tenderly up and rested it on his lap—sitting with knees crossed, as Mahakarunik Buddha sits – and with a soothing touch removed the wild bird’s fright, composed its disturbed wings and calmed its quick heart. He nursed it into peace with light kind palms as soft as an hour unrolled plantain – leaves. While the left hand held the bird, the right hand drew the cruel steel forth from the wound and laid cool leaves and healing honey on the sore. As yet the boy knew so little of pain that curiously he pressed the arrow’s barb into his wrist and cried with pain to feel its sting and turned with tears to soothe the bird again.

Then someone came and said, ‘My Prince has shot a swan which fell among the roses here. He has bid me to pray to you to send it. Will you send it?’ ‘No’ said Siddhartha, ‘If the bird were dead then it might be well to send it to the slayer but the swan is alive. My cousin has only killed the god-like speed which throbbed in this white wing.’ Then answered Devadatta, ‘The wild thing, living or dead is his who fetched it down. It was no man’s in the clouds but having fallen it is mine. Give me my prize, fair cousin.’ Then our Teacher laid the swan’s neck beside his own smooth cheek and spoke gravely, ‘Say not that the bird is mine. This bird is the first of many things which shall be mine by right of mercy and love’s

lordliness for now I know what is it within me that stirs. I shall teach compassion to men and be an interpreter of speechless world abating the cursed flood of woe and not for man alone. But if the Prince still disputes let him submit his matter to the wise and we will wait for their decision.'

So was it done. In full divan of the King this business was debated and many thought this way in favour of Siddhartha and many that way in favour of Devadatta till arose an unknown priest before them and said, 'If life is being discussed, the saviour of a life owns more the living thing than he who sought to slay it. The slayer spoils and wastes whereas the cherisher sustains. Give the bird to Siddhartha.' This judgment was found just by all but when the King sent his guards to fetch the saint for honouring him, he was gone and the guards saw a hooded snake glide forth.

The gods often come thus!

Thus our Mahakarunik Buddha began his works of mercy. Yet he did not know more as yet of grief than that one bird's which when healed, went joyous to its flock.

Visiting the kingdom with father

On another day the King said. 'Come, sweet son ! Let us see the pleasures of the spring and how the fruitful earth yields its riches to the reaper, how my kingdom, which shall be yours when I shall be put on the pyre of flames, feeds all its mouths and also keeps the King's chest filled. Fair is the season with new leaves, bright coloured flowers, green grass and cries of plough – time and bright is the weather. Let us take a round of the Kingdom.' So they rode the chariot through the land of wells and gardens, up and down the rich fertile red land of the kingdom going from place to place.

They saw that the ploughing animals strained their strong shoulders in the noise making yoke dragging the ploughs. The fat soil rose and rolled in smooth long waves back and forth from the plough. The farmer drove the plough with his both feet well planted upon the plough going up and down to make the trench deep. Among the palms the tinkle of the rippling water rang and the glad earth embroidered it with balsams and the spears of lemon – grass wherever it ran. Elsewhere one saw the sowers going forth to sow. All the jungle laughed with nesting songs. The trees and bushes made whispering sound with small creatures like lizard, bee, beetle and

creeping things – all pleased at the spring time. The sun – birds flashed in the mango – shoots. Only the loud coppersmith toiled alone at his green forge. The bee-eaters hunted, chasing the purple butterflies. Beneath striped squirrels raced, the mynas raised their head briskly and picked the grains to eat. The seven brown sisters chattered in the thorn, the pied fish – tiger hung above the pool. The egrets rode leisurely on the back of the buffaloes. The kites sailed in circles in the golden air. The peacocks flew near the painted temple. The blue doves cooed from every well. The village drums beat far off for some marriage festival. All things spoke of peace, prosperity and plenty and the Prince saw and rejoiced. But looking deep, he saw the thorns which grow upon this rose of life, how the dark skinned peasant sweated for his wage, toiling for leave to live and how he urged and persuaded the great – eyed oxen through the flaming hours, goading their velvet flanks. Then he also observed how lizard was fed on ant, snake on him and kite on both and how the fish – hawk robbed the fish – tiger of that which it had caught. He saw the shrike chasing the bulbul, which hunted the jewelled butterflies. Everywhere each slew a slayer and in turn was slain, life living upon death. So the entire fair show was veiled by vast, savage, merciless conspiracy of mutual murder from the worm to the man who himself kills his fellows.

First Lesson of Meditation

Seeing all these - the hungry ploughman and his labouring oxen, their dewlaps blistered with the bitter yoke, the violent desire to live which makes all living a conflict, a struggle between two opposed persons, Prince Siddhartha sighed, 'Is this that happy earth which they brought me forth to see? How peasant's bread is mixed with salt in the sweat! How hard is the service of the oxen! How fierceful is the war of weak and strong! The air is full of such plots. There is no refuge even in water. Kindly let me go aside a little and muse on what you showed me.'

So saying, compassionate Buddha seated himself under a jumbu – tree with ankles crossed – as holy statues sit – and first began to meditate on this deep disease of life, what its source is and whence is its remedy. So vast a pity filled him, such wide love for living things, such passion to heal pain, that by their stress his princely spirit passed to ecstasy and he was completely purified of the mortal taint of sense and self. The boy attained thereat *Dhyana*, the first step of the 'Path'.

That very time five holy Devas flew high overhead whose free wings started wavering as they passed the tree. 'What power superior draws us

from our flight?’ they asked –for spirits feel the presence of the divine forces everywhere and know the sacred presence of the Pure. Then looking downward, they saw Siddhartha who was to become Buddha, crowned with a rose-hued halo round his head, lost in thoughts to save the mankind while from the grove a voice was heard, ‘ Rishis! This is He who shall help the world. Descend and worship.’ So the Bright ones came down and sang a song of praise folding their wings. Then they journeyed on, taking the good news to gods.

But when the King sought for the Prince as the noon was past, he found him still musing under the jambu tree. The sun had hastened to the western hills and yet while all shadows moved, the jambu –tree’s shadow stayed in one corner, overspreading Siddhartha lest the sloped rays should strike that sacred head. The messenger who saw this sight was stunned and heard a voice, ‘Let the King’s son be where he is! Till the shadow goes forth from his heart, my shadow will not shift.’

Chapter-II

King's Worries

When our Teacher came to eighteen years of age, the King commanded that three stately palaces should be built - one of square stone beams with sweet smell arising out of cedar lining, warm for the winter days; one of coloured striped marbles, cool for summer heat and one of burnt bricks ornamentally decorated with blue tiles, pleasant at the spring time when the champak flowers bud. These palaces were named as Subha, Suramma and Ramma. Pleasing gardens bloomed around them. Streams went along uncontrolled and musky smelling shrubs and trees spread out full length with many decorated pavilions and fair lawns. Siddhartha wandered in them at will. Something or the other giving pleasure was provided to him every hour. He knew of happy moments only, for life was rich with youthful blood flowing alive at quick speed. Yet sometimes the shadow of his meditation came back as the lake's water gets gloomy with the shadow of silver clouds moving in the sky.

When the King observed this, he called his Ministers and said, 'Think you Sirs! How the old Rishi spoke and what my dream—readers foretold. This boy,

who is dearer to me than my heart's blood, shall be of universal command, trampling the neck of all his enemies, a King of kings – and this is in my heart. Otherwise, he shall walk the sad and lowly path of self-sacrifice and pious pains, gaining who knows what good, when all will be lost and to this his sad eyes do still look for amidst my palaces. But you all are wise and, therefore, you should counsel me how his feet may be turned to that proud road and he should walk on that and that all good forecasts come true which will give him the Earth to rule, if he would like to rule.'

The eldest Minister answered, 'Maharaja! love will cure all these small ills. Create the attraction of women about his idle heart. What knows this noble boy of beauty yet, the eyes that make one forget the heavens and the warmth of the soothing lips? Provide him gentle and pleasing wife and attractive playmates. One who cannot be held back with brass chains can be easily bound by a girl's hair.'

All agreed to this suggestion. But the King questioned, 'If we seek him wives, love chooses often with other types of eyes. If we arrange a beauty's garden around and ask him to pluck what flower pleases him, he will simply smile and sweetly shun away the joy about which he does not know at all'. Then another minister said, 'The *barasingh* roams

only till the fated arrow strikes him. Someone will definitely delight the Prince, some face will surely look like a paradise to him, some form will appear fairer than the dawn which wakes the world. My King! Please do this. Order to hold a festival where the kingdom's young maids shall be competitors, in youthfulness, beauty and sports of the Sakyas. Let the Prince give them prizes and when the lovely maids pass in front of him, there shall be those who will keep a close but secret watch if one or two change the fixed sadness of his tender look. Thus we may choose a maid for him with his own eyes and cheat him to be led to happiness'. The idea seemed good and was approved by the King.

Love

One day the drum beaters announced that the young and beautiful maidens come to the palace for it was the King's command to arrange a court of pleasure where the Prince would give away the prizes, something precious to all and the most precious prize would be for the most beautiful judged! Thus Kapilavastu's maidens assembled at the gate, each with her dark hair freshly smoothed and bound, eyelashes shining with the application of *soorma-stick*, freshly-bathed and scented; all in colourful shawls and clothes. The slim hands and feet were freshly

stained with crimson colour and bright *tilka*-spots were put. It was a beautiful show of all those girls of the kingdom who slowly-walked past the throne with large black eyes fixed on the ground. Seeing the Prince made their hearts tremble, not so much in wonderment of his royal majesty, but more at the sight of his calmness and gentleness and also as he was so beyond them. Each maid, afraid to gaze at him, took her gift with her eyelids down. And if some people hailed someone more beautiful than her rivals meriting royal smiles, she stood like a scared antelope to touch the gracious hand and then fled to join her mates, trembling at the favour of receiving the gift, from one so seemingly divine, so high and saint-like and beyond her world. Thus the beautiful maids moved, one after other, the city's flowers. After sometime when this beauteous march was getting over and the prizes were exhausted, came young Yasodhara, and they, who stood near Siddhartha, saw how the Princely boy's face changed as the radiant girl approached. The girl possessed a heavenly form. Her gait was like that of Parvati, eyes like a deer in love-time, face so fair that words cannot describe her beauty. She alone looked full, folding her palms across her bosom in boy's full gaze and with her stately neck unbent asked smilingly, 'Is there a gift for me?' 'The gifts are gone,' replied the Prince, 'Yet, take this instead, dear sister, a favour of which our happy city justifiably boasts'. Saying this he

loosened the emerald necklace from his neck and tied its green beads round her dark and silk-soft waist. Their eyes met and from their looks outflowed love.

Story of hunter's son

Long after, when enlightenment was attained, the disciples prayed to Mahakarunika Buddha to tell them why his heart was aflame at the first glance of the Sakya girl. To this he answered, 'We were not strangers. In ages long gone by, I was a hunter's son who played with the forest girls by the side of river Yamuna where Nandadevi stands. The hunter's son sat as an umpire while they raced beneath the fir trees like hares in the evening running in their playful rings. He crowned one with flower-stars, another with long plumes and the jungle cock and yet another with fir-apples. One who ran the last came first for him and the boy gave her a gentle show of affection and also his heart's love. They lived many happy years in the forest and in the forest itself they died together. See! As the hidden seed shoots after rainless years, so do good and evil, pains and pleasures, hate and love. All dead deeds come forth again bearing bright leaves or dark, sweet fruit or sour. Thus I was the hunter's son and Yasodhara, the forest girl. And while the wheel of birth and death turns round, that which has been, must be between us two'.

They who watched the Prince at the prize-giving ceremony heard and saw all that took place there. They told the anxious King how Siddhartha sat unconcerned till the Great Suprabuddha's child, Yasodhara passed there and how at the sudden sight of her, his glow changed and how she gazed on him and how did he react on seeing her. They also told of the jewel-gift and what beside passed in their speaking glance.

Proposal for Marriage

The very affectionate King smiled, 'Look! We have found out an allurements. Now take counsel and act to fetch herewith our falcon from the clouds. Let messengers be sent to ask for the hands of the maid in marriage for my son.'

But it was the law of the Sakyas that when anyone asked for the hands of a beautiful and pleasing maid of noble background in marriage, he was required to prove his skill in martial arts against all suitors who challenged him. Lest this custom should be broken for the King himself, therefore, Yasodhara's father spoke, 'Please tell the King: My daughter is sought by princes far and near. If your most gentle son can bend the bow, swing sword and ride a horse better than them, then he would be the

best in all and to us also. But how will this be possible with his monastic ways?' On hearing this, the King's heart was filled with sorrow, for now the Prince started begging sweet Yosodhara for wife in vain. The King was worried as Devadatta was the best at the bow, Arjuna the master in horse racing and Nanda, the chief, excelled in sword play. However, when the Prince came to know it, he laughed and said, 'These things, I too, have learned. Please make royal announcement that your son will meet and face all challengers at their chosen sports. I think I shall not lose my love for such as these.' So it was announced that on the seventh day the Prince, Siddhartha had summoned all those Princes who so wanted to compete with him in feats of manliness. Yasodhara would be the victor's crown.

Test in Martial Arts

Therefore, upon the seventh day, the Sakya lords, people of the town and country assembled in the maidan. The maid too went with her relatives, carried as a bride with music in a palanquin beautifully decorated by ornamented covering and flowers, drawn by gold-horned oxen.

Devadatta, being born of royal line, made claims on Yasodhara. Nanda and Arjuna too, both

noblemen, best of all the youth present there, also claimed her till Prince Siddhartha reached there riding his white horse, Kantaka, which neighed, surprised at seeing this great crowd of strange people. Also Siddhartha looked with wondering eyes on all those people born below the throne, who lived differently than the kings, ate differently and yet were so alike the rich in joys and griefs. When the Prince saw sweet Yasodhara, he smiled brightly, drew his silken rein, stopped Kantaka and leaped to the earth from his broad back and spoke loudly, 'One who is not the worthiest is not worthy of this pearl. Let my rivals prove that I have dared to desire too much in seeking the hands of Yasodhara.' Hearing this, Nanda challenged him for the arrow-test and got a brass drum set six gows away, Arjuna six and Devadatta eight gows away but Prince Siddhartha asked them to set his drum ten gows from off the line as target until it looked as small as a cowry-shell. Then they shot their arrows. Nanda pierced his drum and Arjuna his. Devadatta sent a well-aimed arrow through both sides of his signpost. The crowd shouted in marvel and sweet Yasodhara dropped the golden sari over her fearful eyes lest she should see the Prince's arrow fail. But Siddhartha, taking the bow of lacquered cane with sinews bound and strung with silver wire which none except very strong arms could draw a span, played it. He, laughingly, drew the twisted string till the horns kissed and the thick belly

broke suddenly and said, 'That is for play, not for love. Has no one a bow more fit to be used by the Sakya lords?' And one from the crowd replied, 'There is Sinhahanu's bow kept in the temple since when one does not know, which none can string, nor draw if it be strung'. 'Fetch me', Siddhartha commanded immediately, 'that weapon meant for a man!' Then the ancient bow made of black steel and laid with gold tendrils on its branching curves like bison-horns was brought by a number of people and Siddhartha tried its strength across his knee and spoke, 'Shoot now with this, my cousins'. But they could not bring the inflexible arms a hand's breadth for use. Then the Prince, lightly leaning, bent the bow, slipped home the eye upon the notch and pulled the wire sharply which, like eagle's wing, thrilled the air, sang forth so clear and loud that feeble and weak at home inquired that day, 'What is this sound?' And people answered them, 'It is the sound of Sinhahanu's bow which the Prince has strung and is going to shoot'. Then the Prince fitted an arrow, drew it and shot it. The arrow cut through the sky and drove right through the farthest drum, did not stop in its flight but glided lightly over the plain beyond and away beyond eyes' visibility.

Next Devadatta challenged with the sword and cut a Talas-tree six fingers thick, Arjuna seven and Nanda cut through nine but Siddhartha's blade cut off

with one flashing stroke two such stems which had grown together. But his cut was so smooth that the trunks upstood straight even after being cut. Seeing that Siddhartha's strike had failed, Nanda cried, 'His cutting failed!' and Yasodhara trembled seeing the trees erect. The Devas of the air who were watching blew light winds from the south and both green trees crashed into the sand, clean cut.

Then the horses were brought, high spirited, nobly-bred. They were taken three times round the maidan but white Kantaka left even the fastest one far behind. So swift was he that before the foam fell from his mouth to earth, he had already covered twenty spear-lengths. Seeing this Nanda said, 'We too might win this contest with a horse like Kantaka. Fetch an untrained horse and let men see as to who can best ride him.' So the grooms brought a fully grown black stallion, as dark as night, bound by three chains, fierce-eyed, with wide nostrils and tossing mane, unshod, unsaddled as no rider had so far rode him. Each Sakya youth tried to jump on his mighty back three times but the hot steed went backwards furiously and threw them forcefully to the ground in dust. They were all put to shame. Only Arjuna could hold his seat for a while and bidding loose the chains, lashed the horse, shook it a bit and held the proud jaws fast with his master-hand. The savage stallion was in storms of wrath, rage and fear. It circled the

maidan once, as if half-tamed, but suddenly turned with naked teeth and took a grip of the foot of Arjuna and tore him down. It would have killed him but the grooms ran in and chained the mad beast again. Then all men cried, 'Let Prince Siddhartha not meddle with this bhut (ghost) whose liver is a tempest and the blood is the red flame.' But the Prince said, 'Let the chains be removed and give me his forelock only.' It was done accordingly. The Prince held the forelock with quiet grasp and speaking a few words in low voice, laid the right palm across the stallion's eyes and drew gently down the angry face. He patted it all along the neck and heavily breathing flanks till the astonished men saw the night-black horse sink his fierce crest and stand subdued as if he knew our Lord and worshipped him. He did not stir even when Siddhartha mounted him and went soberly at the touch of the knee and rein before the whole crowd cried out, 'Strive no more for Siddhartha is the best.' All the suitors also joined them saying, 'He is the best!'

Marriage

Suprabuddha, father of the maid, said, 'You being the dearest, it was in our hearts to see you the best. Yet which magic taught you more of manhood amidst your rose-gardens and dreams? Where did

you learn these arts of war and such work which is so unsurpassing in worldly skills? Anyway, take, fair Prince, the treasure that you have won.' Then at the command of her father, the lovely maid rose from her seat in the crowd, took a garland of mogra-flowers, lightly drew the veil of black and gold above her brow and proudly paced through the youths, until she came to the place where Siddhartha stood in divine grace, just alighted from the night-dark steed. It stood there with his strong neck meekly bent underneath his arm. After reaching there, Yasodhara bowed before the Prince and uncovered her heavenly beautiful face beaming with happiness of love. Then she hung the fragrant garland on his neck, laid her perfect head on his bosom and bowed forward to touch his feet with proud glad eyes saying, ' Dear Prince ! Look at me! I am yours!' The whole crowd rejoiced when they saw them passing through them, hand held in hand and hearts beating together, the veil of black and gold drawn again.

Mystery of black and gold veil

Long after he had already attained enlightenment, the disciples asked Mahakarunik Buddha to explain why did Yasodhara wear this black and gold saree and stepped out so proudly through the defeated princes. And to this the world-honoured

answered, 'Until now this was unknown to me; no it seemed half known. While the wheel of birth and death turns round, past things, thoughts and buried deeds enliven again and come back. I now remember. Many thousands births ago I roamed in Himalaya's hanging woods as a tiger with the rest of the hungry and striped group. I, who am Buddha, laid ambushed in the Kusa grass, gazed with green blinked eyes upon the animals which came grazing near and nearer to their death. Near my day-lair (den) or underneath the stars, I roamed for prey, savage, unsatisfied, sniffing the paths for track of man and deer. Amidst the beasts that were my companions then, I met in the deep jungle by the side of the marshy *jheel*(lake), a tigress, most beautiful, in the forest. Her beauty set all the male tigers at war; her hide was lit with gold, black-embroidered like the veil Yasodhara wore for me. The war in that wood became more and more fierce. It was fought with tooth and claw while underneath a neem tree the fair tigress watched us bleed profusely as to who would win the hand of her love. And I remember, at the end, she came making angry growl with bared teeth past the injured tigers whom I had conquered and with light yellowish brown jaws licked my quick heaving flank and went into the wild with me with proud steps, showing feelings of love. The wheel of birth and death turns low and high!

Thus the maid, a winning reward, was given to the Prince and when the stars were favourable – Mesha, the Red Ram, Lord of Heaven, was in position, the marriage was fixed. As per the Sakya tradition, the golden gadi (cushion seats) were set, carpets spread, the wedding garlands hung, the arm-threads tied, the sweet cake cut, rice and attar (essence) thrown and two straws were floated on the reddened milk, which coming close, read, ‘Love till death.’ As per the custom, the seven steps were taken thrice around the sacred fire, gifts bestowed on holy men, alms and temple-offerings were made, mantras were read and the garments of the bride and bridegroom were tied. Then the old father spoke to the young Prince, ‘Worshipful Prince! She that was ours till now is now only yours. Be good to her who has given her life to you’. Thereafter they brought sweet Yasodhara home with songs and trumpets to the arms of the Prince. And love was all in all in their lives.

Pleasures of life

But the King did not trust the love alone. He gave orders to his ministers to build a grand and beautiful love’s prison-house so that there was no wonderful building on earth like the superb Vishramvan, the Prince’s pleasure place. Midway in those wide palace-grounds rose a hill whose base

was bathed by the river Rohini, murmuring down from the low lands of the Himalayas, ultimately to become a tributary of the Ganges. Southward grew trees of tamarind and sal, thickly set with pale sky-coloured ganthi flowers which secluded the palace completely out the world. Only sometimes the city's low sound came through the wind, no louder than the sound the bees buzz when out of sight in shrubs or trees. Northward the unspoiled slopes of great Himalaya's wall rose high, ranged in white lines of vegetation against the blue sky-not yet treaded, infinite, wonderful –whose vast, higher lands and lifted universe of the top of the mountain and steep rugged rocks, shoulder and shelf, green slope and icy pyramidal peak, split ravine and branched precipice led climbing thought higher and higher, until it seemed to stand in heaven and speak with gods. Beneath the snow, the dark forests spread, sharp laced with forcefully jumping waterfalls and veiled with clouds. At lower heights grew rose-oaks and the great fir groves where pheasant's call and panther's cry echoed. Rattling sound of wild sheep on the stones and scream of circling eagles were heard. Under these the plain shone like a praying-carpet spread at the foot of those divine altars. In front of this the builders set the bright decorated pavilion, fairly placed on the terraced hill with towers on either side of the hill and the pillared cloisters round. Its beams were carved with stories of old times: Radha and Krishna and the forest

girls, Sita, Hanuman and Draupadi. On the middle veranda was carved the statue of God Ganesha, with disc and hook, sitting well disposed to bless all, to bring wisdom and wealth, his sidelong trunk encircled with flowers.

Moving through the winding ways of the garden and the court one reached the inner gate, made of white marble, with pink veins. The lintel was studded with lazuli, a blue gemstone. The entry was made of translucent gypsum, and the doors of sandal-wood cut in pictured panelling whereby the delighted foot passed to the imposing, huge halls and shadowy leafy shelters in the garden. One could go through the majestic stairs passing through the decorated net, latticed galleries, beneath the covering of the painted roofs. There were many clustering columns, where cool fountains, bordered with lotus and water-lilies danced and fishes shined through their crystal, red, gold and blue colours. The great-eyed gazelles fed on the rough shoots of blown red roses in the shady shelters. Birds of rainbow coloured wings flapped among the palms. Green and grey doves built their safe nests on gilded cornices. The peacocks drew the splendours of their trailing back-feathers on the shining pavements, calmly watched by milk-white herons and the small house-owls. The reddish-purple-necked parrots swung from fruit to fruit. The yellow sunbirds continuously made softly chicking sounds

from flower to flower. The shy lizards sat lazily on the lattice fearlessly and the squirrels ran to take feed from hand. The shy black snake that gives fortune to households sunned his sleepy coils under the moon-flowers where the musk-deer played. Brown-eyed monkeys talked continuously with the crows. Everything was peaceful. And in this house of love beautiful faces were kept for attendance so that in every part of the palace only lovely sights with gentle faces were seen. They were trained in soft speech and willingness to serve; each one glad to serve, pleased to provide pleasure and proud to obey the orders of the Prince or the Princess. The life passed gently with attention diverted from struggles of life, like a smooth stream, surrounded by all-time flowers, with Yasodhara being the Queen of the delightful court.

