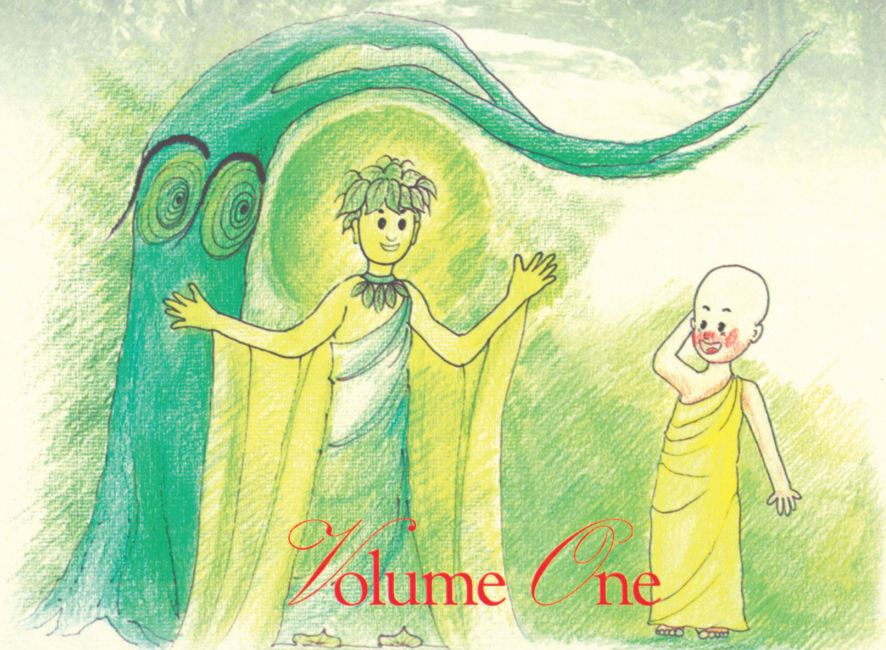






# Human Roots for Young Readers



Volume One



**Human Roots**  
**for**  
**Young Readers**  
**Volume One**

Translated and published by the  
Buddhist Text Translation Society  
Dharma Realm Buddhist University  
Dharma Realm Buddhist Association  
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# *Human Roots for Young Readers*

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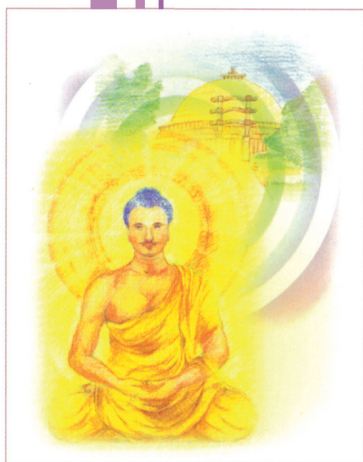
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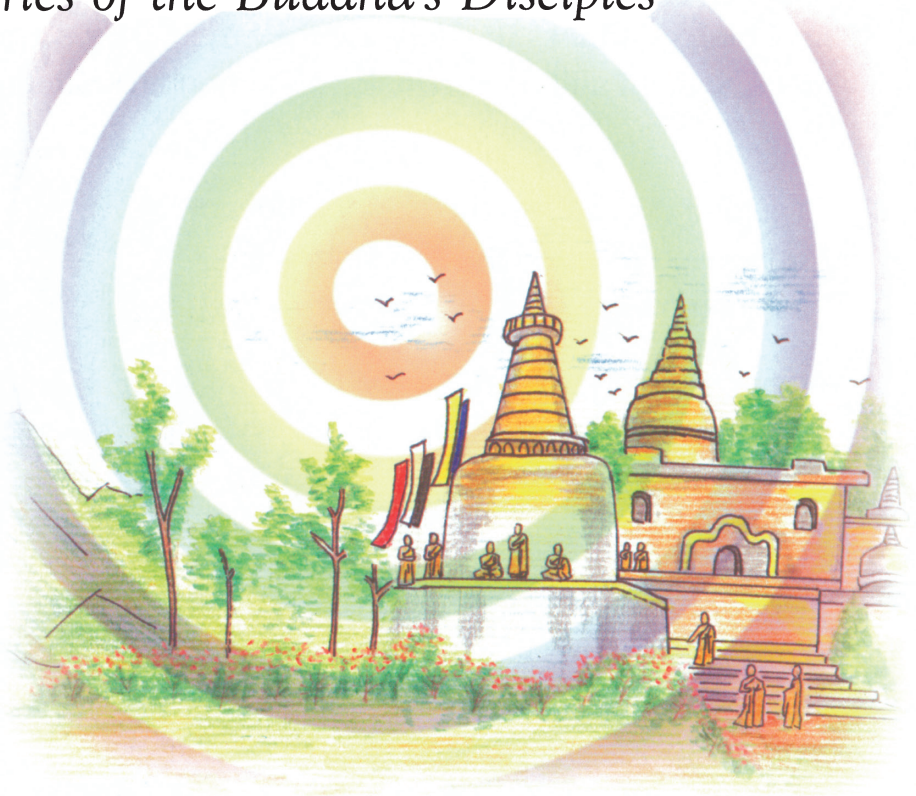
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# Part 1

## AT THE TIME OF THE BUDDHA

*Stories of the Buddha's Disciples*



# Introduction

A beautiful bird with golden wings perched on a limb beside Ivan and Lillian. “Hi, I’m Ivan and this is my little sister, Lillian. Who are you?” Ivan asked.

“Chirp, chirp,” answered the little bird.

Her wings glowed like amber in the sea. “Let’s call her Tiki,” said Lillian.

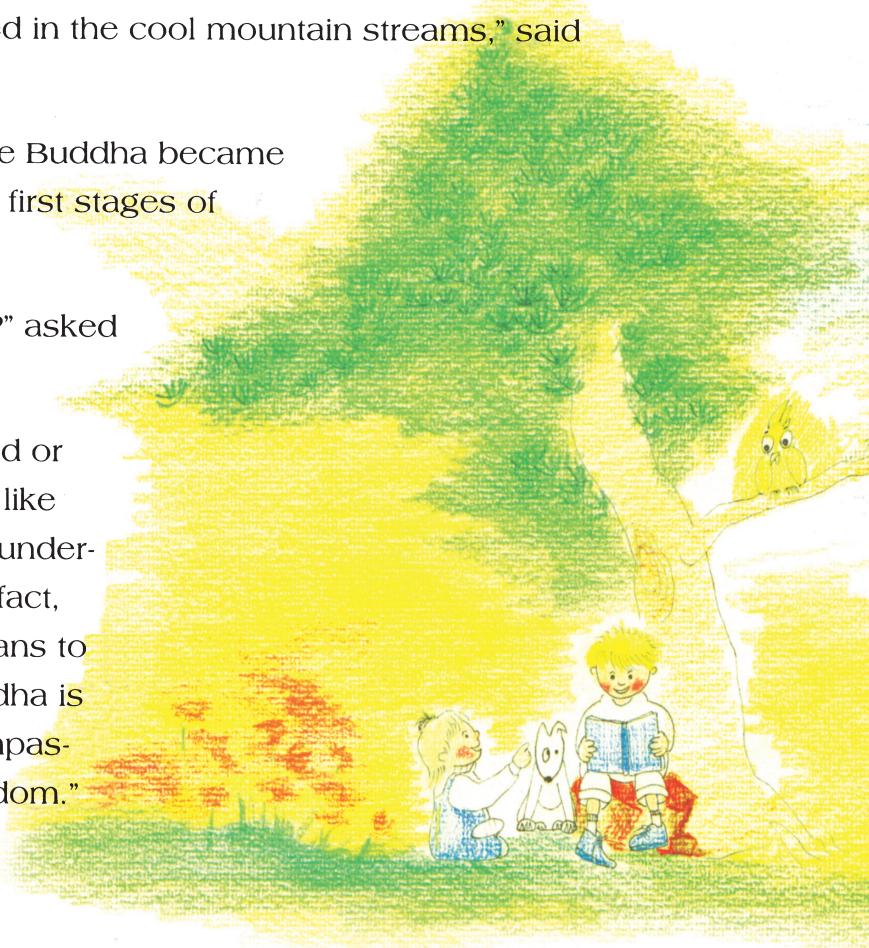
Tiki told them stories all about the trees and mountains and rivers that she flew over. Then Ivan and Lillian told Tiki stories about the Buddha and his first disciples.

“The disciples of the Buddha lived the same life as the Buddha. They wore ragged robes and ate whatever food was offered to them. Going from place to place, they followed the Buddha, teaching goodness to everyone they met. They slept under the trees at night and bathed in the cool mountain streams,” said Ivan.

“The first disciples of the Buddha became Arhats and reached the first stages of enlightenment.”

“What is enlightenment?” asked Tiki.

“It’s not having any greed or hatred in our hearts. It’s like being wide awake and understanding everything. In fact, the name “Buddha” means to be “awakened.” A Buddha is fully enlightened in compassion, kindness and wisdom.”



“Why don’t the monks and nuns work?” asked Lillian.

“The lay people, like our family, give them everything they need so they can study and practice the Dharma,” said Ivan. “In turn the monks and nuns teach us about the Buddha.”

What is the Dharma?” Tiki asked, tottering along the branch.

“Dharma is the teachings of the Buddha,” said Ivan.

“What are the teachings?” asked Tiki.

“There are three main ones. Do no evil, do good deeds, and purify the mind,” said Lillian, holding up three fingers.

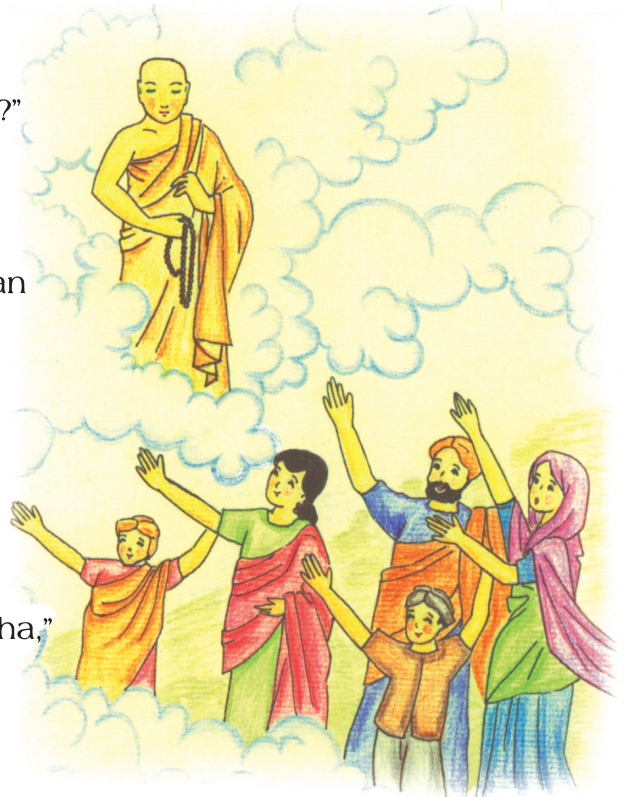
“The Buddha and his disciples were very kind and never hurt anyone, not even animals. They were vegetarians,” said Ivan.

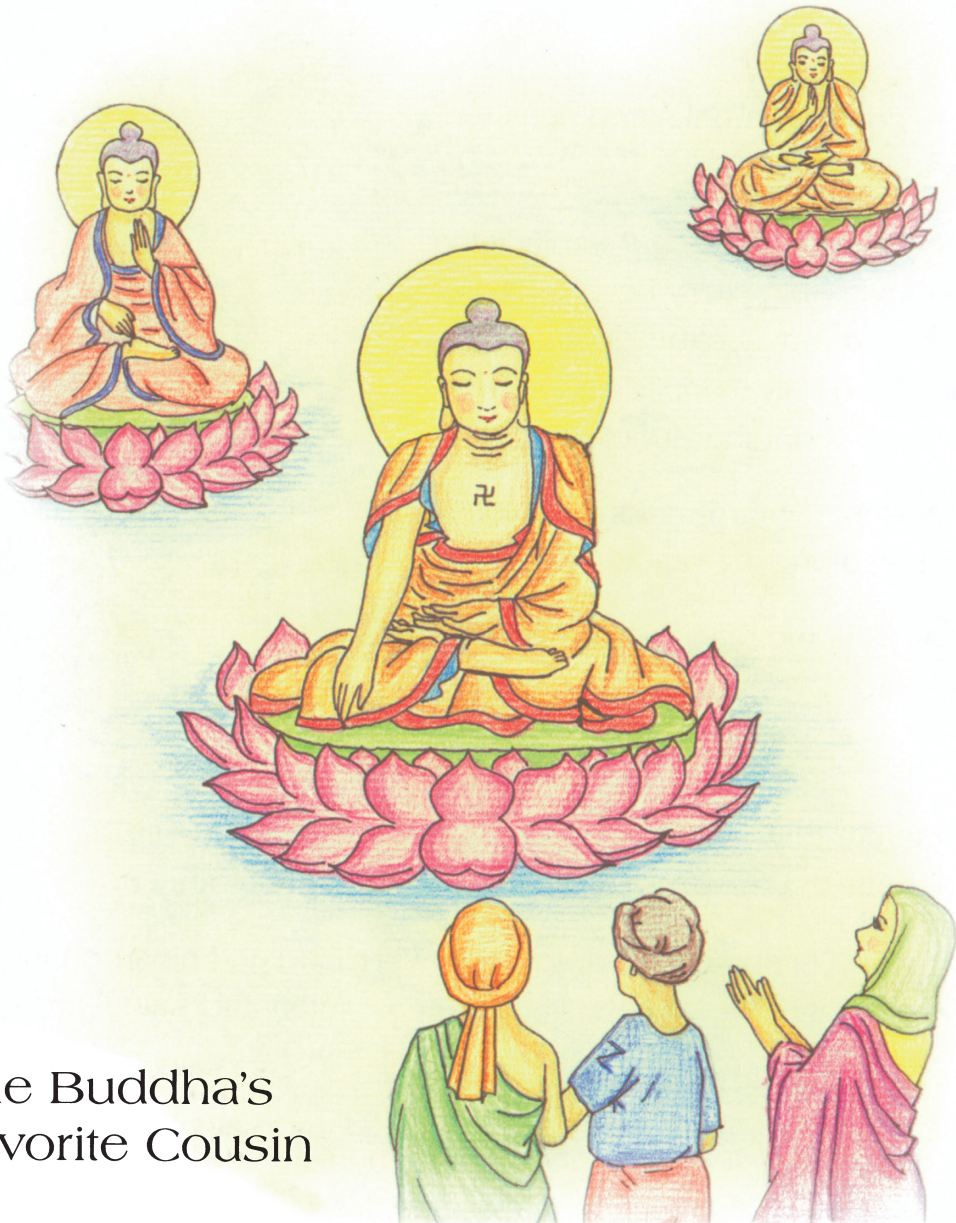
“Lucky for us birds!” chirped Tiki.

Suddenly Tiki became silent. An autumn breeze sent golden leaves fluttering to the ground. Her notes bounded on the breeze, as she softly chirped, “Can birds become enlightened? Can they become Buddhas, too?”

“Of course,” said Lillian. “All living beings have the Buddha nature and can become Buddhas.”

Then Ivan said, “Now, Little Golden One, would you like to hear some stories about the Buddha’s first disciples?” Tiki nodded her head and folded her beak into her soft wings, ready to listen.





## The Buddha's Favorite Cousin

Ananda was the Buddha's young cousin. His name meant 'rejoicing' because he was born at the same time the Buddha became enlightened. Both events were cause for rejoicing. Of all the Buddha's disciples, Ananda was foremost in learning. He had such a good memory that he served as the Buddha's attendant so he could hear everything the Buddha said.

With simplicity and goodness, Ananda took care of the Buddha's personal needs. Not once did he look at what he should not look at, or want what was not his. He remembered everything the Buddha said and never asked for anything to be repeated.

## Stories of Aniruddha

### There Isn't Any Cake

Aniruddha was the older brother of Ananda, the Buddha's favorite cousin. His name meant "never poor". He was given this name because in his past life when he was a poor farmer, he gave his only food to a poor monk. The heavenly spirits made a vow that he would always get what he wanted. He would never know what the word "no" meant.

One day Aniruddha was playing games with the other princes. Whoever lost a game had to give cake to the others. Aniruddha was the first to lose, so he sent a servant home for cake. Again and again, he lost. Again and again, he sent his servant home for cake. At last the servant came back and said, "There isn't any cake to send."

"Very well," said Aniruddha. "Then bring there isn't any cake here."



When the servant told Aniruddha's mother what the young prince had said, she laughed. "We've never told him that there isn't any anything. I think it is time to teach him what "no" means."

She then took a golden platter and placed a cover over it. Handing it to the servant, she said, "Take this to Aniruddha. Tell him that this is there isn't any cake."

It just so happened that the heavenly spirits watching over Aniruddha saw what was going on. They said to each other. "We had better do something or the prince will not get what he wants!"

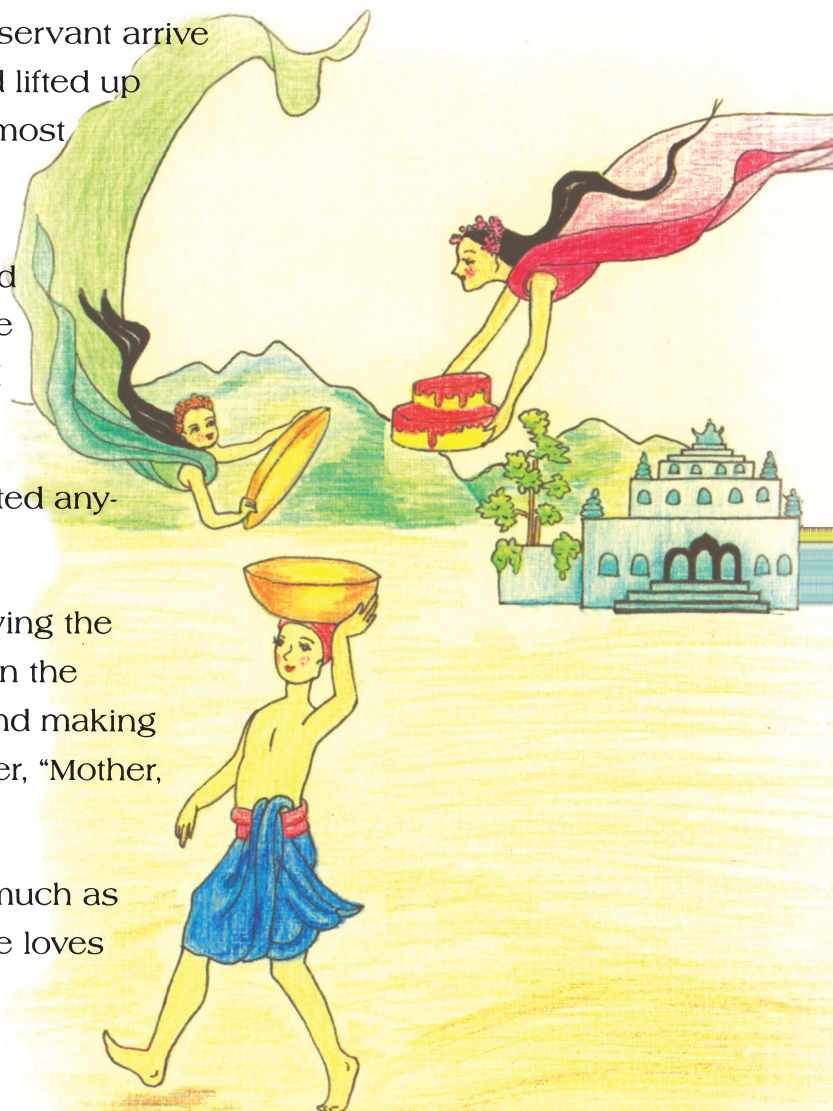
Quickly, they scooped up the colors of the heavenly rainbows and whipped up a cake that appeared on the golden platter.

When Aniruddha saw the servant arrive with the platter, he ran and lifted up the cover. Inside was the most beautiful cake he had ever seen. Its heavenly aroma drifted into the air and filled the entire kingdom. No one had ever smelled anything so wonderful!

The princes had never tasted anything so delicious!

Aniruddha's mother, following the heavenly scent, came upon the children eating the cake and making merry. Her son called to her, "Mother, do you love me?"

His mother said, "Yes, as much as a person with only one eye loves that eye!"



Aniruddha said, “If you love me that much, then why haven’t you given me there isn’t any cake until now?”

She caught on quickly and laughed. And from that day onward, whenever Aniruddha asked for cake, his mother would place a cover on the golden platter. She knew that when Aniruddha opened it, there would be a heavenly cake inside. He would never learn what the word “no” means.”

## The Golden Rabbit

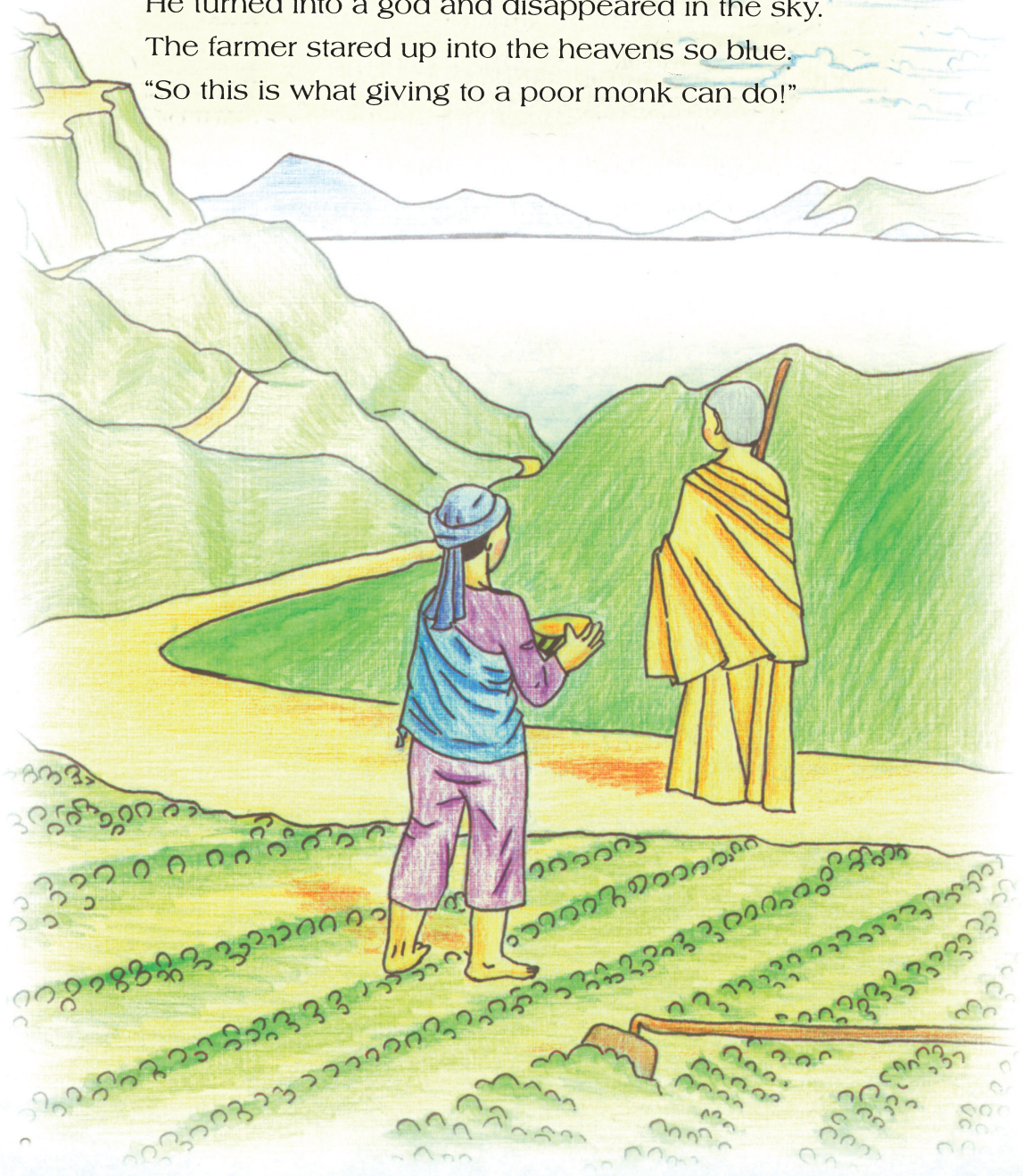
Long, long ago, famine struck the land.  
Water did not fall. Crops did not stand.  
Many people starved. Others stayed alive,  
By eating roots and bark in order to survive.



A poor monk went on alms for a meal,  
Only twice a month, did he go at his will.  
But nothing was given to him on his call.  
The people had no food to give at all.

Back up the mountain, went he with his bowl.  
Passed by a farmer deeply searching his soul.  
Said the farmer, "Please accept this food from me,  
It's only rice, for I'm poor, you can see."

The monk ate the rice and in a blink of an eye,  
He turned into a god and disappeared in the sky.  
The farmer stared up into the heavens so blue.  
"So this is what giving to a poor monk can do!"



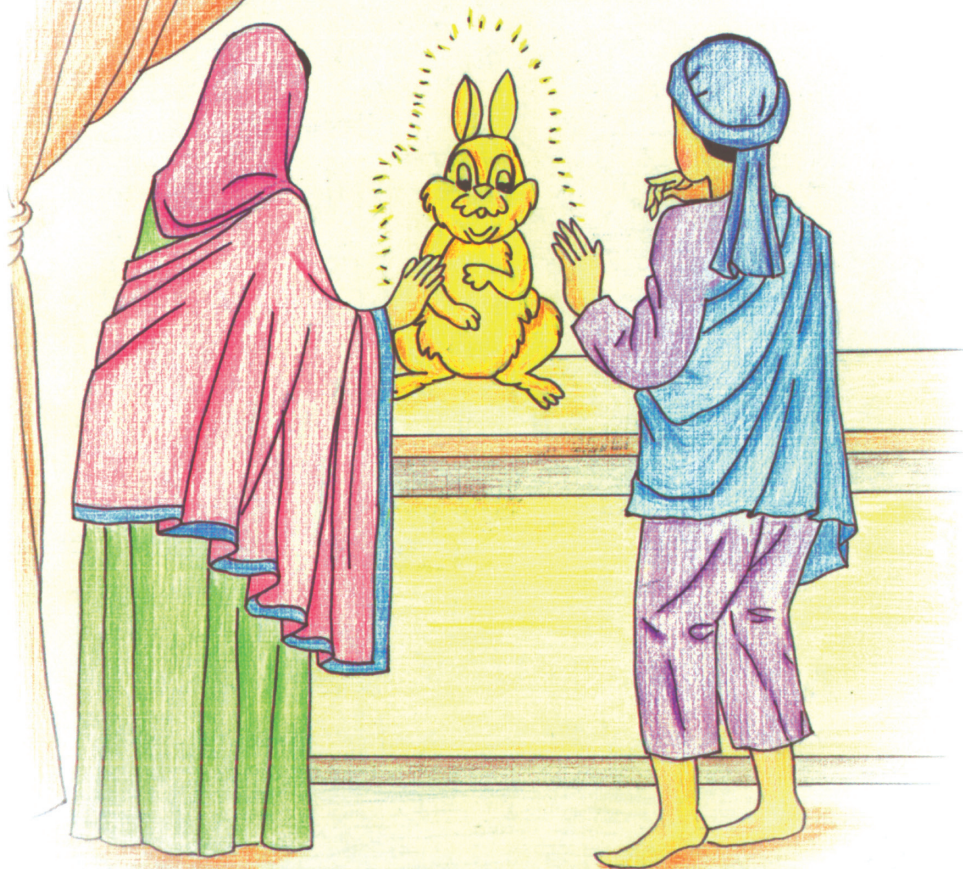


Then out of the bowl, hopped a frisky rabbit.  
It jumped on the farmer's back, as if out of habit.  
The farmer tried to brush it off, gave it a nudge.  
Tried to beat it off, knock it off, but it didn't budge.

Cried he to his wife, "Get this rabbit off my back!"  
With a flick of her finger, it hit the floor with a crack!  
A leg broke off, the rabbit turned into gold.  
Then the leg grew back--what a sight to behold!

The old man and woman were never again poor.  
In need of money, they'd drop the rabbit on the floor.  
The rabbit was never used up, so in life after life,  
They were always rich, the farmer and his wife.

Aniruddha was the farmer. How he got his name,  
Was giving all he had, now his name is fame.  
He was a cousin of the Buddha and a disciple, too.  
Never again poor—he did what was hard to do.