But in the innermost part and beyond the richness of those hundred halls was located a secret chamber which had been skillfully made with all lovely fanciful mental images and day dreams to soothe the mind or send it to sleep. The entrance of it was an enclosure, square-roofed by the sky. And in the midst was a tank – built of milky marble and laid with slabs of milk-white marbles. Inlaid work of agate-stones had been done round the tank, on the steps and all along the decorated band. This gave feeling of coolness as if one were treading on snow in summer-

time. The sunbeams spread their golden rays and passing into verandah and niche it turned to shadows, silvery, pale and dim as if the day had stopped and turned into evening of love and silence at that secluded gate in the garden. Then beyond the gate was the chamber beautiful, sweet: a wonder of the world! Soft light, from perfumed lamps made of pearls and from the pale stars fell through the windows on the golden cloths spread and on the silken beds. The magnificent splendour of the purdah fringes were lifted to take only the loveliest in. Here nobody knew whether it was night or day as here the soft light, brighter than sunrise but as soft as the evening's light, was always present. And here sweet air always flowed which was more joy giving than the morning breeze but as cool as midnight's breath. The lutes were played day and night and delicious foods, early fresh fruits and *sherbets* (soft drinks), newly chilled with snow of the Himalaya and sweetmeats pleasant to the taste were served with sweet tree-milk in ivory cups. A chosen band of dancing-girls, cup-bearers and cymballers, delicate and dark-browed ministers of love, served there day and night. They fanned the sleeping eyes of the happy Prince and when he was awake, they led back his thoughts to bliss with music that whispered through the flowers, charming passionate love songs and dreamy dances, along with the chime of ankle-bells and wave of arms and silver *veena-strings*, while essences of musk, champak and

the blue haze spread from burning spices which soothed his soul to drowsiness by sweet Yasodhara. Thus Siddhartha lived forgetting what he had seen during his first outing with his father.

Further the King had issued command that within those walls no mention should be made of death, age, sorrow, pain or sickness. If someone dropped her look dark in that lovely court or if her feet fainted in the dance, that guiltless criminal was immediately sent away on exile from that paradise; lest the Prince should see and suffer at her grief. Alert managers watched to execute those who spoke of the harsh world outside, where there were aches and plagues, tears and fears, the lamenting of the mourners and descriptions of the smoke of pyres. It was betrayal of the orders of the King, if a silver thread was seen in the hair of the singing girl or a court-dancer. Every morning the dying rose was plucked, dead leaves hid and all evil sights removed, for the King thought, ' If he shall pass his youth far from the things which will move him to longings and yearnings to think anxiously on the empty eggs of thought, the shadow of this fate, too vast for man, may fade and I shall see him grow to that great stature of a fair sovereign when he will rule all lands – if he will rule-the King of kings and glory of his time.'

For this reason, in that pleasant prison-house love was the jail and the delights its bars. But far removed from sight, the King ordered a massive wall to be built and in the wall a gate with bronze folding-doors was made which needed hundred people to roll it back on its hinges and also the noise of the opening of that monstrous gate was heard full upto half a yojana. And inside this, another gate was made and within that yet another gate. One had to necessarily pass through the three gates if he wanted to leave that pleasure-house. Thus there were three mighty gates, bolted and properly secured, and over each gate was set a faithful watch and the King's order said, 'Don't allow any man to pass the gates even if he should be the Prince. You have to obey it at the cost of your lives, even though that person may be my son.'

Chapter-III

Invisible Message to the Prince

Our Lord Buddha lived in the calm and quiet palace of happiness, entertainment, love and affection not knowing at all about sorrows, want, pain, disease, age or death. Sometimes, however, he was like some persons in sleep who roam in dreams over the seas in the night and land exhausted on the sea shores by the day, bringing novel goods from that black voyage. Sometimes when he rested with his soft head in a quiet way lulled on the bosom of his wife, Yasodhara, while her fond hands fanned slowly to send him to sleep gently, he would start up and cry, 'My world!, Oh, world ! I hear! I know! I come!' And Yasodhara, terrified at it, would ask, 'What ails my Lord!' with large eyes awe struck, for at such times the pity in his look was most divine and his face would be like that of a god. At this he would smile away again to stop her tears. To console her, he would ask for the veena to be played.

Once the musicians kept a stringed gourd, a musical instrument, on the shelf by the window. Here the wind could drag on feebly over the keys of the musical instrument and play at will. The wind passing

through the silver strings made wild music and those who were around heard only that low sound. But Prince Siddhartha heard the Devas play on these strings and give message which was meant for him. The song which fell on his ears was as follows:

'We are the voices of the wandering wind which moan for rest but never get the rest. See! as the wind is, so is the mortal life – a moan, a sigh, a sob, a storm, a strife.

Wherefrom we came and whence shall we go, neither we know nor you; nor do we know where life springs from and where it will go. We are like you, ghosts from the empty void. What pleasure can we get of our changeful pain?

What pleasure have you got from your changeless bliss? None! If love could last, there could be joy in this. But life's way is the wind's way. All these things are but brief voices breathed on shifting strings.

O Maya's son! Because we roam the earth, we moan upon these strings. We make no laughter as we see so many woes in so many lands, so many streaming eyes and clasping hands together convulsively in grief.

Yet we make fun while we grieve for we do not know whether they know or not that this life they cling to is but an empty show. It is like an effort to stop the movement of cloud or to hold a running river with the hand.

But you who have to save, your time is near! The sad world is waiting in its misery. The blind world is stumbling on its round of pain. Rise. O Maya's child! Be awake! Sleep not again!

We are the voices of the wandering wind. O Prince! You also wander to find out your place of rest. Leave love for love of lovers. Quit your bondage now to gain sorrow, for woe's sake so as to find deliverance.

Thus we sigh, passing over the silver strings to you who knows not yet of earthly things. We say all this in a laughing way as we pass away from these lovely shadows wherewith you are playing'.

It was evening time. The Prince sat with his beauteous court, holding the hand of sweet Yasodhara. One maid started telling an ancient tale to pass the hour of dusk. She told the story with breaks of music, when her rich voice dropped. It was a tale of love and of a magic horse, of wonderful qualities which moved to distant lands where pale

people dwelled. There the sun used to sink into the seas at night. After hearing the story about that fair tale, the Prince spoke sighing to Yasodhara, 'Chitra has brought back to me the wind's song in the strings. Yasodhara! Give her your pearls for thanks. But you, my Pearl! Tell me, is the world so wide? Is there a land where the great sun rolls into the sea waves? Are there men like us countless, unknown, not happy? It may be that we might find succor for them, if we knew them. Often I wonder to see the Lord of the day, the sun, tread from the east, his kingly road of gold. He hails his beam first on the world's edge, the eastern most part of the earth to the children of the morning. Often, even in your arms and on your bosom, bright wife, I have pondered sadly at the decline of the sun as if I were passing with him into that crimson west and also saw the people of the evening. There must be many whom we should love. How else now would I have in this hour, an ache, which at last your soft lips cannot kiss away? Oh, girl! O Chitra! You know of that fairyland! Where have they tied away that swift steed of your story? I would like to take my palace on his back for one day to ride and see the spread of the earth! No, if I had that young vulture's wing—who is heir of wider realms of decaying and dead animals than mine – I would stretch for the topmost Himalaya and alight where the rosy light shines on those snowy peaks. I would have gazed with my searching eyes to find what is round! Why

have I never seen and never sought to see? Tell me what lies beyond our brazen gates.'

Then one replied, 'The city first, fair Prince! The temples, the gardens and the orchards and then the fields and afterwards fresh fields with nullahs, maidans, jungle*, koss (it is equivalent to the distance of two miles i.e. approximately 3.2 kilometers) after koss and thereafter King Bimbisara's kingdom and then the vast flat world with crores and crores of men living there.' 'Good', said Siddhartha showing satisfaction, 'Let the message be sent to Channa to yoke my chariot at noon to-morrow. I shall ride and see the world beyond this palace.'

Observation

This was told to the King, 'Our Lord, your son, the Prince, Siddhartha desires that his chariot be yoked at noon to-morrow so that he may ride abroad and see mankind.'

'Yes!', spoke the careful King, 'It is time he sees the world. But let the drum beaters go about and bid that my city should be decorated beautifully. No unpleasant and objectionable sight should be seen.'

* Nullah (drains), maidan (fields), jungle (forests)

No blind or disabled, sick or old, leper or feeble man should come forth before him.'

Therefore, the street stones were swept well. Water-carriers sprinkled all the streets up and down from spiring skins. The housewives scattered fresh red powders at the entrance. On the front doors of their houses, they strung new flower garlands. They also trimmed the tulsi-bush outside their homes. The paintings on the walls were raised and brightened up with liberal painting. The trees were set with thick flags. The idols in the temples were overlaid with gold so that in all the four directions the Suryadeva* and the other great gods shined amidst shrines of leaves. The entire city seemed a capital of some fairy land. Also the criers passed, with drum and gong, proclaiming loudly, 'Listen! all citizens! The King commands that no evil sight be seen to-day. Let no one, blind or disabled, none that is sick or old be present on his way. No leper, no feeble folk should come out to-day. Let none burn his dead kin too, nor bring them out till nightfall. This is the command of King Suddhodana'.

So everything was done gracefully as per the command of the King. The houses were set in good order all throughout Kapilvastu. At the appointed time

* Suryadeva : Sungod

the Prince came forth in his painted chariot driven by Channa. The car was drawn by two snowy white horses, with swinging dewlaps and huge humps, wrinkled against the carved and varnished yoke. It was satisfying to see the people's joy in greeting their Prince. The Prince also enjoyed to see all those loyal and friendly people, brightly clothed and laughing showing that they were happy with life. 'Beautiful is the world,' he said to himself, 'and it likes me as well! These men who are not kings are also cheerful and kind. My sisters who work laboriously but look after us are also kind and gentle to make us happy. What have I done for them that they behave like this with me? Why, if I love them, should those children not know that I too love them? I earnestly wish to let that pretty Sakya boy, who threw flowers on us, to ride with me on this chariot. How good is it to reign in kingdoms like this! How simple pleasure is, if these people are pleased only because I come abroad! Do I need many many things if such little households have enough to make them and out city full of smiles! Drive Channa! through the gates and let me see more of this kind world I have not known.'

So they passed through the gates, the joyous gathering crowding around the chariot. Some ran before the oxen throwing flowers. Some touched the corner of their silken clothes against the chariot. Some brought with them sweets and cakes, all raising

the slogan, 'Jai! Jai*! for our noble Prince !'. Thus all the paths gave only happy looks filled with pleasant sights for it was the command of the King that it should be like that.

Old Age

However, after travelling some distance the chariot was stopped by a man passing midway on the road, slow tottering from the wretched dwelling shed where he had hid himself. He came out as a wretch in rags, haggard and foul, an old, very old man skin contracted into wrinkles, brown in colour, like a beast's skin stuck to his fleshless bones. His back was bent with load of old age. His hollow eyes were red with reddish-brown coating of ancient tears. His dim eyeballs were blurred with watery inflammation caused by mucous discharge from tears. His toothless jaws were shaking to and fro with paralysis caused by the loss of control of body. He was suddenly in great fear to see so many and so much of joy. His one thin and repulsive hand held a damaged stick to support his shaking arms and legs. The other was pressed upon the raised line of the curved bones on the back. He breathed very painfully with an open mouth out of exhaustion, and cried miserably, 'Alms!'

* Victory be to our noble Prince

and then moaned, 'Give me alms, good people! for I die tomorrow or the next day!'. Saying this he was completely choked by cough. But he still stretched his palm and stood blinking and making deep painful sound amidst his convulsions, 'Alms.' Then those around him suddenly twisted and pulled his weak feet aside and pushed him from the road saying, 'The Prince! Don't you see! get back to your hiding place!' The old man was about to turn back when Siddhartha cried, 'Let be! Let be! Channa!' and then queried to Channa, 'What thing is this who seems a man, yet surely only seems, being bent, so miserable, so horrible, so sad? Are men born sometimes like this? What does he mean by moaning, "Tomorrow or next day I die?" Does he not find food that his bones are coming out? What grief has fallen on this wretched man?' Then the charioteer answered, 'Sweet Prince! This is no other than an aged man. Some eighty years ago his back was straight and his eyes were bright. He had a handsome and imposing body. But now his years have sucked away his energy and strength and weakened his body over a long period of time. It has finished away his will power and also his ability to think. His lamp has lost its oil and the wick now burns black. The life which is still lingering in him is like the last spark which flickers in a lamp before the finish. This is what is known as old age. But why should your Highness pay attention to him?' Then replied the Prince, 'But will this come to others, or to

all, or is it rare that one should be as he is ?' 'Most noble', answered Channa, 'even as he is, so all others will grow if they will be able to live so long.' 'But', queried the Prince, 'If I shall live as long, shall I also become like him and if Yasodhara lives for eighty years, will this old age come to her and to Jalini, little Hasta, Gotami, Ganga and others also?' 'Yes, great sir!' the charioteer replied. Then spoke the Prince, 'Turn back. Drive me back to my house again! I have seen that I did not think to see.'

Siddhartha kept on pondering on what he had seen. He returned to his beautiful court, totally lost in his thought. His appearance, manners and mood clearly showed that he was sad. He did not taste the sweets. Nor did he touch the fruits spread for the evening feast. He also did not look up even once while the best palace-dancers performed to please him. Nor did he speak a single word except one sad thing when Yasodhara painfully fell on his feet and wept sighing, 'Does my Lord not feel comfortable with me?' 'Ah, Sweet!' he said, 'Such comfort that my soul aches, thinking it must end, for it will end and we shall both grow old, Yasodhara! We all shall become loveless, unlovely, weak, old and bent. Even though we both lock up ourselves in love and life with lips and embrace close and tight night and day that our breaths grew one, yet time would force itself between us to steal away my passion and your grace as black

night steals away the rosy light from those peaks which fade to grey but do not appear to be fading. This I have found and my heart is darkened with the great fear. My heart is focussed only at thinking how love might save its sweetness from the slayer, Time, which makes men and women old. So disturbed was the Prince that he sat sleepless and uncomforted throughout the night.

King's Dreams

On the other hand King Suddhodana also dreamt troublesome dreams all that night. The first dream was of a broad, glorious, shining flag with a golden sun, the mark of Indra. But a strong wind blew which tore its divine folds forcefully into pieces, destroying it into the dust. After this a large group of mysterious people came. They picked up the pieces of the torn flag and took it away eastward from the city gates. The second fear was of ten huge elephants with silver tusks and feet that shook the earth. They trampled the southern road with their heavy and rough movement and he, who sat upon the front elephant, was the King's son. Other elephants followed him. The third fearful dream was the vision of a chariot shining with blinding light. It was being drawn by four horses breathing out air of white smoke and champing fiery foam. Prince Siddhartha was

seated in that chariot. The fourth fear was of a wheel which turned and turned with its central part of burning gold and jewelled spokes with strange things written on the binding tyre which produced both flames and music as it whirled. The fifth dream was a mighty drum, set down midway between the city and the hills. The Prince beat with an ornamental iron rod on it. It had loud repeated sound like a thunderstorm and moved up and up in the sky and far away. The sixth fearful dream was of a tower which rose and rose high over the city till its magnificent head touched the clouds, like a crown. The Prince was seen standing on the top of it. He was scattering gems from both hands, this way and that, gems of most lovely light. It seemed as if jacinths and rubies rained. The whole world came running pushing against each other to catch those treasures as they fell in all the four directions. But the seventh dream was a noise of six men. They were crying loudly and were grinding their teeth. They laid their palms upon their mouths, and walked with inconsolable depression, with their eyes set down.

The King dreamt these seven fearful dreams. But none of even his wisest dream-readers could tell their meaning. The King was very angry. He said, 'There seems evil coming to my house but none of you are wise enough to help me know what the great gods have planned for me by sending me these

dreadful dreams.’ So the ministers and others went round the city sorrowful because the King had dreamt seven signs of fear which none could read. They were looking for someone who could read the dreams. Meanwhile an aged man came in the form of a hermit near the gate clad in deer skin. He was not known to anybody and said, ‘Take me before the King, for I can read the meaning of his dreams.’ He heard the description of the midnight dreams from the King. Then he bowed reverently and said, ‘O Maharaj ! I hail this fortunate House from where shall rise, a wider-reaching splendour than that of the sun. Lo! All these seven fears are in fact matter of seven joys. The first dream in which you saw a broad flag, glorious, gold plated with Indra’s emblem falling down and being carried out of the city signifies the end of the old faiths and the beginning of the new ones. Gods also change with the passage of Kalpas* just as human beings change with time. The ten great elephants that shook the earth signify the ten great gifts of wisdom. They will provide the strength whereby the Prince will quit his Kingdom and with the passage of the Truth shake the world. The four flame-breathing horses of the chariot are those four fearless virtues which shall bring your son to joyous light from doubt & gloom. The wheel that turned with the hub of

* Kalpas: An era or period of time or years known for some or the other reason covering number of centuries.

burning gold was that most precious Wheel of perfect Law which he will turn in sight of all the world. The mighty drum whereon the Prince was beating till the sound filled all lands signified the thunder of the preachings of the Word which he will give. The tower that grew to heaven shows the growing of the Gospel which the Buddha will set forth. The rare jewels scattered are the untold treasures of that good Law which he will give. They will be dear to both gods and men. Such is the interpretation of the tower. And those six men weeping with shut mouths are the six chief teachers whom your son will, with bright truth and unanswerable arguments convince of their foolishness. O King! rejoice. The fortune of my Lord, the Prince is more than that of kingdoms. His hermit-rags will be more valuable than the fine cloths of gold. This was the meaning of your dreams! And this will take place in seven days and seven nights'. Thus spoke the holy man and made eight prostrations, touching the ground thrice, then turned and passed but when the King sent the messengers to offer him a rich gift, they came back and reported, 'We went to where he entered in Chandra's temple. But there was none within save a grey owl which fluttered from the shrine'.

The gods sometimes come in this way.

But the astonished and sad King wondered at what was told by the dream reader. He gave command that new entertainments be provided to please Siddhartha's heart through the dancers of his palace. He also got double guards placed at all the bronze doors.

But who can stop what is to happen, what is fated?

Prince goes for outing again

Therefore, once again the heart and spirit of the Prince was moved with the desire to see the world beyond his gates. He wanted to see whether the life of man was really so pleasant or its watery waves ran to be painfully wasted in Time's dry sands. 'I pray you, let me view our city as it is', this was the prayer he made to King Suddhodana. 'During the last visit, Your Majesty had forewarned the folks to put away all ill things from common sights. They were asked to show their happy faces to make me happy and all the roads and pathways were also to be maintained colourful. But I know that this was not their daily life. Therefore, if I have to ascend the throne and succeed you, as you desire, my father! Little shall I know of the people and the streets, their simple and usual ways and their daily routines, the lives of those men, our

citizens, who also live as all of us human beings but are not kings. Give me an opportunity, dear Lord, to pass unknown beyond my happy palace. I shall come back more contented and peaceful again or at least shall be wiser, if not well contented. Therefore, I pray to you to let me go through the streets at will tomorrow, with Channa. On hearing the request of the Prince, the King consulted his ministers, 'May be this second visit may mend the damage done by the first visit. After all, each visit is a different visit than the previous one. Note how the falcon starts at every new hunt from his nest but comes back with a quiet eye from that hunt! Let my son see all. But instruct them who accompany him to report to me all the news about his state of mind on his return'.

Thus on the next day at noon time, the Prince and Channa came out of the gates which were opened at the command of the King. Yet people did not know who came out of the gate. They could not recognise that it was King's son in that merchant's robe and the charioteer in the dress of a clerk. They moved forward by the common way afoot, mingling with all the Sakya citizens, seeing both the happy and sad things of the town: the painted streets alive with the hum of the market at noon time, the traders sitting cross-legged amidst their spice and grain, the buyers waiting with their money in their bags, the war of words to reduce the price of this or that, the shouts

to clear the road, the huge stone wheels, the strong slow oxen moving with their gentle sound made by the loads of bullock carts, the singing bearers with the palanquins, the broad necked *hamals* (load carriers) sweating in the sun, the housewives carrying water from the well kept on balanced *chatties* with the black-eyed babies sitting across their hips; the flies swarming the sweetmeat shops, the weaver at his loom, the cotton-bow twangling, the millstones grinding grains, the dogs moving around restlessly prowling for pieces of meat, the skilful armourer linking and making armourer's shirt with tong and hammer, the blacksmith reddening a pickaxe and a spear together in coal. They also saw the school where the Sakya children sang the *mantras* around their guru (teacher) in a half-circle and learnt about the Gods. The dyers were seen stretching waist clothes in the sun, wet from the large tanks – orange, rose and green; the soldiers making metallic sound like chains past with swords and shields, the camel-drivers rocking on the humps. They observed the proud Brahman busy reading the Vedas, the martial Kshatriya sharpening the weapons and the humble Sudra toiling with daily routine. They also saw the crowd gathered to watch some chattering snake-charmer wind round his wrist living small and big venomous snakes, the other one charming the hooded dreadful reptile to an angry dance with the deep humming sound of a beaded gourd. A long line

of drums and horns was also seen which went with steeds beautifully painted with silk canopies, to bring the young bride home. Also a wife was seen going with cakes and garlands to the temple god to pray for her husband's safe return from trade or to beg for a boy child. Near the booths the dark skinned potters were beating noisily brass for lamps and lotas. They also passed by the temple walls and gateways to the river and the bridge under the city walls.

Sick Man

They had passed all these when from the roadside lamented a mournful voice, 'Help, masters! lift me to my feet; Oh, help ! Or I shall die before I reach my house!' It was an old pitiable person overcome with illness whose shaking body had been caught by some deadly plague. He was lying in the dust twisting and rolling himself with fiery purple blotches on his skin. The chill sweat was visible as small drops on his brow. His mouth was pulled crookedly with sudden involuntary jerky movement of muscles with pain due to disease. His uncontrolled eyes swam with inward agony. Exhausted, he clutched the grass to rise and rose half-way, but fell down with shaking weak limbs and very loud frightening crying of terror, 'Ah, the pain! Good people, help!' Listening this, Siddhartha ran towards that man

in pain. He lifted him with tender hands and with sweet looks, laid his sick head on his knee and while his soft touch comforted the unfortunate man, he asked, 'Brother, what ails you? What harm has fallen on you? Why cannot you get up? Why is it, Channa, that he breathes with short quick breaths with sadness and laments, gasps to speak and sighs so pitifully?' Then the charioteer spoke to him, 'Great Prince! This man has been attacked by some insect. His body parts are not working. The blood which ran in his veins like a full river, leaps and boils like a fiery flood. His heart which beat regularly earlier, now beats quick and slow like an ill-played drum-skin. His tough fibrous tissues which unite muscles to bones have slackened like a slipped bow-string. The strength is gone from the thighs and buttocks, spine, ribs, bones and the neck. All the grace and joy of the manhood has disappeared from him. This is a sick man who gets sudden attacks of epilepsy. See how he shakes to get rid of his grief, and rolls his eyes tinged with blood and grinds his teeth. See how he draws his breath as if he were choked with smoke! Lo! now he would be dead very shortly; but shall not die till the plague has finished its work on his body killing the nerves which die before the life ends. When his strings which tie the parts of the body shall be broken with agony, all his bones will not feel the sensation of pain, the plague will have finished its work, quit him and strike elsewhere. Oh, Sir! It is not good to hold

him so! The harm may pass and strike you, even you.’ But the Prince continued to hold the man and spoke, still comforting him, ‘Are there others, are there many thus? Or might it be to me as now with him?’ ‘Great Teacher!’, answered the charioteer, ‘This comes to all men in many forms. Grievings and wounds, sickness and eczema, paralysis with tremors, leprosy, high fever, watery discharge like a stream, discharge of blood, inflamed sore on the skin befall on all beings of flesh and enter everywhere’. The Prince inquired, ‘Do such ills come unobserved?’ And Channa said, ‘They come like the cunning snake that secretly stings unseen or like the tiger which waits to jump on a man from the Karunda bush, hiding beside the jungle path. It may also come as the lightning, striking some and sparing others, as chance may have it.’ ‘Then do all men live in fear?’ ‘Yes Prince, so live they! And none can say, “I sleep happy and healthy tonight and shall be awaking tomorrow morning”

‘None say it’, answered Channa. ‘What happens at the end of many continuous and prolonged pains, which come unseen and will come when they come? Is this broken body and sad mind so called old age?’, queried the Prince. ‘Yes Sir, if men live so long.’ ‘But if they cannot bear their extreme suffering, or if they will not bear and seek its end; or if they bear and be as this man is, too weak except for making deep painful sounds and so still

lives and keeps on growing old, grows older, then what is the end?', further queried the Prince. 'They die, Prince.' 'Die?', questioned the Prince. 'Yes, at the last comes Death in whatsoever way, whatsoever hour. A few grow old. Most suffer and fall sick. But all must die. Behold! Here comes the Dead!', was the reply of the charioteer.