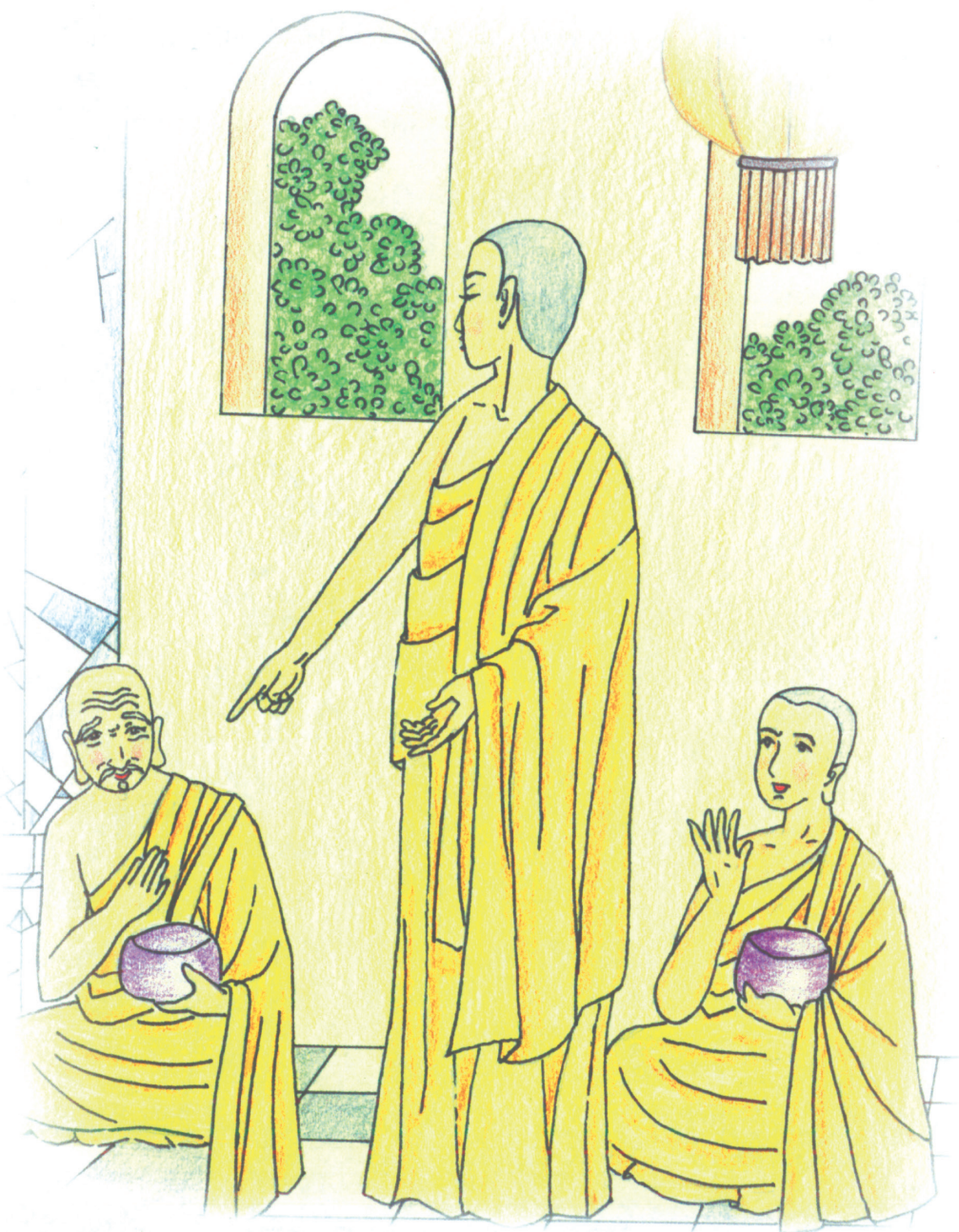


## An Unhappy Cow

“Hey, look at that old monk who has lost his teeth! He eats like a cow. Slurp! Slurp!” laughed a young monk named Gavampati.

“You mustn’t say things like that about that monk. He’s a Pratyeka Buddha,” said an elder monk, who was sitting next to Gavampati in the dining hall at the Bamboo Grove Monastery.

“What’s a Pratyeka Buddha?” asked Gavampati, sipping his soup.

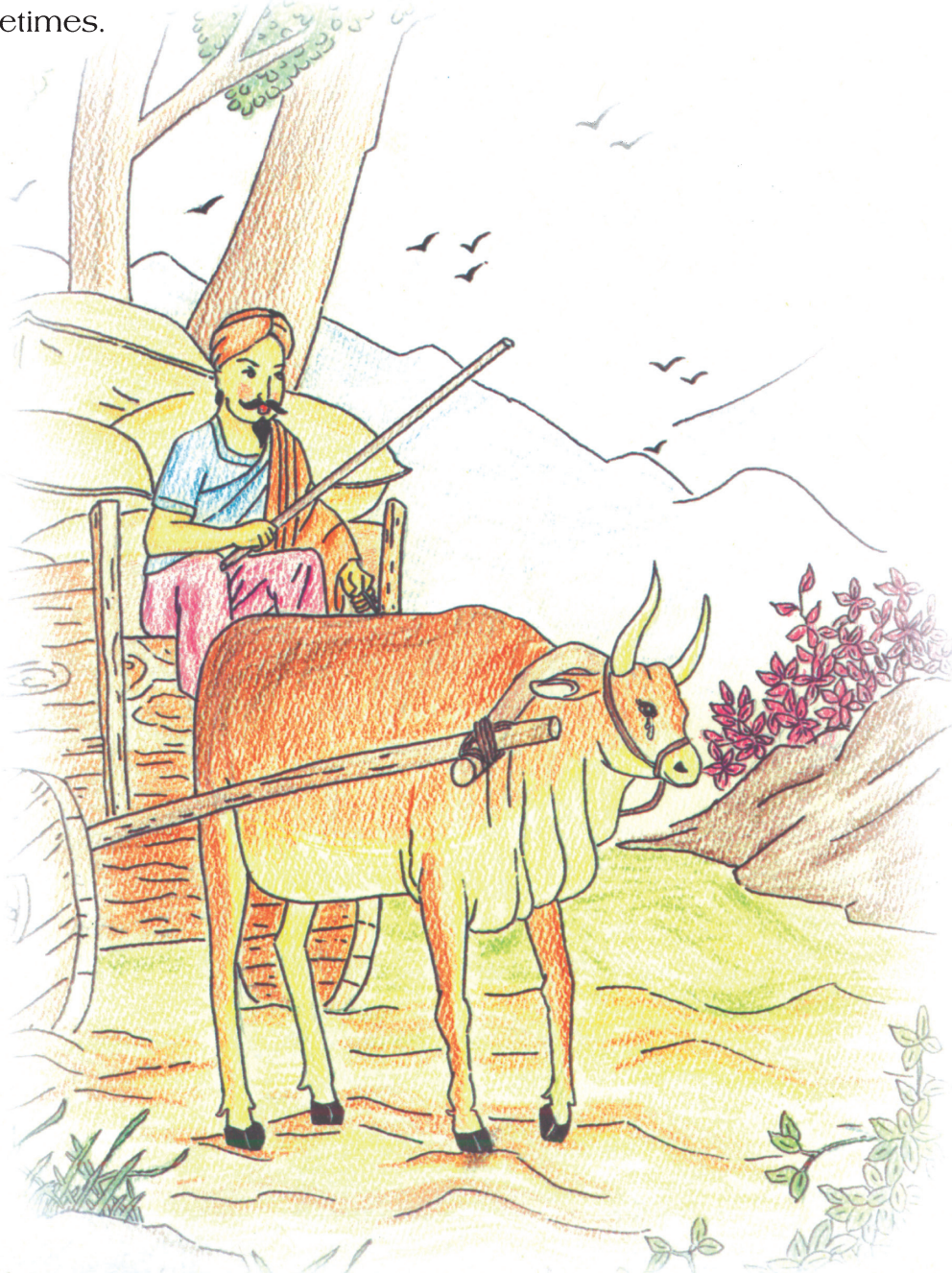


“A hermit who lives alone in the mountains and enlightens himself. It’s a grave offense to slander a Pratyeka Buddha,” said the elder monk.

“I was just teasing,” said Gavampati.

“You must repent right away,” advised the elder.

“If you say so,” said Gavampati and quickly went to the Buddha Hall and repented. But he was not very sincere, so in his next life, he was reborn as a cow. Not for one lifetime, but for five hundreds lifetimes.



All day long, he grazed on grass and chewed a cud. No matter how much he ate, he was never full. He was always hungry. Flies and bees stung him and children hit him with sticks and laughed at him. Life as a cow was very bitter for Gavampati.

After five hundred lifetimes as a cow, Gavampati sincerely repented and was reborn as a person. He forgot all about being a cow, but he still had the habits of a cow. He snorted and blew through his nose and chewed like a cow chews its cud. Everywhere he went, people laughed at him, but he never got angry. He just smiled and went on his way.

One day Gavampati met the Buddha, but the Buddha did not laugh at him. Gavampati asked him, "Why do I chew and snort like a cow?"

The Buddha told Gavampati, "In a past life you made fun of the way a Pratyeka Buddha ate, so for five hundred lifetimes you were born as a cow. The habits of a cow are still with you."

"Now I understand," said Gavampati and became a Buddhist monk.

Still the Buddha was worried. "I'm afraid that one of the monks might laugh at Gavampati and reap the same reward as he. I'll send him to live in the heavens where the gods never make fun of anyone."

When the gods saw Gavampati, they rejoiced and made offerings to him. He was puzzled, "Why do you make offerings to me? I'm just an ordinary monk."

"We've been watching over you in this lifetime, Gavampati," said the gods. "And we've never heard you say unkind things to anyone, even though people laughed and made fun of you. That makes you very special and worthy of offerings."

Among the Buddha's disciples, Gavampati was foremost in proper speech.

## The Buddha Shrinks the Dragon

On the banks of the Ganges River lived three brothers who were fire worshippers. Kasyapa was their name. Their huts were made of mud and reeds and their hair was tied up in topknots. They worshipped Agri, the god of fire, and made animal sacrifices to keep him happy. In all, the brothers had one thousand followers.

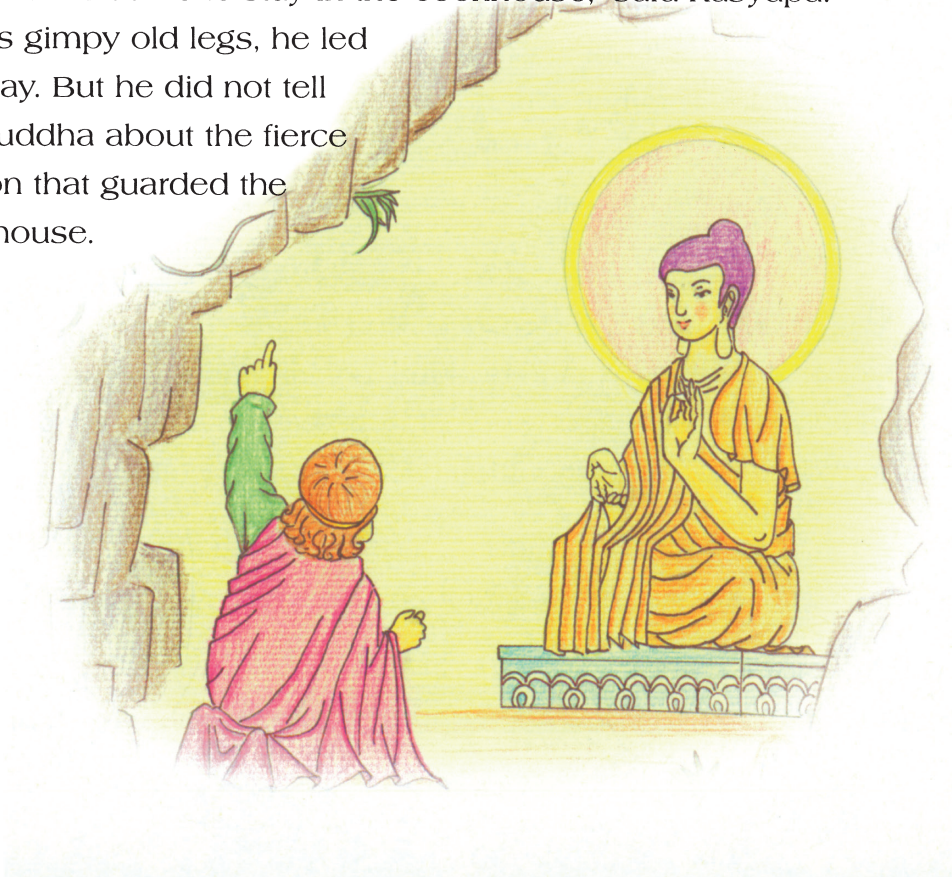
The Buddha said, "I must find a way to stop this useless killing of animals."

One stormy night the Buddha knocked on the door of the elder Kasyapa's hut and asked, "May I stay here tonight? I can go no further."

The old Kasyapa, who was proud of his spiritual power, knew everything about a person at first glance. But of the Buddha he could tell nothing. "Jeepers, creepers! Are my powers playing out?" he asked himself, not happy at all.

"You are welcome to stay in the cookhouse," said Kasyapa.

On his gimpy old legs, he led the way. But he did not tell the Buddha about the fierce dragon that guarded the cookhouse.





The Buddha went into the cookhouse and spreading some grass on the floor, sat in meditation. Around midnight, a fierce looking dragon stuck his nose in the doorway and said, "Well, a guest! It's a good thing I'm hungry!"

The dragon was huge. He was horrible. He was scaly and slimy green. He took a huge, deep breath and spit out a ball of fire

straight at the Buddha. Shish! But the Buddha was not afraid.

Not at all! He went into fire light samadhi and could not be burned. When the fire came near him, it just sizzled and fizzled out!

The dragon backed up and took another huge, deep breath and spit out another ball of fire, and another and another, a hundred fireballs in all. Shish! Shish! But the Buddha was not afraid.

Not at all! When the fireballs came near him, they just sizzled and fizzled out!

The dragon got madder and madder and squirmed closer and closer until he was looming over the Buddha. Looking down at him with his wicked yellow eyes, he took another huge breath, but nothing came out. He didn't even have enough fire left to cook a potato.

"Now look," he said to the Buddha. "I don't like this. Everyone else is afraid of me. As soon as I look at them, they run away screaming."

"Why should I be afraid of you? You're nothing but a miserable old dragon just because you treat others so badly. If you were kind,



you'd be happy and the world would be yours," said the Buddha. The dragon's wicked yellow eyes closed and a huge wet tear fell down his scaly, slimy green cheek. "It's true," he said with a sniffle. "I am pretty miserable. All I do is scare people. I don't know how to be kind."

"Come, friend, crawl into my begging bowl," said the Buddha. "And I will teach you to be kind and good. I will put out your fire of greed and hatred." Then with his power of loving-kindness, the Buddha tamed the enormous dragon and shrank him until he was the size of a thimble.

"Now I can do it!" cried the happy little dragon, clamoring up the side of the bowl. "I can be kind, and I'll never, ever hurt anyone again."

Early the next morning, the old fire worshipper peeped into the cookhouse, expecting to find the Buddha burned to ashes. "Here's your dragon! See for yourself," said the Buddha, holding out his bowl. Out came the tiny dragon.

The old Kasyapa ran for his life, "Help!" he cried.

"Wait! Don't be afraid," called the Buddha. "I used a charm to tame the dragon. He won't hurt you."

"What kind of charm?" asked the old Kasyapa.

"The charm of loving-kindness," answered the Buddha.

"Can I learn it, too?" asked the old fire worshipper, realizing who the Buddha was.

"Happiness does not lie in sacrificing animals to Agri, the god of fire," said the Buddha. "Only by doing acts of kindness can one have such power."

"The Buddha is the greatest teacher of all. I shall stop this useless killing of animals and follow him," said the old Kasyapa to his

brothers and the one thousand disciples. Then he cut off his topknot and tossed it into the Ganges River. The two younger brothers and the one thousand followers did the same and became followers of the Buddha.

This is how the Buddha used fire to tame the fire worshippers.





## The Buddha Shrinks the Dragon in Verse

There were three brothers, Kasyapa was their name.  
Being fire worshippers had brought them great fame.  
A thousand disciples who came to them to learn,  
Attained spiritual powers in their own turn.

In worshipping fire, there's no wisdom to gain.  
To speak of their faults would just be in vain.  
So Buddha went to visit the older brother,  
"May I stay here tonight? I can go no further."

The elder Kasyapa, when given half a chance,  
Knew all about a person at the slightest glance.  
But of the Buddha, he could tell nothing about.  
"Jeepers, creepers! Are my powers playing out?"

"Come, I'll show you where the visitors stay."  
On his gimpy old legs, Kasyapa led the way.  
In with a dragon, he put the Buddha for the night.  
Stories of the dragon make one shiver with fright.

A stranger in the cave put the dragon in a tizzy.  
Spewing flames of fire, it began to get dizzy.  
Lashing at the Buddha, lashing 'til it learned  
A Buddha in fire light samadhi couldn't be burned.

The Buddha shrank the dragon, shrank it very small,  
Put it in his begging bowl, taught it kindness to all.  
Old Kasyapa, seeing the dragon so tame,  
Said to the Buddha, "I want to do the same."

Then Old Kasyapa and his brothers two,  
With their one thousand disciples, not so very few,  
Followed the Buddha and learned the Dharma true.

# Little Roadside

A Play



Cast of characters in order of appearance:

Four Monks

Big Roadside

Little Roadside

Tree Spirit

The Buddha



## Act I

**OPENING SCENE:** The **BUDDHA** is sitting in meditation. **FOUR MONKS** enter and bow to him.

**BUDDHA:** What brings you here, my friends?

**FIRST MONK:** Today we met two brothers who want to become monks.

**SECOND MONK:** The older brother is very smart. He studies very hard and has an excellent memory. However, the young brother is not very smart and cannot remember anything at all.

**BUDDHA:** What are their names?

**THIRD MONK:** The older brother is called Big Roadside because he was born on the side of a big road.





The younger brother is called Little Roadside because he was born on the side of a small road.

BUDDHA: Where do the brothers live?

FOURTH MONK: At the foot of the low hills near the river.

BUDDHA: I will go see what they are doing. (Exits.)

## Act II

OPENING SCENE: LITTLE ROADSIDE and BIG ROADSIDE are sitting under a tree.

BIG ROADSIDE: If we want to become monks, we have to memorize these verses. I will teach you this short verse.  
Like shadows, like bubbles...

LITTLE ROADSIDE: Like...W-what's next?

BIG ROADSIDE: Like shadows, like bubbles.

LITTLE ROADSIDE: Now I can say it. Listen. Bubbles. Oh no, I forgot it again.

BIG ROADSIDE: You can do it. Just be patient.

LITTLE ROADSIDE: La...That's not it. I can't learn it!

BIG ROADSIDE: Just say the verse.

LITTLE ROADSIDE: No! I can't remember it!

BIG ROADSIDE: I've lost my patience! I'll have to become  
a monk without you! I wanted you to go with me,  
but alas, you're just too stupid! (Exits.)

LITTLE ROADSIDE: If I can't become a monk, then I'll just sit under  
this tree until I die!

TREE SPIRIT: (Comes out from behind the tree.) Hello.

LITTLE ROADSIDE: W-what are you?

TREE SPIRIT: I'm a tree spirit. I couldn't help hearing what was  
going on. If you still want to become a monk, I'll help  
you. Do you want to play a game?



LITTLE ROADSIDE: Yes! I like to play games.

TREE SPIRIT: I'll give you two words to remember. 'Sweep Clean'.  
As you say the words, play as if you're sweeping your  
heart clean. Can you do it?

LITTLE ROADSIDE: Oh, yes! I think I can remember two words. Now,  
let me see. Sweep...what was the other word?

TREE SPIRIT: Clean. Sweep clean.

LITTLE ROADSIDE: Oh, now I remember. Clean...now,  
what was the first word again?

TREE SPIRIT: Sweep.

LITTLE ROADSIDE: Sweep clean! I did it! Sweep clean!

(Tree Spirit disappears behind the tree. The Buddha appears in  
its place.)



LITTLE ROADSIDE: You turned into the Buddha! I like this game.

BUDDHA: Do you still want to become a monk?

LITTLE ROADSIDE: Oh, yes! Every day I will say 'sweep clean'.

(Both exit.)

## Act III

OPENING SCENE: FOUR MONKS and BIG ROADSIDE are studying.

LITTLE ROADSIDE is sweeping the floor.

FIRST MONK: Little Roadside made the best grade on the exam today.

SECOND MONK: He's already memorized a whole book of verses.

THIRD MONK: The Buddha says that he will soon become enlightened if he keeps sweeping his heart clean.

FOURTH MONK: He doesn't lose his temper anymore, either.

BIG ROADSIDE: I thought I was the smart one.

Now I must learn from my little brother  
how to sweep my heart clean.

The Buddha says that if we sweep away the dust of greed, hatred, and stupidity, then we can have great wisdom. If you will excuse me, my friends, I am going to help Little Roadside sweep.



## Drinker of Light

Bhadda was born into a poor family and grew up in the kingdom of Madda. One day as a child, she saw crows eating tiny insects that were wriggling in some sesame seeds set out to dry. “Why do creatures harm each other? Why? Why?” she asked, tears flowing down her tender cheeks. “When I grow up, I will renounce the world and find a way to end this sorrow.”

Mahakasyapa was born into a wealthy family in the kingdom of Magadha. Standing in a freshly plowed field as a boy, he saw worms being eaten by some birds. “Why do creatures have to eat each other to live? Why? Why?” he asked. “When I grow up, I will renounce the world and find a way to end all this sorrow.”

When Mahakasyapa was born, his body shone with a light so bright that it seemed to drink up all other lights. He was called “*Drinker of Light*”.

When he grew into a young man, his parents said, “It is our wish for you to marry and give us grandchildren.” Mahakasyapa did not want to become married; yet he wanted to please his parents.

“Very well, but the woman I marry must shine with purple, golden light. Unless I find such a woman, I won’t marry,” he said, thinking the matter was over.

His parents sent messengers throughout the land looking for such a wife for their son, but no match could be found.

Bhadda was now two hundred and sixty years old. She lived alone in a poor hut in the forest. One day she followed a trail deep into the woods in search of firewood. Suddenly she came upon the ruins of an old temple. The roof was blown off and the walls were crumbling. Slowly, she opened the door and hobbled inside. Leaning on her cane, she steadied her old legs and hugged her

wrap close around her to keep out the cold. The altar was still standing and on it was an image of the Buddha stripped of its gold leaf by wind and rain. "I will find a way to repair this temple," Bhadda vowed. "I will have the Buddha image gilded again with gold and it will shine like brand new!"

Everywhere Bhadda went, she asked, "There on the side of the mountain is a temple in ruins. It needs repairs. Will you help?"

Many people, rich and poor alike, gave her money, saying, "It is good that you will repair the old temple. I will ask my friends to help, also."

Soon she had enough money to begin the repairs. She asked, "Who is the best goldsmith? The Buddha image must be gilded by only the best."

"There is such a goldsmith. He lives in Magadha, near the river. Go ask him," someone told her.

Bhadda found the goldsmith and told him about the temple. Moved by her kindness, the blacksmith said, "You live in poverty, yet you are having this temple repaired. Let me share this work with you. I will do the repairs and you buy the gold."

The goldsmith was very old himself, two hundred and sixty years old. He was happy to do the work. Together, he and Bhadda worked side by side. Soon the temple was rebuilt and the Buddha image was gilded with shining new gold.

The last job was to clean the temple for the opening ceremony. Bhadda bent over to scrub the floor. Suddenly, the goldsmith exclaimed, "Purple and golden light is shining from Bhadda's body!"

At last he had found the wife of his dreams. He asked her, "Will you be my wife, not in just this life, but from now on? In every life, we will marry one another." Mahakasyapa was the goldsmith.



The old couple was married, but they both remembered their vows to renounce the world. So they cut off each other's hair and donned yellow robes. Then they set off together as enunciates. Mahakasyapa walked in front, Bhadda behind.

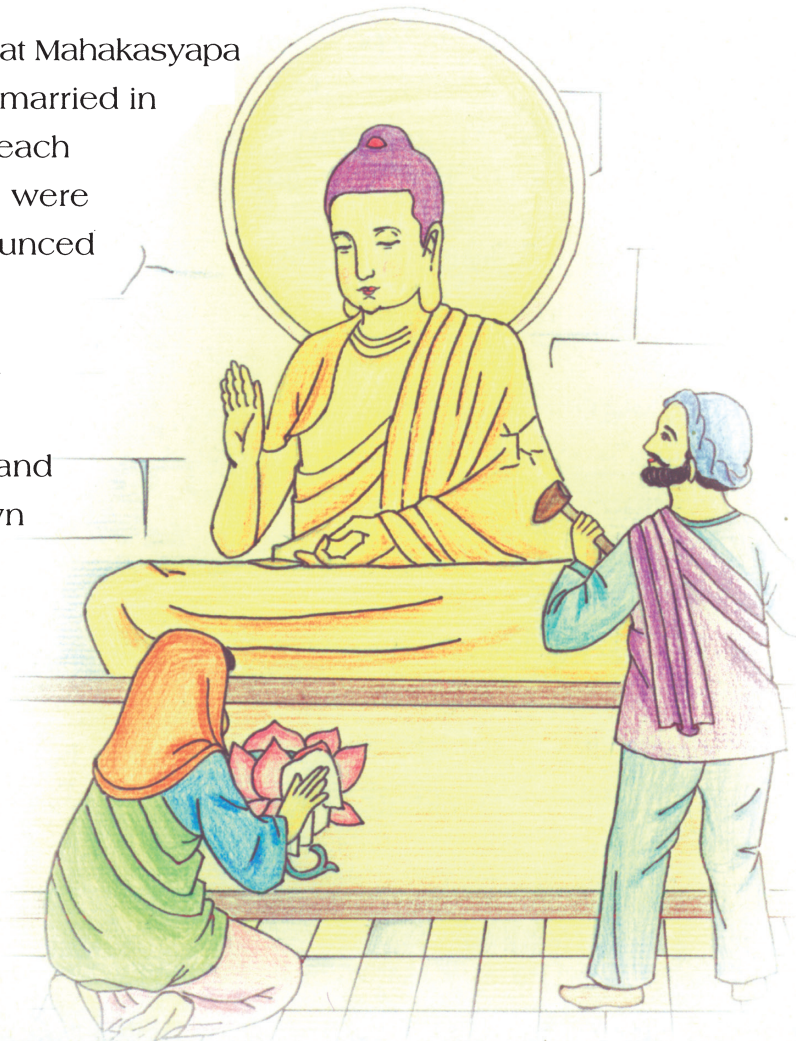
Suddenly Mahakasyapa stopped and said, "It is not right for me to walk in front of you. The man walking in front of the woman means marriage. Those who renounce the world are equal."

"Then let us part," said Bhadda. When they came to a crossroads, Mahakasyapa took the right fork, Bhadda the left.

Within a short time, Mahakasyapa found the Buddha at the Jeta Grove and became one of his greatest disciples. But it was more difficult for Bhadda. She lived in the forest near the Jeta Grove waiting, and when Queen Prajapati established the first Order of Nuns, Bhadda joined her and found peace at last.

The legend goes that Mahakasyapa and Bhadda were married in many lifetimes. In each lifetime, after they were married, they renounced the world together.

Mahakasyapa was always known as "*Drinker of Light*" and Bhadda was known as "*Purple and Golden Light*".



## The Mind-to-mind Seal of the Buddha

One day as the Buddha was speaking Dharma, the heavens opened. The Great Light Brahma Heaven King flew down and gave the Buddha a golden lotus flower. The Buddha held up the lotus to the hundreds of thousands who were listening to him. No one said anything. Mahakasyapa simply smiled.

The Buddha said, "Mahakasyapa understands the Buddha's teachings completely. He has the wonderful mind of the Buddha. It is time for me to leave this world and enter Nirvana. Mahakasyapa will carry on the Buddha's teachings and be your leader. I have given him the mind-to-mind seal of the Buddha." When the Buddha left the world, his robe and bowl were passed on to Mahakasyapa.

Then Mahakasyapa went to Chicken Foot Mountain in Yunnan Province. It has been over three thousand years since the Buddha's Nirvana, but Mahakasyapa is still sitting there in samadhi in a cave. He is waiting for Maitreya Buddha to appear in the world. At that time, he will give Maitreya the bowl and robe of the Buddha. Then his work in this world will be finished.

Many people go to Chicken Foot Mountain to worship Mahakasyapa. There on the cool mountain, those who are sincere can always see three kinds of light-the Buddha light, a golden light, and a silver light. They can hear the sound of a bell ringing from inside the mountain from several miles away. Chicken Foot Mountain is certainly an inconceivable place.



# The Monk with Spiritual Powers

A Play

Cast in order of appearance:

Elder

Crowd Voices

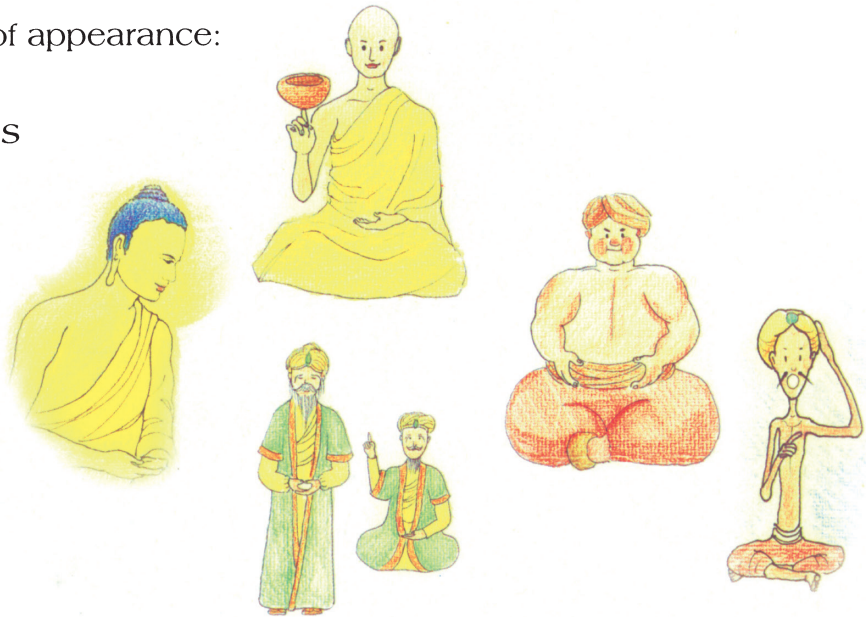
Fat Man

Thin Man

Pindola

Buddha

Narrator



## Act I

**OPENING SCENE:** A pole is in the center of the stage with a wooden bowl placed on top. The **ELDER** enters on stage and speaks to the audience.

**ELDER:** Good people, there are many who claim to have great spiritual powers. Whoever can use his spiritual powers to get the bowl from atop the pole is the best!

**FAT MAN:** (Tries and fails.) I-I can't do it.

**THIN MAN:** Let me at it! (Tries and fails.) W-what? I've lost my powers.

**PINDOLA:** (Seated on a huge rock.) I'll do it! (He soars up to the top of the pole, still sitting on the rock.)

**CROWD VOICES:** Watch out for that fool! The rock will fall and kill us! Look out!



PINDOLA: (Takes the bowl and floats to the ground.) Here's the bowl.

CROWD VOICES: Magnificent! What great spiritual powers you have!

ELDER: (Bowing and handing the bowl to Pindola) Venerable One!  
the bowl is yours.

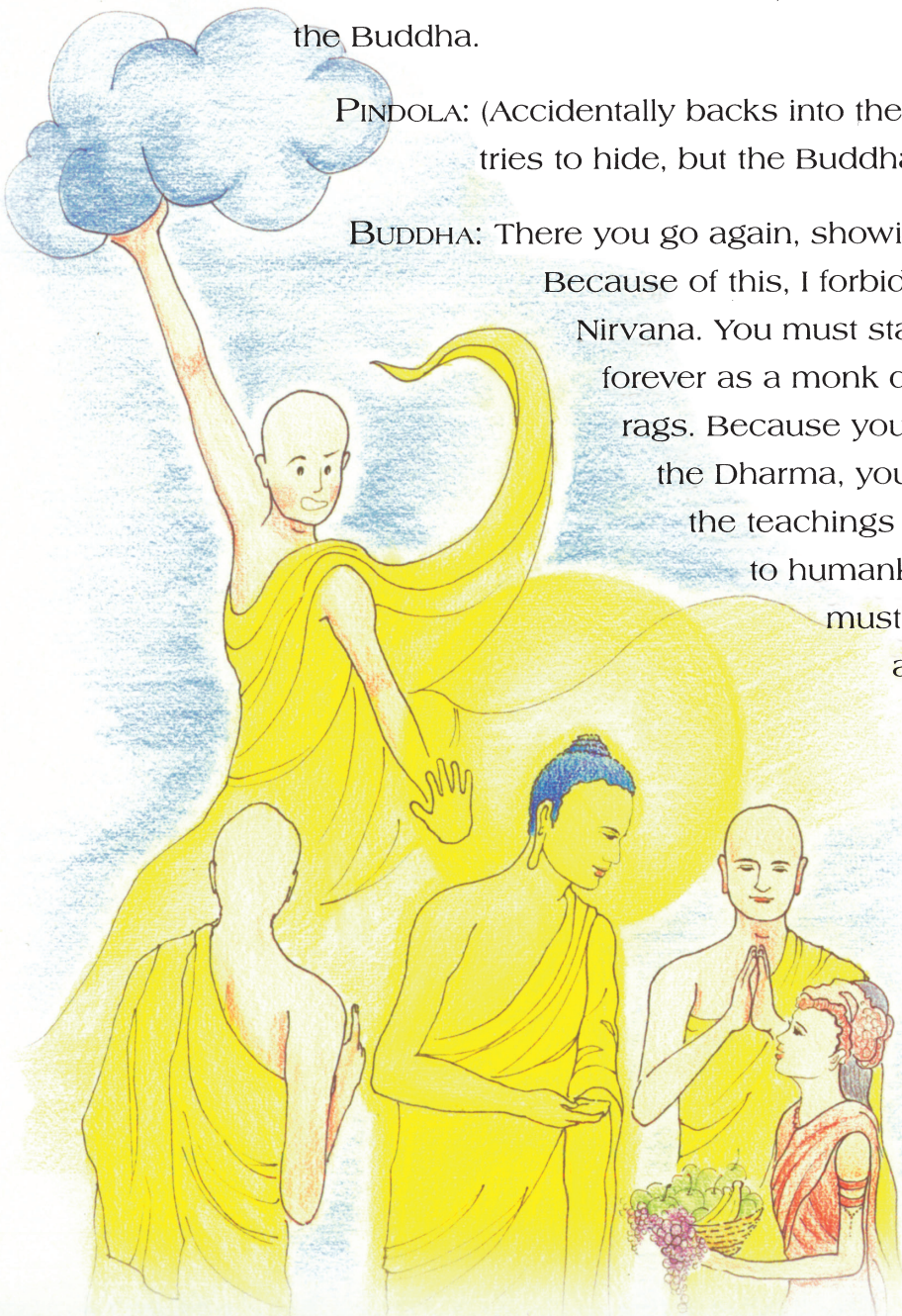
BUDDHA: (Enters stage. Pindola quickly hides the bowl and bows.)  
How could you show off your spiritual powers for the  
sake of a worthless bowl? You can no longer stay here.  
People praise you too much. I'll send you to the Western  
Continent. The gods who live there will not praise you,  
but will help you to rid yourself of selfish pride. (Curtain)

## Act II

**NARRATOR:** After Pindola had been gone for long time, everyone began to miss him and begged the Buddha to allow him return. The Buddha consented, but had Pindola live far away on a mountaintop. One day the daughter of a rich merchant made a meal offering to the Buddha and the monks and nuns. They all gathered together at the grand house. Suddenly Pindola flew into the room and landed behind the Buddha, but he did not see the Buddha.

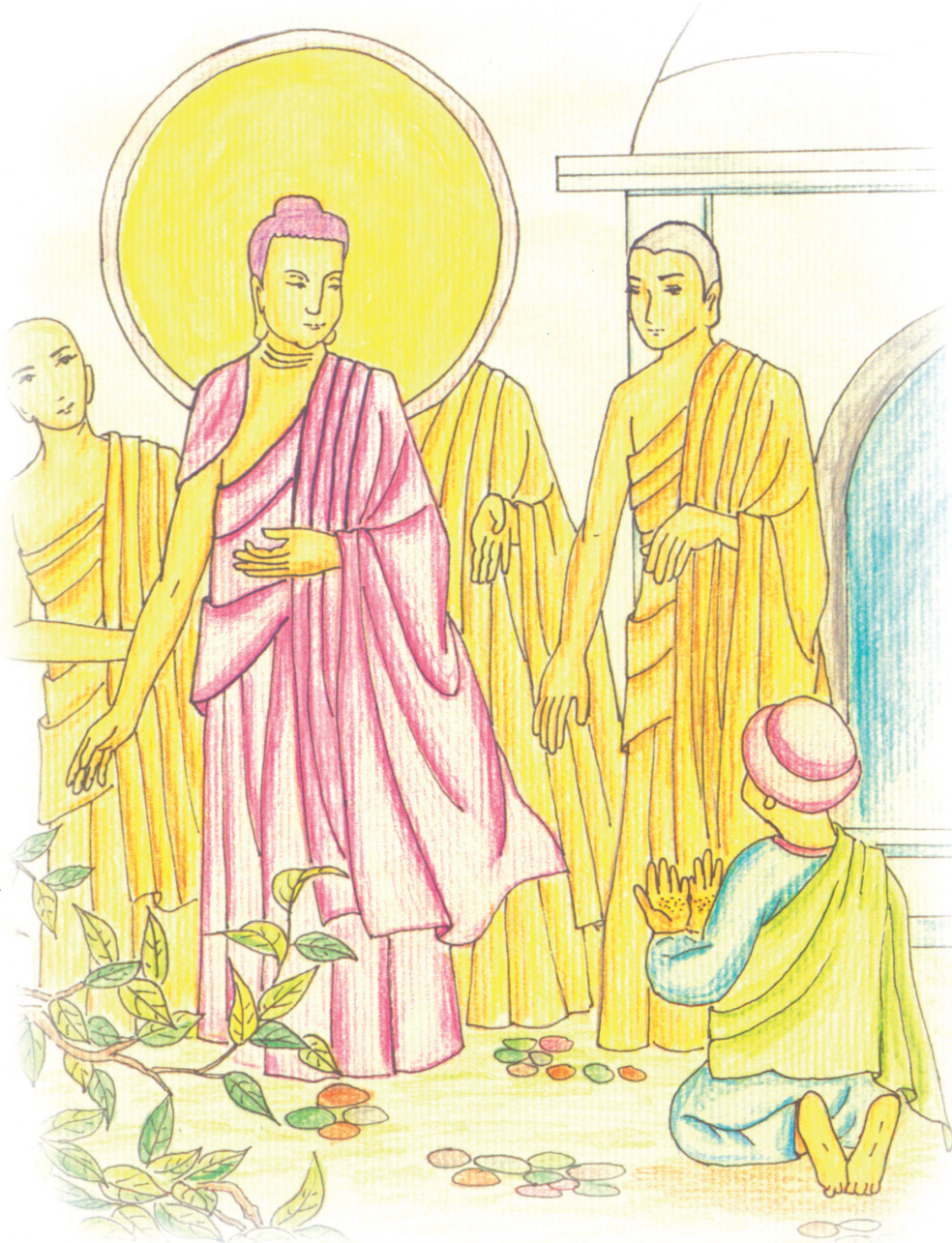
**PINDOLA:** (Accidentally backs into the Buddha. He tries to hide, but the Buddha catches him.)

**BUDDHA:** There you go again, showing off!  
Because of this, I forbid you to enter Nirvana. You must stay in the world forever as a monk dressed in rags. Because you understand the Dharma, you must spread the teachings of the Buddha to humankind, but you must never show off again! (Curtain)



## Act III

**NARRATOR:** A hundred years after the Buddha entered Nirvana, King Ashoka became the king of India. One day, he invited the Buddha's disciples to the palace to accept offerings. Up until now Pindola had followed the Buddha's orders, but when he saw all the monks and nuns in the King's palace, he was so happy that he lost control.



PINDOLA: (Flies into the room wearing a swan headdress, his hair as white as snow, and his eyebrows covering his eyes.)

NARRATOR: I wonder what Pindola is up to this time.

KING ASHOKA: (Bows to Pindola) O Venerable One, how magnificent your spiritual powers are! What splendor you bring to the palace! I have been told that you have lived so long that you have seen the Buddha.

PINDOLA: O King, in your past life, you have also seen the Buddha. One day when you were a little boy playing in the road, the Buddha and I passed by you. You gave the Buddha an offering of sand. He told you, "One day you will become a great king and rule your kingdom with wisdom and kindness. Buddhism will flourish under your reign and you will build 84,000 stupas. The people in your kingdom will be happy and prosperous and they will honor and serve you. The Buddha's blessings are many. King Ashoka, may the Dharma long remain in the world!" (Curtain falls as Pindola flies offstage.)

NARRATOR: That was the last time that Venerable Pindola displayed his spiritual powers. Now there is a Buddhist ceremony once a year to invite Pindola to visit the temples. It is said that when people sincerely recite his name, Pindola will appear as a ragged monk without letting anyone know who he is. If he visits the temple, the flowers will not wither for a long time.

Note: PINDOLA should be a rod puppet or a string puppet so he can fly.

## “You Took my Cow!”

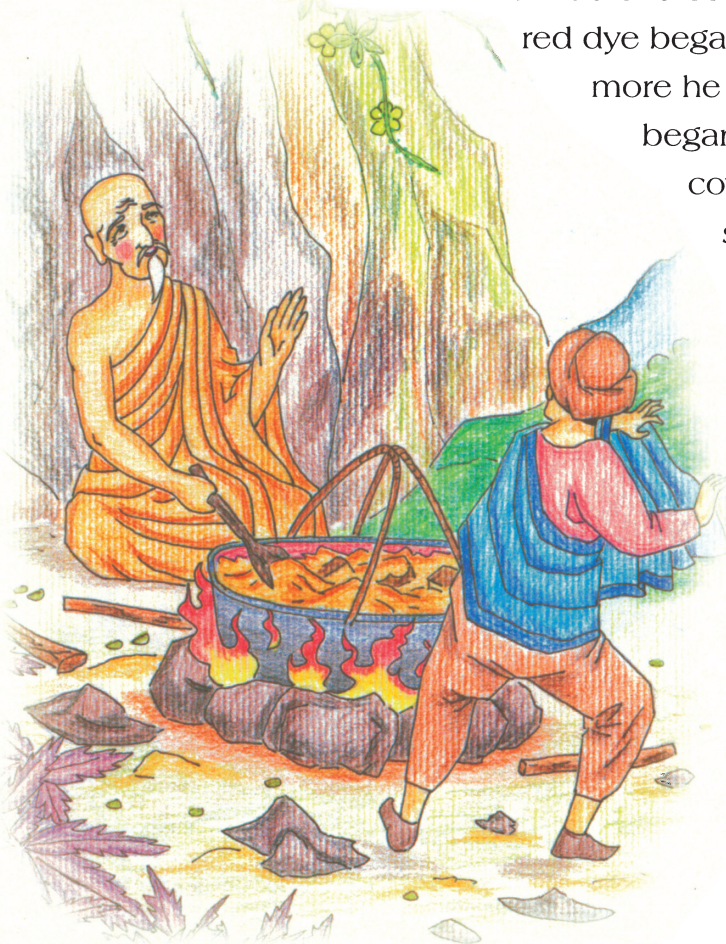
Revata was a Bhikshu, a Buddhist monk. At one time he went up into the mountains to meditate alone. He worked very hard and soon became an Arhat. Many people came to study under him, five hundred disciples in all. They also became great Arhats. Then they went down the mountain to teach other people the Buddha Dharma, leaving Revata alone.

One day, Revata looked down at his robe and saw that it was so old that it was white. “Perhaps I should dye my robe,” he said.

He gathered some tree bark and roots and boiled them up into a reddish-brown dye. Then he dropped his robe in the hot water and began to stir. As he stirred, he noticed that the robe began to

look like the hide of a cow. The more he stirred, the red dye began to look like blood. And the more he stirred, the roots and bark began to look like the bones of a cow. Then everything began to smell like beef stew.

Quickly, he clamped the lid on but not soon enough. A cowherd suddenly appeared on the mountaintop. He strode angrily toward Revata and raised his fist, shouting, “You stole my cow! That’s what you did! And now you’re cooking it! I could smell beef stew from all the way down the mountain.





You've broken the precepts against stealing and killing! And that doesn't look good for a Bhikshu!" The cowherd pushed aside the lid of the pot. Sure enough, there was a cow inside the pot being cooked in a stew. The cowherd grabbed the pot and took it down the mountain to the king. Revata followed him.

After hearing the cowherd's story, the king asked Revata, "What do you have to say for yourself?"

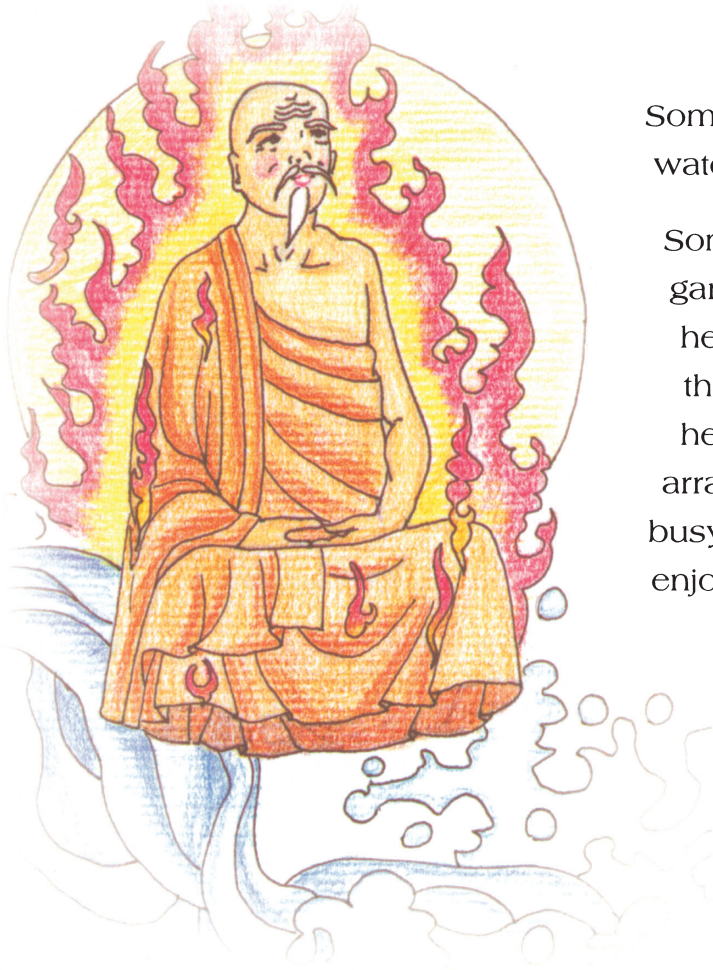
"There's nothing I can say," Revata said, and he was sentenced to twelve years in jail.

Every morning in the jail, Revata swept out the cells and chatted pleasantly to the prisoners who did nothing but complain all day long about this and that. After a few days, strangely enough, some of the prisoners picked up brooms and swept alongside Revata. He enjoyed their company and told them stories about the Buddha and his great wisdom. Without even knowing what happened or even when it happened, the prisoners began chatting pleasantly among themselves, forgetting their troubles.

Revata found a hammer and some nails and repaired the leaky roofs one day. A few prisoners helped him. They even replaced some broken tiles in the kitchen.

The prisoners' clothing needed mending. Bhikshus always carried a needle and thread with them, so Revata took out his own and mended the prisoners' ragged shirts and jackets. This gave the prisoners an idea. "Why don't we wash our clothing? Then we won't stink so much." And they did.

Some even started taking baths, but the water from the well was murky and dirty. So what did they do, but dig the well deeper and clean it out. Fresh water gushed up. Everyone laughed and sang and danced around the well and had a jolly good time. Complaints were left behind and friendship among the prisoners grew warm. Old fights and grudges were settled.



Someone built a fire and heated water for the others to bathe in.

Someone dug a vegetable garden and others planted herbs. But people weren't that sick anymore, so the herbs were used for flower arrangements. People were too busy sprucing up the jail and enjoying their new life to be sick.

While Revata was in jail, his 500 disciples were so busy teaching that most of them forgot about him. However, one still remembered.

"I wonder where our teacher is?" he asked and with his heavenly eye, he

searched for Revata and saw him

in jail. "Our teacher has been wrongly accused. Let's pay a visit to the king!" he told the other Arhats.

All 500 Arhats flew to the palace and alighted on the rooftop. When the king saw them, he was afraid. "How may I serve you?" he asked.

"Our teacher, Revata, didn't steal that cow. He was dying his robe with roots and bark. Until justice has been done, we will not leave this roof top," said the Arhats.

"Of course," said the frightened king, wishing for them to leave. "I made a big mistake. I will free Revata, today."



The king hastened to the prison. Nervously, he opened the prison door, afraid that Revata would be in a rage. He dreaded the complaining of the prisoners about the cold, leaky prison, and the poor food. Most of all, he hated the stench and filth.

As soon as the king turned the key, the door opened and out stepped Revata and the happy prisoners. "Welcome, O King, we were expecting you," said Revata.

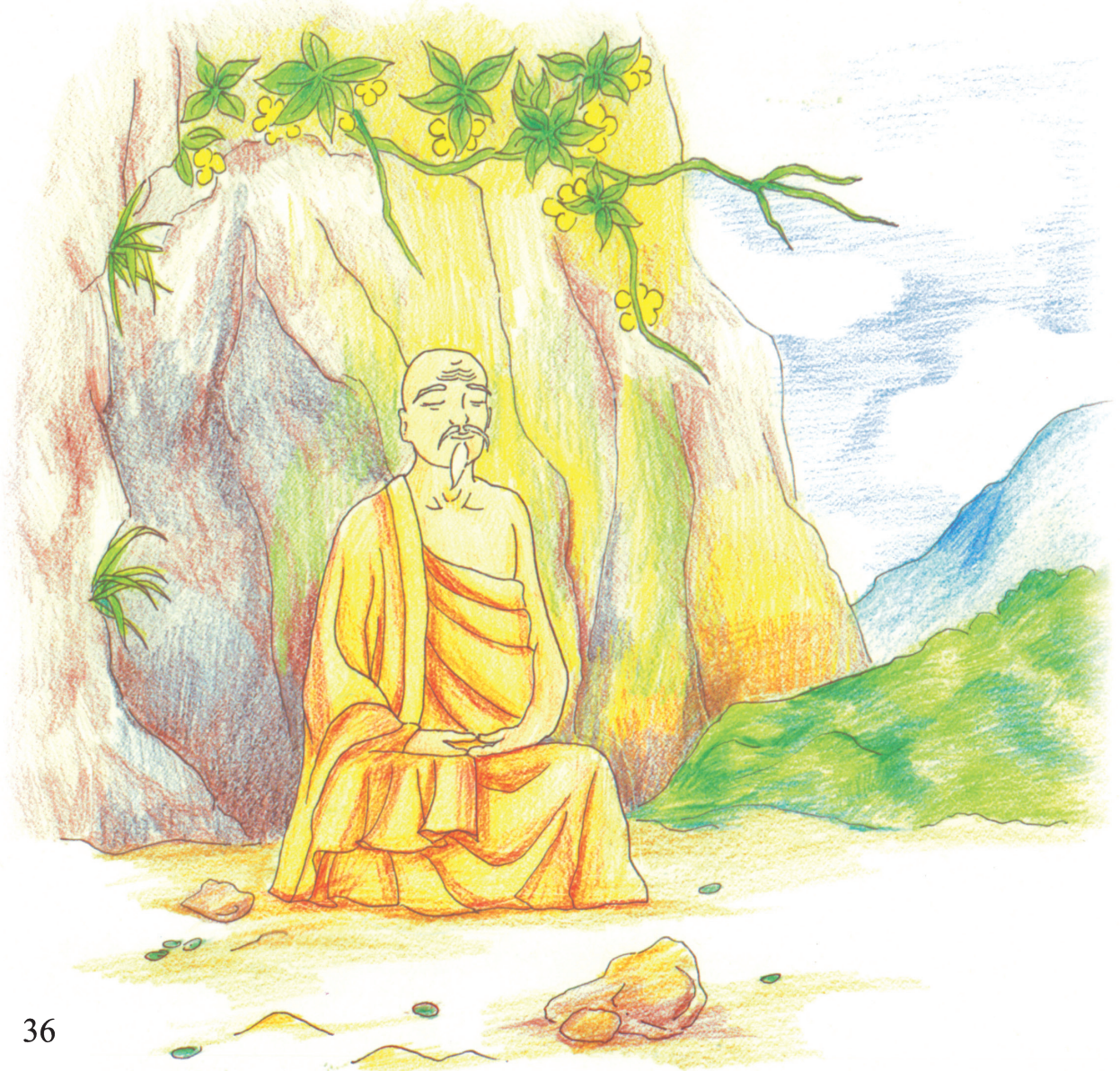
The king could hardly believe what he saw. The prison was bright and clean and the smells from the kitchen were delicious. But the most wonderful sight of all was the prisoners' faces of kindness and forgiveness. Never had he seen such faces, not even in the palace.

The king pleaded with Revata, "Please forgive me for the wrong I have done you."

Revata smiled, "You did no wrong. It was my retribution. It was right for me to be in prison. I'll tell you why. Long, long ago, in my past life, I was a cowherd. One day I lost my cow in the mountains and came upon a Pratyeka Buddha sitting in meditation. I accused him of stealing my cow. Not only that, I dragged him down the mountain to the village officials to be questioned. For twelve hours I fought to prove my point. Since I detained him for twelve hours, I had to spend twelve years in prison to pay back the debt I owe."

“Besides, if Revata had not been put in prison, our lives would still be worthless,” said the prisoners. “He has given us hope. When we get out of here, we want to make up for the wrongs we’ve done and help others.”

The king’s heart softened as he spoke to his guards. “It is the command of the king that all the prisoners be set free today to return to their homes.” Then he turned to the prisoners and gently said, “However, it is my wish that you serve in court and help rule the kingdom with your wisdom.” And the prisoners did just that. They advised the king wisely and he ruled justly for the rest of his life. Revata went back to the top of the mountain.



## Stories of Shariputra

### Eyes of an Egret

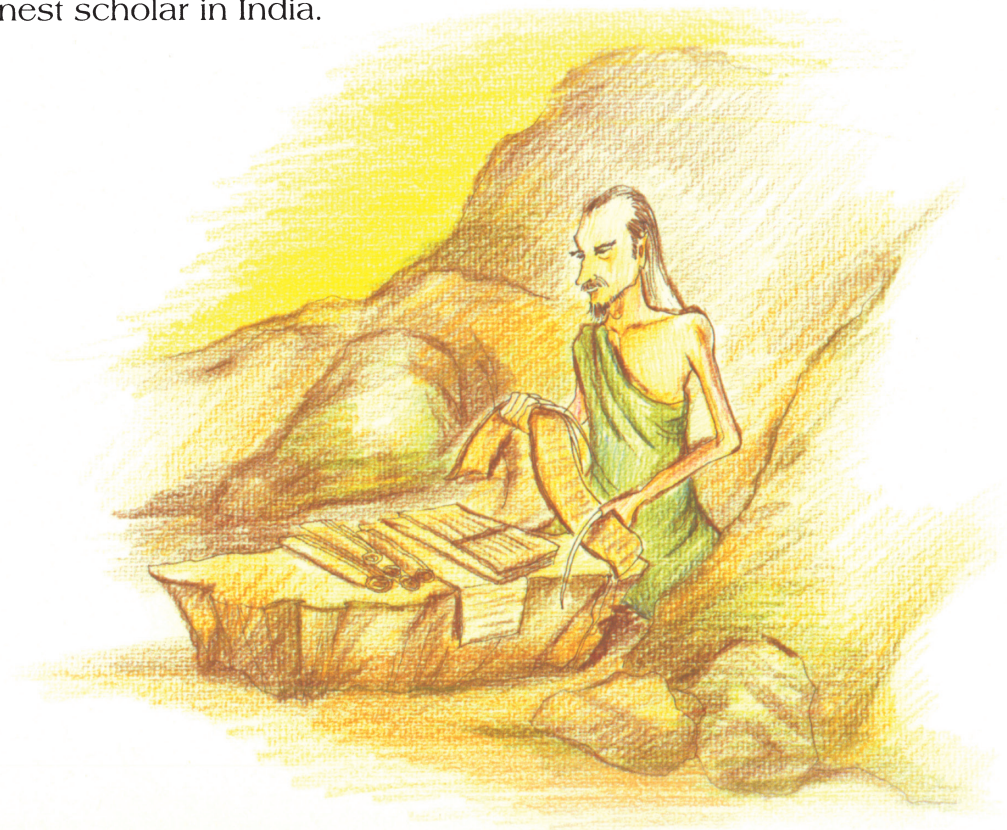
Among the Buddha's disciples, Shariputra was foremost in wisdom. He was called 'Son of an Egret' because his mother's eyes were as beautiful as an egret's. Even before he was born, people knew he would be exceptionally wise.

Shariputra's mother had a brother named Mahakaushthila who was a famous debator. However, when Shariputra was in her womb, she would debate with her brother and win every time.