Truth of Death

Hearing this Siddhartha raised his eyes and saw a group of people crying loudly, painfully, fast moving towards the river-bank. The front man had hung an earthen bowl in his hand with lighted coal. Behind him moved the kinsmen, hair totally cut off with scissors, with mourning marks and crying aloud, 'O Rama, Rama, hear call upon Rama, brothers!' Behind the people calling 'Rama, Rama' was the coffin made of four poles interlaced with bamboo, upon which was laid the corpse-completely naked and stiff, feet foremost, lean, skin totally dried, sightless, hollow body, teeth showing stupid smile. The body is sprinkled with red and yellow dust. At the road crossing they first turned the head of the dead and crying, 'Rama, Rama' [Name of a popular deity in India, considered to be an ideal son and King of Ayodhya in North India], they carried on the body to where a pile had been made beside the stream. They

laid him thereon and the fuel of wood & sandalwood was built up over and around the body. One can see that he who is on that bed has good sleep! He will not wake up feeling cold though he lies naked. Soon they lighted the pyre with red flame at the four corners. The fire developed slowly and licked steadily finding out his flesh and feeding on it with quick hissing and cracking sound of roasted skin and the sudden breaking of joints. This continued till the thick smoke thinned and the ashes sank red and grey with bones lying here and there. This is the total of what was left of the man.

Then the Prince asked, 'Is this the end which comes to all who live?' 'Yes Sir ! This is the end that comes to all', quoted Channa, 'The remnants of the one who is on the pyre are so petty that though the crows caw hungrily for food, yet they ultimately quit the fruitless feast. One who ate, drank, laughed, loved, lived and liked life well ultimately came to face who knows what -- some sudden strong rush of jungle-wind, a fall on the path, contaminated poisonous water in the tank, a snake's sharp bite, half a span of an angry steel piercing any part of the body, a chill, a fishbone or a falling tile and see! The life was over and the man is dead! Now he has no appetites, no pleasures and pains. The kiss upon the lips is gone. The sensation caused by the burning of the body is not there. He is now not able to smell his own flesh

which is already roasted. He does not get scent of even the sandal and the spices which the men have burnt for him. There is no taste in his mouth, hearing of his ears is over. The eyes are without sight now and he is totally blind. Those whom he loved cry desperately, having been left alone, for even the body which was lamp of his life must also go now. Otherwise the worms will have a horrifying feast of it. This is the common destiny of man, made of flesh and bones. The high and the low, the good and the bad all must die. And also it is told, that life begins anew after sometime to live somewhere, somehow which nobody knows. So begin again the violent and severe pains and the parting. The lighted pyre comes up as a wheel going round and round ups and down. Such is the destiny of man!

Lo! Siddhartha turned his eyes glowing with divine tears to the sky, eyes that were lit with heavenly pity for the earth. He looked from sky to earth and from earth to sky as if his spirit were seeking something in this lonely flight, some far-off vision linking this and that. The eyes appeared to be looking for something lost in the past, but searchable, that thing which had once upon a time been seen, was known. He cried with his lifted face, shining with the burning passion of an unspeakable love, the intense feeling of a boundless and unfulfilled hope, 'Oh! suffering world; Oh ! the known and the unknown

who are of my common flesh caught in this common net of death and sorrow and the life which binds these both! I see, I feel the vastness of the agony of the earth, uselessness of its joys, the futility of all its best, the great pain of its worst, since pleasures end in pain and youth in old age, love in loss, life in hateful death and death in unknown lives. They will put men only to their wheel again to whirl the round of false delights and pains that are, of course, not false. This temptation has cheated me too in the past. Living seemed enjoyable and life a sunlit stream for ever flowing as a changeless river of peace. But the foolish ripple of the flood dances lightly down through the blooming flowers and lawn only to pour its crystal clear water quickly into the foul salt sea. The crystal clear water quickly changes into salty water. The veil which blinded me is lifted! I am like all these men who cry upon their gods for help but are not heard, nor are looked after. Yet there must be aid for them and me, there must be help for all! Perhaps the gods themselves have the need of help, being so feeble that when sad lips cry, they cannot save! I would not let one cry whom I could save! How can it be that Brahm [Brahm : Creator of the Universe] would make a world and keep it miserable, being all-powerful. If he leaves it so, then He is not worthy. And if He is not powerful then He is not God. Channa! lead me to home again ! It is enough! My eyes have seen enough!

When the King heard of this, he set a triple guard at the gate. He also gave orders that no man should be allowed to pass by the gate, day or night, going out or entering in, until the seven days' period of that dream were over.

Chapter-IV

Arrival of Departure

According to the prophecy, Siddhartha was to leave within seven days of fateful dreams, the King had seen. As the days passed inching towards the day of departure, the entire Golden Palace fell in gloom. The King was in great distress and a wave of sorrow spread all over the kingdom. The very thought that the Prince may depart, brought grief to everyone.

But this parting, the Great Renunciation, known as Mahabhinishkramana* in the Buddhist literature, on the other hand, was meant to bring deliverance to all who would learn that Law, discovered by Siddhartha. It was to set all those free, who would hear it.

It was the summer month of April, known as Chaitya, according to the Hindu calendar and it was the period of bright fortnight. The summer nights normally sink softly during the full moon. The buds of Asoka flower sweeten the breeze and mangoes become red. Lord Rama's birthday, known as

* Mahabhinishkramana: The Great Renunciation

Ramnavmi, falls during this period. The weather is neither hot nor cold. People all along in towns and villages are happy and joyful.

It was night time. Moonlight fell softly over Vishramvan, the Resting Palace of Prince Siddhartha. Flowers were in full bloom, spreading their scent. It looked as if night appeared to be wearing the jewellery of stars. Cool breeze was blowing from the mighty snow clad Himalayas, widely spread. The moon moved over the eastern peaks, the glittering arches of the mountains. Its rays fell clearly on Rohini's ripples, the hills, the valleys and the plains where all creatures were asleep. Nothing appeared to move near the silver coloured roof tops of the pleasure—house. No one was watching anything, anywhere except the guards who were posted at the outer gates. There the watchman cried loudly the watchword 'mudra' and in response his counterpart replied: 'Angana'. The watchman also beat the drums every-hour indicating the time. The earth was calm and quiet except for the sharp cry of a dog, prowling of the jackals or the vibrating sound of grasshoppers and insects in the garden.

Within the palace the moon glittered through the lace worked stone lighting the walls made of pearl-shells and the floors covered with veined marbles. Its soft beam fell on the rare troupe of

entertainers of Indian girls. The hall appeared to be some chamber in a paradise where the Devis were resting. All the best ones, selected by Prince Siddhartha to serve in his pleasure-house were there, the most beautiful and the most trusted to serve him. Each sleeping beauty was so beautiful that one would have said, 'This is the most beautiful of all!' However, beside her and beyond her were asleep still more beautiful ones and the eyes would keep on roaming to have look at the beautiful faces just as in a goldsmith's shop the eyes keep on gazing from one gem to the other, the succeeding one appearing to be more colourful than the previous one. They all appeared to be lying there with innocent grace. Their soft brown limbs were partly hidden, partly exposed. Their glossy hair was bound back with gold or flowers, flowing loose like waves, down their nape and neck. Having worked laboriously for the day, they were now soothed to gentle sleep to enjoy the pleasant dreams. They were asleep like the jewelled birds that sing love songs for the whole day and in the night, on getting tired, fold their heads under their wings and fall asleep. They sleep till morning when they get up again and start to sing the love songs again. Embossed silver lamps were swinging from the roof in silver chains. They were glowing with perfumed oil.

The soothing light of moon beams and its shades showed perfect lines of grace in the hall. One

could see the peaceful heart beats, rhythmical rise and fall of the beauties lying there. Their soft coloured palms carelessly hanged either sideways or were held closely. Their faces-fair and dark had beautiful eyebrows and parted lips. Their teeth were like pearls, a merchant picks up in a jewellery shop to make a string. They had satin-lid eyes with drooping lashes which swept their delicate cheeks. Their rounded wrists and smooth small feet had coloured bangles and bells making a light ringing sound when some sleeper turned around which broke her smiling dream of some new dance, praised by the Prince, inspired to get some prize from him. In one corner a beauty was lying full-length, her veena by her cheek; her fingers still interlaced in the strings while she played the last notes of her song that put her radiant eyes fall to sleep.

Another slept away holding a desert-antelope in her arms, its gracefully thin head hidden with back-sloped horns between her breasts, resting softly. It was eating red-roses when both felt sleepy and slept away. Her loosening hand still held a rose, half chewed, while a rose-leaf curled between the deer's lips. Here two friends had slept lightly, wearing mogra-buds. It appeared that the sweetness of these two sisters had been bound in a chain. They were both linked together-limb to limb and heart to heart. One of them pillowed on the flowers and the other

one used her friend as a pillow and slept away. Another beauty was stringing stones before she slept to make a necklace of agate, onyx, sard, coral and moonstone round her wrist. This ring was shining with splendid colours around her wrist, while she held unthreaded bead in her hand to close it up-green in colour, carved with golden gods and scripts. They were soothed and sent to sleep by the beat of sound produced from the rhythmic movement of the garden stream. Thus they were lying on the carpets spread in the hall. Each one girl was like a rose whose leaves were shut, waiting for dawn to open it and make the daylight beautiful. Adjacent to the larger hall was the ante chamber of the Prince. Near the curtain in that house of love slept the Chief Ministers, the most beautiful-Ganga and Gotami.

The curtain of the anteroom of the Prince was crimson and blue, embroidered with threads of gold hanging on the large doorway, carved in sandal – wood. One passed the three steps through the door and reached the most inward secluded place of the palace. This private area of the palace was magnificent in grandeur. Here was placed the bridal bed of the Prince, kept on a low platform. The bed-cover was made of soft silver clothes. Here the foot pierced deep as though treading soft on the piles of neem-flowers. All the walls were gold plated and studded with pearls, cut in proper shape from the

shells, collected from the Srilankan ocean. Ornamented inlaid works of lotus and birds were engraved over the alabaster roof. Skilled artists used lazuli, jade, jacynth and jasper gemstones liberally to make them. These were fixed all along the dome and also downward and sideways in all the frames which had continuous ornamental pattern, used as a screen and a fence. Through these screens came the moonlight and cool air, scent from the flowers and jasmine sprays. But these flowers and sprays did not bring there the fragrance and that divine loving elegance which was created by the fair presence within the palace of beauteous Sakya Prince, Siddhartha and Yasodhara. Both of them were asleep.

Yasodhara's horrifying Dreams

The Princess half rose from her soft bed and came to his side. The chuddar (sheet) by which she was covering her body had fallen to her waist. She laid her face in both the palms, was breathing very fast and leaned towards the Prince with falling tears. Reaching the Prince, she touched Siddhartha's hand thrice with her lips and lamented at the third kiss, 'Get up, my Lord! Be awake! Give me the comfort of your speech!' Then asked the Prince, 'What is it with you, O my life?' But she still moaned before the words could come out and spoke, 'Alas my Prince ! I fell into

deep sleep, most happy, for the baby I am carrying of you has enhanced my happiness. My heart beats are double for myself and my baby with joy and love. This happy rhythmic music lulled me to sleep. And then I saw three dreadful dreams, most horrifying. My heart is still beating violently with the thought of those dreams. In the first dream, I saw a white bull with wide-branching horns, a lord of land, walking easily through the streets. He had a gem upon his forehead which appeared as if some star had dropped to sparkle there. Or it was perhaps like the Kantha-stone, that the great snake keeps to make the daylight bright underneath the earth. He moved slowly through the streets towards the gates. People tried to stop him but none could stop him. Then came a voice from Indra's temple, 'If you do not stop him, then the glory of the city will go away.' Yet none could stop him. Seeing all this, I started weeping aloud and wrestled to hold him fast and put my arms around his neck and struggled hard to stop him. I also asked the watchmen to forcefully close the gates. But the ox-king shouted angrily and lightly throwing me with his horns, set himself free from my hold. Breaking away the barriers, he crushed the guards down under foot and passed away. The next strange dream was this: Four magnificent personalities, with shining eyes so beautiful that they seemed like the Administrators of the Earth, who live on the Mountain Sumeru, produced brilliant light in the sky. They, with a body of

countless divine attendants swiftly moved inside our city majestically. There I saw the golden flag of Indra at the gate flap and fall and instead there rose a glorious banner, all the folds of which made gentle sound with flashing fire of rubies sewn thick on the silver threads, the rays wherefrom set forth new words of wisdom and weighty sentences whose message made all living creatures happy. From the east, the wind of sunrise blew with gentle breeze, opening those jewelled scrolls so that all men might read them. There also came simultaneously wondrous flowers plucked from a garden, but which one, I do not know and they fell as showers. Those coloured flowers were such as are not found in our gardens.' Then spoke the Prince, 'All this, my Lotus flower! was good to see.'

'Yes, Lord', the Princess said, 'Except that it ended with a voice of fear crying, "The time is near! The time is near!" At that time, the third dream came. I turned around and looked for to see you by my side my sweet Lord! But Oh! On our bed there was only an unpressed pillow and an empty robe. There was nothing of you except the robe; nothing of you, who are my life and light, my king and my world! And, sleeping still I rose from the bed and sleeping still I saw the belt of pearls, tied here on my body change to a poisonous snake; my ankle-rings falling off, my golden bangles part and fall. The jasmine in my hair

withered to dust while this, our bridal-bed sank in the ground and someone brought the crimson purdah down. Then I heard the white bull making the cry far away. I also saw the banner flap and once again came that cry, "The time has come!" But with that cry, which shakes my spirit still, I woke up'. 'O Prince! What may these dreams mean except that I die or worse than my death, you should forsake me or be taken away?'

The look of Siddhartha was as sweet as that of the last smile of the sunset. He bent upon his weeping wife saying, 'Comfort yourself, dear! If comfort lives in changeless love! It may be that your dreams forecast of the shadows of the things to come because the gods have also shaken away in their seats at the thought of my departure. Now world stands near me thinking that perhaps by chance there may be some way of help. Yet, whatsoever may happen to you and me, be sure that I loved and love Yasodhara. You know well how I have been pondering all these days and nights, looking for the way to save the sad earth that I have seen. And take it, when the time comes, that which is willed, will happen. But if my soul painfully longs with compassion and tenderness for the souls unknown and if I grieve for sorrows which are not mine then you should judge yourself how much my high-winged thoughts shall be concerned for all those lives

which have shared their life with me here and have sweetened it. So dear! and mine the dearest, gentlest, best and the nearest. Ah, you who are also the mother of my baby! Whose body is mixed with mine for this fair hope! When my spirit wanders round the lands and seas, full of pity for men, as the far-flying dove is full of pity for her twin nestlings, it always comes back home happily with wings and passionate feathers to you. You are the sweetest of all kind, the best seen, the utmost of their good, the tenderest of all their tenderness and mine most of all. Therefore, whatever happens after this, think of those dreams, that lordly bull that bellowed and that jewelled banner which waved its folds. Be sure of this that I always loved and will always love you. Also what I have sought for all, have sought most for you. Hence, now, you rest in comfort and if sorrow falls, take comfort also in thinking that there may be a way to peace on earth for our woes. So with this embrace think of the blessings, which may, however, be too little, seeing that the love's strong self is weak. Yet kiss me on the lips and drink these words from heart to heart that you only may know, what others will not, that I loved you most because I loved all living souls so well. Now Princess! rest; for I will rise and watch'.

Mahabhinishkramana

Reluctantly, Yasodhara slept away in tears, sobbing and sighing as if that vision passed again, 'The time! The time has come!' Siddhartha, on the other hand, turned to the window to look at the sky. Lo! The moon was shining by the Crab! The stars, as foretold long ago, stood in the same silver order, as if saying, 'This is the night! You have to choose the way of greatness or the way of good; to reign like a King of kings or wander alone, crownless and homeless so that the world may be helped.' Moreover, along with the whispers of the gloom, that warning song came again to his ears which the Devas had sung using the broken veena, with the wind. Surely the gods were around the place watching our Lord, who watched the shining stars.

'I will depart', he spoke, 'the time has come! Your tender lips, dear Sleeper, summon me to that which will save the earth but will separate us. In the silence of the sky I can read my fated message flashing. I came to this world for this only and all my days and nights have led me to this only. I will not have that crown which may be mine. I lay aside those kingdoms which wait the shine of my naked sword. My chariot will not roll with bloody wheels from victory to victory till the earth wears the red record of my name. I choose to tread its paths with patient,

stainless feet making its dust my bed, isolated, inhabited place as my dwelling, and its meanest things, my mates. Clothed in no prouder dress than the outcasts wear, fed with no food except what the charitable will give out of their wish, sheltered by no more pomp than the dim light cave or the jungle-bush can give to my place of refuge. This I will do because the woeful cry of all living things echoes in my ears. My soul is full of pity for the sickness of this world which I will heal, if healing may be found, by complete renunciation and severe struggle. Do the great and lesser gods have power or pity? Who has seen them – who? What have they done to help their worshippers? Have the prayers, the offerings of the tenth part, chanting of mantras, slaying of the painfully crying animals, being sacrificed, have been paid back to man?

What have men got in return for building majestic temple, feeding the priests and reciting the names of Vishnu, Shiva, and Surya, who save none from the griefs of the world? Hence they are not worthy to be prayed. These griefs teach men to pray in flattery and fear but the same is wasted like the ascending smoke in the sky.

Has any of my brothers escaped, thereby, the aches of life, the stings of love and loss, the fiery fever and the malaria* shivering, the slow, dull sinking into humiliating old age and thereafter, the horrible

dark death and what waits beyond that -- till the whirling wheel of life and death comes up again? New lives bring new sorrows and new generations bring new desires which again end in the old insulting futilities. Has any of my gentle sisters found any fruit through fast or any result from the praise through a religious prayer? Have the offerings of milk and trimming of tulsi** leaves made the pangs of birth even a little less painful for them? No! Never!

It may be true that some of the gods are good and some others are bad, but, in action, all are weak. Both pitiful and pitiless-all gods are like men, bound upon this wheel of change. Our scriptures have truly taught us that once life begins, wheresoever and from whatever source, it keeps on running in the rounds of living, climbing up from a small speck of dust particle to a fly, worm, reptile and fish. And then to bird, animal, man, demon, Deva, God and back again to earth and then to small dust particle. The same story is repeated again and again.

We all are related to each other in this trap. Thus if one might save man from this curse, the whole

* A deadly disease in India, caused by biting of mosquito

** tulsi: a medicinal plant in India which is normally planted in the courtyard or the outside compound. Hindus have a lot of reverence for this plant

wide world will share the lightened horror of this ignorance, whose shadow is cold fear and pastime is bitter cruelty. Yes, if one might save! And there must be the means to save! There must be some refuge somewhere! Men had been dying in winter-winds since ages till someone discovered flint-stones, coldly hiding the quality of fire, struck a firm blow and ignited the red-spark fire, as if produced from the lightening sun. Men ate flesh greedily like wolves till one of them sowed corn. It first came out as a weed but it still sustains the life of man on earth. Men mowed and babbled incomprehensibly till one of them could strike the tongue and discovered the art of speech and the patient fingers of the human hand invented the language. Whatever good gifts my brothers have and are enjoying today has come out of search and struggle and also loving sacrifice of someone! Therefore, if one were great and fortunate, rich, blessed with health and comforts and from birth designed to rule - if he would rule - a King of kings and also not feel tired with life long inning's play but is happy enjoying its freshness of every morning, still not satiated with the excess of wealth or the delicious feasts of love which he may be enjoying but is still hungry and does not look tired, exhausted and wrinkled, sadly sage but is joyous in the glory and the grace of life which mixes with the evils here, and is free to choose the earth's loveliest things at his will, one like me, who has no aches, who lacks nothing,

has nothing to grieve for except with griefs which are not mine, except that I am a man – if such a one, being so happy and satisfied, who has so much to give, if such a person gave away all, laying everything down for love of men and thereafter spent his time only to search the truth, making serious efforts, to find out the secrets of deliverance, whether it be present in a latent form in hell, or hide itself in heaven or remain unrevealed to all: Surely at last, far off, sometime, somewhere---the veil would lift for his deep- searching eyes, the road would open for his painful feet. Definitely that will be won for which he left his entire world. And finally Death might find that he has conquered it. I, who am to lose his kingdom, will do all this because I love my kingdom, because my heart beats with each pulse for all the known and unknown hearts that ache in sorrow. These that are mine and those which shall be mine, a thousand million, will be saved by this sacrifice which I now offer. Oh, summoning stars! I come! Oh, mournful earth! For you and your sake I lay aside my youth, my throne, my joys, my golden days, my nights, my happy palace and your arms, sweet Queen! This is the hardest to bear than all the rest! Yet, by saving this earth I shall save you also. And if I wait to bless my child, the hidden flower of our love which stirs within your gentle womb, my mind will fail. Wife! Child! Father! and People! You must share for a little while the severe anguish of this hour that light may break

and all men learn the Law. I have made up my mind and now I shall depart never to come back again till what I am seeking is found out by my intense and passionate search and struggle’.

So, with his brow he touched her feet and bending bade farewell to those fond eyes, still wet with tears, of sleeping Yasodhara, without uttering anything. Thrice he walked around the bed in reverence, as though it were an altar and softly stepped out with his clasped hands laid upon his beating heart and uttering to himself, ‘I shall never lie there again!’ Thrice he came out of his chamber to go but thrice he came back, so strong was her beauty and so large was his affection towards her. But he finally mustered courage, drew his cloth over his head, turned and raised the purdah’s* corner and before him was the lovely garden where, like water-lilies his maids lay asleep, quiet with the weariness of the day. The two most beautiful maids like two dark petalled lotus buds—Ganga and Gotami were fast asleep on either side and the entire silk-leaved sisterhood of maids was in deep slumber ahead. Seeing them all, he said, ‘Your company is of great pleasure to me, my sweet friends! And you are so dear that I may not like to leave you. Yet, if I do not leave you now what else will fall on us except old age which will be

*purdah: An Urdu word meaning curtain

frustrating, not give us any satisfaction and finally death whose coming will be only painful and of no benefit to us ? Lo! As you lie asleep today, so will you lie dead one day. When the rose dies, where does its scent and splendour go? When the lamp is drained of oil, where does the flame disappear? O Night, press upon their closed lids heavily and seal their lips securely so that no tear or a faithful voice from my friends may go with me. They made my life bright and beautiful and it causes me great pain and unhappiness to see and think that they and I should live as the trees do. Spring for a few months followed by months of rains and a period of severe cold weather in winter and then the dead leaves and may be spring again or may come the stroke of the axe at the root of the tree. I, whose life was as comfortable as that of a god's, will not allow this to happen. No! No! I will not allow it, although all my years have passed with godlike pleasures while men moan with great pain under this darkness. Therefore, I bid you farewell, my friends! I give my life full of pleasures and feel good to give and go to seek deliverance for the mankind and see that unknown Light!