"You are carrying a very wise child," her brother said, "I must learn all there is to know so I can meet my nephew in debate after he is born."

Kaushtila then went off to southern India to study. Being so eager to learn, he did not even take time to cut off his fingernails.

In India, long fingernails are the mark of a scholar who does not do heavy work. His nails grew so long that he was known as the finest scholar in India.



When he completed his studies, he returned to debate with his young nephew, Shariputra, who was now five years old. "Where is my nephew?" he asked Shariputra's mother.

"He has joined the Buddha and has become a monk," she answered.

"I'll see about that!" he said, and ran off in a huff to see the Buddha.

"I'm Shariputra's uncle and have come for him. I challenge you to a debate. If I win, Shariputra comes with me. If I lose, you can have my head."

"Well, speak up. Explain your principle, then I will consider your request," replied the Buddha.

"I don't accept any principle," Kaushthila said, triumphantly.

"Oh?" smiled the Buddha. "Do you accept that principle?"

Kaushthila was bewildered. He thought, "If I say I don't accept it, I will destroy my own argument. If I say I do accept it, I will contradict myself." He didn't know how to answer the Buddha.

Without a word, he turned on his heels and ran away. Then he stopped. "If I am a man of my word, why am I running away? I must offer the Buddha my head."

He hurried back to the Buddha and said, "May I have a knife? I will cut off my head and give it to you."

"What good will you be without a head? Stay with me and learn to develop your true wisdom. With your intelligence, you can help people in many wondrous ways," said the Buddha.

So Kaushthila became a follower of the Buddha and an Arhat. He was first among the Buddha's disciples in debate.

## A Fire worshipper Gets Burned

Once there was an elder named Sudatta who invited the Buddha to come to his city of Shravasti to teach the people there. The Buddha asked him, “Is there a place for all my disciples to stay—a pure and quiet place where the Dharma can be spoken?”

“I will look for a place. When it is ready, I will send for you,” said Sudatta.

“Shariputra will go along to help,” said the Buddha. “He is my wisest disciple and will see that everything goes well.”

On the way, Sudatta asked, “How far can the Buddha travel in one day?”

“About twenty miles,” Shariputra said.



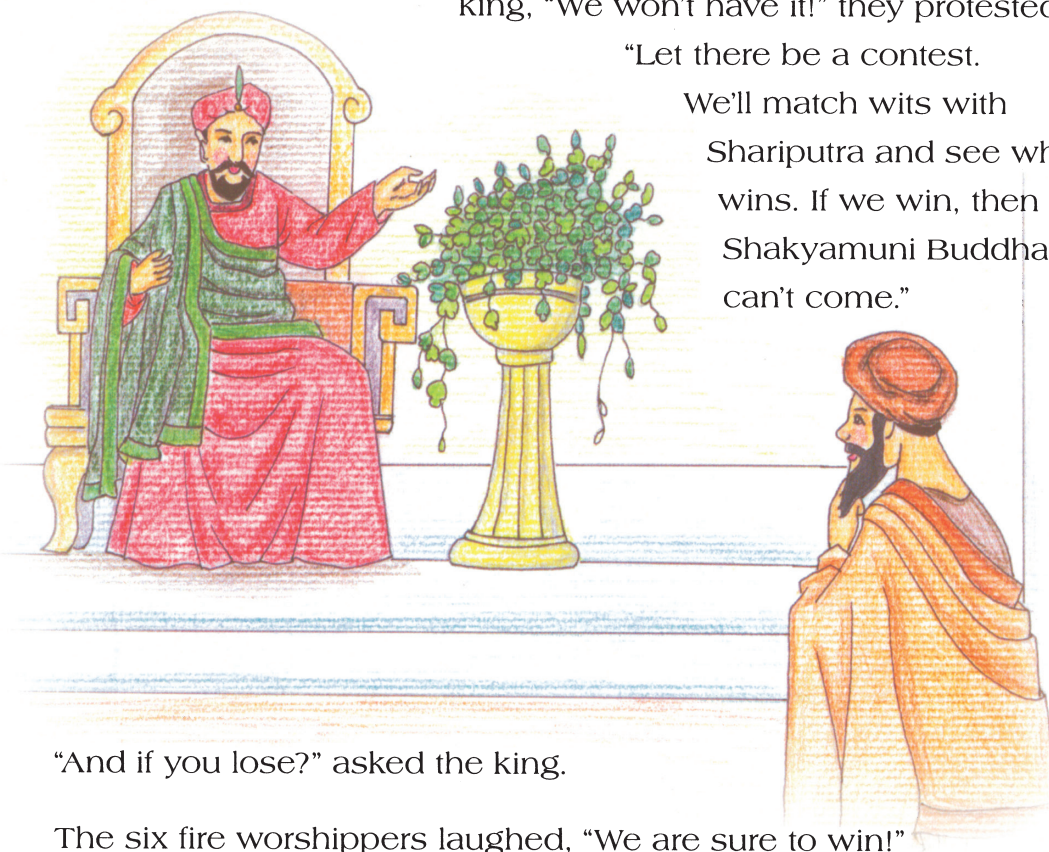
“Then let’s mark off an area for a resting place to be built every twenty miles. Then, whenever the Buddha makes the journey to Shravasti, he will be able to rest along the way,” said Sudatta.

Once in Shravasti, Shariputra and Sudatta began to search for the right location and found a beautiful place called the Jeta Grove. Sudatta purchased the grove and began building.

At that time, there were six famous fire worshippers with spiritual powers who lived in Shravasti. When they heard that the Buddha was to live in their city, they went to the king, “We won’t have it!” they protested,

“Let there be a contest.

We’ll match wits with Shariputra and see who wins. If we win, then Shakyamuni Buddha can’t come.”



“And if you lose?” asked the king.

The six fire worshippers laughed, “We are sure to win!”

The king sent for Shariputra and told him about the contest.

Shariputra was amused. “I accept the challenge. Bring them on!”

The contest will be held in seven days.

On the day of the contest, the drummers rose in the purple light of early morning and hit the drum.



Not the copper drum that called together twelve million people.  
Not the silver drum that called together fourteen million people.  
But the golden drum that called together everyone in the land.

On one platform, sat the six fire worshippers with their hundred thousand disciples. On the other platform, there was only one seat for Shariputra. The people were arriving and the hour to begin was close at hand.

Meanwhile Shariputra sat under a tree and contemplated. “These fire worshippers are arrogant. What virtue do I have to win them over to goodness? I have been kind to my parents for eons, I should be respected for that.”

But no one saw Shariputra under the tree. No one knew where he was. The six fire worshippers bragged to the king, “Shariputra doesn't dare show his face. He's afraid of our powers!”



Then Shariputra came out of samadhi. He walked as majestic as a lion as he passed through the throngs of people. Many stood and bowed as he passed, their hearts warmed by his awesome appearance.

To begin with, the great fire-worshipper named Lao transformed himself into a gigantic tree. The branches spread out and shaded the entire assembly. Abundant with leaves and laden with fruit, the tree was a magnificent sight.

The crowd gasped, "Lao has transformed himself!"

Shariputra suddenly turned himself into a violent wind. It blew the tree down by its roots and scattered it into bits.

The crowd cheered, "Shariputra wins!"

Then Lao turned into a pool made of the seven jewels. Filled with lotus flowers in bloom, the pool was an exquisite delight.

The crowd sighed, "Lao has transformed himself again!"

Shariputra slowly turned himself into a great elephant with six huge tusks. On top each tusk were seven lotus flowers holding seven jade maidens. The splendid elephant ambled over to the pool and quickly drank it dry.

The crowd roared, "Shariputra wins!"

Lao then turned into a tall mountain made of the seven jewels. Bubbling springs flowed from its sides and forests rich with flowers and fruit graced it.

The crowd whispered, "Lao has transformed himself again!"

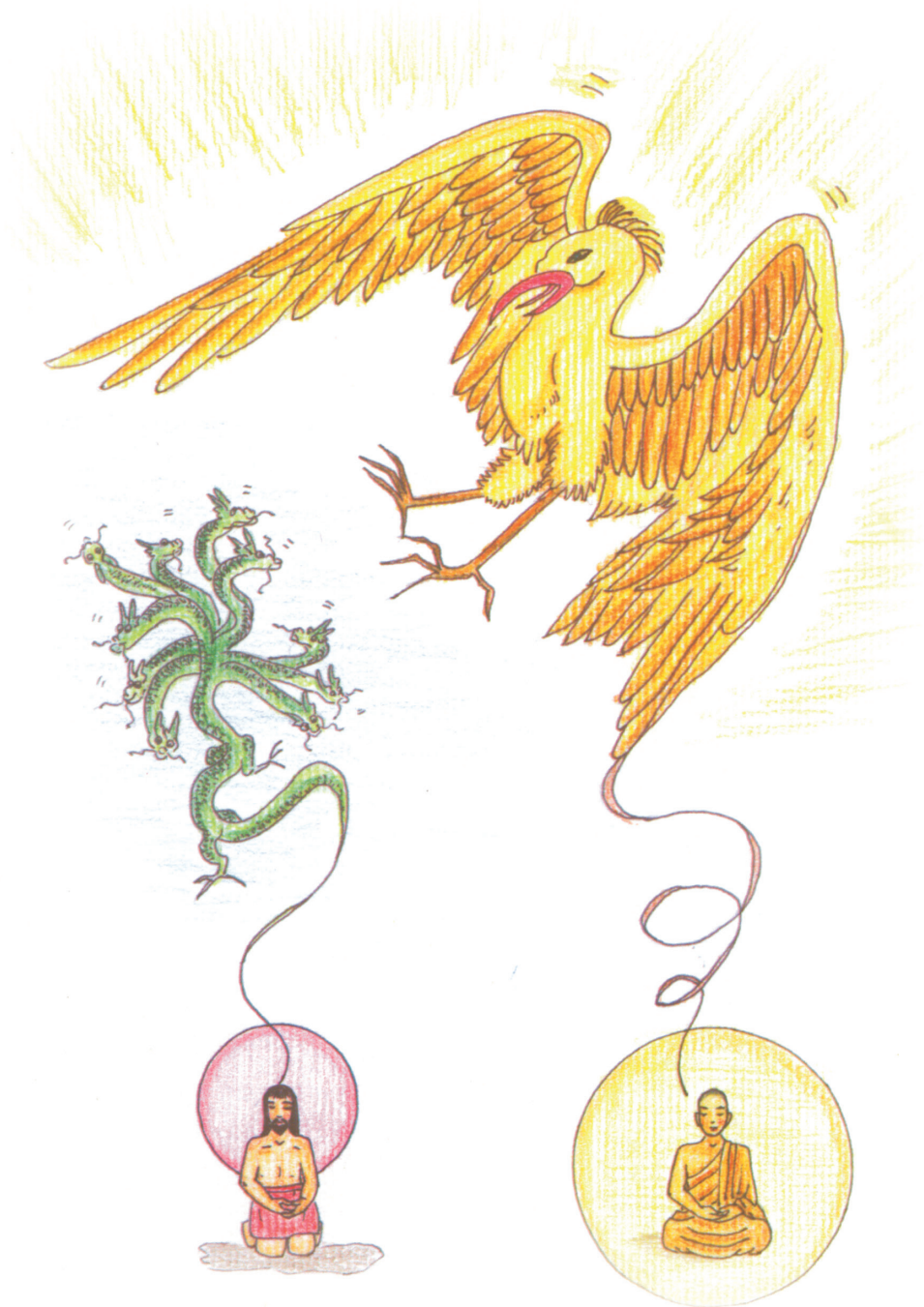
At once, Shariputra transformed himself into a knight wielding a vajra pestle and smashed the mountain to smithereens!

The crowd cheered, "Shariputra wins!"



Lao then appeared as a ten-headed dragon and rained down gems in empty space. Then the dragon conjured up thunder and lightning, tornadoes and earthquakes.

The crowd shrank, "Lao has transformed himself again!"



In a flash, Shariputra turned into a golden-winged Peng bird and slurped the dragon down in one gulp.

The crowd roared, "Shariputra wins!"

Lao then turned into a mighty ox with thick legs and sharp vicious horns. It plowed the ground, lowered its mighty head, and charged.



The crowd cried, "Lao has transformed himself again!"  
In an instant, Shariputra appeared as an enormous, fearless lion.  
He pounced on the back of the ox and ate it in one bite.

The crowd thundered, "Shariputra wins!"

Then Lao turned into a huge, ferocious, rakshasa ghost  
With blood-red eyes. It spit out long streams of raging fire.

The crowd moaned, "Lao has transformed himself again!"

Shariputra immediately turned into the fearsome-looking King Vaishravana. The rakshasa ghost was so frightened that it sought to run away, and it ran right into its own fire. Afraid of being burned alive, it fell to the ground, begging for mercy. The fire turned into ashes.

The crowd exploded, "Shariputra has won!"

Then Shariputra rose into space and displayed the eighteen transformations of an Arhat.

He displayed the deportment of standing, sitting, walking, and lying down in emptiness.

He emitted fire from the lower part of his body and water from the upper part of his body.

He emitted water from the upper part of his body and fire from the lower part of his body.

He disappeared in the east and reappeared in the west.

He disappeared in the west and reappeared in the east.

He displayed a big body and then a small body.

He displayed one body that turned into billions of bodies and then back into one body.

He walked in space.

He entered earth as if it were water.

He walked on water as if it were earth.

Then he sat down in the midst of the people. Their hearts were gladdened by his spiritual powers. Shariputra spoke Dharma for them and their bliss grew even greater. Upon hearing the Dharma, they all became Arhats. The six fire worshippers and their hundred thousand disciples became followers of the Buddha.



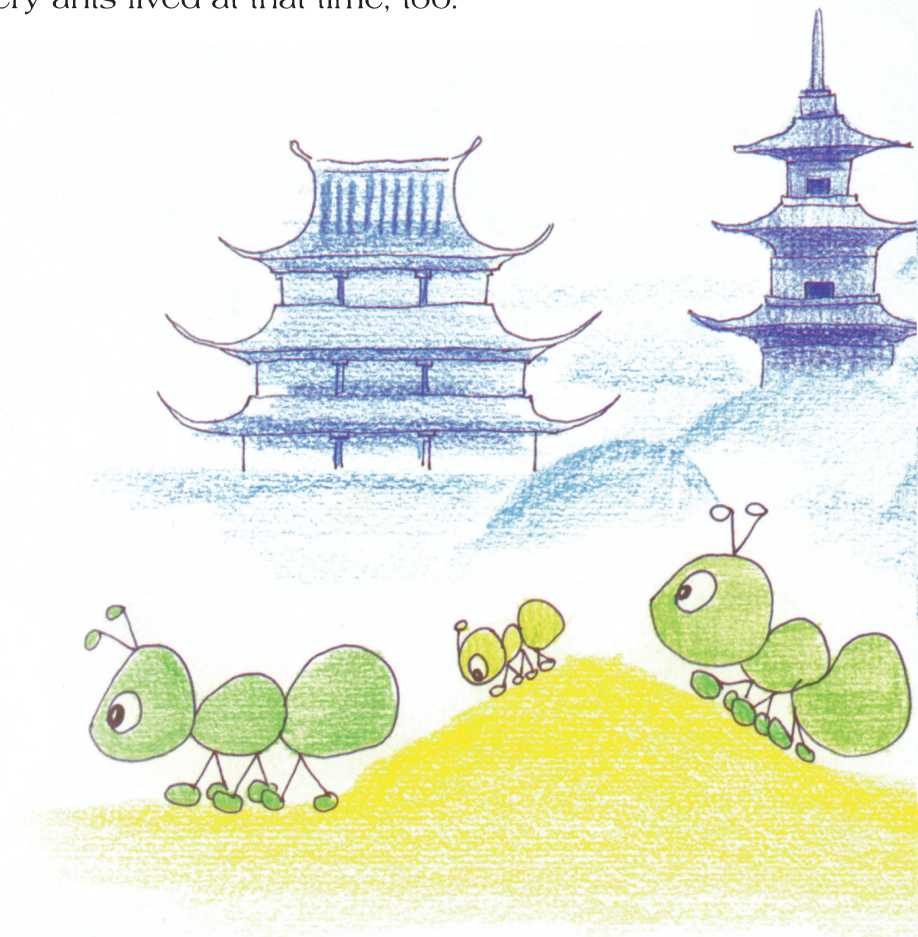
# The Ants

One day Shariputra and Sudatta went to the Jeta Grove to measure off the land for the new monastery. Sudatta noticed that Shariputra looked sad. When he asked why, Shariputra pointed at some ants on the ground and answered in verse:

“At the time of Vipasyin Buddha, a time not so near,  
You built a temple for that Buddha on this very land.  
These ants that we see now, were then crawling here.

At the time of Sikhin Buddha, you also found this place.  
For him, you built a dwelling so peaceful and serene.  
The ants are still here; they have not changed their pace.

At the time of Visvabhu Buddha, a temple built by you,  
Was surrounded by gardens vast and lush.  
And these very ants lived at that time, too.





At the time of Krakucchanda Buddha, on this very ground,  
You built a lecture hall where the Dharma was heard.  
And the ants from that time continue to abound.

At the time of Kanakamuni Buddha, underneath these trees,  
You built a Pure Dwelling where lotuses grew in pools.  
And the ants from that time are the same as these.

At the time of Kasyapa Buddha, on this piece of earth,  
You erected a temple with pavilions all around.  
And these same ants have undergone rebirth.

Now at the time of the Buddha, by this lovely stream,  
You build a monastery for the Dharma to flourish.  
And the ants are still reborn as ants, doesn't it seem sad?

My sadness comes from knowing  
how hard it is,  
For an ant to escape the cycle of rebirth.  
For ninety-one great eons,  
it has been like this.

All those ants, that were then ants,  
Are still ants now; that is why I cry."



## The Buddha Arrives at Shravasti

The elder Sudatta had a grand pavilion built in the Jeta Grove where the Buddha could speak Dharma. It was made from a special wood called chandana. Another building was erected to house the Buddha's twelve hundred fifty Bhikshus. When all was ready, Sudatta asked the Buddha to come. On the day the Buddha was to arrive, the king sent a royal greeting party out to accompany him to Shravasti. This is what happened:

When the Buddha arrived in Shravasti, he emitted a light that flooded the land, making the universe bright.

As he trod on the ground, the earth trembled in three ways. Music burst forth, animals danced, voices rose in praise.

The blind could see, the deaf could hear, the mute could talk. The hunchbacks stood tall, and the cripples could run and walk.

When the good people saw this, they cried with happiness. They came to hear the Buddha, eighteen million and no less.

They heard the Buddha speak of planting good seeds,  
And became Arhats and Bodhisattvas according to their deeds.



## A Visit to Earth

One day Shariputra was sitting under a tree in the Jeta Grove telling the story of Sudatta and the Jeta Grove to a gathering of people. “At the time of Sudatta’s death, he became an Arhat and rose to the Tushita Heaven.”

“How do you know?” asked a child, who was listening.

Shariputra said, “One day there was a bright light in the garden. The Buddha and I went to investigate and there stood Sudatta. I asked him, ‘What are you doing back on earth?’”

“He said, ‘The Tushita Heaven is a wonderful place. My body shines with light and I can speak with my thoughts, but I am not happy there because I miss the Buddha too much. I asked the gods to grant me a visit to see the Buddha one more time.’ After he saw the Buddha, he was content and returned to the Tushita Heaven.”



## A Monk Who Could not be Killed

A long time ago in India, a very beautiful child was born. He was given the name Vakkula, which means 'Good Bearing'. Vakkula was a very unusual child. Unlike most babies, who cried when they were born, he came out sitting in full lotus posture and was smiling. When his mother saw him, she screamed, "What a strange child!" But Vakkula just looked at her with his beautiful, laughing eyes.

As a baby, he was simply fascinated by fire and would stare into it for hours. One day he decided to crawl into the fire and sit in meditation. "Come see me!" he called to his mother.

When his mother saw him sitting in the fireplace, she panicked. "You'll be burned alive!" But Vakkula just looked at her with his beautiful, laughing eyes.



As Vakkula grew older, he did even stranger things. He crawled into a big pot of boiling oil and just sat there playing with the bubbles. When his mother took the lid off the pot, there he was sitting in full-lotus, laughing. "Hello, Mother!" he greeted.

The lid dropped to the floor. Clang! "Why do you frighten me so?" his mother cried. "How can you still be alive, sitting in a pot of oil? What will you do next?" But Vakkula just looked at her with his beautiful, laughing eyes.

Vakkula became even stranger. While the other young boys liked to make sand castles on the beach, he liked to sit on the bottom of the ocean and watch the fish swim by.

One day as he was sitting on the bottom of the ocean, he was swallowed by an enormous fish. A fisherman caught the enormous fish and took it home. When he cut the fish open, out stepped Vakkula. He was not hurt at all!

The fisherman was surprised. "What is this, a strange sea monster? Quick wife! Bring me the ax, I'll kill it."

The fisherman's wife brought the ax to her husband, but when she saw the beautiful Vakkula, she implored her husband to spare his life. "It's only a boy. Please don't hurt him. We must let him go."

The fire did not burn him, the oil did not cook him, the sea did not drown him, and the ax did not cut him. Vakkula simply could not be killed.

The Buddha said, "In life after life, Vakkula never killed anything, not a single living creature or even a blade of grass. For this reason, he could not be killed."

Vakkula was the foremost disciple in keeping the precept of no killing. He said, "Let everyone live out their life in peace. Saving the lives of others is the same as saving your own."

## The First Nun

When the Buddha heard that his father, King Suddhodana, was ill, he returned to Kapilavastu and took care of him until his death. After the king's death, Queen Prajapati, who had raised the Buddha after his real mother died, asked, "May I become a nun and follow you?"

The Buddha said, "The life that I lead is not safe for women. The Buddha's teachings can be followed anywhere. It is not necessary to leave the comforts of your home and family." She asked him three times, but each time he refused. The Buddha then left for a monastery in Visala.

One morning in Visala, Ananda, the Buddha's attendant, saw a group of women standing outside the monastery. They were wearing yellow robes and had cut their hair. Their feet were swollen and their bodies covered with dust. It was Queen Prajapati and a large number of women from the palace.



Ananda was surprised to see them. “What are you doing here? It’s about 150 miles from Kapilavastu to Visala. Did you walk all the way?” he asked.

With tears in her eyes, Queen Prajapati said, “Yes. Now that the king is dead, we no longer have a reason to stay at the palace. We have come to serve the Buddha. Please ask him for us.”

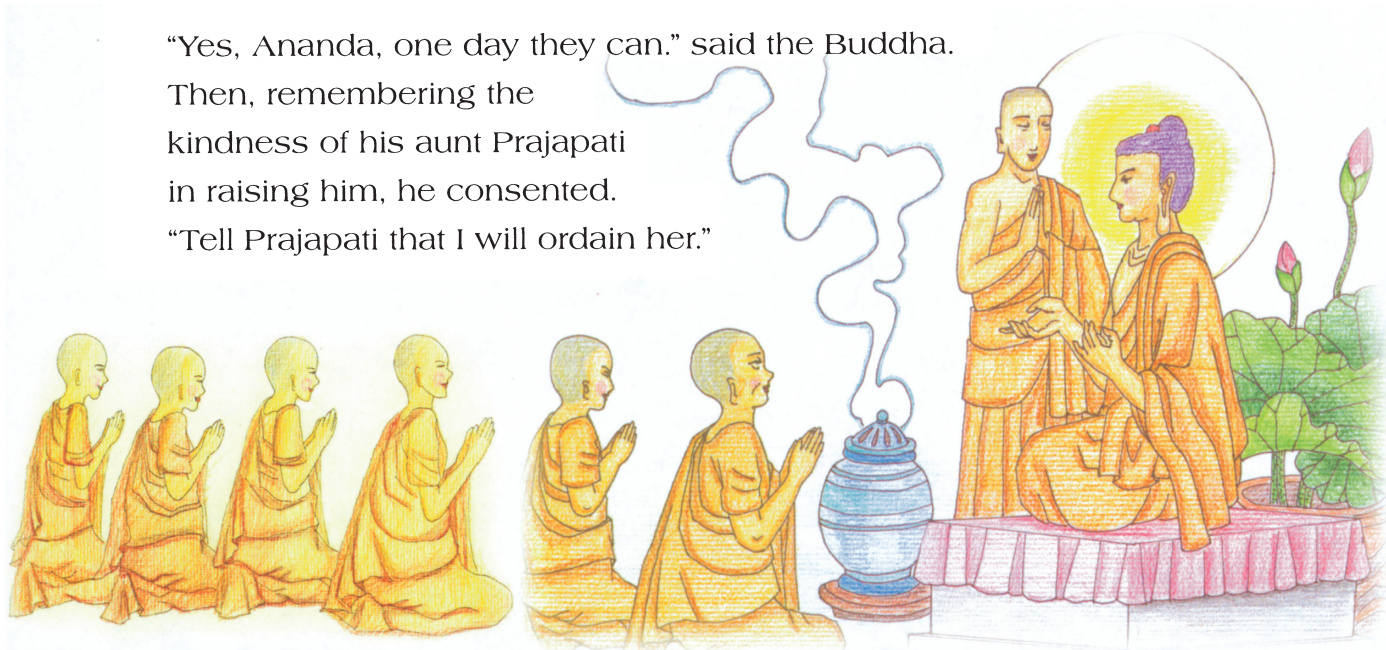
Ananda asked the Buddha three times to admit Prajapati and the women as nuns. Three times the Buddha refused.

Then Ananda asked the Buddha, “Can women attain Buddhahood as well as men?”

“Yes, Ananda, one day they can.” said the Buddha.

Then, remembering the kindness of his aunt Prajapati in raising him, he consented.

“Tell Prajapati that I will ordain her.”



And so Prajapati was the first woman ordained as a nun. She founded the first Order of Nuns and ordained many women as nuns, thereafter.

The Buddha is known in history as among the first to give women an honored place in religion. Many women became his most devoted followers and helped the people of India in many wonderful ways.

## The Beautiful Queen

Khema was the queen of King Bimbisara. She was beautiful like the moon reflecting on a still lake. Her lips were shaped like lotus petals and her eyes sparkled like gems. The king often urged her, "Come with me to the Bamboo Grove to meet the Buddha."

The queen would say, "I prefer the beauty of the palace."

"In that case, I will bring the beauty of the Bamboo Grove to you,"





said the king. And he did just that. He had poets compose poems about the loveliness of the grove—the lotus flowers blooming in pools of clear water and the scent of sweet jasmine filling the air. In the evenings, the poets would recite the poems to entertain the queen. So beautiful were the poems, that the queen’s heart was touched. She became so enchanted that she decided to visit the grove.

Upon entering the Bamboo Grove, the queen heard a voice more beautiful than the birds singing. Moving closer to the voice, she saw the Buddha sitting under a sala tree in full bloom. He was speaking to his disciples. When the Buddha saw her, he used his spiritual powers and created a maiden more beautiful than the queen. The maiden stood by his side, fanning him.

“I have never seen anyone so lovely!” whispered the queen as she moved nearer to get a closer look. Reaching out to touch the skin of the maiden, that was as soft as a lotus blossom, the queen drew her hand back and gasped. The skin was no longer soft and smooth, it was wrinkled and rough. The delicate fingers of the maiden grew gnarly and her ruby lips twisted into a toothless grin. Her hair turned gray, then white.

The queen, thinking her eyes were playing tricks on her, rubbed them and looked again. But true enough, right before her eyes, the beautiful young maiden was fading into an old ugly woman. Older and older the maiden became until she sank to the ground and turned into dust.

The queen hid her face in horror. She realized that she, too, would grow old and die.

Having compassion for her, the Buddha said, “Beauty does not last. Those who are attached to beauty are like a spider entangled in its own web—the spider has no way out. Those who are free from suffering do not delight in such beauty.”



Upon hearing these words, the queen realized how selfish and vain she had been. She renounced the palace life and became an Arhat named Khema. She entered the Order of Nuns and became the chief woman disciple of the Buddha. Foremost in wisdom, she helped the Buddha to teach the other nuns.

It is not that Khema became enlightened as quickly as lightning. She planted seeds of wisdom in the past. It is told that in one life, she sold her beautiful hair to make an offering to the Buddha. In another life, she built monasteries for the Sangha. There is also a story of her being the wife of a good and wise king. And in another story, she was the wife of the man who later became Shariputra and had children who were beautiful and kind to everyone.

## The Mustard Seed



A long time ago in Shravasti, India, there lived a girl named Kisa who belonged to the lowest caste of people. She was very thin and haggard looking with stringy hair and rough skin. Her beauty was an inner one, for she was kind and helpful to everyone. The children laughed at her and called her Kisa, "*the ugly one.*" They could not see the sparkle of her inner beauty.

When Kisa grew up, she worked in the kitchen of a rich man. Although the work was hard, she never complained or stole food as the other servants did. After she finished her own work, she helped the old ones fetch water from the wells.

When the rich man saw the kindness of Kisa, his heart was touched. "You will make a good wife for me," he said, seeing beyond her looks into her heart.



So Kisa became the wife of the rich man and was a very good wife, indeed. But his family despised her. To them she was ugly and low. They did not see the hidden beauty that their son saw in her. Although she had married into a wealthy family, she was sadder than ever.

As time went by, Kisa gave birth to a beautiful baby boy. The husband's family said, "What a fine son. Kisa is a good daughter-in-law after all." After that, she was treated as part of the family.

The boy grew up, full of energy and joy. Everyone, especially Kisa, loved him. One day, he went outside to play alone. When Kisa called him, he did not answer. She ran outside and found him lying dead on the ground. Picking the boy up, she held him close against her, crying, "My poor son is so still and quiet."

Suddenly she remembered her husband's family and thought, now that my beautiful child is dead, will they despise me again? Will my husband still love me? A dark cloud gathered over her head. With the dead son in her arms, she ran from house to house, begging wildly, "Please give me some medicine for my son."

The people said to her, "Medicine will not help your son. He is dead." She paid no attention to them. In her mind, her son was still alive. All around the village she ran from door to door. People laughed at her and children chased her with sticks.



An old man took pity on her and said, "The Buddha is the best doctor. He will give you the right medicine."

Kisa quickly ran to the Jeta Grove where the Buddha was staying. With tears in her eyes, she begged the Buddha, "Is there medicine for my son?"

The Buddha said, "Yes, there is such a medicine."

Hopefully, Kisa asked, "What medicine is it?"

"Mustard seed," the Buddha answered. Everyone was surprised at such a simple remedy.

Kisa asked, "Where can I get some seeds and how many should I get?"

"Bring me a small handful," the Buddha said.

Joyfully Kisa started off to get them.

Then the Buddha added, "But the seeds must come from a house where no one has died."

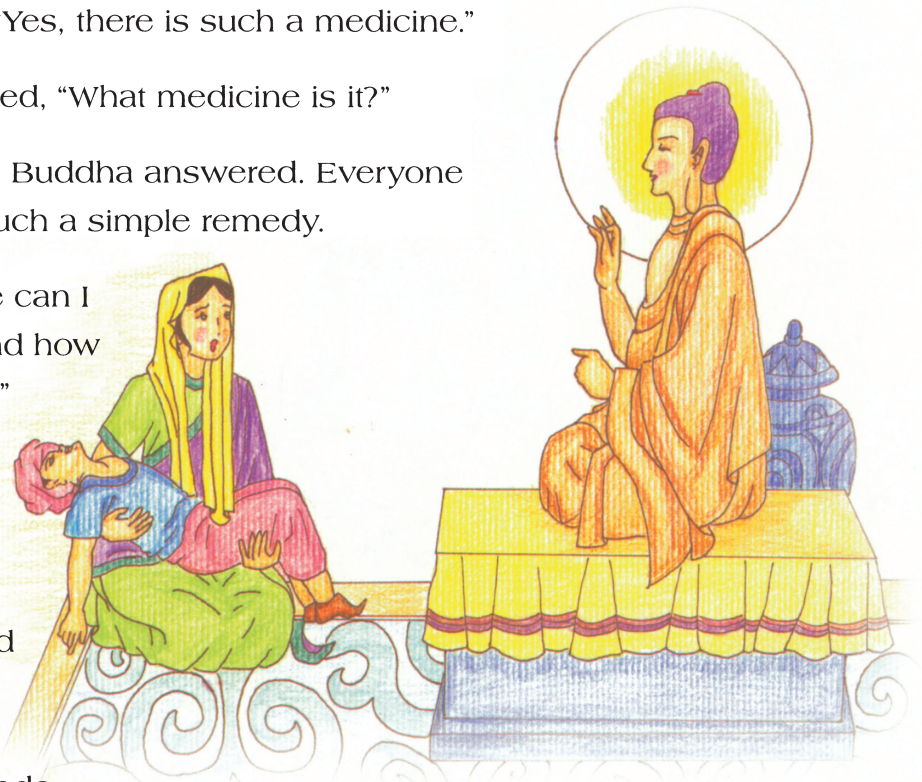
Kisa went into the town and asked at the first house, "Do you have any mustard seed?"

"Oh, yes," she was told, and a handful of seed was brought to her.

Then she asked, "Has anyone died in this house?"

"But of course," the woman said. "Only last week, our mother died."

And so it went everywhere. "My baby died last year", "I lost my father", "Oh, there have been many deaths in this house." She could



not find one house where no one had died.

“There are more dead people than living ones in our home,” she was told.

Towards the end of the day, Kisa realized without words that death was part of life. “Everyone dies,” she said. Then she buried her child in the forest and returned to the Buddha.

“Did you bring any mustard seed?” he asked.

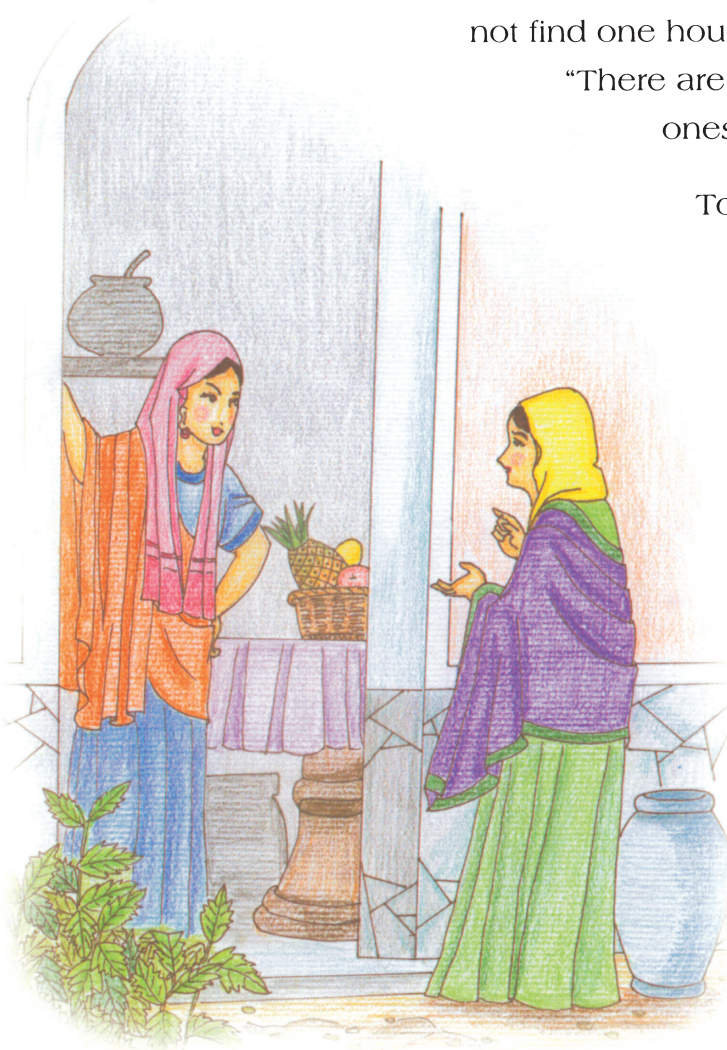
Holding out an empty hand, she said, “No, but I have been cured by the Buddha’s compassion.”

Kisa left the home life and became an Arhat. One night, while watching the flames of a candle flicker and hiss in

the wind, she thought, the flames of the candle are like the ups and downs of birth and death.

Now that she was an Arhat, she was able to see into her past life and saw that she had been a princess who became a nun. She also saw a past life in which she was the wife of a Buddha-to-be.

The Buddha praised Kisa, whose full name was Kisagotami, as one of the seventy-five greatest nuns. He said of her, “She rose to holiness from the lowest birth.”



# The Old Water Carrier

Don Je Le was an old water carrier. Everyday she carried water to fill the huge urns in the large kitchen of a grand house.

In the long cold winters, she would carry water through the soft, silent snow. At the end of the day, she would set out straw that she had saved from the summer. The straw was for the deer, for the grass they usually ate was covered with snow in the winter.

At night when the deer came to eat the grass, she would whisper to the stars, "Is it a miracle or not, that the wild ones have come for food?"

In the spring, as Don Je Le walked through the bright, green meadows on her way to the well, she would stop and watch the mother deer suckle their newborn fawns. "Are they a miracle or not, those newborn ones?" she would whisper to the trees.



One summer day as she was drawing water from the well, she noticed a crowd of people seated around a holy man under a tree. Never before had she seen anyone like him. Golden light shone from his body and his voice was sweet like the babbling of a brook.

“Who is the Holy One?” she asked a passerby.

“He is Shakyamuni Buddha, who has come to our country to teach us the Way to happiness,” he said.

The Buddha stopped speaking and turned his gaze toward the old woman. He told Ananda, “Take my bowl and ask that old water carrier to fill it with water.”

Don Je Le was so happy. She said, “Is it a miracle or not, that I may give the Buddha water?”

When Ananda reached for the bowl, Don Je Le held on to it tightly and said, “I will carry the bowl to the Buddha.”

“But I am the Buddha’s attendant. I should carry it to him,” said Ananda, annoyed.

“I must take it myself,” Don Je le said, running ahead of Ananda.

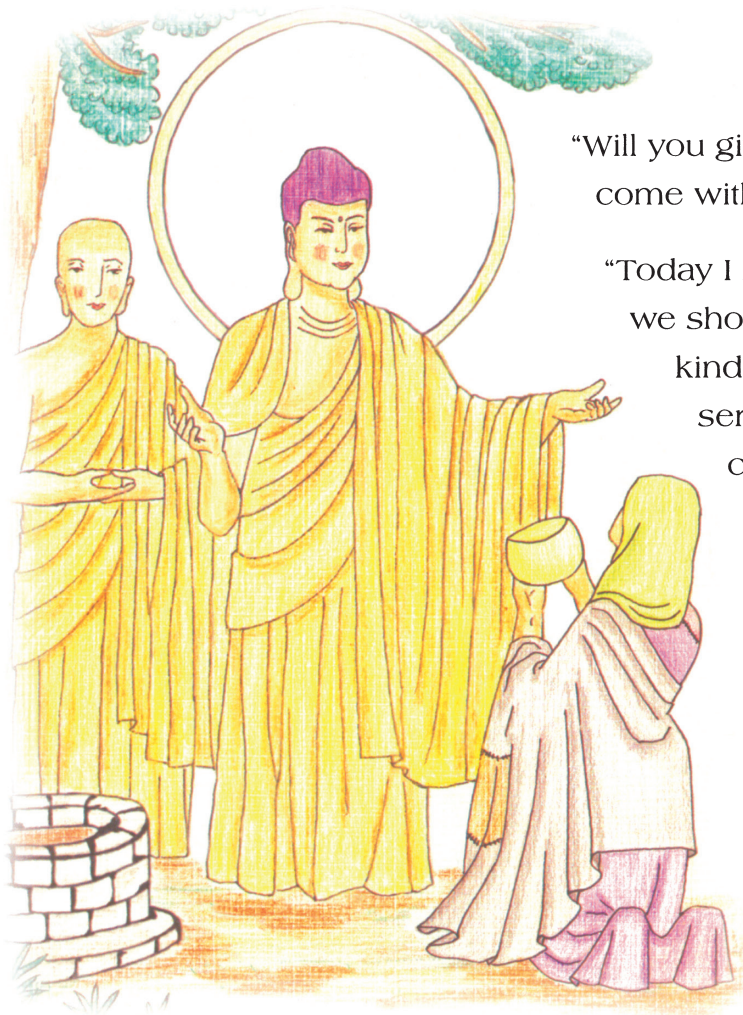
She pushed her way through the crowd to the Buddha and eagerly gave him the bowl of water. Then she held his feet in both hands. Her kind, old eyes twinkled with happiness. Ananda ran behind her in a huff. “This old woman is very impolite. Who does she think she is?” he asked the Buddha.

The Buddha said, “She was my mother 500 lifetimes ago. She’s just happy to see me.”

Then the Buddha asked her, “Who is your master?”

A man in the crowd came before the Buddha and said, “She is a servant in my household.”





“Will you give her freedom so she can come with me?” asked the Buddha.

“Today I have heard you say that we should treat everyone with kindness, whether they are servants or not. The old water carrier does not need to work for me anymore. She may go with you,” said her master.

The next day the Buddha returned to the monastery with Don Je Le and ordained her as a nun. The other disciples asked the Buddha, “How can you ordain that old, ragged woman? She’s an untouchable!

And why are you laughing and talking with her, anyway?”

The Buddha said, “In her past life, she was stingy. That is why she is a water carrier in this life. However, she gathered grass in the summer and saved it for the deer to eat in the winter. For this good deed, she is able to meet the Buddha.

“Yet in another life, she had one son who worked very hard. The country they lived in was so poor that he could not make enough money to keep himself and his mother alive. He told his mother, ‘I’m going to the northern country where I can make more money. I will return soon.’

“While he was away, some bandits robbed their house. They took his mother away and sold her as a slave.



“Some time passed and the son returned home with plenty of money. When he heard the news about his mother, he wept and said, ‘I will search until I find her.’

“One night he stopped to pass the night in an inn and saw an old woman scrubbing the floor. ‘Is it you, Mother?’ he asked.

“The woman peered up at her son, tears streaming down her wrinkled, old cheeks. ‘To hear the voice of my son again brings tears of happiness to my eyes,’ she said.

“Good fortune came my way in the northern country and I have plenty of money for both of us. Come, I will buy your freedom and we will return to our home country,’ the son said, helping his mother up from the floor.”

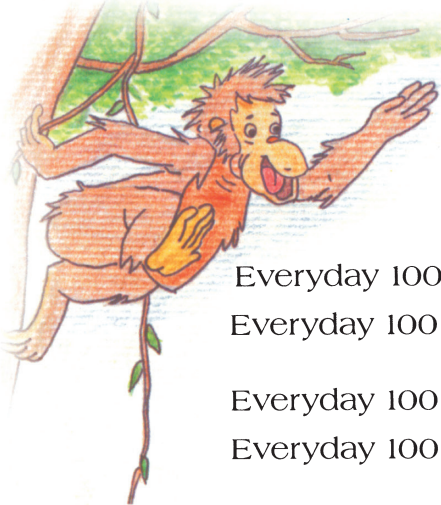
The Buddha ended the story by saying, “I was that son and the mother was this old water carrier.”

The monks and nuns understood. From then on, they treated her as if she were their own mother.

# The Five Hundred Monkeys

One time the Buddha told Shr Ma, one of the Arhats, "Go to a country in the north of India and build a temple."

Shr Ma searched for a very long time to find the right place for the temple. One morning he climbed to the upper slopes of a mountain and looked down over a grove of trees. The trees shimmered in their summer greenery and pink hibiscus flowers were blooming on the hills. Threads of waterfalls trickled into green rivers winding through the grove. Shr Ma felt happy and peaceful. "I shall build the temple here," he thought. Five hundred other Arhats came to help him.



In the mountains nearby, there lived 500 monkeys. They looked down and saw the Arhats busily working. "We want to build a temple, too," they said and began.

Everyday 100 Arhats fetched water from the green rivers.  
Everyday 100 monkeys fetched water from the green rivers.

Everyday 100 Arhats gathered rocks and timber.  
Everyday 100 monkeys gathered stones and sticks.

Everyday 100 Arhats mixed up mud and straw for mortar.  
Everyday 100 monkeys mixed up mud and straw for mortar.



Everyday 100 Arhats put up beams  
and laid rocks.

Everyday 100 monkeys put up sticks  
and laid stones.

The 500 Arhats chanted quietly  
or worked in silence.

The 500 monkeys chattered  
incessantly and worked noisily.



When the work was finished,  
the Arhats put up beautiful banners and  
lit incense. They said, "Let's walk around  
the temple and recite the Buddha's name."

As they recited, their crystalline voices rang throughout the sylvan  
forest and into the valleys below. People and animals came to  
behold the beauty and splendor of the new temple.

The 500 monkeys wanted to make their temple as beautiful as  
the Arhats'. They made a mud pile and stuck sticks in it. Spider  
webs and rotten leaves were twisted into banners and hung on  
the sticks. To them, it was truly a beautiful sight!

Early every morning, the 500 monkeys got up and walked around  
their temple reciting as the Arhats did. They blundered along  
in sloppy file, scratching and nudging each other. Burping and  
belching, their screechy voices rang throughout the forest and  
into the valley below.

As time went by, the monkeys learned to walk in a straight line  
and to chant more like the Arhats. Animals came to listen. "What  
great fun!" said the monkeys.

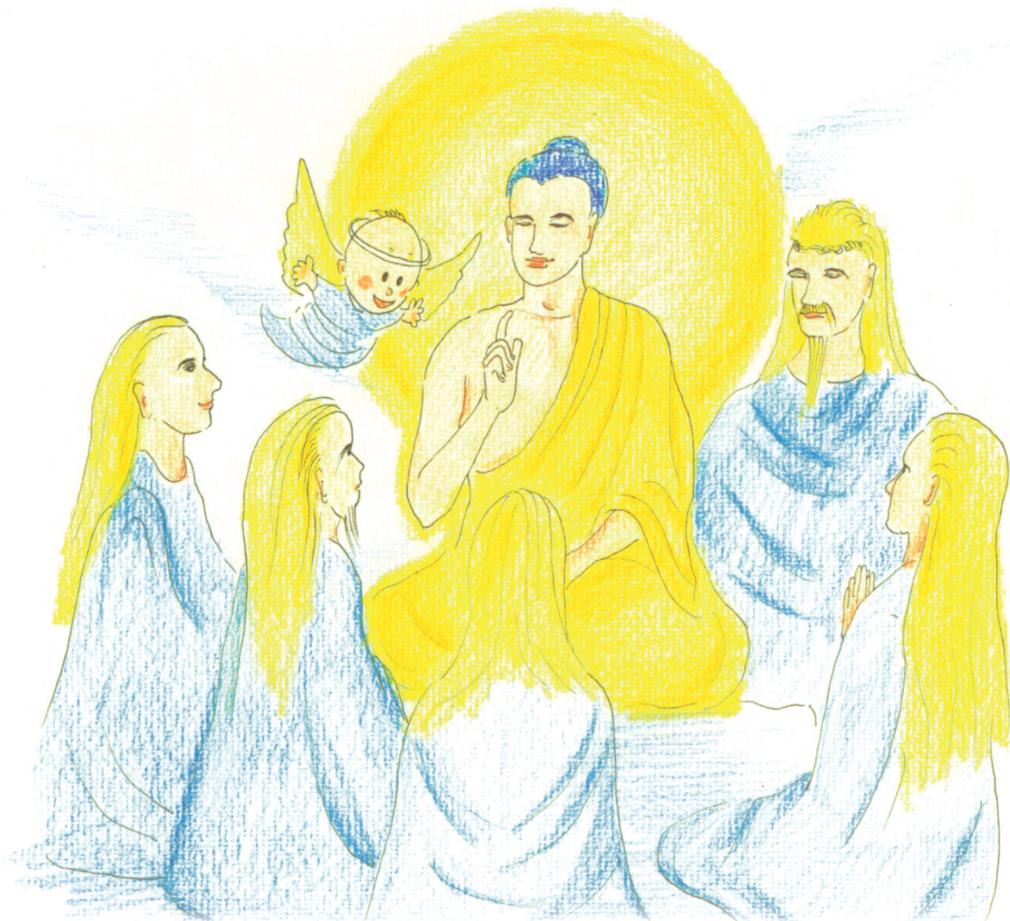
It just so happened that one day a huge storm hit the mountains,  
causing a tremendous flood. All 500 monkeys were caught in  
the flood and drowned. Fortunately, they had been good little  
monkeys and were reborn as gods in the Trayatrimsha Heaven.

Life in the heaven was wonderful for the little monkeys. They were now gods and could have anything they wanted merely by thinking about it. If they thought about pretty things to wear, they would suddenly be all dressed up. If they thought of delicious things to eat, food would appear in their mouths.

They were so happy in the heavens that most of them forgot who they were in the past. But one of the gods remembered said to the others, “Don’t forget that we once were monkeys who had pretended to be Arhats. That’s why we’re now gods. Let’s go back to earth and build a shrine to the dead monkeys.”

Carrying heavenly flowers and incense, the gods returned to the place where they used to live as monkeys. They built a shrine to the dead monkeys and made offerings of the flowers and incense.





The 500 monkey gods then went to Vulture Peak to see the Buddha. With palms together, they respectfully knelt before the Buddha and asked, “What offenses did we create to be born as monkeys in our past lives? Why were we drowned?”

The Buddha said, “In the past, you were young ascetics living in those mountains. There was an old monk who was building a pagoda on the top of a mountain. Everyday, he climbed down from the mountain to fetch water. The old monk was very kind-hearted and never harmed any person or creature. Because of this, his body was as light as ashes. When he walked, it looked as if he were flying. All of you were jealous and teased him, ‘You’re like a monkey. If you keep going up and down the mountain carrying water, you’ll drown in it!’”

The Buddha continued, “At that time, I was the old monk and you were the 500 ascetics. Because of your jealousy, you were reborn as monkeys and then drowned.”

## A Handful of Dirt

“Let’s build a mud wall around our city, so we won’t be attacked by the enemies,” cried the children as they happily played in the dirt along the road.

“I made a huge, gigantic storehouse and it’s full of rice,” said one child, piling up a mound of dirt. “Come see it!”

“Look! Here comes someone down the road. It’s the Buddha and the Arhats!” Another child yelled.

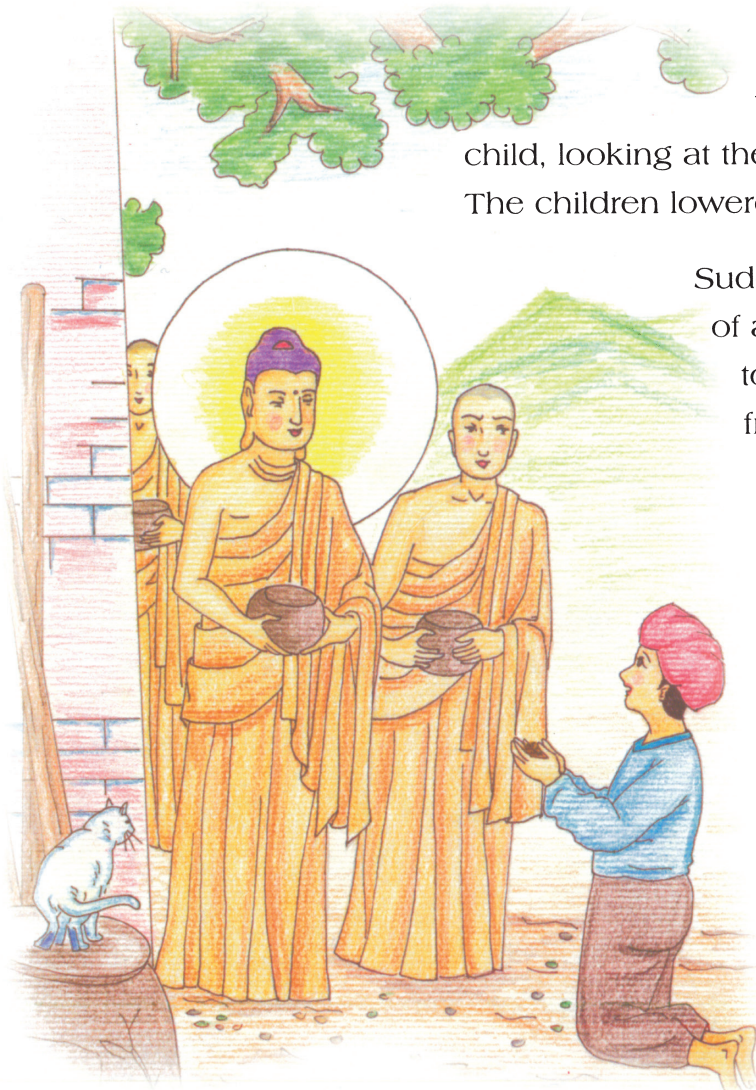
Someone whispered, “Let’s make an offering to the Buddha.”

“Oh, yes, yes!” the other children squealed with delight.

“But what can we give? We have nothing,” said a child, looking at their dirty, ragged clothes. The children lowered their heads in silence.

Suddenly, the smallest child of all looked up with a toothless smile, “Listen, my friends, we have a huge, gigantic storehouse filled with rice. We can offer the rice to the Buddha.”

Picking up a handful of dirt, the child knelt before the Buddha and asked, “Will you accept this offering of rice from our storehouse?”



The Buddha accepted the dirt and then rubbed the child on the head, saying, "I am pleased with your offering. In a future life, you will be a great king."

Ananda was alarmed. "World-Honored One, how can you accept such an offering? It's dirt!"

Handing Ananda the handful of dirt, the Buddha said, "This is a good offering. Add it to the earthen mixture to make bricks for my hut."

The child who offered the handful of dirt to the Buddha later became King Ashoka, one of the greatest rulers in India. Under his rule, Buddhism flourished in India and is still alive today.





# The Jambu Tree

A Mime

Cast of characters in order of appearance:

Narrator

Gandharvas

Sea Creatures

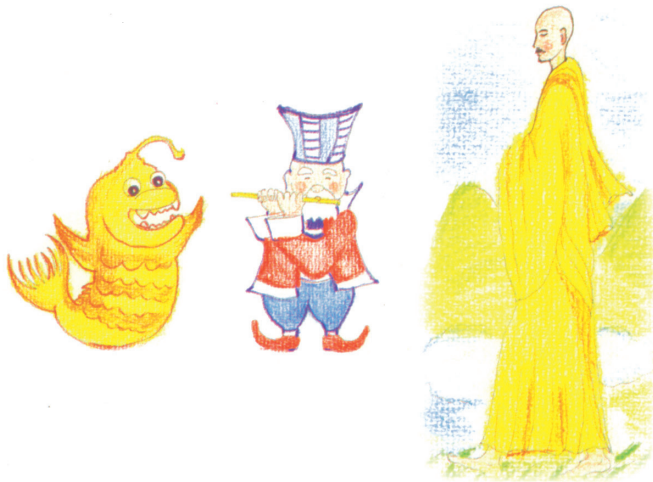
People

Two monks

Bhikshu Long Legs

The Buddha

Monks and Nuns



## Act I

**NARRATOR:** There is a tree called the Jambu tree. It grows in golden sand and is taller than the highest clouds. Its long branches stretch out for miles over the mountains. It is too big for people to walk around.

In the spring, new buds grow and swell. When the tree is in full bloom, its blossoming branches bend gently over the meadows, filling the clear air with their sweet fragrance.

And when the blossoms fade away, Jambu fruit appears on the branches and ripens. The fruit casts a golden glow over the valley and its juice drips into the rivers and turns the tones into pure gold. Of all the trees, the Jambu tree is the most supreme. It reigns over the rich and fertile valleys along the Ni Li To Lo River in Jambudvipa.

**GANDHARVAS:** (Enter on the eastern side of the stage and mime eating fruit.)

NARRATOR: The fruit on the eastern side is eaten by gandharvas, spirits who play heavenly music and like to smell incense.

SEA CREATURES: (Enter on the western side of the stage and mime eating the fruit.)

NARRATOR: Huge sea creatures eat the fruit on the western side.  
(GANDHARVAS and SEA CREATURES exit.)

PEOPLE: (Enter from all directions and eat from the tree.)

NARRATOR: People who eat the Jambu fruit will become immortal.  
That is, they will live forever.

(Everyone exits.)



## Act II

NARRATOR: At the time of the Buddha, there were two monks who wanted to see the Jambu tree. They had heard that if monks ate the Jambu fruit, they would become Arhats who could tell the past and future. The two monks used their spiritual powers and flew to the tree that was far, far away.

MONKS: (Mime flying onto stage and admiring the tree.)

NARRATOR: A huge fruit has fallen to the ground and has split open. The monks want to see how big it is.

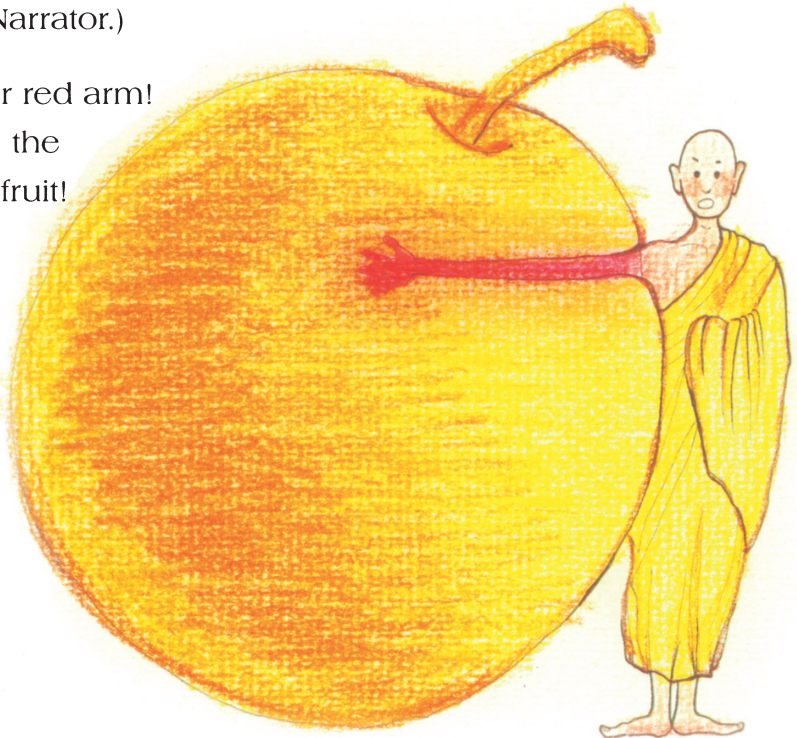
MONKS: (Measure the size of the fruit. One MONK puts his arm in the hole. He shows that he only got in halfway.)