Then Siddhartha slowly passed through those sleepers lying fast asleep and came out of the chamber. The eyes of that dark night, the watchful stars, looked on him with great love. The breath of the wandering wind kissed the corner of his fluttering robe.

The flowers in the garden, which would have remained folded as buds till the dawn, opened their velvet hearts and the gentle movement of air provided him scent from pink and purple flowers, like incense burning in a container. From Himalaya to the Indian Ocean -- over the entire land, a tremor was felt, as if the earth's soul beneath had been stirred with an unknown hope. The holy books, which tell us the story of Shakyamuni, also mention that rich celestial music thrilled the air from the Devas, who had gathered in large numbers to witness this Mahabhinishkramana.

The Devas thronged eastward and westward making the night bright and also northward and southward making the earth happy. Also the four greatly feared Regents of the Earth descended at the door in pairs with their vast number of invisible subordinates. They were decorated with sapphire, silver, gold and pearl and watched with joined hands the Indian Prince who stood with tearful eyes raised to the stars and lips close-set with remarkably enormous love.

Then Siddhartha took long decisive steps in the total darkness and called, 'Channa, get up! and bring out Kantaka!' 'What did you say my Lord?' the charioteer replied, slowly rising from his place near the gate where he used to sleep, 'To ride at night when there is darkness everywhere?' 'Speak low',

Siddhartha said, 'and bring my horse. Now the hour has come that I should quit this golden prison, where my heart lives caged to find the truth which henceforth I will seek for all men's sake, until that truth is revealed.'

The charioteer answered, 'Alas! dear Prince ! Did the wise and holy men, who predict the future, speak wrongly when they asked us to wait for the time when King Suddhodana's great son should rule empires upon empires and be the Lord of Lords? Will you ride away to-day and thus let the rich throne slip out of your hands to hold a beggar's bowl ? Will you leave this Paradise of pleasures here and go forth into the friendless world?'

The Prince replied, 'I came to this world for this only and not for the thrones. The kingdom that I am craving for is far more valuable than many kingdoms since all things pass to change and death. Bring forth Kantaka to me!'

The charioteer once again pleaded, 'Most honoured master! Think of your father's grief! You yourself think of their woe whose happiness you are! How will you help them, by first harming them?'

Siddhartha explained, 'Friend, that love is false which holds love for selfish ends. But I, who love

these men more than my joys, also more than their joys, am departing to save them and all men so that utmost love may prevail. Go and bring Kantaka* !'

Then Channa said, 'Teacher, I go!' and immediately went into the stall mournfully and took down the silver bit and bridle-chains from the rack; also the breast-cord and curb, knitted the straps swiftly, linked the hooks and led out Kantaka. He tied him to rope and the ring, combed him and dressed, stroking the snowy coat to silken glossy shine. Next he laid the numdah square on him, fitted the saddle-cloth across and set the saddle right. Thereafter he drew the jewelled girths tight, buckled the breech-bands and put the martingale and set both the stirrups of worked gold. Then he cast the golden net over all with tassels of seed-pearl and silken strings and led the great horse to the palace door where the Prince was waiting. When Kantaka saw his master, very happily he raised his feet and neighed with great joy, spreading his red nostrils. It is written in the scriptures, 'Surely everyone had heard Kantaka's neigh and the strong trappings of his iron heels. But the Devas had laid their soft unseen covers over their ears which made the sleepers deaf'.

* Kantaka: Name of Buddha's horse on which he finally left the palace in search of truth.

Affectionately Siddhartha touched the head of his horse and brought it down, patted its shining neck and said, 'Be still my snowy Kantaka! Be still and take me now on the farthest journey ever any rider rode. Tonight I take you, my dear horse, to find the truth. I do not know where my quest will end except that it will not end until I find it. Therefore, tonight good friend, be aggressive and bold! Let nothing stop you. Let not a thousand blades, wall, moat or roads stop our flight! Look! If I touch your flank and cry, "On, Kantaka!" Let the whirlwinds be left behind you! Today, be the fire and air, my horse! Take your Lord so that you will share with him the greatness of this deed which will help the world. Today I do not ride for men alone but for all things which, speechless, share our pain. They have no hope, nor the wisdom to ask for hope. Now, therefore, carry your master valorously!'

Then the Prince leapt lightly on the saddle and touched the arched crest and immediately Kantaka sprang forth on the longest journey ever any rider rode. The armed hoofs sparkled on the stones but none could hear that sound for the Suddha Devas had gathered near and plucked the red mohra* - flowers and had scattered them thick over the surface of the road on which he treaded, while invisible hands muffled the ringing bell and the bridle-chains to

* Mohra: An Indian flower having soporific effect.

reduce their sound. Moreover, it is written in the books that when they came upon the pavement near the inner gates, the Yakshas of the air laid magic cloths under the stallion's feet so that he went softly.

But when they reached the gate made of tripled brass-which could be unbarred and opened with difficulty by hundred men – lo! the doors rolled back all silently though in the daytime one would hear the thunderous roar of those black unattractive hinges and unwieldy plates, even two miles (koss) away.

The middle and the outer gates, too, unfolded their monstrous portals in silence as Siddhartha and his steed drew near them, while under the shadow all the chosen guards lay silent as dead men. Their lance and sword had fallen away alongwith the shields. Captains and soldiers were all asleep for there came a wind drowsier than the air that blows over Malwa's fields. This air, blowing over the Prince's path, being inhaled, lulled every sense dead and, therefore, he came out of the palace without any hindrance.

When the morning star stood half a spear's length from the eastern rim and the breath of the morning sighed over the rippling river, Anoma's waves, which formed the border of the kingdom, Siddhartha drew the rein and leaped to the ground and kissed snowy Kantaka between the ears and

spoke to Channa sweetly, 'What you have done will bring you good and also bring good to all creatures. Be sure I have always loved you for your love. Take back my horse and also carry back my crest-pearl, my princely robes, which henceforth, I shall never wear, my jewelled sword-belt and the sword and these beautiful long locks of hair severed off. Give all these to the King and tell him that Siddhartha prays him to be forgiven and forgotten till he comes back, ten times Prince, with royal wisdom won from lonely searchings and the struggle for light. If I win in my mission, lo! All the earth becomes mine- mine by chief service! Tell him that it will become mine by love! Since there is hope for man only in man and none has sought for this so far, as I will seek, I cast away my world to save my world.'

Chapter-V

Life of an Ascetic

Even today Rajagriha has been blessed with great natural beauty. It is located at three hours distance from Patna, the capital of the State of Bihar. In ancient times this capital was known as 'Patliputra' and the region was known as Magadha. Five beautiful hills rose around this sylvan town, the capital of King Bimbisara. They are still there protecting this small town. The first hill, known as Baibhara, is green with lemon-grass and palms. The second is the Bipulla. Below its foot flows the narrow river, the Saraswati* with warm ripples. The third hill has a lot of shadowy trees and is called the Tapovan. Its black rocks mirror themselves in the steaming pool below. Very valuable and useful liquid trickles out slowly and slowly from these rugged rocks. Sailagiri, the vulture-peak is located in the south east direction. And the fifth, Ratnagiri,** hill of gems, as the name indicates is located eastward. A winding track, covered with footworn flat stones and bricks leads us to the

* Name of a river. Saraswati also means the 'goddess of learning'.

** Ratna means gem in Sanskrit and Hindi.

safflower fields and bamboo grass. One has to pass through dark mango and berry trees and bushes, passing by milk-white rocks and reddish-brown steep cliff. Thereafter one reaches the low cliff where one sees jungle-flowers. The passage ultimately takes us to a cave, canopied with wild figs. It is located at the western slope of that mountain where that footpath ends. Lo! Those of you who are coming here should remove your footwear and bow your heads for, there is no place on this entire earth more deeply revered and sacred than this. Here the Most Compassionate Buddha sat in the scorching summers and the heavy rains, the chilly dawns and evenings, wearing the yellow robe for the sake of helping all men, eating the scarcely sufficient poor meal as a beggar, by chance offered by a charitable person. At night, he would remain laid down in yogic posture and on the grass, homeless and alone. Sleepless jackals made sharp cry in pain round his cave and the extremely hungry tigers coughed from the dense bushes and trees. The World-honoured dwelt here day and night conquering that fair body, born for bliss, by fast and constant watch. The intense search of silent meditation was normally so prolonged that often while he was absorbed and lost in thoughts, as motionless and fixed as a rock in his seat, the squirrel leaped upon his knee. The easily frightened game bird laid her eggs between his feet. The blue dove used to strike

with its beak at the rice-grains from the bowl beside his hand.

Thus he would be lost in thought from noon—when the land shined with bright light and heat and the walls and temples danced in smoke and fumes—till sunset, not even noticing the flaming Sun going down with brilliant light and the purple evening arriving swiftly across the fields. He would not be noticing the coming of the stars, the strong beat of the drum-skins in the busy town, nor the loud and harsh cry of the owl and night-bird. He would be wholly absorbed in self-introspection, trying to unravel the threads of thought and firmly pacing to understand the confusing pattern of life. Thus he would sit till midnight in the silent world, except where in the dense forests the beasts of darkness crept and cried out once in a while as fear, hatred, lust, extreme greed and anger creep in the black jungles of man's ignorance. Then he would sleep for almost one tenth part of the night and rise before the dawn. He would again stand regretfully longing for something unknown on some dark platform of his hill, watching the sleeping earth with very passionate eyes embracing all living things while the waving fields made low noise like the kiss of the morning made to wake up the lands and its people. In the east that miracle of the day, the sun, gathered and grew up and up. At first a dusk came. It was so dim that the night seemed still unaware of the

whisper of the approaching dawn round the corner. But very soon- before the jungle-cock crows twice – a white border, widening, brightening white, high as the herald-star, faded in flood of silver changing into pale gold and was caught by topmost clouds, flaming on their rims in golden glow, with the brink of saffron, scarlet, crimson & amethyst colours. Thereafter the sky became splendid blue. It appeared as if it robed itself in the clothing of cheerful light. This heralded the coming of the King of Life and Glory, the Sun!

Then our Teacher, like a Rishi, made salutations to the rising sun and after washing, would go into the town through the winding path. He passed from one street to another like a Rishi with a begging-bowl in hand, gathering the little amount for his needs. Soon his container would be filled up, as seeing his godlike face and eyes absorbed in deep thoughts, the townsmen would cry, 'Take from our store, great sir!' and 'Take of ours!' Mothers, seeing Gautama going by, would ask their children to kiss his feet and lift the corner of his robe to their brows. They would make them run to fill his jar with water and bring milk and sweets for him. And often as he paced, gentle and slow, radiant with heavenly compassion, lost in the welfare of those whom he did not know except as his fellow-beings, the dark surprised eyes of some town maid would develop sudden love and deep worship for that dignified form as if she saw the dreams of her

innermost thought come true, and grace, more elegant than any mortal grace, would fill her heart. But Siddhartha would pass onwards in his yellow robe with his bowl, thanking, by mild speech, all those who gave those gifts of hearts and making way back slowly to his lonely place of habitation. On his way back he would sit on the hill with holy men, and ask them questions of wisdom and seek answer as how to reach that road of wisdom.

Dialogue with Hathyogis

Midway in the peaceful forest of Ratnagiri, beyond the city but below the caves lived men who considered that the body was an enemy of the soul. They thought that it was a beast which men must chain and tame with bitter pains till the very sense of pain is killed in it and the tortured nerves do not show any annoyance of the torture of the body. They were Yogis, Brahmacharis and Bhikkhus --- a lean, thin and haggard, mournful lot of people living through illness, hunger and old age, all dwelling apart. Some stood day and night with lifted arms, till, they were totally drained of blood and became wrinkled due to age or disease. Slowly their joints became useless. Their stiffened limbs came out of their energyless and powerless shoulders like dead branches of forest trees. Others had held their hands continuously so

long and with such frightening and violent determination that claw-like nails grew through the deteriorated palms due to inactivity. Some walked on sandals of pointed nails. Some made long, deep cuts and wounds on their chests, brow & thigh with sharp fire and scarred the whole body. Others threaded their flesh with jungle thorns and thin metal rods. There were many who covered their body with mud and ashes, smelling foul in rags of dead men wrapped about their genital and private parts. Then there were others who lived in the cremation ground with the corpses, burning slowly with smoke but no flame, all fear gone in the company of those corpses, the vultures crying out in a loud shrill voice over them to eat the funeral-spoils. A few others had knit their sun-tanned necks and body with hissing snakes and recited the name of Shiva* five hundred times a day, raising up one paralysed foot against the thigh and the buttocks. Thus lived the company of suffering men, intentionally inflicting injury on themselves. Their heads had serious blisters formed by the burning heat. Their eyes had become dull and the vision was dim. Their tissues joining muscles to bones and the muscles themselves had contracted due to the loss of moisture showing visible wrinkles all over the body especially over the face. They looked pale, totally

* Shiva : God of Hindu mythology who is said to be the destroyer of the universe.

exhausted, sick and weak like slain men, dead five days ago.

Here, one stood in the dust from noon to noon who though extremely hungry ate only seed by seed everyday out of one thousand millet seeds 'with patience'. Another had bruised his pulse with bitter leaves to deny pleasing his sense of taste. And next stood a miserable saint who had injured himself so much that parts of his body had been permanently damaged. He was eyeless, tongueless, sexless, crippled and deaf. The mind through suffering had stripped the body of all its glory and bliss. 'Ultimately, they only will win, as the holy books say, whose suffering will make the gods shameful who send us the sufferings', they argued.

What suffering these men gave to themselves made them suffer more than the suffering which could be brought to them by the Hells.

Seeing all these saints in such miserable condition, Siddhartha felt sorry and sad for them and spoke to one of the chief sufferers, 'I, who am searching for the Truth, staying on this hill for a number of months find that all of you are torturing your bodies. Sir! When I see you and other brothers suffering with severe mental and physical pain, I

feel that you deserve pity. Our life is already full of pain and sufferings.'

He carries a snake around his neck.

The sages answered, 'It is written in the books that if a man subdues his physical urges by self-denial and disciplines, his body denying the luxuries and sensual pleasures of life to it and thus increasing his pain in life, then these sufferings will purify him while he lives. To such a man death will come as a resting place. All these sufferings shall burn away the impurities created by the sins committed in life. Thus purified, the soul shall soar from the furnace of sorrow. It shall get the wings to go up and up and reach the glorious spheres and splendours, past all thought'.

Siddhartha was not happy, nor satisfied with this answer. Pointing out towards the clouds in the sky, the Prince replied, 'See that cloud floating in the sky, as if golden cloth is enveloping Indra's throne, arisen from the violent windy storm of the sea! Though it looks so beautiful, yet it must fall again in tearful drops and trickle ultimately through rough and painful water-ways. It must pass through gaps in the rocks, the nullah and finally turn into the muddy flood to mingle with the river Ganga. It flows through the plains and finally meets the sea, wherefrom it had

sprung earlier. You know this, my brother! Is it not so? The same happens with the saints who attain bliss through severe pains. It is the law of nature that anything that rises falls; anything that is bought gets spent. If you buy heaven with your blood in hell's costly market, then, when the time is up, the toil begins again!

'It may begin', the hermits grumbled 'Alas! We know only this, not surely anything else. We know that the night comes after the day and peace after the turmoil! But we hate this cursed body, which blocks the growth of the soul, which would be happy if it could soar upwards. Thus we play this game of life with the gods and take risks, tolerate agonies, for the sake of the soul, so as to enjoy larger pleasures in due course of time.'

Siddhartha replied, 'Even if the pleasures last for an indefinite number of years, those joys are bound to ultimately end someday. Or, if they will not fade, then is there some life below, above, beyond so unlike our life where the joys will continue permanently and not perish? Speak, O brothers! Do your gods enjoy happiness forever?'

'No', the Yogis said, 'Only the great Brahma lives in perpetuity. The gods only live for certain periods.' Then spoke Mahakarunika Buddha, 'You

appear to be wise, holy and strong hearted ones. Yet you throw away the sore dice of life which is your pain, despair, pleasures and suffering for gains which may not be true and be only dreams. And these dreams also must come to an end. Will you, for the love of the soul, feel so much of hatred and disgust for the body, that you will make it suffer and injure so much that it gets permanently crippled and is unable to bear the burden of the spirit? Will you like that this body of willing horse, unable to bear the burden of the soul, searching for home, stumbles and falls on the track before the nightfall, because it was over lashed?. Will you, sad sirs! Pull down and tear to pieces this fair house of life, where we have been forced to come and stay due to the deeds of our painful past births, whose windows give us light --- some light, little light, dimlight and yet the light - whereby we could gaze outside to find out if dawn is round the corner or not and also which way the road winds for our further journey?’

The Yogis retorted, ‘We have chosen this road and are moving on it. Rajaputra! We shall follow this path upto the end even if all the stones on the way are on fire because we have faith in death. Speak, if you know a better way. Otherwise, be at peace with yourself and go your way!’

Siddhartha paced away slowly, all alone, exceedingly sorrowful, seeing how human beings are so scared of death that they even dare not fear. Their passionate desire is so strong, that they dare not love their life and live it. On the other hand they inflict continual punishment to the body with severe injury as a repentance for wrong doings of the past. In order to please the gods, who always grudge the pleasures enjoyed by men, they create so many worse hells for themselves that the hell does not appear to exist for them. They live in holy madness thinking and hoping that the soul may be better off if the body is tortured.

Seeing all this, Siddhartha looked towards the flowers of the field and addressed them, 'Oh, flowers of the field! You are always happy and glad to receive the light from the sun and turn your delicate faces towards it. You have gratefulness when you breathe sweetly with fragrance and show reverence when you wear those robes of silver, gold and purple colours. None of you miss to live a full life or spoil your magnificent beauty. Oh you palms! You go up and up eager to pierce the sky and drink the cloudy wind blown from Malaya and the cool blue seas. What is the secret that you grow content from the time you are a soft young branch till you bear fruits, singing sun-songs from your feathered crowns? You, too, who dwell so merrily in trees—quick-moving parrots, bee-

birds, bulbuls, doves -- none of you hate your life, none of you try to improve yourself by foregoing your needs! But man who slays you -- being lord considers that as wise. His wisdom is nursed on blood and can be seen only in self-torture!

While Shakyamuni spoke thus, there blew, down the mountain, the dust from the quickly hitting feet of white goats and black sheep going slowly their way, with many of them wanting to stray and stay somewhere longer to take small bites at the bunch of grass. They sometimes moved away from the set path when they found a small pool of shining water or wild figs. Seeing this happen, the herdsman would shout or throw stones from his sling to keep those unmindful creatures in the flock, taking them towards the plains. In the crowd there was a female sheep with two lambs of which one was lame as it was hurt. This lamb toiled against bleeding, while in front, its fellow companion, the other lamb, skipped merrily from the path. The worried mother ran here and there afraid that she might lose this little one or that. Our Teacher observed all this and tenderly took the limping lamb back on his neck, saying, 'Poor mother who gives us wool! Be at peace! Wherever you go, I shall carry your baby. To ease the grief of one beast is as good as to sit and watch the sorrows of the world in some far off cave in the company of the priests who pray'.

Then he spoke to the herdsmen, 'Friends! Why are you driving the flocks down at this noon time since it is normally only in the evening that the herdsmen shut their sheep in an enclosure?' The herdsmen replied, 'We have been asked to bring hundred goats and hundred sheep as our King has to make a sacrifice of these in the night today to worship his gods.' Then said the Master, 'I will also go!' and he moved on patiently, carrying the lamb beside the herdsmen in the dust and the sun. The mother sheep sadly moved with him softly bleating at his feet.

Story of Kisagotami

When they came upto the river side, a dove-eyed, young woman came before them, with a tearful face and folded hands and saluted the Shakyamuni bending low, 'Mahakarunik! You are that, who took pity on me yesterday in the fig-garden where I live alone with my child, taking care of him. But yesterday he moved away towards the flowers in the garden where he found a snake, which entwined itself around his wrist while he laughed and teased it and opened the mouth of that playmate. But, alas! Before long he turned very pale, I wondered why he had stopped playing and let my breast fall from his lips. And someone said, "He is sick of poison" and another said,

“He will die”. However I did not want to lose my precious boy and, therefore, prayed to them for medicinal drugs which might restore the light back to his eyes since the kiss-mark of the serpent was so very small! I think that my son was kind and pleasant, the snake could not hate him nor hurt him in the game they were playing. And someone said, “There is a holy man who lives on the hill---See! He is now passing in the yellow robe --- Ask the Rishi if there is any cure for that which ails your son.” On getting this advice, I came trembling to you, whose forehead is like a god’s, kept on weeping before you and drew the cloth from the face of my baby praying to you to tell me what herbs might cure my child. And you, great sir! did not reject me with contempt but looked at the child steadily and intently with gentle eyes and touched him with your patient hand. Then you drew the face-cloth back, saying to me, “Yes, little sister! There is a thing which could heal you first and then the child if you could bring that thing, for one who seeks treatment from a physician has to bring to him what is ordered. Therefore, I advise you to bring one *tola* of black mustard-seed. Only take the precaution not to take it from any hand or house where father, mother, child or slave has died. It will be alright even if you cannot find such seed.” ‘You spoke like this to me yesterday, my Lord !’

Tathagata smiled in an exceedingly gentle and compassionate way, 'Yes, I spoke like this, Dear Kisagotami ! But could you find out that seed?'

'Lord! I went around holding my son to my breast, who had grown colder, asking in each hut, both here in the jungle and also in the town, " I pray to you, please give me one *tola* black mustard out of compassion for me" , and each one who had it gave, for all the poor have pity upon the poor. But when I asked, "In my friend's household has anyone by chance ever died - husband or wife, child or slave?", they replied, " Oh Sister! What is this that you ask? The dead are very many, and the living are but a few!" So, with thanks, I sadly gave the mustard back and moved to the next house. On asking others, they said, "Here is the seed, but we have lost our slave!" "Here is the seed, but our good man is dead!" "Here is some seed, but he, that sowed it, died between the rainy-season and the harvesting!". 'Oh, Sir! I could not find a single house where there was mustard-seed and none had died! Therefore, I left my child, who would not suck my milk, nor smile, below the wild-plants near the stream and have now come to prostrate before you and pray you to tell me where could I find this seed and find no death'.

'My sister! Searching for that none finds, you have found the unfindable', the Teacher said, 'the

bitter balm that I had to give you which helps heal wounds of life. Whom you loved, was lying dead in your lap yesterday. Today you know that the whole world weeps with your sorrow. The intensity of grief which all hearts share becomes less for the sufferer. See! I would pour out my blood of heart if it could wipe your tears and help you find out the secret of that curse which makes our sweet love the cause of severe mental, physical pain and suffering, the curse that drives us, covered with grass and flowers, to the sacrifice like these dumb beasts being driven by the men, their owners, to death. I am looking for that secret. Now Sister! You bury your child!

Stopping Animal Sacrifice

Thus the Prince entered the city alongwith the herdsmen. It was getting afternoon. The sun appeared to have a thin layer of gold on the river Sona's stream and threw long shadows down the street and through the gate where the King's guards stood as watchmen. When the guards there saw Compassionate Buddha bearing the lamb, they stood back. The market people drew their carts and wagons aside to give passage to the Prince. In the *bazaar* (market) the buyers and sellers stopped the exchange of hot words over the price of goods and kept on looking steadily on that gentle face of Buddha. The

blacksmith who had lifted his hammer in his hand forgot to strike. The weavers making the fabrics left away the piece of woven fabric. The writer forgot his writing on the paper. The money-changer forgot the number of cowries* he had counted. Shiva's white bull** started eating freely the unwatched rice and nobody was bothered. Milk ran over the *lota* and got wasted while milk milching milkmen started watching the passage of the Prince, moving gently and submissively, but still with great dignity. Most of the women gathered at their doors asked the question, 'Who is this that brings the sacrifice? As he passes by, he looks so graceful and peace- giving. What is his caste? Wherefrom he got the eyes so sweet? Is he the *Sakra**** or the *Devaraj**** ?' Others said, 'He is the holy man who dwells with the *Rishis* on the hill.' And Gautama moved slowly, in meditation lost, thinking, 'Alas!

All my sheep have no shepherd! They are wandering in the night with none to guide them, moving blindly towards the knife of Death just like

* Cowrie: A small shiny shell that was used as money in the past in the parts of Africa and Asia.

** Shiva's white Bull: Nandi: It is said to be the carrier of Lord Shiva. Its image normally in sitting posture can be seen outside the Shiva temples in India.

*** Two names of Indra, the king of Gods.

these dumb beasts which are moving towards death with their kin.'

Seeing Tathagata coming, someone informed the King, 'Sir! A holy saint is coming with a number of sheep and goats which you wanted to have to perfectly complete the evening ceremony of sacrifice.' The King stood in the hall of sacrifice with white robed *Brahmans* standing on his both sides. They recited the *mantras**, still feeding the fire which was burning brightly with a lot of flames in the middle of the altar. The flame from the scented woods was shining with its burns like bright tongues whispering and curling in an angry way. The smoke continued to form curved and spiral shape as it received the gifts of *ghee* and spices and consumed the *soma* juice, the joy of *Indra*. Near the heap of fire a thick red streamlet moved and ran slowly, absorbed by the sand, the blood of the sacrificed animals crying mercilessly. One long horned spotted goat had its head bound back with *munja*** grass. A knife had been pressed by a priest at its stretched throat and the priest was murmuring, "The dreadful Gods! This is the crown of all the *yajnas* performed by King Bimbisara. Be overjoyed to

* Mantra: A word, phrase or sound that is repeated again and again esp. during the prayer or meditation.

**Munja: A type of grass which is quite strong and is also used for making ropes and for tying purposes etc.

see the blood gushing out, to smell the scent of the rich meat being roasted amidst sweet smelling flames. Let the King's sins descend upon this goat and let all those sins be consumed by the fire, while this goat gets burnt. Therefore, I strike it now.”

But before the priest could strike, Buddha said softly, ‘Let him not strike, great King!’ and therewith loosened the goat's rope. His presence was so impressive that none could dare to stop him. Then pleading for the freedom of goat, he spoke of life, which all can take but none can give, life which all creatures love and struggle to keep--- wonderful, dear and pleasant to all, even to the smallest creature---- a blessing to all. It is the quality of pity which makes the world soft to the weak and noble for the strong. He made these sad appeals to the dumb struck King and the priests showing, how man who prays to god for mercy is himself merciless to those to whom he is god like. Though all life is linked just as relatives, yet we slay that which has given us milk and wool. Only those hands murder them on whom they have placed their trust. Also he spoke of what the holy books surely teach how at death some sink to the level of bird and beast and then rise up to be man, like the spark which grows into flame. We create a new sin by such sacrifices when we stall the destined growth of a soul. He also spoke that none can wash his spirit clean by blood, nor make the good gods happy with it

or bribe them who are basically evil. For the sin of even one hair's weight committed by all of us for doing wrong things, we all will have to give answer someday. The sin cannot be transferred upon the head of the innocent beast, due for sacrifice. Each one has to answer that arithmetic question alone, each for himself, which says that good will end in good and ill into ill. We will be paid in the same coins for the deeds, words and thoughts which we have generated. The Law is ever watchful, aware, unmoved and cannot be appeased. The future fruits, according to this Law, are produced only by the past seeds.' Thus Siddhartha gave pitiful sermon with such majesty of rightfulness and kindness that the priests removed away the garments covering their hands, coloured with blood and the King came near Buddha with great reverence and folded hands. Our Teacher went on teaching how fair this earth would be if all living beings be linked in friendliness and common use of bloodless and pure food, the golden grains and bright fruits, sweet herbs which grow for all, meals and water sufficiently available for all. When all the persons present there heard this, they were all transformed by the forceful sermon of the compassion of Buddha. The priests themselves scattered their altar-flames and threw away the steel knife. An order was passed which was announced by the drumbeaters and was also engraved on the rocks and columns. It said: 'There has been slaughter in the

past for the purpose of sacrifice and for food but henceforth nobody will kill any animal either for sacrifice or for food because all life is one and mercy comes only to the merciful.' Thus was the decree proclaimed. From that day onwards sweet peace spread amongst all living beings--- human animals and birds, on the land beside the banks of Ganga where our Lord taught the law of mercy to all with his great compassion and soft speech.

Story of sacrifice of Brahmin

Yes, so pitiful was Buddha's heart to all that lives and breathes on this earth and are united together in joys and pains during their transitory, brief life on this earth that in one of his previous lives, it is written in the holy books, as to how he made the supreme sacrifice of his physical body (himself) to save the life of a dying tigress and its two cubs.

In one of his previous lives, ages ago, Buddha was a Brahmin who lived by the side of a rock cave named Munda near the village Dalidd. At that time once a severe drought withered away everything. The rice plants died even before they could hide a small bird. All the water tanks got dried due to severe heat and the grass and herbs burnt away. The woodland creatures fled away to save their lives. During that

time between the two rocky hot walls of a nullah which had totally dried up, Buddha, as a Brahmin, saw as he was passing by, a starving tigress lying on naked stones along with its two cubs. One could see severe starvation from her green eyes, full dry tongue hanging out, heavily breathing with her open mouth in exhaustion and contracted jaw, that being hungry she was on the verge of dying. Her coloured hide hung wrinkled on her ribs like a thatch, rotten with rains, sinking between the two frames of the roof. The cubs were crying in pain due to hunger, pulling and sucking the milkless nipples which did not yield any milk while their lean, haggard mother licked those complaining cubs with full motherly affection, leaving her side of the body between ribs and hips towards them. With her moaning throat and love stronger than want and softening her wild cry, she laid her muzzle (nose and mouth) on the sand and roared a savage thunderous peal of pain. Seeing this bitter distress which nobody else could ever see or hear except the great compassion of Mahakarunik Buddha, the Brahmin thought, 'There is no other way to help this murderess of the wood except one. These will die by sunset as they won't get any meat to eat. No living heart will take pity on her, bloody animal which catches and devours the prey and is now lean and thin for want of blood. See! If I offer myself as food, nobody will be the loser except me. And how can love lose doing something of its kind even to the uttermost?' So

saying this, Buddha silently laid down his sandals and stick, his sacred thread, turban and clothes and came forth from behind the bush to the sand where the tigress was lying, saying, 'Hi! Mother! Here is meat for you!' Seeing him as its prey, the dying beast made an excited, sharp, shrill cry and sprang upon him, throwing on the ground with great force that willing victim. The tigress and its cubs had a good feast of him with daggers of her claws, tearing his flesh with yellow teeth which got bathed in his blood. The great cat's burning breath got mixed with the last breath of that fearless love of Buddha.

So large was Mahakarunika Buddha's heart long ago, not only now, when with his graceful kindness he got the practice of cruel worship of gods through sacrifice stopped.

Having come to know the royal lineage of Buddha and his holy search, King Bimbisara prayed him many times to stay back in his city, saying often, 'Your princely body may not tolerate such fasts. Your hands were made for royal authority and not for alms. Stay with me in my palace with a beautiful bride. I have no son to rule. Teach my kingdom wisdom till I die.' But Siddhartha was of determined mind and said, 'I also had these things, most noble King but left them seeking for the truth which I still seek and shall continue to seek, not to be stopped even if pearl

doors of Sakra's* palace is opened and the Devis** try to woo me in. Journeying to Gaya and to the forests there I am going to build the kingdom of the Law where I hope that the light will come to me, as no light is coming here from anywhere - not from the Rishis, nor from the shastras***, nor from fasts borne till the body faints, starved by the soul. Yet there must be light to be reached and truth to be won and surely, O true friend! If I attain that, I will return and repay you for your love.'

Thereat the King Bimbisara made three rounds of the Prince Siddhartha, reverently bending to the Master's feet and bade farewell to him. So passed our Teacher towards Uravila, not yet comforted, with dark face and weakness after the quest of six years. On the way he met the five ascetics Alara, Udra and others staying on the hill and they persuaded him to stay back saying that all was written clearly in holy shastras*** and none could rise higher than the sruti*** and the smriti***, not even the chief saints! The mortal man could never be wiser than the jnan-kand*** which tells us that Brahm is bodiless, actionless, passionless, calm, unqualified, unchangeable and made of pure life, pure thought and

* Sakra or Indra : King of gods.

** Devi : Goddess.

*** Shastras, Sruti, Smriti & Jnan-Kand : Scriptures.

pure joy. How can man go above the karma-kand* which shows how man may remove passion and break from the bondage of the self and thus become God and enter into the vast divine, moving from false to true, from wars of senses to peace eternal where the silence lives?’

The Prince heard them but was not yet comforted.

* Karma-Kand : Scriptures.

Chapter-VI

Severe Penance

You who want to see where the light finally dawned on Buddha should go north-westward from the 'Thousand Gardens' by Ganga's valley till you reach the green hills where the twin streamlets, Nilajan and Mohana spring. Follow them, winding beneath broad-leaved Mohana-trees amidst the bushes of sansar and then Bir*, till these shining sisters meet the river Phalgu, flowing by the rocky banks to Gaya and the red Barabar hills. By the side of the river stands a thorny bush with broken sandhills, known as Uruvela in ancient times. By its side is a forest in which sea-green feathers wave and woolly plants tied together rise up towards the sky and provide decorative beauty. Under them flows a placid streamlet filled with blue and white lotus flowers, in which live quick moving fishes and tortoises. Near this forest was the village of Senani. The village Senani derived its name from the headman, Senani of the village, which had huts with roofs of grass, amidst the palm trees. In the village lived peacefully, simple villagers who worked hard in their fields.

* Bir : Small nut fruits grown in Northern India.

Here, once again in the solitude of the woods, Mahakarunik Buddha lived, meditating on the woes of men, the Law of Karma and the doctrines of the scriptures, the lessons learnt from the creatures of the forest, the secrets of the silence from which all came and the secrets of the gloom where to all will go, the life lying like an arch flung from cloud to cloud across the sky which has mists as its stonework and vapoury structure, which was so fair with blue, red and green colours of gems melting to void again. Moon after moon Buddha sat in the wood in meditation continuously for days and nights; as a result he often forgot to take his food. Rising after prolonged contemplation beyond sunrise and noon, he would find his bowl empty. Thus he was compelled to eat wild fruits fallen from the overhead branches, shaken to fall to earth by shattering monkeys or plucked by purple parrots with long tails. Therefore, his grace faded, his body, worn by the stress of the soul, day by day, lost the thirty two marks which affirmed the presence of Buddha. As a dry, withered leaf is compared to falling Sal-tree leaf in an irregular motion from the tree, so was his condition compared to that of the earlier period when he was the princely flower of Kapilvastu.

On one such occasion, the over-exhausted Prince fell on the earth in a deadly fainting-fit. All his energy had been drained away like a slain person no

longer having any breath or flow of blood; so pale, so motionless he was. But a shepherd – boy passing by his way at that very time, saw Siddhartha lying on the ground with eye-lids lightly closed and lines of mysterious pain fixed on his lips, the blazing mid-noon sun was beating over his head. The boy plucked some branches of rose-apple trees and knitted them thick as a shady, leafy shelter to provide shade to the sacred face of the Prince. He also poured some drops of warm milk pressed from his she-goat's udder, otherwise, being of the low caste, he would have done wrong by touching one who appeared so high and holy. But the holy books tell us how the jumbubranches, thus planted, shot up with a lot of leaves, flowers and glowing fruits which interlaced each other so closely that the shady leafy shelter looked like a tent of silk prepared for a king at hunting, decorated with thickly set silver work and ornamental carvings of red gold. The boy worshipped Siddhartha thinking him to be some god but Buddha gaining strength arose and asked for milk from the shepherd's Lota*. The boy replied, 'Oh, my Lord, I cannot give you this milk. You can see that I am a Sudra and my touch will make you impure!' Then the world-honoured spoke, 'Pity and need make all flesh related to each other. There is no caste in blood which runs in only one colour, nor caste in tears which causes salt to

* Lota : A container used in India.

flow in drops from the eyes of all. Neither is any man born with tilka-mark on his forehead, nor with sacred thread tied on his neck. One who does right deeds is only dwija (twice-born) and who does wrong deeds is a wicked person. Give me milk to drink, my brother! When I shall succeed in my quest, it will be good for you also.’ Hearing this the shepherd-boy’s heart was gladdened and he gave the lota of milk to be drunk.

Giving up Severe Penance

On another day a band of brightly dressed Indian dancing girls of Indra’s temple in the town with a group of musicians passed by. They produced music around where Siddhartha was sitting in meditation. One of them was beating the drum, decorated with peacock-feathers. Another blew high whistling bansuli* and the other was playing on the sitar. They walked down with quick light steps through the path from ledge to ledge to some colourful festival. The silver bells round their small brown feet made soft sound along with the armlets and the wrist rings which made high pitched sound. One that held the sitar played it unskillfully making strong ringing sound with threads of brass. The girl beside him sang –

*Bansuli : A type of flute usually made of bamboo stick.

The dancing goes on well when the sitar is tuned proper.

*Tune the sitar neither low nor high,
And we shall dance away according to the hearts of men.*

The string, overstretched, breaks and the music flies.

When overslack, it becomes dumb and the music dies.

Tune us the sitar neither low nor high.

The nautch-girls thus sang in tune with the flute and the sitar, like a proudly painted fluttering butterfly moving from place to place along the forest path. She did not dream that her words echoed on the ears of the holy man who sat attentive, fully absorbed under the fig tree by the path. But Buddha lifted his eyes as the singer and the team passed aimlessly and spoke, 'The foolish often teach the wise. I strain this string of life too much expecting it to produce such music as shall save this world. When the eyes should be able to see the truth, they have become dim. When my need is the most, my strength is going away. Will it be that I shall get that help as man must have, for in this way I, whose life was all men's hope, shall die.'

Sujata

By the side of the river lived a pious and rich landowner, master of a large number of animals, a good person, friend of all the poor. It was from his name that the village derived its name – ‘Senani.’ He lived peacefully and pleasantly with his wife Sujata, who was the loveliest of all the dark – eyed daughters of the plain. She was gentle, true, simple, kind and noble. She spoke graciously to all and behaved in a pleasant way. She was a pearl of womanhood, passing calm years in her household happily with her husband in her village, except that they had not been blessed with a child through their marriage. She made many prayers before the Goddess Lakshmi and also passed a number of full nights in prayer around Shiva’s lingam. She made eighty one offerings of rice, jasmine flowers and sandal oil praying for a boy and also vowed that if they were blessed with a son then she would make offering to the wood-God in a bowl of gold under his tree of food that would be so delicious that the gods also would be pleased to gladly take it. And this desire was fulfilled. A beautiful boy was born to her, now three months old who lied between Sujata’s breasts while she moved with grateful steps towards the Wood-God’s shrine. With one arm she had clasped her crimson sari close to wrap the baby, that jewel of her joys and the other lifted up to hold

the bowl and the dish, steady on her head, which had delicious food for the God.

But Radha, the maidservant, who had been sent beforehand to sweep the ground and tie the red threads around the tree came eagerly crying, 'Ah, my dear Mistress! look! The Wood-God is sitting in his place with hands folded upon his knees. See how the light is shining round about his face. How soft and great he seems with heavenly eyes! It is good fortune to meet the gods thus'.

So, thinking him as a divine being, Sujata drew near him trembling and kissed the earth and said, with her beautiful face bent, 'Would that Holy one inhabiting this forest, giver of food, merciful to me, his female servant, confirming his presence here, kindly accept these poor gifts of snowy kheer,* fresh made with milk as white as new carved ivory?'

Saying this she poured in the bowl the kheer and milk and on the hands of Buddha, dropped attar** from a crystal flask – distilled out of roses. And he ate speaking not a word while the happy mother stood in reverence. But the virtue of that meal was so

*Kheer : A delicious sweet dish in India made by boiling rice in milk.

**Attar: Rose essence

wondrous that Mahakarunik Buddha felt strength and life returned to him as though the nights of watching and the days of fast had passed away in dream, as though the spirit also shared that fine food with the flesh, as if a bird had made its wings tidy and anew with its beak, or as if a bird became delighted to find a stream suddenly after its flight over the endless span of sand and washes its neck and body in that stream to feel fresh.

And while Sujata worshipped him, she found the face of Gautam glow fairer and brighter and asked lowly, 'Are you indeed the God ?' 'And has my gift been accepted ?'

But Buddha asked, 'What is it that you have brought for me ?'

'Holy One!' answered Sujata, 'From our flock of animals I took the milk of hundred mother – cows, newly calved and with that milk I fed fifty white cows and with their milk twenty five and then with their milk twelve more cows and then their milk was fed to the best six of our animals. I boiled that milk taken from those six cows with sandal and fine spice in silver lotas, adding rice, well grown from chosen seed, sown in virgin land and I thus picked up each grain like a pearl. I did it out of my true heart because I had vowed under your tree that if I shall bear a boy, I shall

make this offering out of my joy. And I now have a son and my life is full of bliss & happiness!’

Softly Buddha drew down the purple colour cloth and put those blessed hands, which help the world, on that little head and said, ‘Long be your bliss! And let the load of life fall on him lightly! You have helped me, who is not God but one of your brothers. I was hitherto a Prince but now a wanderer who has been seeking, night and day, all these six years, that light which shines somewhere which may remove the darkness of all men, if they come to know about it! And I shall find that light. Yes, now it appears that it will dawn on me, glorious and helpful. When my weak body failed, your pure food, fair sister, has restored its strength, drawn manifold through lives to quicken life just as life itself passes by many births to happier heights through cleansing off the sins. Yet, do you truly find it satisfying enough only to live? Are life and love sufficient to satisfy you?’ Answered Sujata, ‘Worshipful! My heart is little and little rain will fill the lily’s cup which otherwise hardly moistens the field. It is enough for me to feel that my life’s sun shines in my lord’s happiness and my baby’s smile which makes our home a loving place. My time passes pleasantly attending to household duties. When I wake up at sunrise, I offer prayers to gods and give some grain in charity and then trim the

tulsi* - plant. Thereafter I distribute the tasks to my female servants and supervise the work till noon when my husband, after his meals, lays his head upon my lap and rests while I sing soft songs and wave the fan for him. And similarly at the supper time in the evening I serve him food while I stand by his side. After the night falls, I visit the temple, talk to my friends and when the stars start twinkling asking us to go to sleep, I go to bed.

How should I not be happy, blessed with so much and also having given birth to this boy whose small hand shall help my husband's soul to go to svarga**? The holy books teach us that when a man will plant trees to provide shade to travellers, dig a well for the comfort of his fellow beings and shall beget a son, it will be good for him for life after death. I humbly accept what is written in the holy books because I cannot be wiser than our great ancestors who could converse with gods, knew how to please them by prayer and also knew the magical powers. How could one thus not live a virtuous and peaceful life? Also I think that good must surely come of good and ill

* Tulsi : A medicinal ayurvedic plant in India which is normally planted in a courtyard of a home and is also worshipped. The plant has medicinal value as well.

** Svarga : Heaven.

of ill to all in every place and also at all times, seeing that sweet fruit grows from wholesome seeds and bitter things from poisonous seeds and also seeing how ill will breeds hate and kindness produces friends and patience leads to peace while we live. And when it is destined, we will die, why shall there not be as good a 'Then' as it is 'Now'? May be, by chance, the 'Then' may be probably better than the 'Now'! One grain of rice gives rise to fifty pearls of rice. The white and gold champak flower remains hidden in that little, naked, grey spring-buds. Yes, Sir! I know that there may be sorrows which I may have to tolerate and one may lose patience, if one is in trouble. For example, if my baby passes away first then I think my heart will break – almost I hope my heart will break. I might embrace him dead and pass away with him and wait for my husband, in whatsoever world the faithful wives are made to wait dutifully till my husband would also die and come there. But if death called away Senani first, then I would mount the funeral pyre and sit on it with his dear head in my lap as I do daily. I would be rejoicing when I would also be consumed by the flame and the choking smoke, for it is written in the scriptures that if a wife dies in this way, then her love will give her husband's soul for every hair upon her head a crore* of years in Svarga.

*Crore : A crore is a unit of measurement of number and is equivalent to ten million.

Therefore, I am not afraid and my life is happy. But while I live thus fortunately, I do not forget those who are poorer, more needy, painful and miserable than me. Let the gods have pity on them! But for me, I humbly do only that what good I see and I live obeying the law with full trust that what will come must come and shall come well.'

Then spoke Siddhartha to Sujata, 'You teach them who teach others that which is more profound than wisdom in your own simple language. You should be happy and satisfied that you are ignorant and that knowing the way of righteousness and duties, you should continue to grow like a flower in the sweet peaceful shade. Truth's high noon is not for delicate leaves which must wait to spread in other lights in future and lift its crowned head to the sky in later lives. You, who has worshipped me, I worship you. Excellent heart! You have learnt the wisdom unknowingly just like a bird which goes on flying to distant places, flies back home, pulled by love to its family. In you can be seen the hope for man where we hold the wheel of life at our will. May your life be peaceful and all your future years be comfortable! As you have accomplished, may I also achieve! He, whom you thought to be God, is keen that you wish him this!'

'May you achieve,' she said, with earnest eyes bent on her baby who moved his tender hands to show reverence to Buddha, knowing, as the children very well know, more than we think.

Bodhi-Tree

Siddhartha rose from his seat, becoming strong with that pure food, and moved a few footsteps where a great Tree, known as the Bodhi-tree (From then onward never to fade in all times to come and preserved in homage of the world) grew up. It had been prophesied that Truth would come to Buddha beneath this tree. Buddha knew this and therefore, he went under the Tree of Wisdom with measured move in a steadfast, majestic manner. Oh, you worlds! Rejoice! Our Teacher has made his way into the Tree!

When he passed into the spacious shade of the tree covered with drooping stems which had the arch ceiling of sparkling green colour, the earth being aware as to what was going on in the surroundings there, worshipped him with waving grass and sudden blooming of flowers near his feet. The branches of the tree bowed down to provide him shade. From the river blew lotus-scented cool wind, breathed usually by water-gods.

From the caves, forest and shrubs, creatures like leopard, boar and deer, made peace that evening and gazed with large wondering eyes on his gracious and kindly face. The spotted deadly snake started dancing on its hood in honour of Tathagata from the cold opening in the rocks. Bright butterflies of deep sky-blue, green and golden colours fluttered their wings to become his fan-bearers. The ferocious hawk dropped its prey and cried out in a loud shrill voice. The striped palm-squirrels ran from branch to branch to see Buddha. The weaver-bird chirped from its swinging nest. The lizard ran here and there and the Koel* started singing her songs. The doves gathering together went round and round in the sky. Even the creeping creatures had also become aware and were happy. Voices of earth and the air joined in one song which when heard by the ears said, 'Lord and friend! Lover and Saviour! You, who have subdued anger and pride, desires, fears and doubts, who has given away himself for one and all, please move to the Tree! The sad world blesses you that you who are Buddha shall mitigate its suffering. Move now, O Honoured one! Make this last effort for us. O King and high Conqueror! Your hour has come. This is the Night for which the earth has been waiting for ages!'

* Koel: Cuckoo, a black colour bird in India which makes beautiful sound.

When our Teacher sat below the Bodhi tree, the night fell. Mara, the Prince of Darkness, knowing that this was Buddha who will deliver men and this was the time when he would find the Truth and save the world, gave orders to all his evil powers to act. Thereupon, the devils, driven by the most intense wickedness, who constantly fight with Wisdom and Light, came out from every deep pit: Aarti, Trishna (desire), Raga (anger) and their gang of passion: horror, ignorance and passionate desire, the offspring of gloom and dread, all hating Buddha and desperately trying to shake his mind. No one knows, not even the wisest, how these demon-armies of Hell battled that night to keep the Truth away from Buddha, sometimes with terrors of violent wind storm and explosions of the devils' army clouding all the sky and the wind with thunder, with blinding light being flung as a jagged javelin, of purple colour as if emitting anger from the splitting skies.