NARRATOR: What a big fruit! The monk can not even reach the pit. Hey, take a look at his arm! It's bright red!

(The other MONK puts his arm into the fruit. It also turns red. He shows it to the Narrator.)

NARRATOR: Another red arm!  
Such is the  
Jambu fruit!

(Everyone exits.)



## Act III

NARRATOR: There was another monk named Bhikshu Long Legs who could walk on water without falling in. (Pause) He could also walk on grass without leaving a trace. He heard about the Jambu tree and walked across seven mountains to see it.

BHIKSHU LONG LEGS: (Enters on stage walking. He mimes along with the story.)

NARRATOR: At last Bhikshu Long Legs comes to the valley of the Jambu tree and looks around for the tree. Oh, what's going on? It's dark everywhere. Bhikshu Long Legs looks frightened. Oh, no! He's running away. I wonder where he's going? (Bhikshu Long Legs exits stage.)

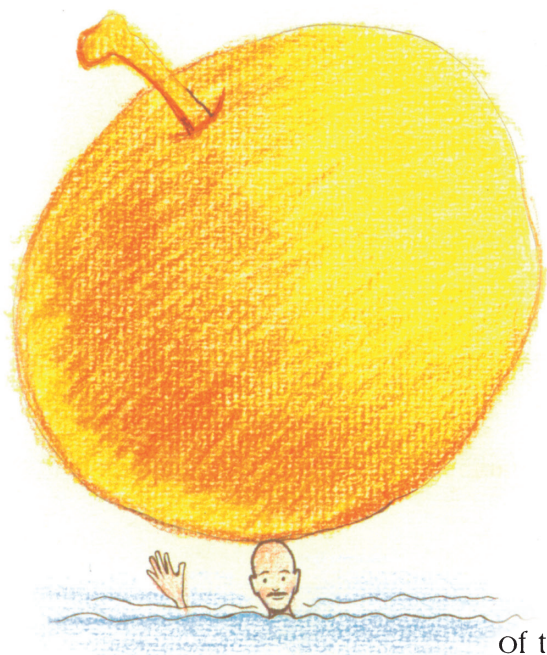


NARRATOR: It looks like Bhikshu Long Legs ran back to the Buddha and asked what happened to the Jambu tree. The Buddha told him that at that time of year, the tree had so many leaves that they blocked out all the light. Here comes Bhikshu Long Legs back for another look!

BHIKSHU LONG LEGS: (Enters stage and walks all around the tree trunk. He continues to mime along with the story.)

NARRATOR: Watch out, Bhikshu Long Legs! A Jambu fruit is falling. It fell into the river! There goes Bhikshu Long Legs after it! (To BHIKSHU LONG LEGS) Bhikshu Long Legs, the Ni Li To Lo is not an ordinary river. It's too light for you to walk over! Too late!

BHIKSHU LONG LEGS: (Attempts to walk on top of the river, but falls in. He grabs onto the Jambu fruit and climbs out of the water with it. He shows the audience how big the fruit is and then he runs happily offstage holding the fruit in his arms.)



## Act IV

STAGE SETTING: MONKS and NUNS are sitting on opposite sides of the BUDDHA.

BHIKSHU LONG LEGS: (Enters and hands the Jambu fruit to the Buddha who breaks it into small pieces and gives everyone a piece. Everyone mimes eating the fruit. Then the BUDDHA holds up his hand. It is bright red! He stands and makes a hand print on a boulder.)

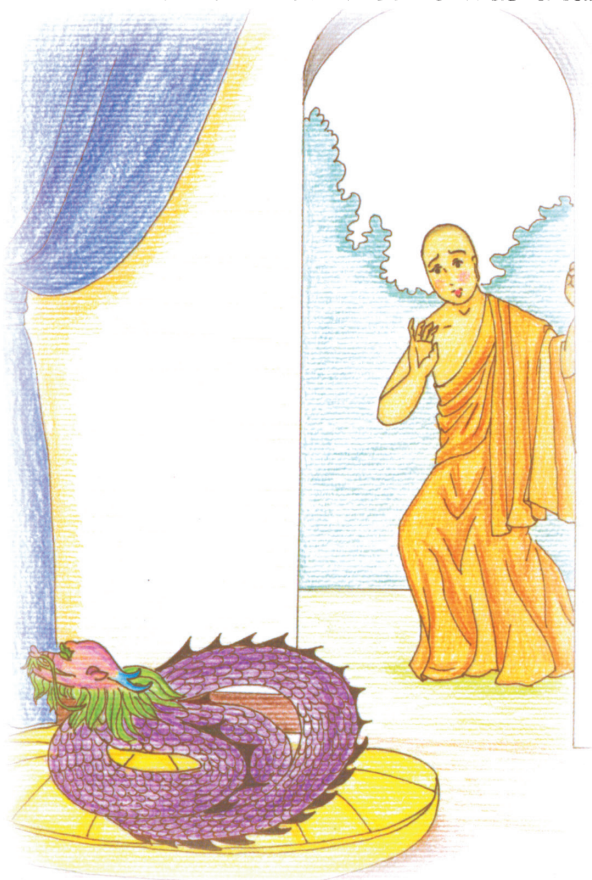
NARRATOR: The story ends with the Buddha making a Jambu hand print on a boulder. It is said that to this day, the handprint is still on the boulder in India.

## Are You a Human Being?

A lazy dragon opened one eye and dreamily watched a young monk walk by his cave. "Aha! What a fine handsome monk this is. I want to be like him," he said, yawning. "But I would have to cultivate to become a human. It's too hard so I'll just have to use my magical powers." And with that, the lazy dragon moved his tail from side to side and twisted and twitched until he turned into a handsome young man.

He raced to the Jeta Grove where the Buddha was staying. "How does one become a monk?" he inquired of the monks who greeted him.

"The Buddha is away," said the monks. "But you are such a fine looking young man, that we'll take you as a monk anyway." They did not know that he was a lazy dragon.



At first, the dragon-monk worked and studied very hard, but only when someone was looking. When no one was around, he took catnaps. One day when his roommate was away, he stretched out on his sleeping mat and said, "Ah, now is my chance for a long, long nap." Right away, he went to sleep. As soon as he did, he began to move from side to side and he twitched and twisted until he turned back into a dragon. But he didn't know it.

When his roommate returned and saw him, he screamed, "Snake! Snake!"

Everyone in the monastery came running. Slowly they opened the door and peeped inside. "There's no snake in the room. There's nothing here except the handsome new monk and he's sitting in meditation. What's wrong with you anyway?" the other monks asked. Little did they know that the dragon was awakened by the noise and quickly turned back into a monk.

"B-but there was a huge snake in the room!" said the roommate.

A few days later, the Buddha returned and asked, "Where is the new monk?"

"He went to fetch water," the monks told him.

The Buddha went down to the spring to find the dragon-monk, but he was nowhere to be seen. Searching around, the Buddha found him curled up fast asleep behind a tree. The Buddha snapped his finger and the monk began to move from side to side and he twitched and twisted until he turned back into a dragon.

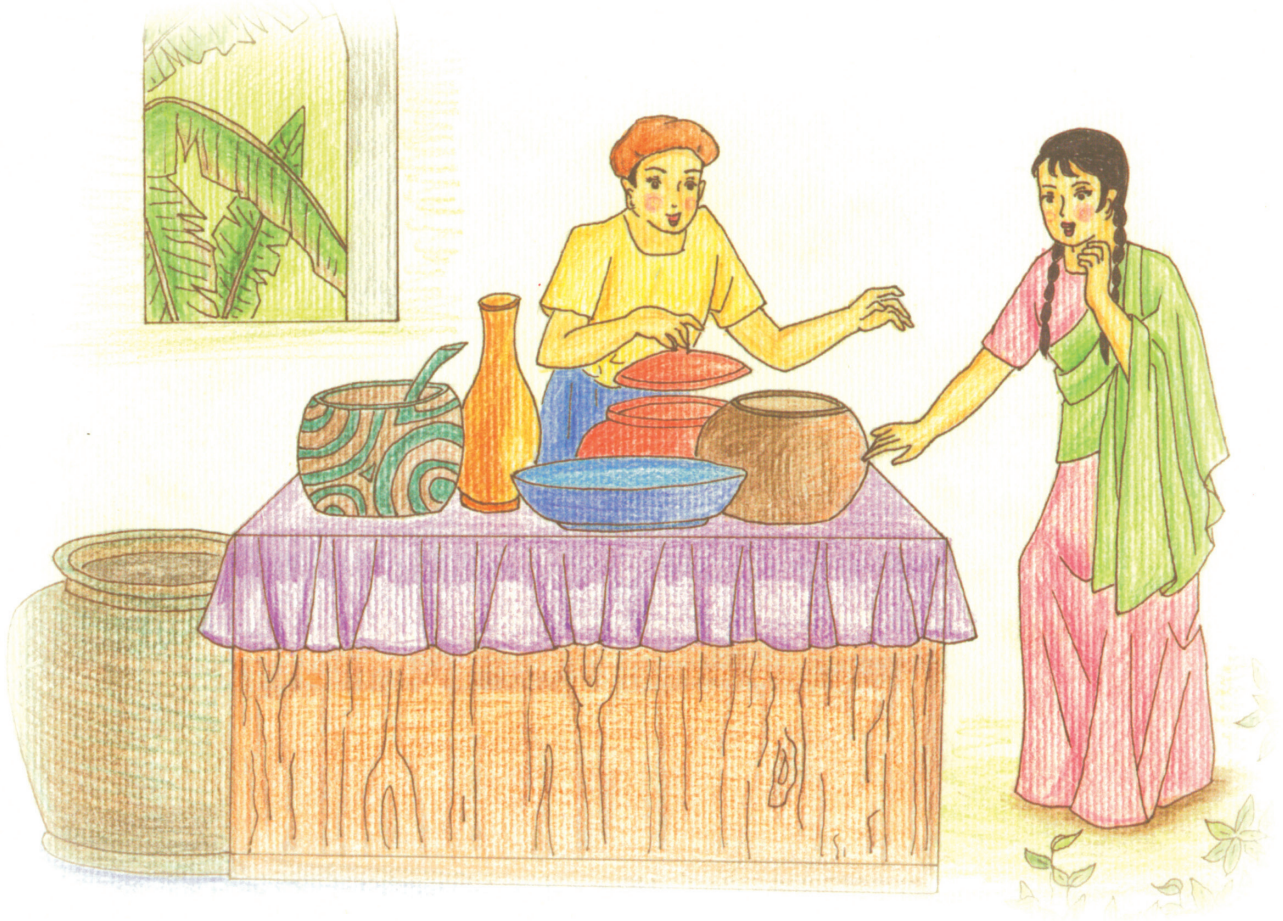
"Never," cried the monks, "Never have we seen such an amazing sight!"

Knowing he was caught, the dragon sputtered. "I- I just wanted to be a monk so I tricked everyone."

After that, the Buddha made a rule. Whenever someone wants to become a monk or nun, they must first be asked if they are a human being. To this day, the question is still asked.

Another time, there was an asura who also wanted to become a monk. Asuras are spiritual beings who like to quarrel and fight. The men are very ugly, but the women are beautiful. They have spiritual powers and can change into whatever they want to be, just by wishing.

One day the asura, who was very lazy, was flying over the earth. He saw a rich woman offering food to a monk. "Ah, what delicious



food the woman is giving to that monk,” he said, his mouth watering, “If I were a monk, people would offer me food, too. I’ll just use my spiritual powers and see what I can do.”

Suddenly there was a bright flash of light. The asura disappeared and in his place stood a fine young man. Off to the Jeta Grove, he rushed to become a monk. Again the Buddha was away. “Are you a dragon?” the monks in charge asked him.

“Do I look like one?” the asura asked.

The monks agreed that he didn’t look like a dragon at all and accepted him.

One morning the head monk announced, “A rich man has invited all the monks and nuns to a meal offering in his home, today.” The asura, who was now a monk, went along.



At the rich man's house, there was a large table set with all kinds of delicious foods and drinks. The monks and nuns waited silently in line to be served. Suddenly, the asura-monk began pushing and squeezing himself through the line. "Outta my way! Outta my way!" he said, snarling. Everyone was aghast. He had been so polite before.

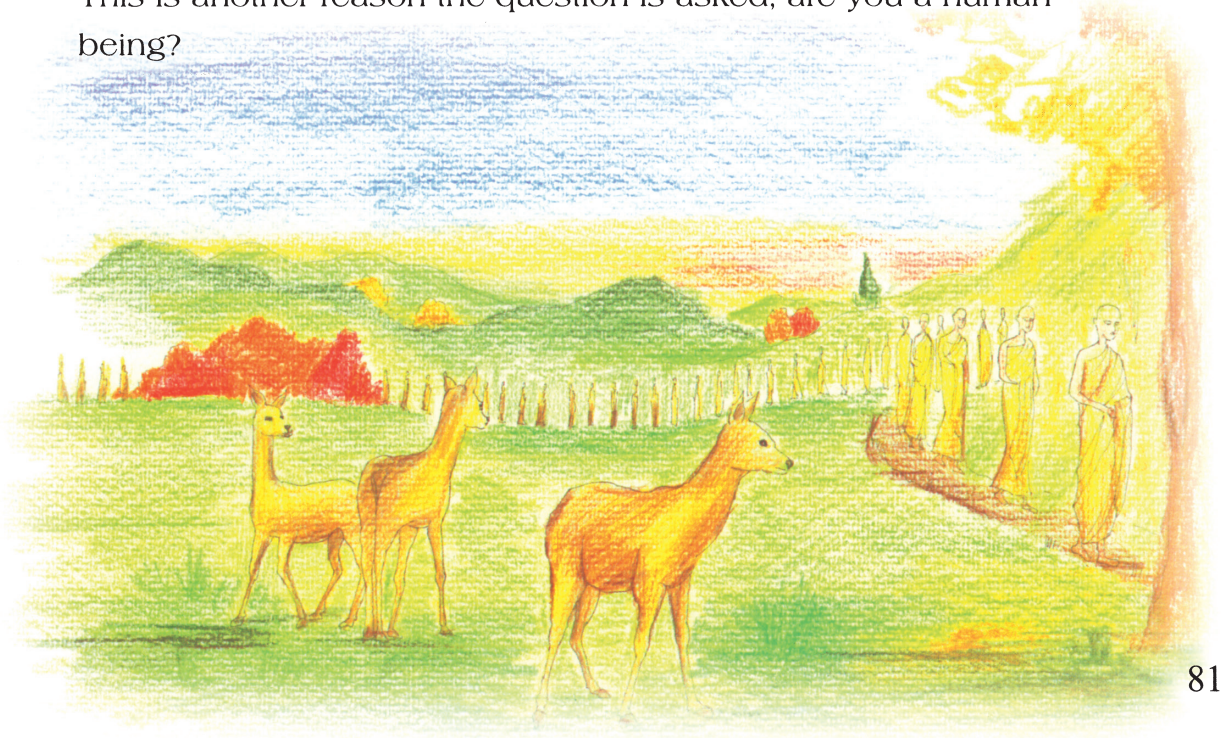
"I'm eating first," he growled. Then with one big bite, he ate all the food. And with one big gulp, he drank all the drinks. There were five hundred monks and nuns in all. In two bites, he had eaten enough food for five hundred people.

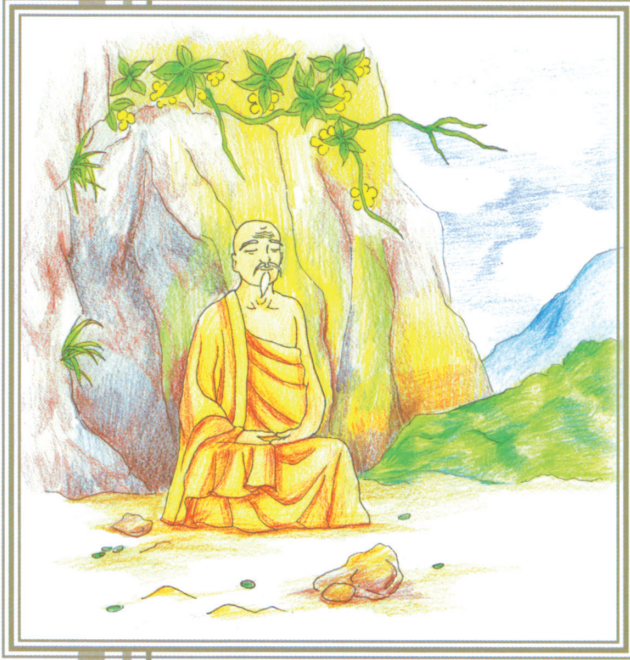
When the Buddha heard what happened, he asked the asura-monk, "What are you?"

The asura-monk said nothing. He didn't want to be found out. The Buddha snapped his fingers. Suddenly there was a bright flash of light. The monk was gone. In his place stood the ugly asura.

"Never," said the astonished monks, "Never would we have guessed that the fine looking man was an asura!"

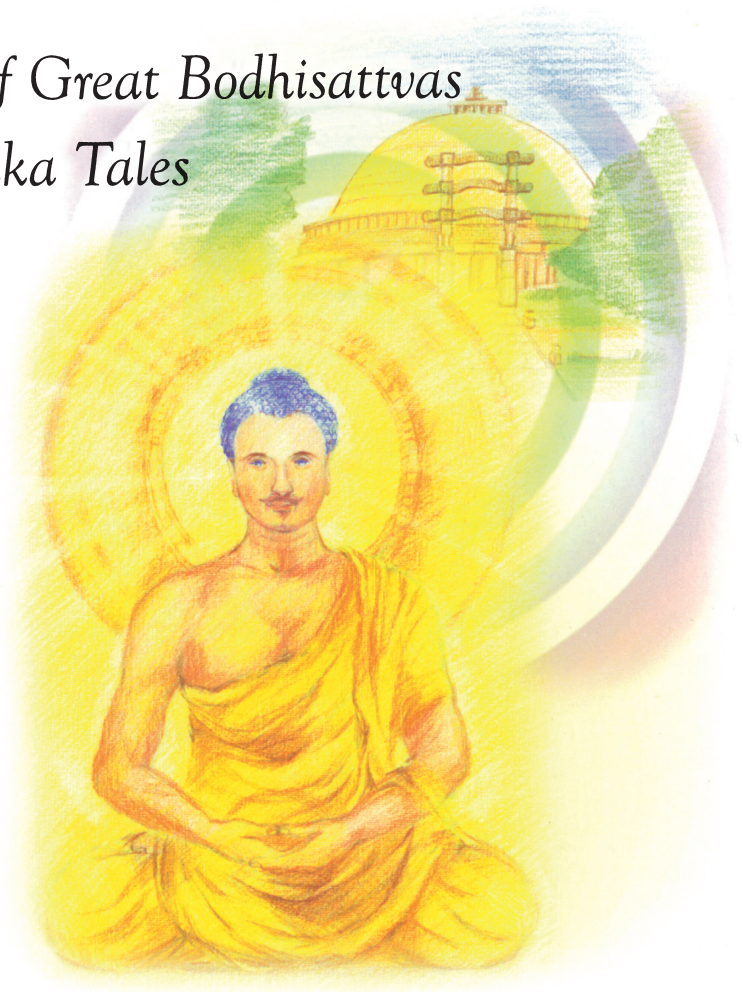
This is another reason the question is asked, are you a human being?





# Part 2

*Stories of Great Bodhisattvas  
and Jataka Tales*



Introduction to the Great Bodhisattvas



It was in the early spring and Ivan and Lillian were walking along in the woods. Their little friend, Tiki the golden bird, flew above them. Ivan was telling a story.

One day the Buddha and one of his disciples, Subhuti, were walking through a forest. They heard a crashing sound and looked ahead. In the distance, they saw a huge elephant pushing down a tree with its mighty tusks. Many elephants were gathered around waiting to eat the delicious leaves.

Subhuti asked the Buddha, "I've heard that Bodhisattvas appear as animals. Why is that so?"

The Buddha said, "Let us rest under a tree and I'll tell you why."

"What is a Bodhisattva?" chirped Tiki. "Listen to the story and you'll find out," said Lillian.

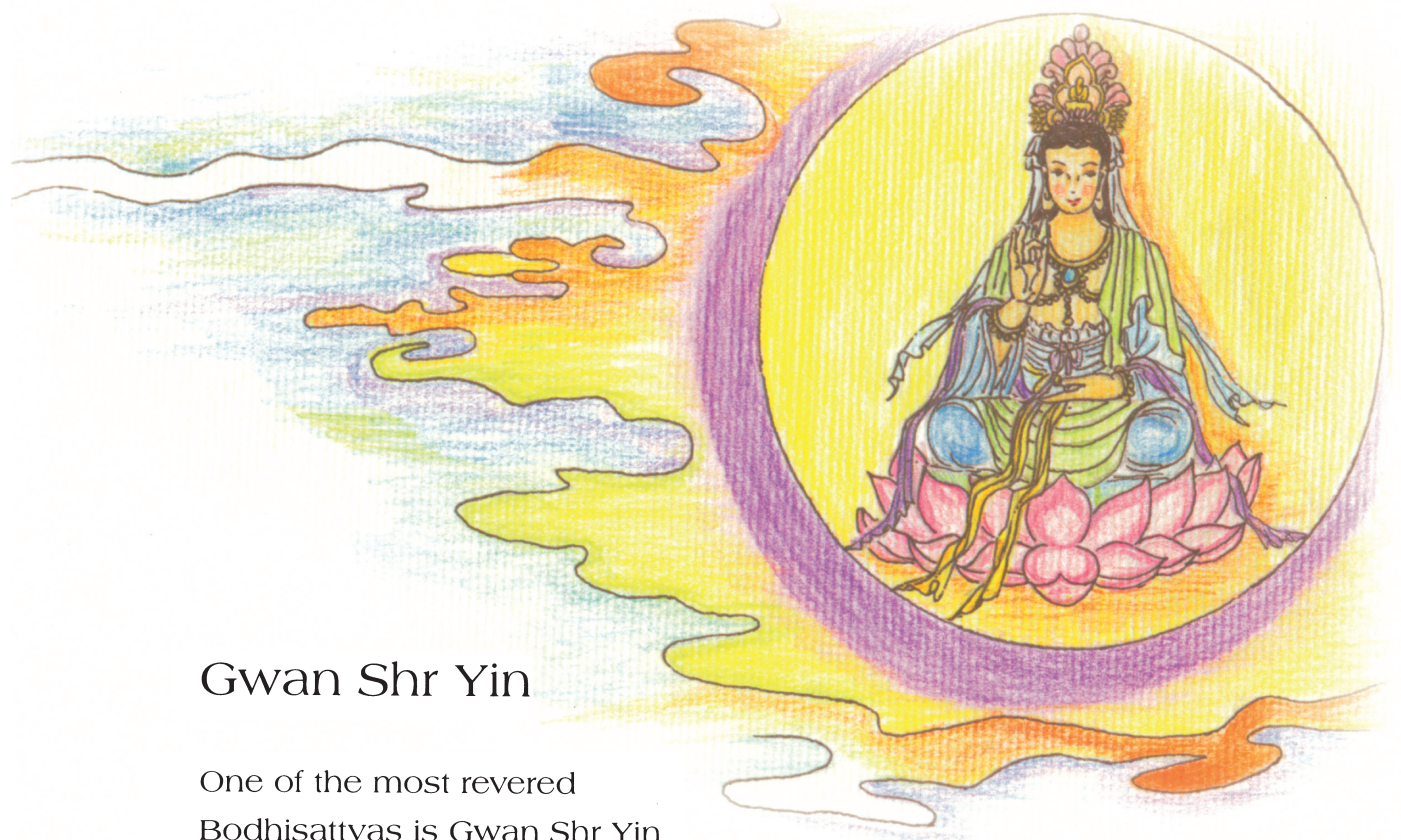
"As the Buddha told the story, deer, rabbits, and even tigers ambled in close to hear," said Ivan.

"What about birds? Were there any birds in this story?" asked Tiki, ruffling his feathers. "Of course, there were hundreds of birds!" laughed Lillian.

Ivan continued, "The Buddha said, 'Bodhisattvas are enlightened beings who enlighten others. They have very big hearts and want to help all living beings. When they wish to help animals, they appear as animals and when they wish to help people, they appear as people. They help everyone.'

"But Bodhisattvas don't brag, so you'll never know who they are," sang out Lillian.

"Let's sit over here on this log and I'll tell you some stories about the great Bodhisattvas," said Ivan as everyone settled down to listen.



## Gwan Shri Yin

One of the most revered Bodhisattvas is Gwan Shri Yin. People of all walks of life seek out his kindness and compassion by worshipping him and reciting his name.



In Japan, he is called Kannon and Avalokiteshvara in India. He is Chenrezig in Tibet and the Giver of Courage in the West. In China, this Bodhisattva appears as a female who protects travelers from danger on the land, in the air, and upon the great oceans. There she is known as Gwan Yin.

# The Clam Shell

A long time ago, during the Tang Dynasty in China, there was an emperor called Wen Zhong. He was very fond of eating clams and sent men out to gather clams for him everyday. On the days when the sea was calm and clear, it was easy to find enough clams to satisfy the emperor's hunger. Upon seeing the clams laid out on his dinner table, the emperor's eyes would glisten and his eyebrows would waggle up and down with laughter.

On the days when the sea was stormy and murky, it was not easy to find enough clams to satisfy the palate of the emperor. Upon not seeing any clams on his table, the emperor's eyes would narrow and his eyebrows knit together in outrage. The clam diggers would scrunch down and shiver with fright and the emperor would bristle. "Put these men to death!" he would command his soldiers. Many clam diggers lost their lives that way.

One day a clam digger found an enormous clam and brought it to the emperor. The emperor's eyebrows waggled up and down, so happy was he. But when the clam digger tried to open the shell, he could not.

So the cook was sent for, who tried to open the clamshell with his knife, but could not.

So the carpenter was sent for, who tried to open the clamshell with his hammer and saw, but could not.

So the magicians were sent for, who tried to open the shell with their magic, but could not.

The emperor's eyebrows began to knit into a frown, so unhappy was he. Wondering what to send for next, he tapped on the shell once, twice, thrice. Thump! Thump! Thump! Strangely, it opened!

Inside was a carved image of Gwan Yin. "What's the meaning of this?" roared the emperor, expecting a big fat juicy clam. "Quick, go to the temple and ask the head monk to come here. He must surely know of such things!" he ordered a servant.





“Gwan Yin Bodhisattva has appeared in the clam shell to teach you a lesson. What do you suppose it could be?” asked the monk. “Well, I like to eat clams. There’s no harm in that, is there?” stammered the emperor.

“Think about it. How many clams have given up their lives just so you can eat them? How many men have died digging them for you?” asked the monk.

The emperor’s eyebrows narrowed and began to knit. He thought for a while and said, “True, many lives have been wasted all because of my greed. From now on, I’ll not eat any more clams or any other animal. I’ll divide my wealth among the families of the men who have died on my account.”



When the people heard about the clamshell, they followed the example of their changed emperor and became vegetarians. The emperor had every temple in China set up an image of Gwan Yin inside the clamshell, so people could remember her kindness and compassion. After that, China prospered for hundreds of years.

If you go to China today, you can still see these images in the temples. The original clamshell with the image of Gwan Yin was taken to Potala Mountain, a sacred mountain in China. It can still be seen there.

## Kindness Begins in the Home

Not so long ago, in a small village near a lake, there lived a mother and her son. The son had a big temper and was very cruel to his mother.

The mother was very poor and eked out a meager living by making candles and selling them in the market. Some days she would come home late from work to find the boy sulking on the doorsteps. "What kind of mother are you?" he would yell. "I have been home from school for a long time. Where is my supper?" Then he would hit her. And whenever he wanted money, he would just steal it from her.

The neighbors begged him to change his ways, but he only scorned them, "Leave me alone, you old dolts."

One day the boy passed by a temple and heard the name of Gwan Yin Bodhisattva being recited. "Who is Gwan Yin?" he asked aloud.