In order to divert the attention of our Teacher, they often showed some cunning tricks and occasionally spoke fair sounding alluring words, made the leaves still, the wind silent and less severe. The witches of different shapes and beauties appeared before him to attract him towards them. They sang erotic songs, whispers of love, sometimes made fascinating offer of giving him his royal kingdom to rule the earth, sometimes raising doubts trying to

show that nothing would be achieved by his pursuing the truth and that the pursuit was empty and useless. But whether these allurements actually took place in a visible form outside him or whether Buddha fought with the spirits within his own innermost heart only, you have to judge it for yourself. I* write only what has been written in the ancient books.

Thereafter the ten Chief Sins – Mara’s mighty ones, the Angels of evil, came. First came *Attavada*, the Sin of the Self who, in the Universe, sees her own fond face everywhere as in a mirror crying ‘I’ and that the world should be ruled by this ‘I’ only. All things would have perished in the Universe if she were allowed to have an upper hand. She said, ‘If you want to be Buddha, let others grope about lightless in the dark. It is enough that you are Buddha. Be changeless and rise to the grade of gods. Enjoy their bliss, who do not change, neither hear nor help anyone.’ But Buddha replied, ‘What you call as truth lacks in moral worth. It is not truth but something that will cause evil and harm to all. Loving oneself is a deception, a fraud.’ Then came the representative of dark force, the Doubt, the Sin that ridicules and diverts attention by pretending something other than the truth to be true. This whispered in the Teacher’s ears with a sense of disapproval, ‘All things are mere

* I hereby means the original author, Sir Edwin Arnold.

shows. It is useless to have that knowledge. It is nothing more than your vanity. You are only chasing your own shadow. Rise and go away. There is no other way except rejecting it patiently. There is no hope of any help for man, nor any chance of stopping of this rotating wheel.’ But said Buddha, ‘You have nothing to do with me, False *Vichikichcha!* You are the most cunning of man’s all enemies.’ And the third to come in line was one she who gives the darker forces their power, *Silabbat – paramasa*, who uses magical powers to perform magic by using the power of evil spirits found in different places as superstition. These evil spirits continuously cheat the souls with rituals and prayers. She is the keeper of those keys which lock up Hells and open Heavens. ‘Will you dare’, she said, ‘Put the sacred books aside, dethrone our gods, empty all the temples of the idols, set aside the law which feeds the priests and supports their authority?’ But Buddha answered, ‘What you are advising me to keep is the form which will pass away. But the Truth will stand eternally. Get back into your darkness.’ Next in turn came a braver Tempter, more courageous, the King of passions, known as Kamadeva, who has influence even on gods also. He is the Lord of all senses and the Ruler of the Kingdom of pleasures. He came into the Tree laughingly, carrying his bow of gold, encircled with red flowers and arrows of desire pointed with five – tongued highly sensitive flame, which stings the heart it

touches more than a poisoned hook. To that lonely place he was accompanied by a group of very beautiful women with heavenly eyes and lips. They were singing erotic songs in praise of love, accompanied by invisible music of sweet harmony. Their presence was so captivating that the night seemed to stand still to hear them. The stars and moon listening to them stopped their movement while these women sang songs of lost delights, happiness and love. They mentioned to Buddha how a mortal man could not find anything better in the three worlds more loving than sweet smelling breasts of Beauty, the rosy breast – flowers which are the gems of Love. Nothing can be better to touch than that sweet, soothing and harmonious form, their lines and contours which are charms of unspeakable loveliness. They convey everything from soul to soul through warm blood jumping forcefully, worshipped by strong deliberate fixed desire of everyone who tries to catch it, knowing that this is the best thing in the world. This is the true heaven where mortal beings are like gods, Makers and Masters and this is the gift of gifts ever renewed and worth a thousand woes. Who can grieve when the soft arms embrace and shut one safe, all life melting into a happy, long, deep audible sigh? And the entire world could be given away in a simple warm kiss? The women sang in this way with soft sounds and beckoning movement of hands and fingers, eyes lighted with love – flames and very

attractive smiles in provocative dance, their supple body parts revealing and concealing like the buds which open and tell their colour but hide their heart. The eyes had never tasted such matchless beauty as troop after troop of these midnight dancers passed nearer to the Tree, each troop prettier than the previous one and murmuring, 'O great Siddhartha! I am yours. Kiss my lips and then only conclude whether youthfulness is sweet or not!' But Siddhartha stirred not. At last when nothing moved Siddhartha's mind, Kama used his final weapon, waved his magic bow and lo! the band of dancers opened up. One fairest of all and the most beautiful of the crowd came forward taking the form of sweet Yasodhara. Her dark eyes had strong erotic love and were brimming with tears. She showed strong passionate longing for him and stretched her arms towards him. The beautiful shadow breathed heavily, lamented in musical voice and addressed him by his name, 'My Prince! I am dying because of your absence! What heaven have you finally found which we did not have in the Pleasure – house by the side of the river Rohini, where I have been weeping for you all these tiring years? Return, Siddhartha! Ah! Return! Only kiss my lips again, let me lie on your breast once and all these fruitless dreams will end! Oh, look! Am I not the one you loved?' But Buddha said, 'You are playing with me in this way by taking the form of sweet Yasodhara! Your playing through

this fair and false shadow is useless. I am not cursing you because you are wearing the form which is so dear to me. But understand clearly that your show is also like all other earthly shows! Melt away in your void again!

As Buddha said so, a sharp cry thrilled through the forest. The entire company of defeated troops of beautiful ladies faded with flickerings of flame leaving the trail of their vaporous forms.

Thereafter with the darkening skies and the noise of the rising storm came very aggressive and angry Sins, the last of the Ten: *Patigha* – Hate. She had serpents coiled about her waist which sucked poisonous milk from her both hanging nipples. She was murmuring curses and her murmur was mixed with the angry hiss of the serpents. But she could hardly bring any influence on the Holy One who with his calm eyes silenced her bitter lips and made her black snakes writhe to hide their fangs. After her followed another Sin, *Ruparaga* – Lust of days-- that sensual Sin which out of greed for life forgets to live. Thereafter came the lust of fame, nobler *Aruparaga*, she, who cheats the wise, who is also the mother of daring deeds, battles and toils. Then came the haughty *Mano*, the evil spirit of Pride and smooth Self – Righteousness, *Uddhachcha* with many unpleasant group of vile and formless things which

crawled and flapped like toad and bat. This was followed by Ignorance, the mother of Fear and Wrong, *Avidya*, horribly ugly old witch whose footsteps made the midnight darker while the rooted mountains shook and the wild winds howled. The broken clouds shed streams of lightning lighted rain. Stars shot from the heaven and the earth shivered from fear as if one laid flame on her wide open wounds. The black air was full of whistling loud, sharp cries of pain and fear of the peering evil faces. The terrible and majestic, Lords of Hell, led their troops from thousand abodes of the dead souls to tempt the Teacher.

Enlightenment

But Buddha did not take notice of all that happened. He continued to sit serene with perfect virtues protecting him as a wall, as is a fort protected by its gates and moats. Also the sacred Tree – the Bodhi tree – did not stir amidst the uproar. Each leaf glistened but was as still as when in moon-lit nights, a mild gentle wind does not stop the formation of the gems of dew. All the noise raged outside the shade of that cloistered stems.

In the third watch when the earth was still and the armies from hell had fled away and a soft air was blowing while the moon was going down, our Teacher

attained *Samma – Sambuddh*. He saw by light, which shines beyond our mortal range of knowledge the line of all his lives in all the worlds, far, farther and farthest back, five hundred and fifty lives. He saw them like a person standing at rest upon a mountain – peak who sees his path wind up by high rough steep rock by the side of a dense forest shrinking into a small patch of ground, passing through marshy type of vegetation which shone like a green bright light. He saw those valley basins where he toiled breathlessly to move on those unsteady long narrow ridges where his feet had almost slipped. He also saw the large waterfall, the cave and the small body of still water beyond the sunny lawns and then backward those not clearly seen surfaces from where he started his journey to reach the sky. Thus Buddha beheld before him, his life's upward steps – linked to each other from the lower levels where the air is impure to higher and higher heights where the ten great Virtues wait to take the climber further up, skyward. Also Buddha saw how new life reaps what the old life had sowed, how its march begins from the place where the original march ended, thus holding the gain and paying for the loss. He also observed how in each life good begets more good and evil begets fresh evil, Death only adding up and calculating the details of the record, the debits and the credits. In the accounting the merits and demerits are surely reckoned up by the ever correct, inevitable and fair, arithmetic where not

even a small written stroke or dot is dropped in the new life coming up. In the new life are packed and scored past thoughts and deeds, strivings and successes, memories and traces of past lives.

In the middle of the night our Teacher attained Abhijna, a vast insight ranging beyond this sphere to unnamed spheres, system after system, countless worlds and suns moving splendidly, inter-connected, linked together in division, one, yet separate. He saw the silver islands of a bright blue sea- shoreless, unfathomed, undiminished, stirred with waves which roll in restless tides of change. He saw those Lords of Light who hold their worlds together by invisible bonds, how they themselves circle obediently around mightier heavenly bodies which in turn move in greater splendours, star to star, flashing the ceaseless radiance of life from centres which are ever shifting into circles knowing no absoluteness. He beheld all these with uninterrupted vision and also all those worlds with small circles moving around the circumference of larger ones. He came to know all about them, of their Kalpas and Mahakalpas – measurement of time which no man can grasp even in imagination though he were capable of counting the drops in Ganga from her springs to the sea. He saw how these heavenly bodies undergo alternate waxing and waning, fulfil their shining life and in the darkness of the night die away. He passed through great

depths and heights moving through the boundlessness in the sky and heavens observing behind all modes and above all spheres. Beyond the burning force of each heavenly body he saw that fixed order working silently at will, evolving the dark to light, the dead to life. It fills the emptiness to fullness, the yet unformed to forms, good to better and the better into the best by a wordless order or command. There is none to give this command. Nor is there someone to withdraw it. This command is beyond all gods, unchangeable, unspeakable, supreme – a Power which builds, unbuilds and builds again, ruling all things in accordance to the rule of absolute, which is beauty, Truth and Power. All things do well which serve that Power and ill, which hinder it. This way the worm does well to follow the nature of other worms of its kind, the hawk does well when it carries the bleeding preys to its young ones for food. The dewdrop and the star shine harmoniously in a sisterly way, rotating together in a common cause. Man, who lives to die and dies to live well again in next life, should lead his way by a blameless life and the earnest will to help, not hinder all things in furtherance of their evolution, both great and small. Our Teacher saw all these in the middle watch of that great night.

In the fourth watch the secret of sorrow was revealed to him which with evil mars the law in the same ways moisture and rubbish hold back the

goldsmith's fire. Then the Dukkha-Satya opened before him – First of the Noble Truths : How sorrow is a shadow to life, moving wherever life moves, not to be laid aside until one lays away the living itself, with all its changing states like birth, growth, decay, love, hatred, pleasure, pain, being and doing. He saw how nobody gets rid of these sad delights and pleasant griefs, does not have the knowledge to understand them as traps. But one who knows Avidya- Delusion, sets those traps apart, does not love life any longer but attempts escape. The eyes of such a one are wide open. He sees that delusion breeds Sankhara, which is a perverse Tendency; Tendency Energy – Vijnan – whereby comes Namarupa, local form and name and a body. Thus the man comes with senses and sensible things pass before him in his heart as helpless shows pass through mirror. Thus Vedana grows out of sensuous life which feels happiness in falsity and also terrible in sadness. But sad or glad, the Mother of Desire, Trishna, the thirst which makes the living beings drink false salty water from deepest depths of the ocean on which float pleasures, ambitions, wealth, praise, fame, commands, conquest, love, rich food, clothes, beautiful houses and pride arising from the past and passionate desire for happy days, struggle to live and as a result sins flow from that struggle, some of which are sweet and some bitter.

Thus Life's thirst is quenched with drinks which instead of quenching the thirst double it. But one who is wise, tears this Trishna from his soul and no longer feeds his soul with false shows. Rather he disciplines his firm mind not to seek, not to strive and not to do anything wrong, tolerating in a timid manner, all ills which flow from the wrong deeds performed in the past. Thus he controls the passions so that they are starved and ultimately die away, till the sum total of the Karma ends in life, which was created by the things one did, thoughts one had, the self one wove with woofs over a period of time, crossed on the warp of invisible acts. A man finishing his Karma grows pure and sinless. He never again needs to find a body and a place. Alternatively he takes new forms in new lives where the new struggles prove to be lighter and lighter till the time the weights disappear totally. Thus there is an end to the treading of the Path. He becomes free from the deceit of the earth. He is released from all the *Skandhas (limitations)* of the flesh and broken from all ties, the upadanas. He is now released from the whirling on the wheel of births and rebirths. Alive and sane, as if he has been awakened from some hateful dreams, he becomes greater than Kings, happier than gods. In him the painful fancy to live ends. In him the life glides lifeless-to unbound peace and joy which cannot be described in words. He gets to the change which

never changes, the blessed Nirvana – sinless, rest without any disturbance.

See! The Dawn came along with Buddha's victory! In the East were seen the flames of the first sun rays of the beautiful day, which poured forth as if the night's black curtain had been folded and vanished away high in the blue sky. The herald star faded to pale silver colour and finally disappeared, as the rosy glow became brighter and brightest in the sky. Far off the shadowy hills saw the great Sun came up before the world was aware of its coming. It donned the crowns of red and blue colour. Each flower felt the warmth of the morning sun and began to unfold its tender lid. The swift footsteps of the lovely light swept over the glittering ornamental grass. The tears of the night in the form of dews turned to joyous gems. It covered the earth with radiance as if embroidering the sinking storm-clouds with a golden fringe. The radiance also covered the feathers of the palms as if they were gold plated. The palms seemed to salute gladly throwing golden beams in the open space in that forest. It appeared as if a magic wand had touched the rippled stream to turn it to crimson. In the bushwood the rays fell on the mild eyes of the antelopes who lazily said, 'Oh! It is day!' They also whispered in the ears of a number of birds, which still had their small heads under their wings, put in the night to settle themselves comfortably and were still

asleep, 'Children, praise the light of the day !' Hearing this, all the birds sang solemn hymns of praise. The koel sang songs and bulbul too sang the songs. Others murmured 'morning, morning'. The twitter of the sun – birds were heard who were going out in search of honey before the bees came out for it. The grey crow cawed, the parrots screamed, the green hammersmith stroked, the myna chirped and the doves continued with the never finished love – talks. Yes! the influence of that magnificent dawn, which came with victory, was so holy that an unknown peace spread in homes far and near. The slayer hid his knife. The robber put the stolen goods back. The shroff counted all the coins without committing any fraud in counting. All evil hearts became gentle. Gentle hearts became gentler as the healing balm of the most divine daybreak lightened the earth. Kings at fierce war with each other called for truce. The sick men leaped laughing from beds of pain. The dying smiled as though they knew that the happy morning had sprung from fountains from the farthest East.

And over the heart of sad Yasodhara sitting forsaken at Prince Siddhartha's bed came sudden bliss, as if love had ultimately not failed. She felt her sorrow ending in joy. The world was extremely happy all around although it did not know why. Predicting Buddha's arrival, the bodiless Prets* and Bhuts* went

* Prets and Bhuts : Ghosts.

singing songs of merriment. The Devas cried in the air, 'It is finished, It is finished!' The priests stood with the people wondering in the streets and the corners, watching the golden splendours flood the sky and said, 'Some mighty thing has happened'. Also that day friendship grew amongst the creatures in desert and jungle. Spotted deer moved around fearlessly where the tigress fed her cubs. The cheetahs drank water in the pools beside the bucks. The brown hares moved under the eagle's rock while it cleaned its feathers in the wing and arranged them neatly with its fierce beak in an idle manner. The snake sunned all his jewels in the sunbeam while its deadly fangs remained enclosed in a sheath. The bird of prey did not harm the small seed eating baby birds still in the nest, too young to leave it. The greenish kingfisher sat leisurely, dreaming while the fishes played in the pool beneath.

The squirrel did not catch the red-purple, blue and yellow butterflies as they moved lightly around the branches of the tree. The Spirit of Tathagata had very powerful influence on man, bird and beast, even while he sat reflecting under the Bodhi tree.

He felt glorified with the conquest gained for all and lightened by a Light that was more intense and powerful than the sunlight of that day.

Then he arose – radiant, rejoicing and strong – from beneath the Tree, lifted his voice high and spoke the following verses which became immortal in all Times to come and in all the Worlds:

Aneka-jati-samsaram
Samdhavissam anibbisam
Gahakarakam gavesanto
Dukkha jati punappunam

Gahakaraka ditthosi;
Puna geham na kahasi;
Sabba te phasuka bhagga
Gahakutam visamkhatam;
Visamkharagatam chittam;
Tanhanam khaya-majjhaga

Meaning: Through many houses of samsara's births, I have been seeking to find out the builder of this house but have not succeeded. The birth, again and again, has been very painful. But now you! the builder of this house-you! I know you! You will never be able to build again these walls of pain for me, nor you will be able to raise the roof tree of deceits, nor place fresh beams on the roof! Your house fashioned by false beliefs is broken and the horizontal pole is split. I hereby pass safely attaining Deliverance.

Chapter-VII

Message to Yasodhara

After Siddhartha left the palace, King Suddhodana lived sorrowfully without his son for six long years, amongst his Sakya Lords. Sweet Yasodhara, Siddhartha's wife, the Princess, also lived sorrowfully all those years not knowing any joy of life. Though her husband, the Prince was alive, she lived like a widow. Sometimes some camel riders, while taking their camels for grazing to far off lands, had brought the news of some hermit. Some traders, having gone on long journeys for business purposes, had also brought some information about some recluse. The King had also sent a number of messengers on long journeys in different directions. On return they brought account of many holy sages who had left their homes and now lived in solitude. But none brought any news of him, who was destined to ascend the throne of Kapilvastu, was going to be its monarch and was its ray of hope. The heart of sweet Yasodhara, the Prince, was now wandering – nobody knew where. Nobody knew if he had changed, whether he had forgotten her or was even dead!

But one day in the Vasanta time when mango trees swing with silvery buds and the entire earth is covered with spring, the Princess was sitting by the side of the bright garden stream which flowed smoothly as a continuous motion. Its water reflected the things as a mirror does. Lotus flowers bloomed in it. They were witness of the bliss gone by when the Prince and the Princess held each other's hands and their lips met together. Today, of course, her eye lids had become pale with tears. Her tender cheeks had thinned. The lips' pleasing curves were now filled with grief. The lustrous glory of her hair had disappeared. It had been closely tied as widows do. She neither wore any ornament nor jewel on her clothes but was dressed in a simple coarse saree of white colour; moved her small fine feet slowly and painfully. Earlier when the Prince was still in the palace, the same feet walked with the elegant pace of a small deer. Her voice had been like a falling rose-leaf. Her eyes had earlier shined as lamps of love, sunlight coming out from the deepest dark, illuminating night's peace with the day time's glow. The same were unlighted now. They moved in different directions aimlessly, hardly attending to the signs of the arrival of the spring season. The silken eyelashes drooped over their eyeballs. In one hand she held the girdle thick with pearls, left by Siddhartha and treasured by her since the night he left the palace. What a bitter night that was! She was the mother of all subsequent weeping

days! Love had never been so merciless to love except by the death. By the other hand she held the hand of her little son, Rahula, a boy, divinely fair, left as a pledge by Siddhartha. He was now seven years old and moved happily beside his mother, lightheartedly with short, light steps to see the spring-flowers blooming everywhere.

As mother and son moved slowly, lingering around the lotus flower pools, Rahula laughingly threw rice to feed the blue, red and other coloured fishes. Yasodhara, with her sad eyes, watched the rapidly flying cranes in the sky and with long expression of yearning uttered in a regretful manner, 'O large wandering cranes! You have been going about from place to place. If you can throw light where my dear Lord is hiding, tell him that Yasodhara lives, close to death, waiting to hear one word from him, to have one glimpse of him!' Thus, as the mother and the child played and mother sighed remorsefully, some young girls of the palace approached them and told Yasodhara, 'Great Princess! Some merchants of Hastinapur named Tripusha and Bhalluk have entered the south gate of our palace. They are rich businessmen who have been travelling to far off places on the sea coasts. They have brought treasures from far off places-beautiful lovely pieces of embroidered cloth having golden pictures, costly swords of steel overlaid with gold, ornamented bowls

of brass, decoration pieces of ivory, spice, medicinal plants and unknown birds. But they have also brought something unique which is precious than all these put together. These treasures are trifles before that. They have brought the news about your lord, our lord, the hope of our kingdom, Prince Siddhartha, whom we have been looking for all these years, has been seen. They have seen him face to face. Not only have they seen him, they have kneeled down before him, touched his feet with their eyebrows, worshipped him and made offerings in prayer. He has become all that was foretold. He has become a teacher of the wise, world- honoured, holy, wonderful, a Buddha. He is set to liberate all men and save all beings by his sweetest speeches and pity as vast as heaven. It is said that he has set out on his journey to come here.

On hearing this, happiness leaped in the blood in Yasodhara's veins as the Ganga leaps when the first mountain snow melts in spring. She stood up from her seat, clapped her palms and laughed with continuous flowing of tears and cried, 'Oh! Call them quickly. Call these merchants to the courtyard. My ears are thirsty like a very dry throat to drink their blessed news. Go and bring them immediately. If this news were correct, then tell them that I shall fill their girdles with so much of gold and gems that even the kings will envy them. You, my girls, should also come

for you will also get your reward for bringing this great news to my grateful heart’.

Thus those merchants started moving towards the courtyard of the palace. They softly paced slowly, barefeet, through the golden paths with the maids standing on the way gazing them with half closed eyes. While the merchants passed through the corridors of the palace, they were dumb struck and wondered at its beauty. When they reached near the curtain of the inner courtyard, they were welcomed by a tender, eager charming voice as if filled with melodious music, saying, ‘Sirs! You are coming from far, far distance and it is told that you have not only seen my Lord but have also worshipped him for he has now become a Buddha, world-honoured holy and delivers human beings from the bondage of birth and death. It is also told that he is coming this way. Speak! If this be true, then, you are great friends of my palace and I most heartily welcome you, dear ones’.

On hearing this, Tripusha answered, ‘Princess! We have seen the sacred Teacher and bowed before his feet. One who was lost as a Prince by us all has been found out as the King of Kings. That which will save the world has lately been found out by him under the Bodhi – tree located by the side of river Phalgu. He is now the friend of all, the Prince of all but

definitely yours the most. O Great Lady! Out of the tears shed by you in the past, the men have won the soothing comfort of the world, which they get when the Teacher speaks. Lo! He is well, content, satisfied and serene, as one beyond all ills. He is now like a god, uplifted above all worldly woes. He shines with the Truth he has seen, golden and clear. And now as he enters town after town, preaching people the noble truth which leads to peace, people start following his teachings and the path as the leaves follow the wind or as the group of sheep follow that sheep which knows the grazing ground. We have ourselves heard the teachings from those wonderful lips of the Master in the small forests of Chirnika by the side of Gaya and also paid him our reverence. It is learnt that the Teacher will come this way before the start of the rainy season.'

Tripusha thus explained to Yasodhara about Buddha. And Yasodhara was so joyous that she could hardly muster breath to answer, 'My dear worthy friends! Let good always come to you now and in all times to come for all the good news that you have brought for me! But I am very keen to know as to how all this happened?' To this query, Bhalluk replied, 'Recall that dreadful night of conflict about which the people of the valleys know very well, when the air darkened with the shadows of the evil spirits, there were earthquakes and water gushed out due to

Mara's anger. You may also recall as to how the glorious morning broke out-radiant with rising hopes for men and how the Lord was found rejoicing beneath the Bodhi tree after the release of burden of many years. He had crossed all storms of doubt safely to the shore of Truth. After he got enlightenment he had a golden load on his heart, musing as to how men, who love their sins and cling to the cheatings of the senses and drink the wrongful drinks from the thousand springs of worldliness and have no inkling to see the truth, nor the strength to break the traps of the body which bind them to the cycles of birth and death – how should such persons receive the twelve Nidanas and the Law discovered by him which could free them all. Yet, it was strange that nobody wanted to get liberated by what was discovered by Buddha. The human beings were like the caged bird which often shunned the opened door. The door of the cage was open but the bird did not want to come out of it. Mankind would have missed the benefits of the gains arising out of the victory of Buddha, if Buddha, after winning the way would have concluded that it would be too hard for the mortal feet of human beings living on this painful earth, without a refuge, to attain the same. He could have thus moved away, none following him. But led by the compassion, the Teacher pondered about the well being of all mankind when at that time a painful voice as sharp as the cry of the pangs of the childbirth were

heard from the mother earth in a moaning tone, '*Nasyami aham bhū Nasyati loka!*' SURELY I AM LOST, I AND MY CREATURES. After this cry there was a pause for a moment and then a pleading accompanied by a deep prolonged breath was heard through the western wind, '*Sruyatam dharma Bhagvat!*' OH, SUPREME ! LET THY GREAT LAW BE UTTERED! On hearing this the Teacher cast his vision on the mankind around him and could make out who were ready to receive his teachings and who must wait as the sun while throwing its brilliant light in the morning over the lake of lotus flowers can easily see which buds will open up that day with its beams and which are still not grown up sufficiently above their roots and have, therefore, to wait for the next day. Then he spoke with a divine smile, 'Yes, I shall preach the Law! Whosoever is capable of listening it, let him learn the Law.'

Subsequently he passed, it is said, by the hills to Benaras where he taught the five selected disciples as to how the cycle of birth and death should be destroyed. He also taught how man has no fate except his past Karma (deeds), no hell other than what he makes by himself and no heaven which is too high where people who have subdued their passions cannot reach. This all happened on the 15th day of Vaisakh, mid-afternoon and that night was a full moon night.

Out of the five Rishis thus ordained, first Kaundinya learnt the Four Truths and entered the Path. After him Bhadraka, Asvajit, Basava & Mahanama attained the arhatship. Also at Isipatan in the deer – park the Prince Yasad along with his fifty four nobles took to yellow robes after hearing the blessed teachings of the Teacher. They worshipped and followed him. Peace sprang up everywhere. People came to understand that or now time had come for all men who heard his teachings as flowers and grass spring up when water sparkles through a sandy plain.’ People say that our Teacher sent these sixty men, perfect in self – control and free of passions to teach the way. The World- honoured himself turned south from the Deer park at Isipatan to Yashti and to the kingdom of Bimbisara where he gave the sermons of his wisdom for many days. After hearing the teachings of the Teacher the King and his folks started believing in the law of love and changed their life. Also the King gave the bamboo-garden, named Veluvana to Shakyamuni as free gift by pouring forth water on the hands of Buddha. It has a number of caves, streams and small forests. The King set a stone there whereon was carved :

Ye dhamma hetuppabhava
Yesam hetum Tathagato aha;
Tesam cha yo nirodho
Evamvadi Mahasamano.

'How the life moves on its course and what are its causes have been made plain by Tathagata. What frees the human beings from the life's suffering, that our Lord has made us known.'

People say that in that Garden a high Assembly was held where the Teacher spoke of wisdom and power, winning all souls which heard. As a result of this nine hundred men took to yellow robe, like the one the Teacher wears and spread his law.

He ended his teachings with the following *gatha*:

Sabba papassa akaranam
Kusalassa upasampada;
Sa-chitta-pariyodapanam
Etam Buddhanusasanam.

'Evil swells in life to pay the debts. Good delivers and makes us free. Shun evil, follow good and hold control over yourself. This is the Way of Buddha.'

The merchants thus spoke of the Teacher. On hearing the entire story, the Princess thanked them profusely and gave them gifts, more valuable than the jewels.

Thereafter the Princess asked, 'But by what road is my Lord coming and when?' The merchants replied, 'Rajagriha is sixty *yojans* from the city – walls. The easy path to Rajagriha lies through the Sona river and the hills. Our bullock carts moving slowly eight koss* a day reach there in fifteen days.'

Arrival at Kapilvastu

The King also heard the entire story and then sent well mounted noble Lords of the Court to the Teacher. Nine separate messengers were sent in this way, advised to say: 'The King Suddhodana has reached nearer to his pyre during the seven long years of your absence. All these years he has been trying to find out about you. He prays his son to come back to the kingdom of his own where the throne and the people of this kingdom are longing to see him. If he does not come then he may die and may not see your face any more.' Also Yasodhara sent nine horsemen directed to say, 'The Princess of your house – Rahula's mother – craves to see your face as the night – blowing moon-flower's swelling heart longs for the moon, as the pale *asoka* – buds wait for a woman's foot. If you have found more than

* Koss : A measure of distance. Equivalent to almost two miles.

what was lost, she prays for her share in it and also the share of Rahula. But most of all she wants to see you.’ So the Sakya lords left the palace quickly to convey the message of the King and the Princess. But it so happened that each one of them, who was carrying the message, entered the bamboo garden at the time when Buddha was teaching his law and hearing it, each one forgot to speak the message he was carrying. They forgot all about the King and also about the sad Princess. They only gazed upon the Teacher with rapt attention. Their hearts got caught in his compassionate, commanding, perfect and pure speech which enlightened all, pouring forth from his sacred lips. Look ! They were all like a bee which looks for the hive, sees the *mogras* spread and smells their utter sweetness in the air. It does not matter that the bee is filled with honey. It matters not that it is day or night. It will not heed even if it is raining. It must alight on those delicious flowers and drain their nectar. Thus those messengers, hearing Buddha’s words, forgot the purpose of their visit and got mixed up in the crowd. When nobody came back with any news, the King sent Chieftain of the Court, Udai who was most trustworthy and also Siddhartha’s playmate in childhood days. When he drew near the garden where Buddha was preaching, he plucked some blown wool from the wool – tree in the forest and sealed his hearing with it. Thus he safely entered the place overcoming the sublime, serious and lofty

danger of the place and told the message of the King and the Princess to Buddha.

On hearing this our Teacher bowed his head in a piously gentle manner and spoke to Udai and before the people, 'Surely I shall go! It is my duty as was my will to visit them. No man should miss an opportunity to render reverence to those who provide him life whereby comes the means to live and die no more but safely attain the blissful Nirvana, if you follow the Law, purging the past wrongs and after that adding nothing living in complete love and charities. Let the King and the Princess know that I start the journey forthwith.'

This message of Buddha reached Kapilvastu. Hearing that their Prince was to come, the people of the kingdom started getting ready to receive their Prince. A bright pavilion was built at the south gate. It had flower – wreathed pillars and the walls of silk which were worked with woven gold in red and green.

The roads were decorated with scented branches of trees of neem & mango. The mussaks* filled their bags full and threw water on the roads to settle the dust. Thereupon sandal and jasmine dust

* Mussaks: Bag made of animal skin used to carry water by men to sprinkle it on the roads.

was spread. The flags fluttered in the air beautifully. When the likely date of the arrival of the Prince was known, it was ordered as to how many elephants will be placed where with their silver howdahs and the gold tipped tusks, where they should wait beyond the fort, where the drums should beat and announce, 'Siddhartha is coming !' and where the respected lords should alight from their horses and wait to receive the Prince. It was also decided as to where the dancing girls should throw flowers with dance and song so that the horse which Siddhartha rode might trample knee – deep in rose and balsam flowers and the coming and welcome be pleasant while the town rang with music and high joy.

All this was ordered and the public would come out of their homes every day at the dawn to hear the first beat of announcement, 'Now he comes!' And Yasodhara also, eager to be the first to receive him, rode in her palanquin to the city walls where stood the bright pavilion. All around was a beautiful garden, named Nigrodha, shaded with bel-trees and green trees of dates. The winding streets and banks of fruits and flowers were newly trimmed and now they looked brightly coloured. The southern road went along its lawn where bloomed trees with beautiful flowers and leaves. On the suburbs of the town and away from the gates, were the huts of the downtrodden, untouchable people who could not

touch the Kshatriyas and the Brahmin priests. Yet they were also full of enthusiasm to welcome their Prince. They would rise before the dawn and look along the road or climb trees to hear the far-off trumpet of some elephant or the beating of the temple-drum. When none came they again busied themselves in routine, small activities to please the Prince like sweeping their door-stones, setting forth their flags, stringing the fig-leaves in chains, polishing and giving a new look to the Lingam, replacing yesterday's faded arch of branches of trees by the new ones. They would also keep on questioning the wayfarers if they had heard any news about the coming of great Siddhartha. The Princess marked all these happenings with lovely languid eyes. She also watched the southward plains to see if the Prince was coming and bent her head like them to listen if the passers-by gave any news on the road.

As Yasodhara thus watched, she saw one person slowly coming towards them with his head closely shaved, with yellow clothes spreading over his shoulder like the hermits surround, carrying an earthen bowl, shaped melonwise. He moved humbly in a gentle manner from hut to hut where he stopped for a while accepting the granted alms with gentle thanks and moving forward gently where none gave. Two persons followed him who also wore yellow robes but he who carried the bowl was so lordly, so

worthy of respect and moved with such a gait and his presence filled the surrounding in such a commanding way that he infatuated all with his sweet eyes of holiness. His eyes suddenly infatuated the alms – giver so much that he gazed awestruck on his face. Some bent down in worship before his feet. Some ran to fetch fresh gifts feeling pained that they were poor. This all went on till slowly group by group children, men and women drew behind him and started walking, following his steps behind, whispering with covered lips, ‘Who is he? Who? He looks like a Rishi!’ But as he came with quiet footsteps near the pavilion, see! the silken door was lifted and all was unveiled. Yasodhara stood on his path crying, ‘Siddhartha! Lord!’, with wide eyes streaming with tears and with closely clasped hands. Then sobbing she fell on his feet and remained there.

Story of Ram and Lakshmi

Afterwards when Yasodhara had passed into the Noble Paths and the disciples prayed to Buddha to answer why, being vowed, having given up and conquered all mortal passions including flower-soft touch of a woman, he allowed Yasodhara to embrace him. To this the Teacher replied, ‘The greater has helped the lesser love so that it may rise to heights easily. Remember that no man, having escaped

from bonds, should vex the bound souls with the boasts of liberty. You are free so that you may spread your freedom to others, winning them patiently by using the skills of sweet wisdom. There are three distinct periods of time of long toiling through which Bodhisattva* come, who will guide and help the darkened world to freedom. The first period is known as the period of deep 'Resolve'. The second era is known as the 'Era of Attempt' and the third is known as the 'Era of Nomination.' Lo ! I lived long ago in the era of resolve, desiring good, searching for wisdom but my eyes were closed. Lakhs years ago in one of my previous births I was Ram, a merchant staying by the sea – coast South of Lanka** island. Lanka was full of pearls. Also in that far off time Yasodhara stayed with me in our village by the sea as my wife. She was as tender as she is now and her name was Lakshmi in that birth. I remember how I used to go on voyages for earnings as we were poor and of low caste. Nonetheless, Lakshmi used to earnestly beg me not to go, nor take the hazardous journey of land and sea, tearfully saying, "How can love leave what it loved?" Yet I would venture out on my journey and passed on to the high seas and after stormy journey and deadly struggle with the creatures of the deep

* Bodhisattva: is one stage, prior to the attainment of the
Buddhahood

** Lanka : In Hindi it also means Srilanka.

seas and the pains of days and nights, while I dived deep in the seas, I found a moonlike glorious pearl, such as the kings may like to buy emptying their treasury. I returned to my village with a lot of happiness in my heart but found that a severe famine had spread all over the land. I was tired and ill due to the strain of my journey home and with a lot of difficulty I could hardly reach my home aching for food, while that valuable wealth of the sea lay tied in my girdle. But Lakshmi was lying speechless at the door and there was no food there. For whom I had toiled more than myself was near her death – bed for want of food. Then I made the announcement in the village, “If there is anyone who has any grain, then here is the equivalent of a kingdom in exchange for that grain to save one life. Give Lakshmi something to eat and take away my moonlight pearl.” At this one brought the last of all his hoarding, three seers* of millet and took away that beautiful pearl. With that food Lakshmi did not die, recovered, sighed and lived her life, “Yes! You indeed loved me!”, she told me. I spent my pearl well in that life to comfort heart and mind of Lakshmi. But these pure pearls, my last great gain, won from even deeper seas – the Twelve Nidanas and the Law of Good Karma cannot be spent, nor dimmed but are made of perfect beauty and are

* Seer : An unit to measure the quantity of food grain in India.

being given freely. Compare the Meru* hill over there with the heaps made by the little ants. Compare the few drops of dew dropped from the footmarks of a walking deer with the water drops in the shoreless seas. That gift of mine in that life was like the small seed or the drop of water as compared to my present gift of the mountain or the ocean drops. And thus this love which is more vast and which has become free from the toils of the senses was wisest when it stooped to pull up the weaker heart of Yasodhara. Thus the feet of the sweet Princess passed into peace and bliss, being softly led.'

But when the King heard as to how Siddhartha came, shaved, in hermits' sad-coloured cloth, stretching out his bowl to collect alms from the left overs of the untouchables, wrathful sorrow drove away love from his heart. He spat three times on the ground, plucked out of his silvered beard and strode straight forth with the trembling lords looking at him. Frowning he climbed upon his war horse, drove the spurs and angrily dashed through the wondering streets and lanes filled with people, who scarcely found time to say, 'The King! Bow down!' before the noisy procession of the King had moved away. The King's company of the riders took a turning by the temple-wall where the south gate was and on taking

* Meru : Name of a mountain in India.

that turn saw a mighty crowd in which people were joining in fast from all sides till no road could be seen at all, covered by the huge company of men which had assembled there and kept growing. The King saw how the crowd was following the person, whose serene eyes met the old King's eyes.

The father's anger could not live longer as the gentle eyes of Buddha met the father's eyes and lingered in worship on his troubled brows and then they sank below with his knees to earth in proud humility. It seemed so dear to see the Prince, to know him whole, to mark that glory greater than that of earthly state, crowning his head, that majesty which brought all men, awed and silent, to follow his steps! Nonetheless, the King broke forth, 'It is how this ends that great Siddhartha moves silently into his kingdom wrapped in a small saffron piece of cloth, shaven head, wearing sandals and asking for food from untouchables and others – he whose life was that of a god? My son! Heir of Kings who could achieve anything with only the clap of their palms, you should have come appalled according to your rank with shining spears and tramp of horse and foot. See! All my soldiers camped upon the road and all my city waited at the gates. Where have you been staying through all these evil years while your crowned father mourned? Yasodhara also lived the life of a widow, foregoing all joys, never hearing any sound of song,

nor music, nor wearing any festive clothes till now when in her golden clothes she welcomes home her spouse clad as a beggar in old yellow cloth. Son! Why is this?’

‘My Father!’ came reply, ‘It is the custom of my race’. ‘Your race’, the King questioned, ‘I can count one hundred thrones from the Maha Samrat but nobody did like this’. ‘Not of a mortal line,’ the Teacher said, ‘I spoke only of invisible succession (race) about Buddhas who have been and who shall be. I am one of them and I am doing exactly what they did. And what is happening today has also happened earlier that a King in his warrior apparels has met at his gate, his son in the clothes of a hermit and that by love and self-control which is more powerful than the power enjoyed by the mightiest Kings, the appointed Helper of the worlds should bow-as I bow now – and with all lowly love offer the first fruit of the treasure he has brought which now I offer to repay for all the tender debts owed by me.’

Hearing this, the King who was totally amazed, inquired, ‘What treasure?’ and the Teacher meekly took the royal palm and while they paced through the worshipping streets, the Princess and the King on either side, he told the things which make for peace and purity. He told about the four Noble Truths which hold all wisdom as shores shut the seas, those eight

right Rules whereby whosoever will walk- monarch or slave – shall sooner or later break away from the wheels of life attaining blessed Nirvana. So, they came into the Palace porch. Suddhodana, now at peace, drinking those mighty words carried Buddha's bowl in his own hand. A new light brightened the lovely eyes of sweet Yasodhara and dried her tears. That night Suddhodana and Yasodhara entered the Way of Peace.

Chapter-VIII

Discourse by Buddha

A broad grassland spreads by the side of rapidly flowing river at Nagara. It takes five days for a man travelling in a bullock cart from Benaras' shrines to reach there journeying eastward and northward. The Himalayas with its snowy peaks is located just beside this place. The area blooms with flowers all the year round and is encircled by small forests made green from that bright streamlet's waves. The slopes of the place are soft and its fragrant shades are cool. The spirit of this place is holy even upto this time. The cool air of the evening is coming silently over the entangled shrubs and trees and high heaps of carved red stones partly divided by root and stem of creeping fig, clothed with waving veil of leaf and grass. The snake shines like a wet object on the crumbled work of lac and cedar beams and has coiled its folds there on deeply fixed slabs. The lizard moves rapidly over the painted floors where the kings had paced in the past. The grey fox gives birth to its babies safely under the broken thrones. Only the peaks, the stream, the sloping lawns and gentle air have remained unchanged. All else, like all the fair shows of life, have disappeared. This is the place where stood the

city of King Suddhodana, the hill where in an evening, blue and golden, when the sun was setting down, Mahakarunik Buddha sat himself to teach the Law which he had discovered.

See! You will read it in the sacred books how the meeting took place in that pleasure – place, a garden in old days with hanging walks, fountains and tanks and rising banked terraces, surrounded by pleasant pavilions, in front of the stately palace. The distinguished Teacher sat in the centre, worshipped by the entire earnest crowd which waited and watched the opening of his lips to learn the wisdom which has made our Asia mild having a follower of four hundred millions today*. He sat on the right side of the King. The Sakya lords sat around him, along with Ananda, Devadatta and the entire court. Behind him stood Sariputta and Mogallan, Chiefs of the calm brethren in the yellow robes. A large company of monks was also present. Sitting between his knees, with wondering childish eyes Rahul smiled while at his feet sat sweet Yasodhara, her heartaches now gone. She had realized that true love is not dependent on fleeting senses and that such life knows no age, that it is so blessed that the death is dead for such a life

* Today: Means 1879, when this book was written. Today the number of followers of Buddha in the entire world is manifold as compared to 1879.

and that this was the victory of both of them. She kept her hands upon his hands and her silver shoulder cloth was folded around his yellow robe. She was nearest in all the worlds to him whose words the three worlds waited to hear. I* cannot tell you even a small part of the splendid wisdom which came out of the Teacher's lips, preserved even till now by the Buddhist monks. I am a late-comer writer whose only quality is that he loves the Teacher and his love of men and tells this traditional story, knowing that he was wise but I am not intelligent enough to speak beyond the books. Time has also blurred the script written in ancient times which was once new and effectively very powerful and touched and transformed all. I know just a little of that large discourse which Buddha gave that beautiful evening. I have also read that it is written in the books that they who heard unseen were more – lakhs more – crores more – than could be seen. All the Devas and the Dead assembled there till the heaven was emptied to the seventh zone.

The uttermost dark hells opened their doors and all came there to hear the words of wisdom of Buddha. Also the daylight stayed around beyond the sunset. The watching peaks continued to have rosy radiance so that it seemed that the night listened from

* The author: Sir Edwin Arnold

that narrow valley and the noon from the mountain tops. Yes! It is written in the books that the evening stood between them like some heavenly maid, love-struck, in rapt attention. The smooth rolled clouds were her silky braided hair; the thick-set stars were the pearls and diamonds of her crown. The moon was her forehead –jewel and the deepening darkness was her woven black garment. The scented air blowing across in the lawns was her closely held breath which came across in scented sighs while our Teacher taught. While he taught, whosoever heard, though he were a stranger in the land, a slave, from high caste or low, belonged to the Aryan blood or was *mlech (untouchables)* or jungle-dweller – all seemed to hear it in their mother tongue. No! Apart from those who crowded by the river-great or small, the birds and beasts and the creeping things, it is written, everyone had a sense of Buddha's vast embracing love which gave him the promise of his deliverance through his pitiful speech so that their lives imprisoned in the shape of monkey, tiger, deer, a hairy bear, jackal, wolf, foul feeding kite, pearled dove or gemmed peacock, squat toad or a speckled serpent, lizard, bat or fishes of the river – they all touched humbly the boundaries of brotherhood with man who has less innocence than all these. In mute gratitude they knew that their bondage had been broken while Buddha spoke the words of wisdom before the King:

OM, AMITAYA!

Do not measure with words the Immeasurable, nor sink the string of thought into the fathomless. Who asks, errs and who answers also errs. Therefore, do not speak about it.

The Books teach that there was darkness everywhere at the beginning of all and the Brahm was solely meditating in that night. Do not look for Brahm and the beginning there. Do not look either for him or for any light.

Shall any gazer be able to see with mortal eyes? Shall any searcher come to know through mortal mind? Veil will lift after veil but there shall still be veil upon veil left behind.

Stars shine away with passage of time but question not. It is enough to understand that life and death, joy and woe and cause & effect exist in life.

Human beings are like tides, going up and down. Human life is like a river where wave follows wave, sometimes fast, sometimes slow. The waves seem to be the same and yet they are not the same. They come from the far off fountain of mountains, flow long distances through the plains and then fall into the

seas. The sunrays fall on this water of the sea, water gets evaporated and goes up in the sky, being light, gets mingled with the clouds, moves towards the mountains, trickles down the hills and starts moving from the source of the river again, having no pause, nor peace.

This is enough to know that illusions exist in life, in heavens, earths and all the worlds and all of them are subject to change led by a mighty whirling wheel of struggle and pressure which none can check or stop.

Pray not! The darkness will remain dark* and shall not change into light. Do not ask for anything from the dumb, Silence, for being dumb** it cannot speak! Do not be angry, irritated or bring annoyance to your mournful minds by thinking of religious and virtuous things. They are at most pains only! Oh! Brothers and Sisters! Do not seek anything from the helpless gods and other exalted beings by giving them gifts and singing songs of praise in their honour. Do not bribe them with sacrifices shedding blood, nor feed them with fruits, sweets and cakes. You cannot

* We may pray for thousands of years or recite mantras but that will not remove the darkness.

** As a dumb person cannot speak, so will he not be able to speak to us in response to our prayers.

find your deliverance outside. You have to seek it within yourself as each man is himself the maker of his own prison. But each has lordship stored for him which is of soaring heights. This is possible with the power available everywhere – above, around, below and for all beings in flesh and for whatever lives since our acts make for our joys and woes. What has been done will bring what shall be, which may be worse or better. The last one may be the first or the first one may be the last depending on what has been done. Even the angels in the happy heavens also reap only the fruits of the past deeds.

The devils in the underworlds also pay for the wicked deeds that they had done in an age gone by. Nothing endures permanently in life. Fair virtues done in the past waste away in the course of time. The foul sins also get cleaned up in the course of time.

Who toiled as a slave in the past may come in the next birth as a new Prince for the gentle deeds done and the merits won therefrom. On the other hand a King who once ruled in the past may be seen as wandering on the earth in rags for the things done and undone by him.

You may lift your lot higher than the Indra. On the other hand you may also sink it lower than the

worm or the fly. The end of indefinitely large number of lives may be this or that.

Till the invisible wheel turns in life, we shall find no pause, no peace or staying place. Who mounts will fall, who falls will mount. The spokes of the wheel shall go round unceasingly.

* * * * *

If you were laid bound upon the wheel of change and there was no way of breaking from the chain, then one should infer that the Heart of the Boundless Being is a curse and the Soul of Things is made up of pain only.

You are not bound! The Soul of Things is sweet and the Heart of the boundless Being is not made up of curse. Rather the Heart of the Being is celestial rest. Stronger than the sorrow is our will power. With the will power that which was good does pass to become better and then to be the best.

I, Buddha, who used to weep with the tears of all my brothers, whose heart was broken by the whole world's sorrow, laugh today as I have that Liberty! Hear! You who suffer! Know!

Know that your suffering is your own creation. Nobody else compels you that you live and die. Nobody forces you that you hug and kiss the spokes of agony of the wheel while you whirl upon it. None either wants that you embrace the tyre of tears of the wheel and its hub made of nothingness. Behold, I show you the Truth! Lower than the hell, higher than the heaven and outside the utmost stars and farther than the Brahm, from before beginning and without an end, as eternal space and surely as a certainty, exists a divine Power which provides goodness through its laws which only works in the universe.