An old crippled man hobbling by, heard him. He steadied himself on his staff, and with his beady, bright eyes, looked at the boy. "Gwan Yin is very kind to everyone. With her thousand eyes and thousand hands, she helps people with their troubles."

The name Gwan Yin touched the boy's heart. "I'd like to see her," he said.

The old cripple pointed his staff at an island in the sea. "There on the island is Potala Mountain. It is the home of Gwan Yin. I'm traveling there tomorrow. You may go with me." The boy hurried home to ask his mother.

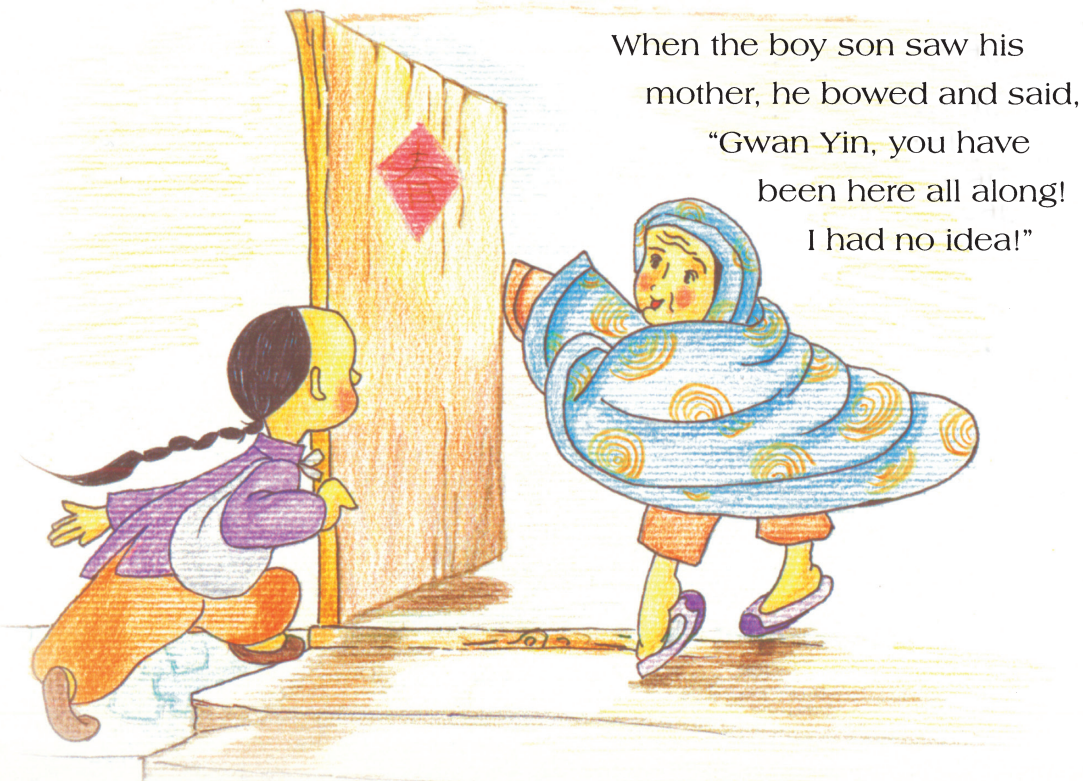
Early the next morning, the old cripple and young boy crossed the lake on a ferry boat. The air was chilly and the ride was long. As soon as they arrived, the old man pointed his cane to a trail and said, "This trail leads to the mountain."

The boy looked up ahead and then turned around to wait for the old man, but the old man had disappeared. He was nowhere to be found. Left alone, the young boy set out to find Gwan Yin. He followed the trail through the forest and over the mountain, but could not find her anywhere. He sat down under a pine tree. So much walking had tired him out. Peeking through the branches of the tree, he watched the birds glide in the sky, black against the heavens. "How silently they fly," he said and fell asleep.

While sleeping he dreamed that the old man came to him and said, "If you want to see Gwan Yin, return home. She's waiting for you. She'll be wearing one shoe backwards and her robe will be inside out."

The boy suddenly woke up and felt a great longing to go home. He caught the ferry and returned to his village.

Reaching his home in the middle of the night, he knocked loudly on the door. His mother awakened with a fright and called out, "Is it my son who returns? Is he angry with me?" Rushing to the door, she quickly put one shoe on backwards and threw her robe on inside out. Then she flung the door open.



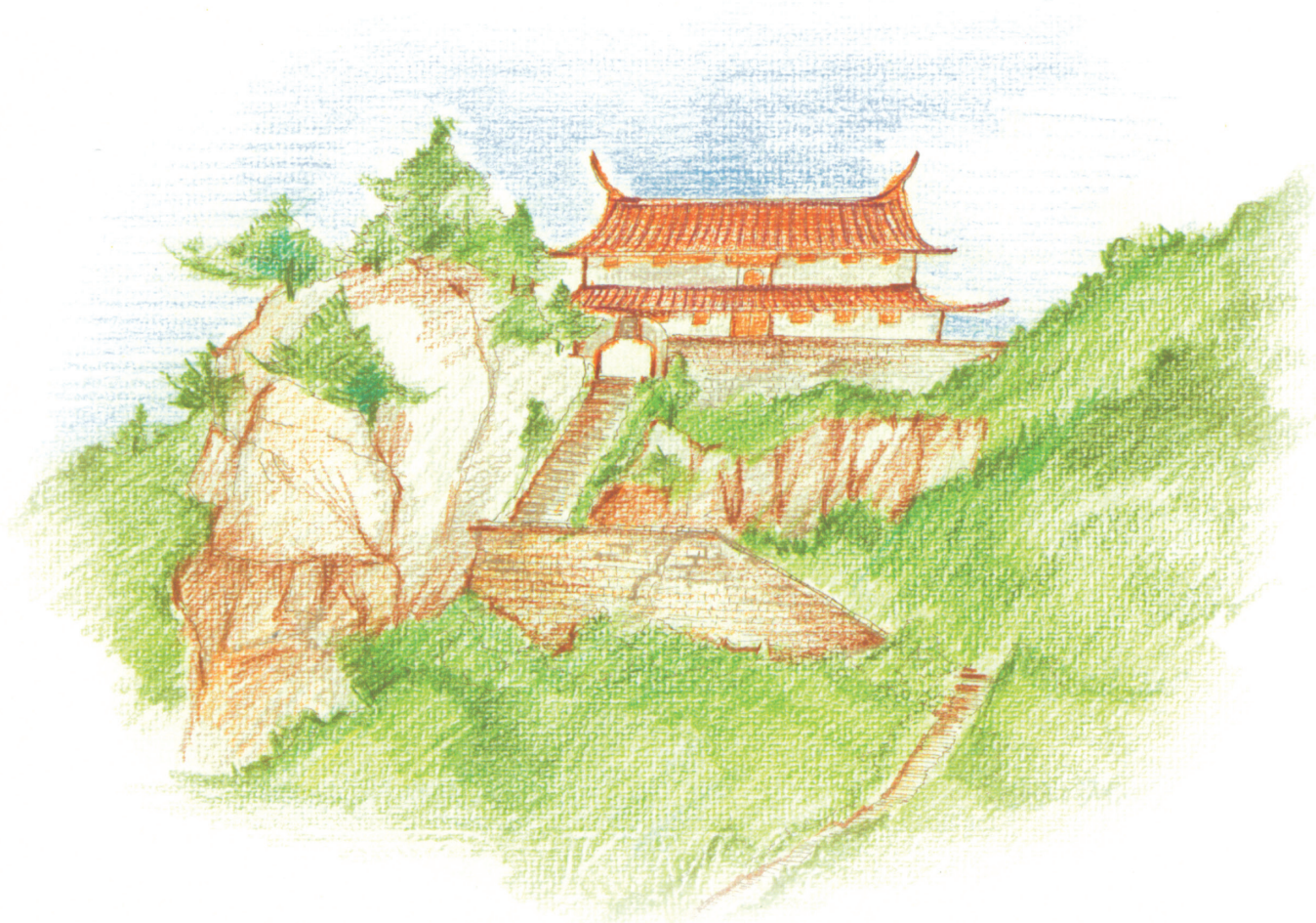
When the boy son saw his mother, he bowed and said, "Gwan Yin, you have been here all along! I had no idea!"

His mother was stunned, "Son, it's me, your mother. Why are you bowing to me now, when only yesterday you were hitting me?"

The boy told his mother the story about Gwan Yin. "So you see, when I saw you with your shoe on backwards and your robe on inside out, I realized that you were really Gwan Yin."

He laughed, "And the old cripple was also Gwan Yin, teaching me to not seek far away for what is in front of me."

From that time on, the son was kind to his mother and to everyone. He and his mother worshipped Gwan Yin every day and visited Potala Mountain every year to pay their respects. When the boy grew up, he became an official and was respected by everyone.



## The Bandit and the Purse

Wan Dan awakened in the middle of the night to the pitter-patter of raindrops. Too tired to move, he continued to lie in a puddle of water on the side of the road where he had been sleeping. There was nowhere to go to get out of the rain. Anyway, he didn't want to lose his begging place by the temple gate. Hugging his ragged shirt close to his chest, he sighed, "If only my parents were still alive, I would have a dry and warm home to sleep in."

Rolling over, he went back to sleep dreaming of the bandits who rode into his village, looting and burning houses to the ground. His parents were inside one of the houses.

The first rays of light falling on the temple steps and the tinkling of carriage bells startled him out of his dream. He sat up quickly, rubbing his eyes. A carriage had stopped next to him. The door slowly opened and out stepped a wealthy woman and a young boy his age. As they started up the temple steps, the boy turned around and walked over to where Wan Dan was struggling to get up. Sleeping on the hard wet ground made the young beggar's legs stiff and wobbly. With a smile, the boy dropped some coins in his cup, saying, "Buy yourself a bowl of warm soup. You need it."

Wan Dan watched the boy leap up the steps. As the boy disappeared through the door, a purse fell out of his pocket. "You dropped your purse!" Wan Dan called out loudly, but the boy did not answer.

Picking up the purse, Wan Dan started running after the boy, but suddenly an idea seized him. "The boy doesn't know that he dropped his purse. What if I keep it?" Quickly, he slipped the purse under his ragged shirt.

As he walked down the street, the heavy purse began to burn his chest. He thought to himself, "Is it right to keep the purse? The boy has plenty of money. He'll never miss it. But if I keep it,

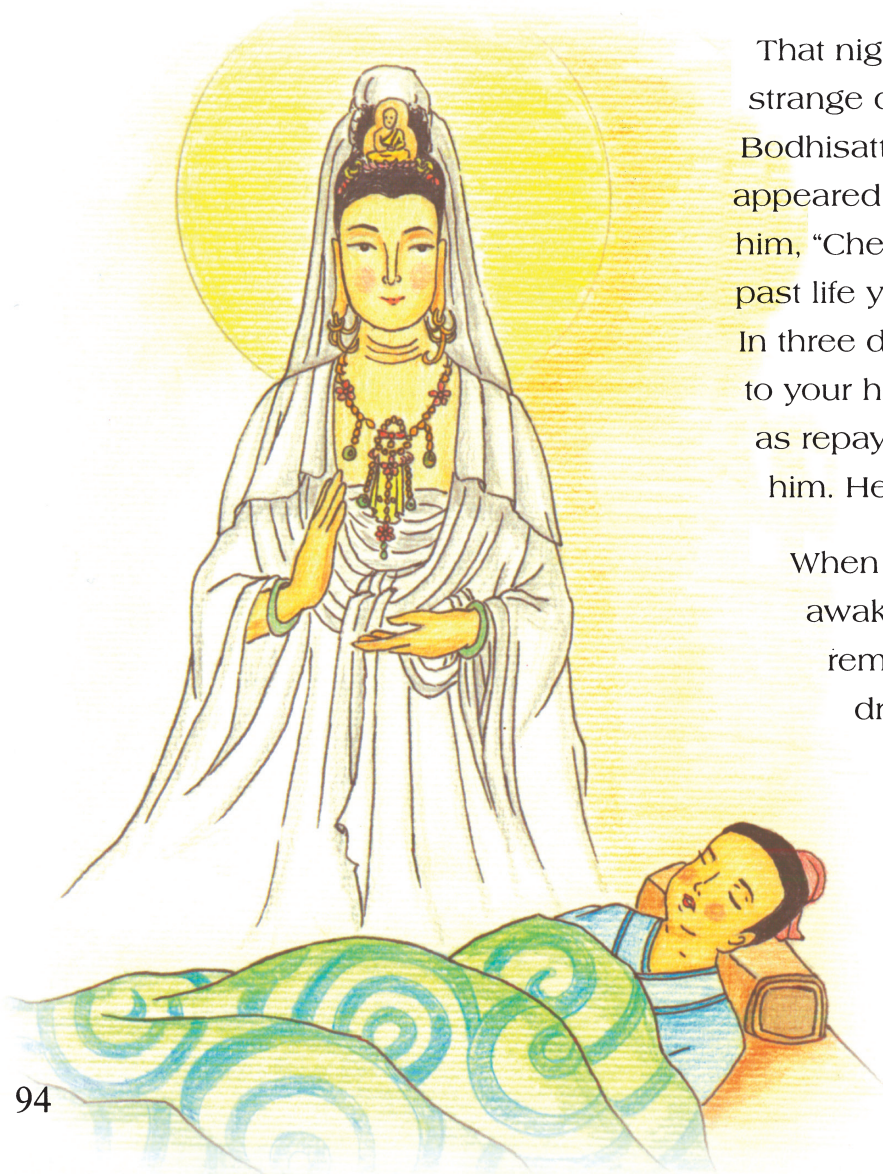
will that be stealing?" Up until now, Wan Dan had never stolen, he had only begged. The pangs of hunger and the cold wind led him to a near-by food stand. It had been a whole year since he had had a full stomach and warm clothes.

From then on, when Wan Dan was hungry or wanted something, he would steal. He joined up with a band of outlaws, and when he grew up, he became known as the most dreaded and vicious bandit in all of China.

Many years passed. One day a man named Chen Kuan walked up the temple steps and made an offering of fruit in front of the image of Gwan Yin. Since he could remember, he had done this everyday of his life.

That night he had a strange dream. The Bodhisattva Gwan Yin appeared and spoke to him, "Chen Kuan, in a past life you killed a man. In three days he will come to your house to kill you as repayment for killing him. He's a bandit."

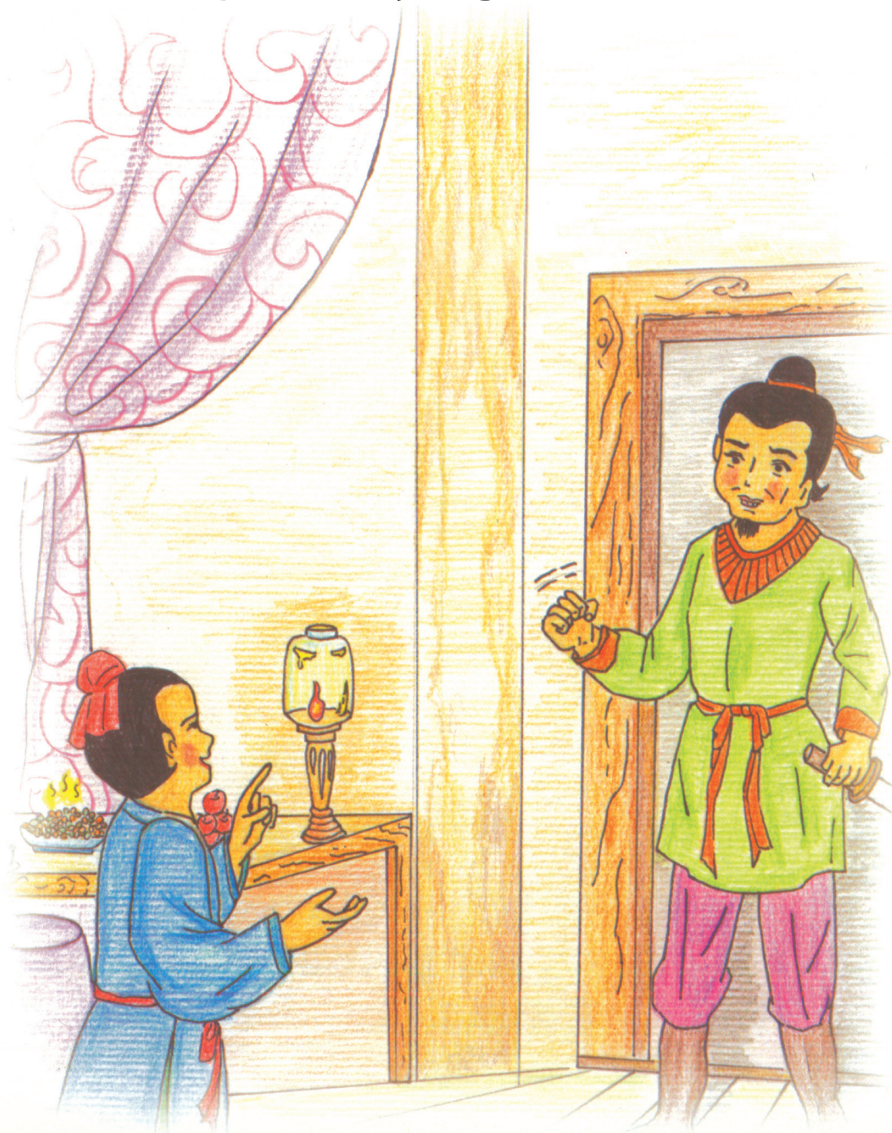
When Chen Kuan awakened, he remembered the dream and was frightened out of his wits.



He went to the temple and bowed before the image of Gwan Yin, asking, "What shall I do?"

And that night he had another dream. Gwan Yin said, "Remember that what you did in the past is the cause of this problem now. If you regret the wrong that you did, there's no need to be afraid. Go to the market tomorrow and buy some fresh food—vegetables and fruit—perhaps some melons. Prepare a delicious meal. Then be ready. When the bandit comes to your door, be friendly and invite him to eat with you. His name is Wan Dan."

The next day, Chen Kuan prepared the meal and waited for the thief. Soon enough, he heard a violent knock on the door. Breathless, he opened the door and invited the visitor in. A dark-faced man burst in, demanding, "Where's your gold? Hand it over!"



“Wan Dan, it’s you!” exclaimed Chen Kuan.

Wan Dan scowled, “Oh, you know who I am? You’ll surely turn me in, so I’ll have to kill you, Fool!”

Chen Kuan nodded, “Yes, I suppose so, but first come in and have dinner with me. I have lots of food. I cooked it just for you.”

The bandit was stunned, “Y-you know my name and you’re not afraid to die? And you want me to eat with you? How can this be?”

Chen Kuan calmly said, “I’ve been waiting for you. I’d like to talk to you. Please sit down. Let’s eat together. I know all about you.” Wan Dan sat down in a chair. He was bewildered, “What do you know?”

Chen Kuan told him about his dreams, “In the past, I killed you. Now I owe you my life. Gwan Yin Bodhisattva told me that. After we have eaten, you can kill me. That’s how it should be.”

Wan Dan raised his hands, “No, no, no. I don’t want to kill you now. If I did that, maybe next life you will kill me again. Let’s stop it right here and not kill anymore.”

In silence, the two men began to eat. Wan Dan explained, “The life of a bandit is miserable. We’re always running away from the law. We have to hide in the mountains and forests. We get cold and wet. And there’s always fighting among the bandits. We don’t have good food to eat, either.”

“How did you become a bandit?” asked Chen Kuan.

“After my parents died, I had no place to go. So I joined some bandits,” Wan Dan said. “I never did like killing and robbing people, but being a bandit meant food and clothing. I became a thief one time when I found a purse. I knew whose it was, but I kept it anyway. As a matter of fact, I still have it.” He reached into his jacket pocket and pulled out a worn purse.

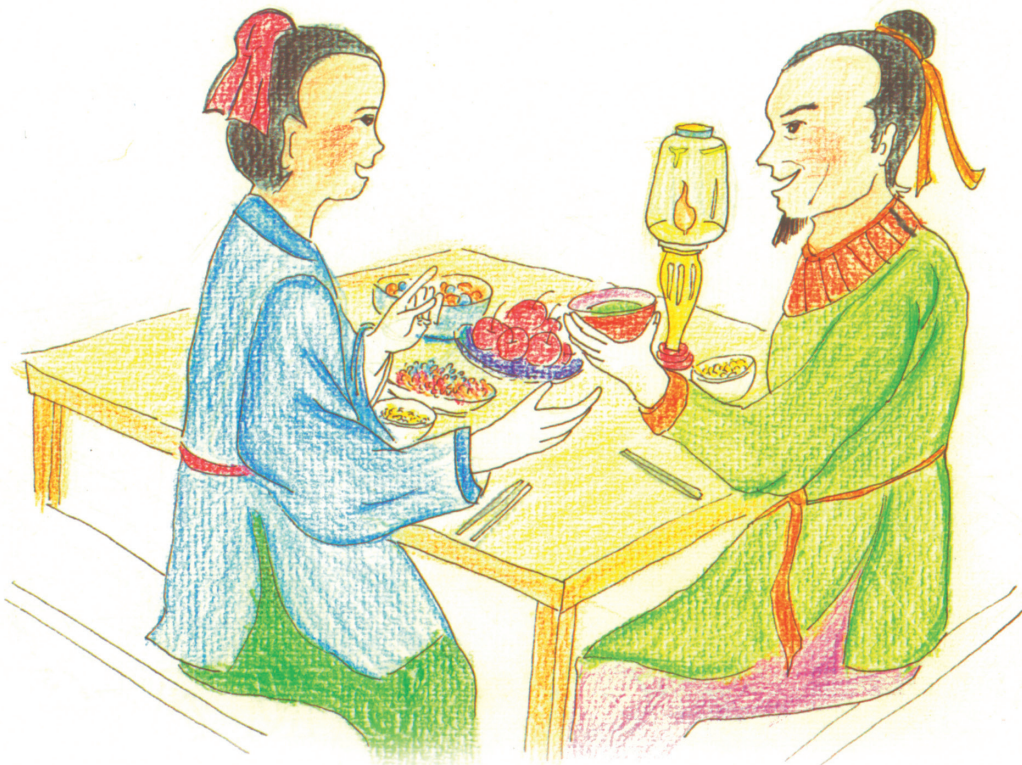


Seeing the purse, Chen Kuan's eyes widened. He gasped, "That purse looks like one I used to have...yes, now I remember! By the temple gate! You're the beggar. I thought I had seen you somewhere before."

Wan Dan looked closely at his host's face. Chen Kuan was smiling. "I remember that smile," Wan Dan said. "But how can you be friendly to me? I robbed you. You should have me arrested."

Chen Kuan said calmly, "Well, you do owe me some money. You can stay here and work to pay me back. I need someone to help me run the mill, but if you'd rather be a thief..."

"No! I'm tired of being a thief! I'd like to work for you, but I've been wicked to many people. It's time to pay my debts. I must turn myself in and serve my term in prison. When I get out, I'll come and work for you," Wan Dan said. "But first, I must go to the temple and bow to Gwan Yin. If you hadn't bowed to her, you would be a dead man now and I would still be a useless thief."



## Walking-stick Siu

The flower waved her by.  
The river pushed her on.  
Waterfall Monk saw into her heart.  
And taught her all he knew.

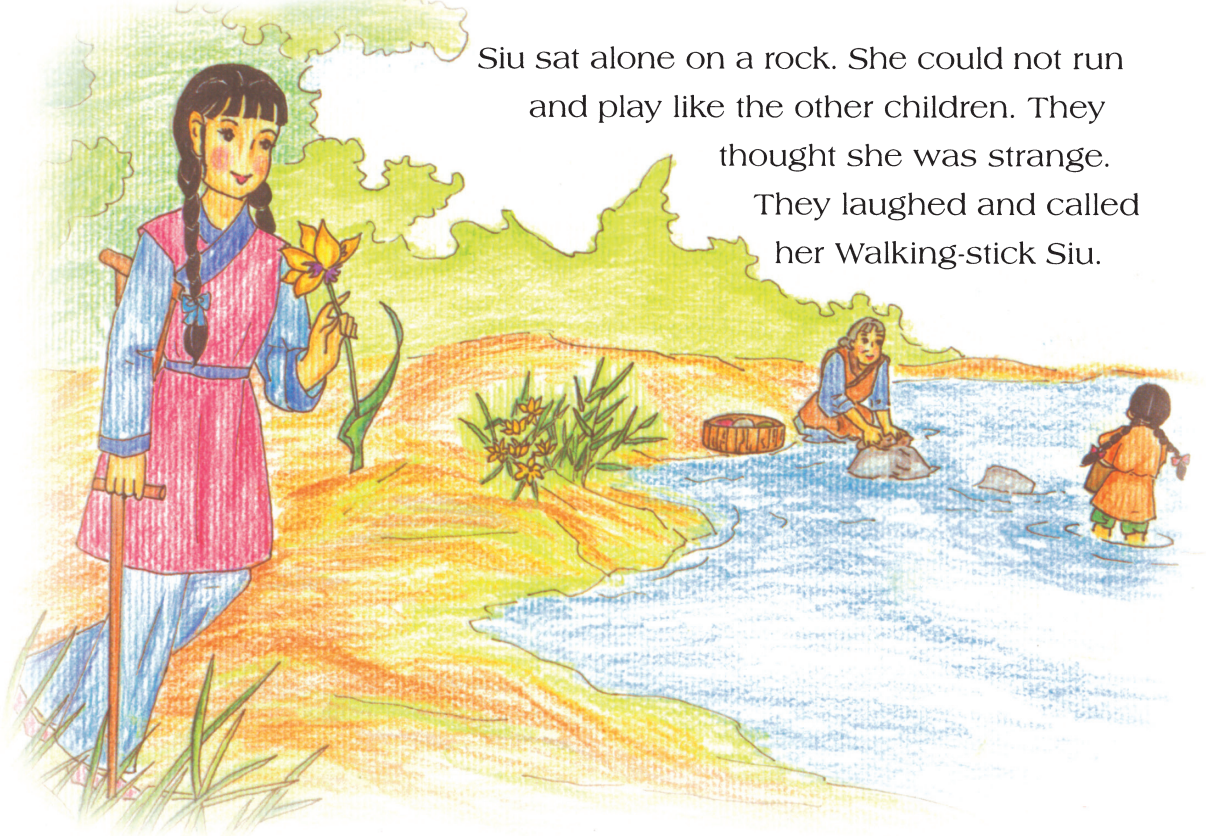
“The sun is up. We must hurry! Don’t be so slow!” called her mother.

“May I help you wash clothes today?” Siu begged. “The other girls are helping their mothers.”

“With your crippled foot, you’ll only be in the way!”

Up and down the quiet river were mothers and daughters washing clothes and children playing along the river’s edge. Today the mothers did not talk or laugh. The sickness had come to the village. The old people and children were sick. Siu’s little brother and grandmother were also sick.

Siu sat alone on a rock. She could not run and play like the other children. They thought she was strange. They laughed and called her Walking-stick Siu.



Her mother's voice carried up from the river. "Walking-stick Siu, you lazy girl! You are no help here! Go fetch water from the spring and don't forget to do Kuang's chores, now that he's sick."

Siu slowly carried the heavy jug to the village. Her thoughts went to little Kuang crying last night in his sleep and the fear in her mother's face. "I wish I could help. But what can a cripple do? I wish I were sick, instead of my brother."

Siu was happy to do Kuang's chores, gathering firewood. As she was stacking the wood against the hut, her grandmother opened the window. Her face was red and she smelled of fever. It frightened Siu. "I have some flowers for Kuang," Siu said.

"Flowers are no help," grumbled her grandmother. "Only the Waterfall Monk can help."

"The Waterfall Monk?" asked Siu.

"Yes. if your father were here, he would go find him," Siu's grandmother said, spitting on the ground. "But alas, all the men are away working on the emperor's new road. There is no one to go!"

Siu's mother returned from the river and admonished the grandmother. "That's nothing but a silly old tale. Don't fill Siu's head with your nonsense. Waterfall Monk, indeed!"

"It is true. People say he lives in a cave near the waterfall and that he never talks," said Siu's grandmother, closing the window.

"And what took you so long, Walking-stick Siu?" asked her mother. "Picking flowers when there's work to be done. You're just good-for-nothing!"

Siu picked up an empty basket and went inside the hut. She thought of the Waterfall Monk. The thought made her happy.

The next day, Siu limped up the steep, winding path by the river.

It was difficult to walk and her foot hurt. She stopped and looked back at her village in the valley below. It seemed so far away.

She thought of her mother looking for her. She did not tell anyone where she was going. "I don't want my mother to worry. Perhaps I should go back. I didn't know it was so far to the waterfalls," Siu said aloud.

Suddenly, three crows flew out of a tree straight towards her. "Caw! Caw!" they squawked. To Siu, it sounded like, "Go back! Go back!"