Through this power a rose bud blossoms, being touched. The hands of this power shape the lotus-leaves. It weaves the robe of the spring in the dark soil of the earth, the seeds lying silently there. It paints the glorious clouds in the sky as a rainbow and puts the beautiful bright-green patches of colour on the feathers of the peacock. It rules over the stars. The lightning, wind and rain are its slaves.

In the darkness it creates the heart of man. Out of the dull shell it brings out the neck of the bird. It works all the time and levels down all ancient wrongs and ruins. Its treasures are: the grey eggs in the golden sun-bird's nest, the bee's six-sided cell – its honey pot. The intelligence through which the ant

recognizes its way back home and the return path to the nest of a white dove are also due to this law.

It spreads forth the eagle's wings for flight. It also decides what time she brings her prey back home. It sends the she-wolf to her cubs to feed them. This power finds food and friends also for the unloved things.

The working of this power cannot be ruined or stayed in any way. All like it as it is a great leveller. It brings white milk to the breasts of the mother. It also brings the white drops wherewith the young snake stings.

The power orders the heavenly bodies to move in a systematic way as if marching on an ordered music. It makes an invisible canopy in the sky. In deep depths of the earth it hides up precious metals like gold and gems like sard, sapphire and lazuli.

It ever and ever reveals its secret to us while it sits silently in the greenery of the open space in the forest, nursing strange seeds at the root of the trees creating leaves, flowers and grass.

It slays and it also saves. In no manner and in no way we can get rid of it except working out the fate created by the destiny of our past actions. Love and

living are the threads and death and pain are the shuttles of the loom through which the fabric of life is stretched.

It makes, unmakes and then restores back the things to their original condition. What it works out makes a thing better than what it has been in the past. The magnificent pattern that it plans is executed slowly and its wishful hands move in between.

These are only a few of the works of the things done by the great power that we see. The unseen things are much more in number. The great Law also binds men's hearts, minds, their thoughts, behaviour and desires on the invisible plane.

Unseen it helps you with faithful hands and unheard it speaks stronger than the storm. Man developed Pity and Love because long pressure of mental energy moulded blind mass into form.

It will not despise or treat anyone with contempt. One who tries to challenge its authority, is the loser. On the other hand, one who cooperates with it and serves it, ultimately gains. The hidden good done in the past is repaid through peace and bliss and the hidden wrong through pains.

It sees everywhere and marks all. If we do one right act, we are compensated through reward. If we do one wrong, we are paid through equal coin, although Dharma may defer* its coming or going by sometime.

It does not know any anger. Nor does it know forgiveness. Its weighing scale meets the utterly true standards. Its balance weighs utterly faultless. Time has no meaning for it. It may judge tomorrow or it may judge after many days. But it will surely judge.

On this principle the slayer's knife has stabbed himself** and the unjust judge has lost his own defender. The false tongue speaking a lie invites its own destruction. The thief and robber who loot have to pay back double the amount they have stolen. Such is the uniqueness of the Law which moves everything to righteousness which nobody can turn

* This means there may be delay in getting the reward or punishment of actions, we did. But delay does not imply that the effects of our actions will not come. A bamboo seed in China remains below earth for five years showing no signs of life but in the sixth year it goes up by ten feet.

**Stabbing someone, according to the law of Karma implies that some day the person stabbing shall be stabbed back by the person who is being stabbed today.

aside, stop or slow down. This Law is guided by Love. Heart of this Law and ultimately the desired end of it is Peace and Perfection. Therefore, it is desirable that everyone obeys this Law.

* * * *

Brothers! The scriptures very well say that each man's life is the outcome of his former doings. The old wrong doings bring forth sorrows and pain and past rightful deeds result in perfect joy and happiness.

You reap only that which you have sowed. See the fields over there in that direction! The sesamum* seed gave birth to only sesamum tree and from wheat seeds we get wheat only.

The man comes in this world to reap what he sowed, sesamum, wheat or whatsoever he sowed in his past births. He has also to harvest the weeds and the poisonous stuff which he had sowed that ultimately ruins him and produces continuous mental distress and pain in the world.

* The hidden law hiding in the darkness and silence knows the rules perfectly that sesamum seed is to yield sesamum only and wheat shall yield wheat only. And in this way the man's fate is born.

However, if he strives in a rightful way, rooting out the poisonous weeds and planting wholesome seeds in their place, the ground will become clean, fair and fruitful and the harvest will be rich.

If he who lives learns wherefrom sorrow springs and endures it patiently, striving to pay his utmost debt for ancient evils done, embedded always in love and truth and then thoroughly purifies his blood from the lies and the love of the self, suffering all meekly, renders nothing but grace and goodness in return for offences done to him, if he will live his day to day life mercifully, holy, just, kind, true and take out desire from his heart with its bleeding roots till the love for life ends; such a person, dying, will leave behind him his account closed. His ills will be dead and finished. His goodness will be quick and mighty, far and near so that fruits will follow it.

Such a person has no need to live what you call life. That which began in him when he began his life is finished. He has worked out the purpose of what made him man.

Now yearnings will never be able to torture him, nor shall sins stain him. The ache of earthly joys and sorrows will not invade his safe eternal peace, nor will life and death recur for him. He goes into NIRVANA.

He is one with Life and yet does not live. He is blessed, ceasing to be.

The Dewdrop slips into the shining sea!

OM, MANI PADME, OM!

This is the doctrine of Karma, learn! Only when all the dross of sin is cleaned, only when life dies like a white flame spent, Death dies along with it.

Do not say: 'I am', 'I was' or 'I shall be'. Think not that you will pass from house to house of flesh like travellers who remember and forget ill-lodged or well-lodged inns. Fresh issues come up in lives which sum up and appear in the lattermost lives. The man makes his dwellings in this way as a worm spins silk and dwells therein. The human being takes up the form and the activities like other beings, just as a snake's egg hatched up takes the form of a snake only and acquires fang of its mother; or like feathered water grass seeds which fly over rocky soil and sand till they find marshy fertile land where they multiply.

Also when the painful Death, the murderer, does strike, it works out to either help or to hurt. If he has not cleaned his Karma, then in the next birth he may have to discharge blood due to deadly

contagious disease like plague or other diseases caused by biting of insects. But when the gentle and just men die, pleasant air filled with perfumes are sent out. The world becomes richer, as if a stream sinks down in a desert but comes out again, purer with more bright light.

This way the merits won bring us happy days which subsequently finish just before the end because of the demerits won. Thus this King of all Laws of Love shall reign till the Kalpas come to an end.

What causes it to happen? Brothers! It is the darkness that causes it to happen which breeds ignorance. You are impressed by the things so much that you take these shows as true and develop the thirst to have them. And you hold on and embrace those strong desires which ultimately lead you to sorrows.

Those of you who will take the Middle Path* which is based on satisfactory reasons and works softly, smoothly and quietly and those of you who will take the high express path of Nirvana, should hear the Four Noble Truths:

* Path: Path means road.

Four Noble Truths

The First Truth is of *Sorrow*. Do not be mocked! Life which you prize so much is a long drawn extreme mental and physical suffering. Only its pain remains. Its pleasures are like the birds which light and fly.

Pain of the birth, pain of the helpless days, pain of hot youthful period, pain of manhood's prime time, pain of depressing years of old age and then finally the choking death- all these fill your wretched time, demanding pity.

Sweet is the affectionate love but funeral flames must kiss the breasts which pillow and the lips which cling. Warlike strength is chivalrous but vultures pick up joints of Chiefs and Kings during the funeral.

The earth is beautiful but all its forest animals, hungry to live, plot mutual slaughter. The sky looks like transparent blue sapphire but when men cry to them, extremely famished, they do not give any drops.

Ask the sick, ask the mourners. Ask the person who shakes and walks feebly on his stick, sad, alone and abandoned, 'Do you like life?' They reply, 'New born is wise that weeps on being born.'

The Second Truth is *Sorrow's Cause*. What grief springs of itself and springs not of Desire? Senses and things seen and observed mingle and produce the spark of the fire of passion.

Thus grows the flame of Trishna*, lust and thirst for things. Eagerly you stick fast to shadows and become foolishly fond of dreams. And in this process you create a false self and a world around you which seems blind to the heights beyond, deaf to the sound of sweet air breathed from far past Indra's sky, oblivious to the teachings given. One becomes dumb to the summons of the true life given to him, who, on the other hand, puts on the false cloak.

Thus grow the conflicts and struggles between the opposites and desires which start the war in the world. Thus the poor cheated hearts grieve and salty tears start flowing. Thus passions, envy, anger and hate become larger and larger and stronger and stronger in life. Thus the years of life chase the blood-stained years with wild blood stained red feet. So where the grain should grow, spreads the unwanted weed with its evil roots from which come out poisonous flowers. The good seeds hardly find soil where to fall and shoot up.

* Trishna: Longing for things

Thus drugged with poisonous drink, the soul departs. And with the fierce thirst to drink, Karma returns. Struck with senses, the saddened self begins its journey again earning new deceits.

The Third Truth is the - *Sorrow's Ceasing*. Conquering love of self and lust of life, tearing away deep-rooted passion from the heart will end the inward struggle and will ultimately bring peace. This will help love to hold Eternal Beauty close. It is glorious to be the Ruler of the self and live in the pleasant state beyond the reach of gods with immeasurable wealth laying up everlasting treasure.

The rich Karma created by perfect services rendered, charitable duties done, soft speech spoken and stainless days spent shall not fade away in life, nor will death remove its effect by expressing disapproval. Thus sorrow ends in this process for life and death both have ceased for such a person. How can the lamp flicker when the oil has been spent away? The old sad account has been cleared and the new account is clean. Thus the man attains contentment.

The Fourth Truth is- *The Way*. It widely opens forth the path for all feet to tread. It is clear and easy for everyone to understand. This *Noble Eightfold Path* goes straight to peace and provides shelter from worldly danger and troubles.

Hear carefully! Many tracks lead you to the sister-peaks over there at some distance. Those snowy peaks are curled and covered with golden clouds. The climber reaches there through gentle or steep slopes from the earth below.

Men with strong limbs may dare to take the rugged road and move violently, reaching high levels, full of risk, moving in a dangerous and hazardous way and thus reach the top of the hill. The weak must go in a circular, spiral, curved course, slowly from lower level to the higher taking rest at many places on the way.

The Eightfold Path

So is the Eightfold Path which brings us to peace. The road goes by the lower or the upper heights. The determined soul hastens away the journey steadfastly. The weak and infirm, lacking energy stay and wait and defer their going although all will one day reach those sunlit snowy peaks.

The First of the teachings of the Eightfold Path is: *Right Belief*. Walk on the path always keeping in mind the fear of the Dharma, avoiding and keeping away from all evil deeds, paying careful attention to

Karma which creates man's fate. Thus make yourself as your lord over your senses.

The Second teaching is *Right Purpose*. Have goodwill for all that lives, letting unkindness, greed and anger die so that your lives may be like soft airs passing by.

The Third teaching is *Right Speech*. Control your lips as if they were palace-doors and as if the King sat within you. The words you speak should be calm, serene, unruffled, truthful, just, unbiased, kind and courteous.

The Fourth teaching is *Right Behaviour*. Let each act clean the wrong Karma created by our faults or help us create more good Karma for the future. Just as the thread of silver is seen clearly through the crystal beads, let love show itself in your life through good deeds.

There are four higher roadways. Only those feet can tread them which have already mastered the earthly nature. They are: *Right means of Livelihood, Right Exertion, Right Mindfulness (Memory) and Right Meditation*.

Do not spread your wings for sunward flight with your unfeathered wings! The lower air is sweet,

safe and the homely levels of the ground are also familiar and known. Only the strong ones should leave the nests made by them.

I know that the love of wife and child is dear, the company of your friends is pleasant and your years also pass as a pleasant recreation in their company. They are the fruits of the gentle benevolence of a good life.

Live, you who must, such lives if you want to live these. Make golden stairways of your weakness. Rise to lovelier higher stages of truth after staying temporarily with those fanciful images. Thus you will pass to clearer heights, find the ascents easier and the loads of sins will be lighter. You will develop greater will power to break the bonds of senses and enter the Path. One who has achieved this has reached the *First Stage*. He knows the Noble Truths and the Eightfold Path. In this way one will attain NIRVANA'S blessed abode by a few or many steps.

One who stands at the *Second Stage*, made free from doubts, delusions and the inward strife, having become the lord of all lusts, made free of the priests and the scriptures shall live but one more life.

Beyond this lies the *Third Stage*. Here the dignified spirit stands clean and purified. Here the

soul has arisen to love all living things and lives with them in perfect peace. Here his life is at the end of the living process. The life's prison is broken.

But this is not the last stage. There are surely those who pass living and visible to utmost goal by *Fourth Stage* of the Holy Ones – Buddhas, who are of stainless soul.

Lo! Like the strong and violent enemies killed by some warrior, the ten sins lie in the dust along these stages: *The Love of Self, False Faith and Doubt* – these three. Two more sins: *Hatred and Lust*.

One who has conquered these five Sins has trodden three stages out of four. Yet there remains with him: *The Love of Life on earth, Desire for Heaven, Self-Praise, Error and Pride*.

As a man stands over the snowy peaks at a distance having over him nothing but boundless blue sky, so does the man stand on the threshold of Nirvana, having slain all the sins.

The gods envy such a person from their seats. The three worlds also having been in ruins cannot shake and deviate such a person from his path. All life has been lived for him and all deaths are dead.

Karma will no more make new houses for such a person. He does not seek anything but gains all. He forgets his self and for him the universe itself grows as 'I'. If anyone teaches that NIRVANA is to cease away, tell him that such person is lying. If anyone teaches that NIRVANA means living a worldly life, tell him that he is making mistake in thinking so.

Tell them that they do not know it, nor do they know the type of light that shines beyond their broken lamps. Nor do they know anything about the bliss which is lifeless and timeless.

Enter the Path! There is no grief like Hate! No pain is more severe than caused by passions. There is no deceiving in life like the senses! Enter the Path! One who has trodden down and controlled even one sin is able to go far off.

Enter the Path! You will find healing streams on the way which will quench all thirst! You will find immortal blooming flowers carpeting your way with joy all the way! There you will have swiftest and sweetest hours of your life!

Panchasheel

The treasures of the Law are more valuable than the gems. It is sweeter than the sweetness of honey. Its delights are more delightful as compared to any past delights with which one might have lived. Hear the Panchasheel*:-

1. *Do not kill anything.* Have pity on everything. Otherwise you may slay the meanest thing and postpone its upward journey.
2. *Give freely to others and receive also.* But do not take from anyone anything which belongs to him by greed, force or fraud i.e. do not steal away anything which does not belong to you.
3. *Do not be a false witness.* Do not defame someone falsely, nor lie. Truthful speech (words) are manifestation of inward purity.
4. *Shun away drugs and drinks.* They lead to the abuse of the mind. Clear minds and clean bodies do not require any soma juice.
5. *Do not touch your neighbour's wife. Nor commit the sins of flesh,* unlawful and improper.

* * *

*Panchasheel: Five rules of rightful living: essence of Buddha's teachings

The Teacher also spoke about the duties due to father, mother, children, fellows and friends. He taught how a man may swiftly break the clinging chains of senses, how a man whose feet are weak can tread the roads to greater heights, how the man should rearrange his present life in flesh so that the days hitherto pass blamelessly in discharging the duties of kindness and compassion and may put his first foot on the Eightfold Path- Living pure, reverent, patient, pitiful, loving all things, even those which may be living for themselves. Because what falls for ill is the fruit of ill worked out in the past and what falls for well is the fruit of good deeds done in the past. As much the householder cleans himself of the self(ego), he helps the world by that much. Happiness comes to him at the next stage and to that extent he becomes a better human being. This the Shakya muni taught.

Story of Singala

Also long before during the time when our Teacher was at Rajagriha and used to walk through the bamboo forest, one day while he was walking early morning he saw the householder, Singala, who had just bathed, bowing himself with the bare head to the earth, the heaven and all the four quarters, while he threw red and white rice to the earth with both hands. Our Teacher made the query, 'What for you

are thus bowing, brother?’ Singala replied, ‘It is the way, Great Sir! Our fathers taught that at every dawn, before the toil of the day begins, we should hold off the evil from the sky above and the earth beneath and from all the winds which blow’. Then the World-Honoured spoke, ‘Do not scatter rice and waste it. But offer loving thoughts and good acts to all – to the parents as the East, wherefrom the light rises, to teachers as the South, whence rich gifts come. Send loving thoughts and acts to wife and children as the West where shines with brightness the colours of love and calms, where the sun sets. To friends and relations and all men as North, to humblest living things below, to Saints, Angels and the blessed Dead above. In this way all evil will be shut off and thus the six main quarters will be kept safe.’

But to his own disciples, monks of the Order who wear yellow robe, those who are like vigilant eagles, who have reached a high level of standard, have contempt for worldly things, take the world as the scene of trouble and travel over a long distance towards the Sun, to such persons he taught the ten observances of the Order – the Dasa – Sil and how a monk living solely on alms must know the *Three Doors* and the *Triple Thoughts*, the *Sixfold States of Mind*, the *Fivefold Powers*, the *Eight High Gates of Purity*, the *Modes of Understanding*, *Iddhi*, *Upeksha*, the *Five Great Meditations*, which are sweeter than

*Amrit** for the holy soul, the *Jhanas*** and the *Three Chief Refuges****.

He told his monks how they should live free from the traps of senses and wealth, what they should eat and drink and also that they should carry three plain clothes, yellow in colour, made of stitched material and worn with one shoulder uncovered. They should carry a girdle****, a bowl to receive the charity of food and a strainer.

Thus Tathagata laid the great foundations of our *Sangha****** well, that noble Order of the Yellow Robe which to this day stands to help the World.

Thus our great Teacher spoke all that night, teaching the Law and in no eyes there was any sign of sleep because those who heard his discourse rejoiced with tireless joy. Also the King, when the talk was over, rose from his seat and with bare feet bowed

* Amrit: A Sanskrit word meaning nectar.

** Jhanas: Wisdom

*** The Three Chief Refuges of Buddhism are: Going into the shelter of Buddha, Going into the shelter of the Dhamma and Going into the shelter of the Sangha

**** A belt or cord worn round the waist in order to fasten a piece of clothing

***** Sangha means Order.

low before his Son, kissing the edge of his robe and said, 'Take me, O Son!' and then immediately changed his words, 'O Teacher! as the lowest follower in your Order'. And sweet Yasodhara, who was now all happy, cried, 'Give to Rahula, you Blessed One! The Treasure of the Kingdom of your Words as his inheritance.' Thus these three passed into the Path.

* * *

Parinirvana

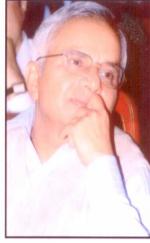
Here ends what has been written by one who loves the Teacher for his love for us. I know only a little and, therefore, have told a little, touching the Teacher and the Ways of Peace. For forty five years thereafter he showed the Path in many lands and many languages and gave our Asia the Light that is still beautiful, conquering the world with the spirit of strong compassion and kindness all of which is written in the holy books.

Wherever he passed, the proud Emperors carved his sweet words upon the rocks and caves. And the books say how when the time was over, how it happened that Mahakarunik Buddha passed away to the other world, the great Tathagata, just like an ordinary man amongst men, having fulfilled all that for which he had taken the body. The books also say how a thousand of thousands and even more lakhs of lakhs since then have adopted the Path which leads where he went, into NIRVANA, where lies the Silence.

TRIBUTE

AH! BLESSED LORD! OH, DELIVERER.
FORGIVE THIS FEEBLE SCRIPT,
WHICH DOES WRONG TO YOU,
MEASURING WITH LITTLE WISDOM YOUR
LOFTY LOVE.
AH! LOVER! BROTHER! GUIDE! LAMP OF THE
LAW.

I TAKE MY REFUGE IN YOUR NAME AND IN
YOU!
I TAKE MY REFUGE IN YOUR LAW OF GOOD!
I TAKE MY REFUGE IN YOUR ORDER! OM!
THE DROP OF DEW IS ON THE LOTUS! RISE,
GREAT SUN!
AND LIFT MY LEAF AND MIX ME WITH THE
WAVE.
OM MANI PADME HUM, THE SUNRISE COMES!
THE DEWDROP SLIPS INTO THE SHINING SEA!



HRISHIKESH SHARAN

Born at Bettiah, West Champaran, Bihar. Secured Post Graduate Degree in Physics from Patna University. Joined the Indian Revenue Service (Customs and Central Excise) in 1975. Obtained LLB Degree from Kolkata University and Post Graduate Diploma in Operational Research from the Operational Research Society of India. Led the Kailash Mansarovar Yatra Group as the Liaison Officer in 1994. Awarded Diploma in Creative Writing in Hindi from the Indira Gandhi National Open University. Retired as Director General (Inspection), Customs and Central Excise, New Delhi.

In 2007, he translated the 'Light of Asia' by Sir Edwin Arnold in Hindi (Poetry) as 'Jagadaradhya Tathagata'. In 2009 he translated it also in Hindi (Prose) as 'Asia Ki Joyti'. In 2010, his work 'Dhammapada : Gatha & Katha', consisting of 26 chapters of Buddha's Teachings were released on

Buddha Purnima Day. He has also published a book 'Mantras of Mathematics' in 2011.

For the last thirty five years, he has been seriously pursuing the Life and Buddha's teachings. He has also been a Member of the Theosophical Society since college days.

Apart from travelling all throughout India extensively, he has also toured Zambia, Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, Singapore, Australia, Holland, Bhutan etc. and apart from speaking on 'Holistic Management' and 'Life and Message of Buddha', also lectured before students and teachers on 'Secrets of Success in Mathematics and Life'.

*“Wherever the Buddha’s teachings have flourished,
either in cities or countrysides,
people would gain inconceivable benefits.
The land and people would be enveloped in peace.
The sun and moon will shine clear and bright.
Wind and rain would appear accordingly,
and there will be no disasters.
Nations would be prosperous
and there would be no use for soldiers or weapons.
People would abide by morality and accord with laws.
They would be courteous and humble,
and everyone would be content without injustices.
There would be no thefts or violence.
The strong would not dominate the weak
and everyone would get their fair share.”*

~THE BUDDHA SPEAKS OF
THE INFINITE LIFE SUTRA OF
ADORNMENT, PURITY, EQUALITY
AND ENLIGHTENMENT OF
THE MAHAYANA SCHOOL~

GREAT VOW

**BODHISATTVA EARTH-TREASURY
(BODHISATTVA KSITIGARBHA)**

**“ Unless Hells become empty,
I vow not to attain Buddhahood;
Till all have achieved the Ultimate
Liberation,
I shall then consider my Enlightenment
full !”**

**Bodhisattva Earth-Treasury is
entrusted as the Caretaker of the World until
Buddha Maitreya reincarnates on Earth
in 5.7 billion years.**

**Reciting the Holy Name:
NAMO BODHISATTVA
EARTH-TREASURY**

**Karma-erasing Mantra:
OM BA LA MO LING TO NING SVAHA**

With bad advisors forever left behind,
From paths of evil he departs for eternity,
Soon to see the Buddha of Limitless Light
And perfect Samantabhadra's Supreme Vows.

The supreme and endless blessings
of Samantabhadra's deeds,
I now universally transfer.
May every living being, drowning and adrift,
Soon return to the Pure Land of Limitless Light!

*** The Vows of Samantabhadra ***

I vow that when my life approaches its end,
All obstructions will be swept away;
I will see Amitabha Buddha,
And be born in His Western Pure Land of
Ultimate Bliss and Peace.

When reborn in the Western Pure Land,
I will perfect and completely fulfill
Without exception these Great Vows,
To delight and benefit all beings.

*** The Vows of Samantabhadra Avatamsaka Sutra ***

DEDICATION OF MERIT

May the merit and virtue
accrued from this work
adorn Amitabha Buddha's Pure Land,
repay the four great kindnesses above,
and relieve the suffering of
those on the three paths below.

May those who see or hear of these efforts
generate Bodhi-mind,
spend their lives devoted to the Buddha Dharma,
and finally be reborn together in
the Land of Ultimate Bliss.
Homage to Amita Buddha!

NAMO AMITABHA
南無阿彌陀佛

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