Waving her stick at them, she shouted, "No, I must go on! Get away, you silly, old noisy crows!"

Circling around her, the crows cawed back. Now it sounded like, "Go on! Go on!"

So Siu hurried on, following the loud rushing river, happier than ever before. The river gave her strength and the heart to go on—one step at a time.

The crows flew along the path protecting her. A woodcutter came walking along. The crows cawed and warned her. Quickly, she hid behind a rock. She didn't want anyone to stop her.

As the sun set, Siu entered the deep, dark forest. Once in the shadow of the trees, there was no moonlight to guide her. Clutching her stick, she followed the sounds of the river.

Suddenly a roar broke the silence of the forest. Siu stopped, afraid to go on. Yet she knew she could not go back. Shivering with fright, she slowly moved on through the darkness.

Tired and sleepy, she lay down under a tree. Suddenly a wind came up. It blew through her thin clothing. It whipped her hair about her face. It spun around her and whispered its haunting song into her ears.

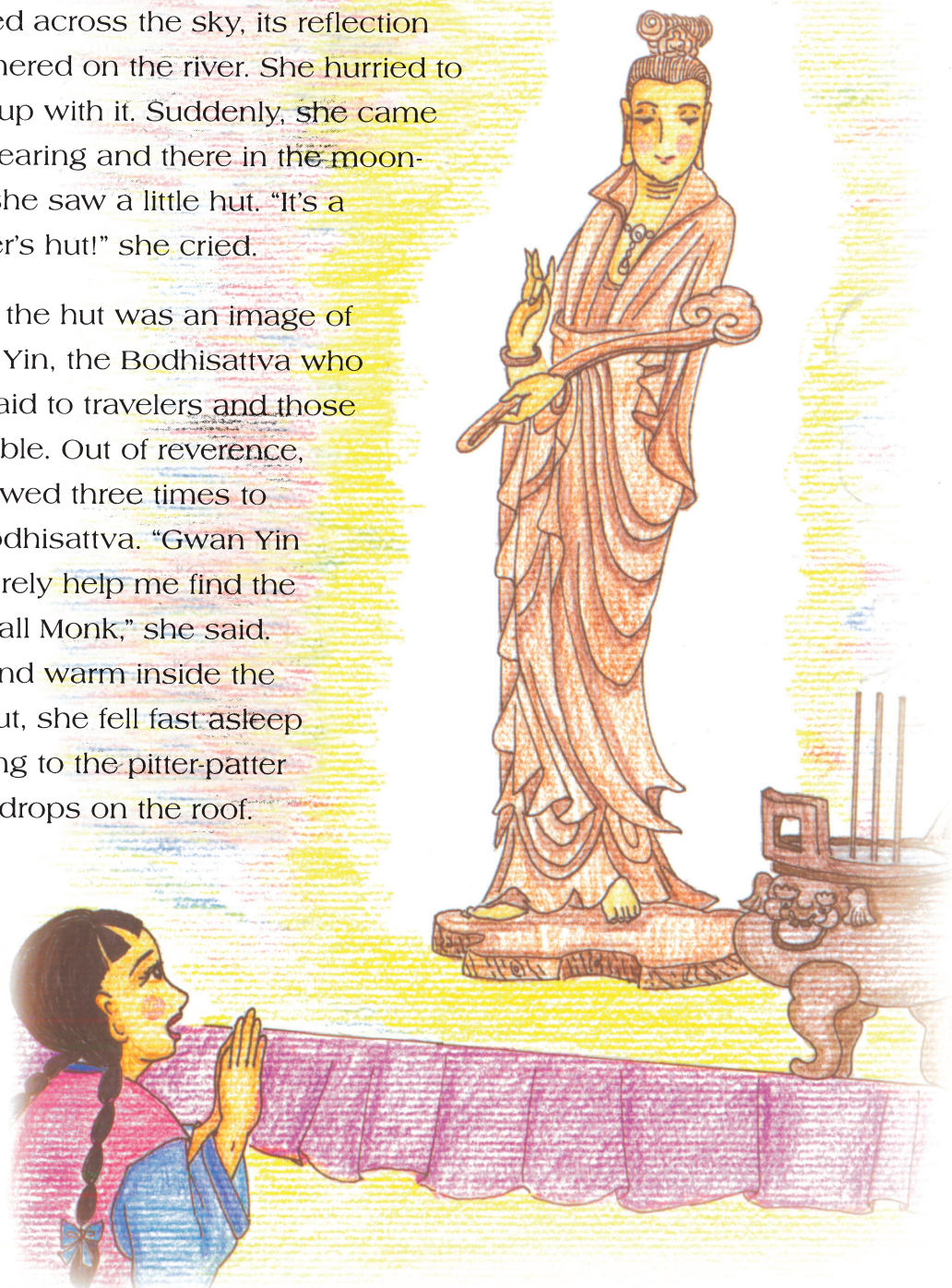


“There is no Waterfall Monk. Your grandmother is old and foolish. Don’t listen to her silly old tales!”

Siu jumped up. “Yes, there is a Waterfall Monk! And I will find him. I’m not afraid of a silly old wind!” Then it began to rain. “I must go on!” she said.

Siu stumbled along the path, tripping on tangled roots, cutting her legs. As the moon traveled across the sky, its reflection shimmered on the river. She hurried to catch up with it. Suddenly, she came to a clearing and there in the moonlight, she saw a little hut. “It’s a traveler’s hut!” she cried.

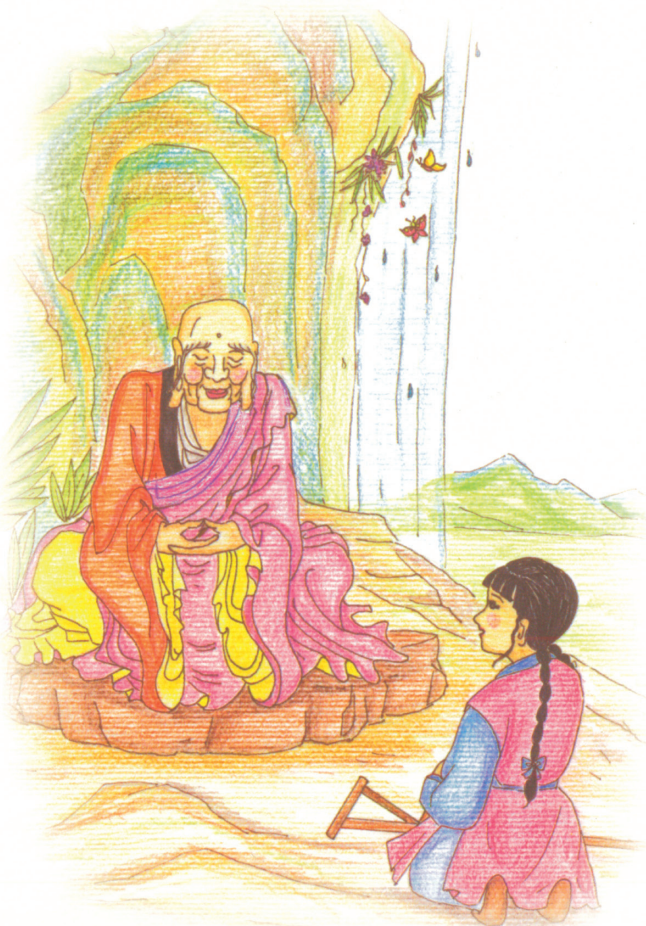
Inside the hut was an image of Gwan Yin, the Bodhisattva who gives aid to travelers and those in trouble. Out of reverence, Siu bowed three times to the Bodhisattva. “Gwan Yin will surely help me find the Waterfall Monk,” she said. Safe and warm inside the little hut, she fell fast asleep listening to the pitter-patter of raindrops on the roof.





The next morning, the young traveler was up and on her way before the first song of the birds. The skies had cleared and the storm had drifted away.

At last, she came to the waterfalls. There in front of the cave, sat the Waterfall Monk in silence. Fear gripped her. "What will he think of me?" she asked herself. "I'm so pitiful. My legs are cut and dirty and my dress is torn. I have nothing to offer him. He probably won't notice me anyway. I've come all this way for nothing. I must go away quickly before he sees me!" Yet she knew he wanted her to stay. She waited quietly.



Slowly the Waterfall Monk opened his eyes and motioned for her to speak. Placing her palms together, she slowly said, "O Holy Sage, sickness has come to my village. The sick ones moan and groan day and night. My grandmother said you would know what to do."



For a long time, the old monk looked kindly at Siu. Then he stood up and built a fire. He put on a pot of rice to cook and tossed in some wild greens. They would eat.

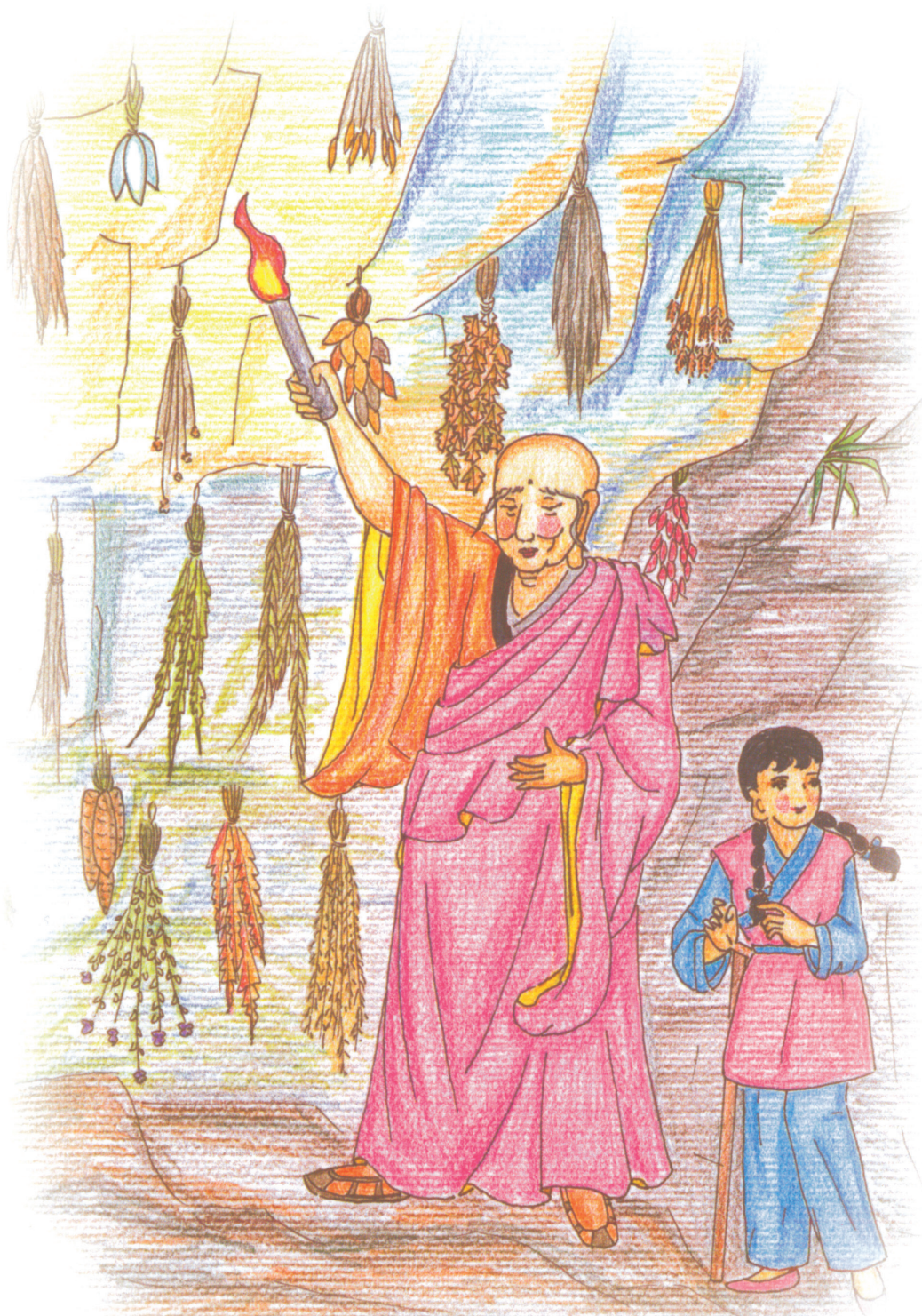
Siu was so hungry that her stomach hurt. They ate together in the warm sunshine. It was the best meal that she had ever eaten.

Then the Waterfall Monk disappeared inside the cave and returned with a clump of dried flowers. With his ancient hand, he pointed to the sky. “He means that the flowers are blue like the sky,” thought Siu.

Then he showed her how high the bush grew and handed her a bag. She stared at the path leading up the hill above the waterfall.



“He wants me to find the herb myself. But I’m afraid to go near the waterfall. I can’t do it!” Her legs ached. Tears welled up in her eyes. Then she remembered her little bother crying in his sleep. “I can do it!” she sighed.

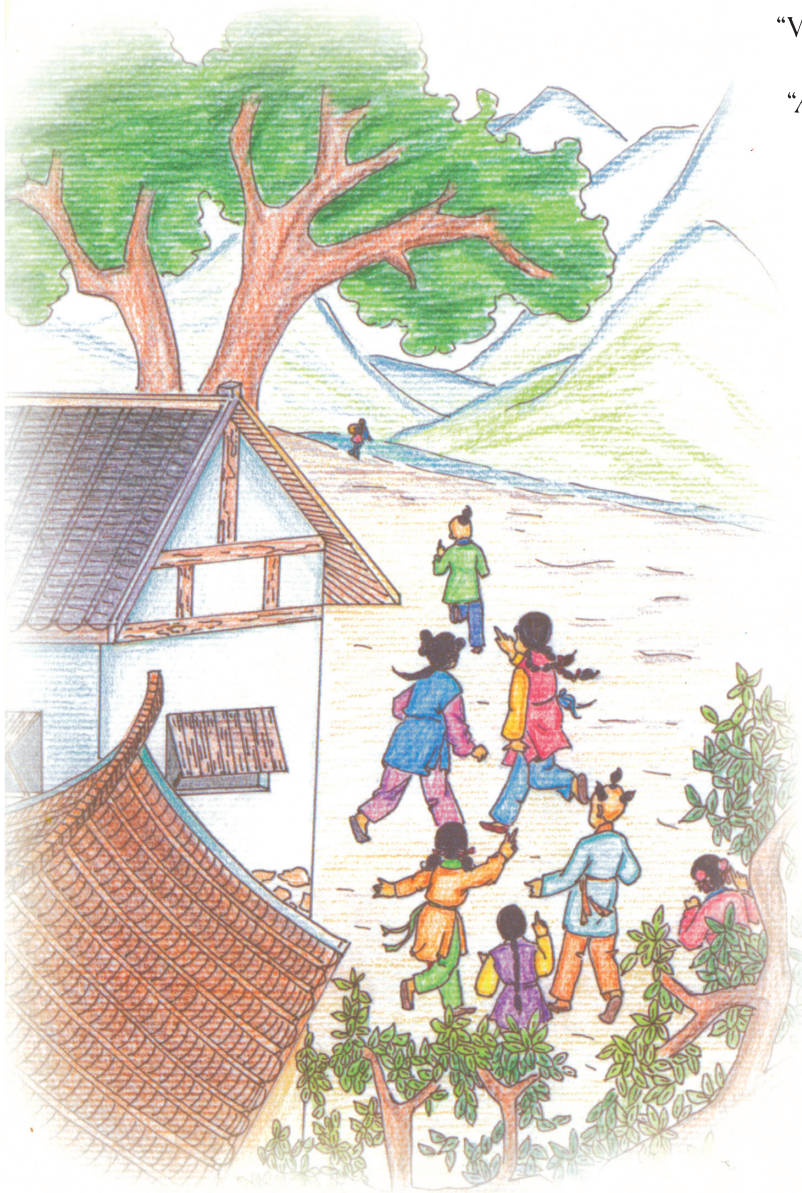


Siu looked for the herb until the sun was high in the sky. Along the rocky edges of the sheer path, she saw many wild herbs, but none had blue flowers.



Going on, Siu came to a place where the rocks were the biggest that she had ever seen. And on the biggest rock of all, lay a lizard sunning himself. But she did not see the lizard. She only saw a small bush with blue flowers peeping through a crack in the rock—tiny blue flowers, thin leaves, round stem—it looked the same as the dried herbs the Waterfall Monk has showed her. She had found the herb at last.

“Someone’s coming! Someone’s coming!” The children’s voices rang throughout the village.



“Where? Where?”

“Along the river path.”

“From which way?” asked Siu’s mother.

“From the waterfall!  
From the waterfall!”  
echoed the voices.

“It’s Walking-stick Siu!”

“Not Walking-stick Siu!  
She ran off. She was  
afraid of the sickness.  
Stupid girl!” snapped  
Siu’s mother.

“It’s not Siu. She fell  
in the river,” said a  
woman. “Bandits took  
her.” Another said.

“It’s not Siu. A beast  
ate her,” whispered the  
children.

“Siu!” yelled her mother.

“Where is your walking stick? You’ll fall and hurt yourself.”

“I must have left it at the cave. I hope the old monk uses it for firewood,” said Siu. She had forgotten all about her walking stick.

“I’m slow, but I can walk along just fine on my two legs.”

“Where have you been?”

"I went to visit the Waterfall Monk. He gave me medicine to cure the sick."

"Give it to me," said Siu's mother, grabbing for the bag of herbs.

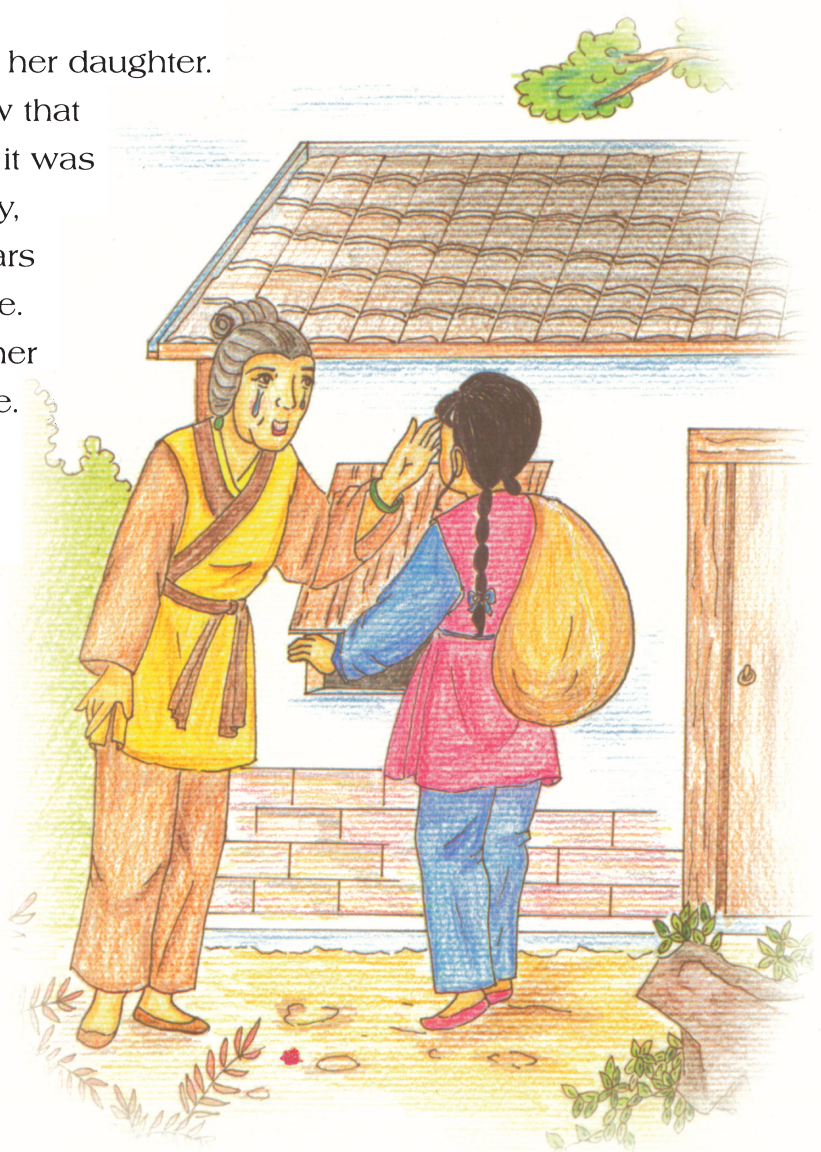
"The Waterfall Monk showed me how to cook it. I can teach everyone," Siu said, holding on tightly to the bag.

"Don't talk back to me. What do you know of such things? Just give me the bag," demanded her mother.

"Wait!" said another mother. "We all know Siu. Look, she has changed. This is no longer Walking-stick Siu, but a brave young girl. See how much better she walks and how bright her eyes are. Allow her to cook the medicine."

Siu's mother gazed at her daughter.

In her heart, she knew that Siu had changed; yet it was hard to accept. Quietly, she began to cry—tears of both joy and shame. "Only your grandmother knew where you were. Come, show us what you learned from the Waterfall Monk."



## Heavenly Eye Mountains

This is a story about Wei Tou Bodhisattva who protects those who follow the Buddha's teachings and cultivate. He is called a Dharma Protecting Bodhisattva.

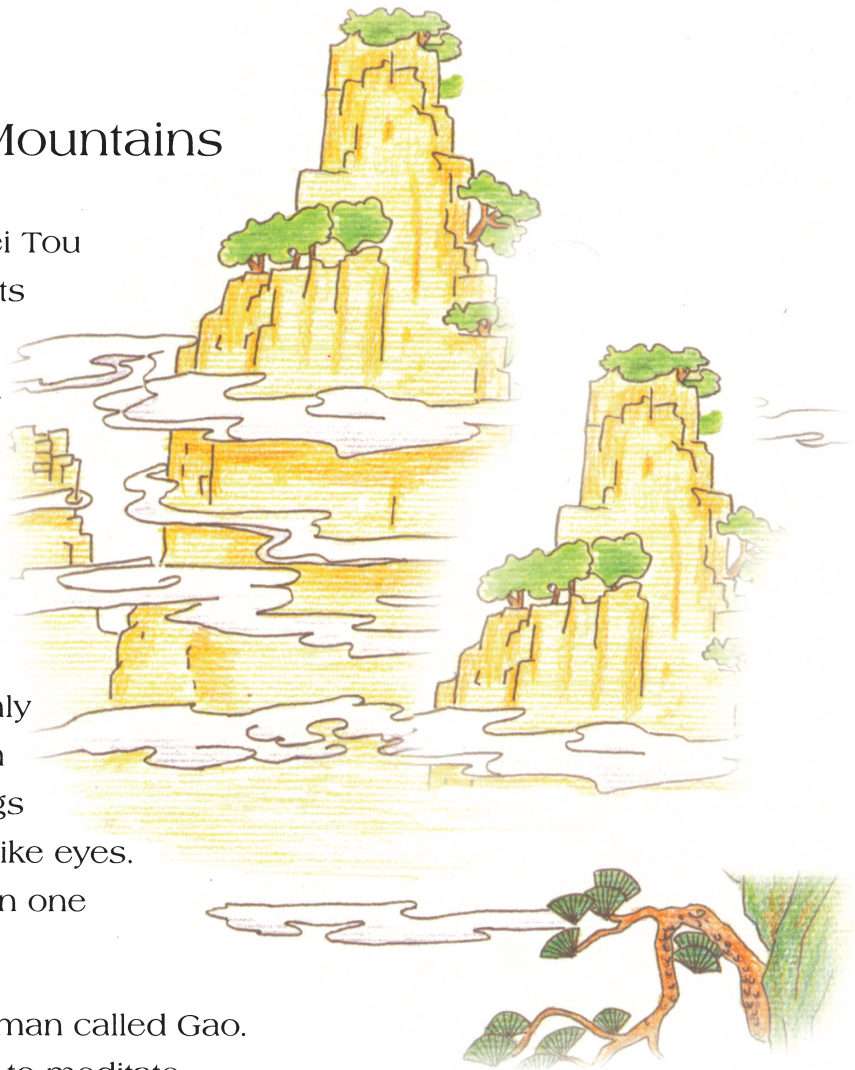
In Hangchow, China, there is a mountain range called the Heavenly Eye Mountains. On each mountain are two springs of clear water that look like eyes. This story takes place on one of the mountain peaks.

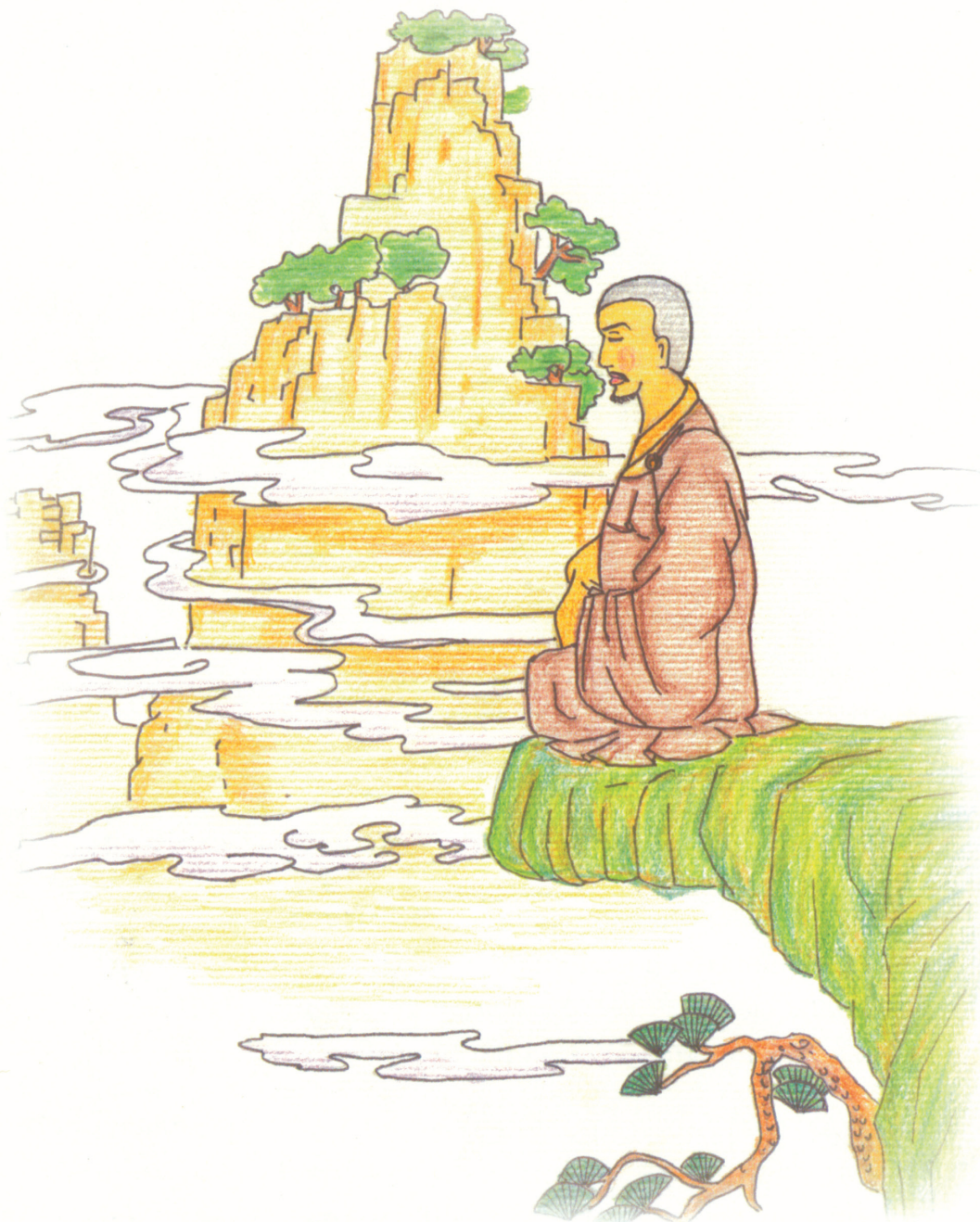
There was once a holy man called Gao. Every time he sat down to meditate, he would fall asleep. If only," he said, "I could chase the sleep away, I would enter samadhi and have great wisdom."

In the silence of the morning, Gao looked up at the mountain peak ringed with glistening soft pink clouds, "Perhaps I can cure myself of sleep by meditating on that high peak. I'll be so afraid of falling off, that I won't dare go to sleep."

So he cut a stave and began the steep climb, deciding to put his life on the line. Once on the peak, he meditated one full day and did not sleep. Then for another day, he did not sleep.

Three days went by and still he did not sleep. But on the fourth day, he dozed off.





He slumped forward and toppled off the cliff, careening down thousands of feet. When he woke up, his nose was only inches from the ground.

Suddenly, a hand appeared and caught him. "Who has saved me?" he asked.

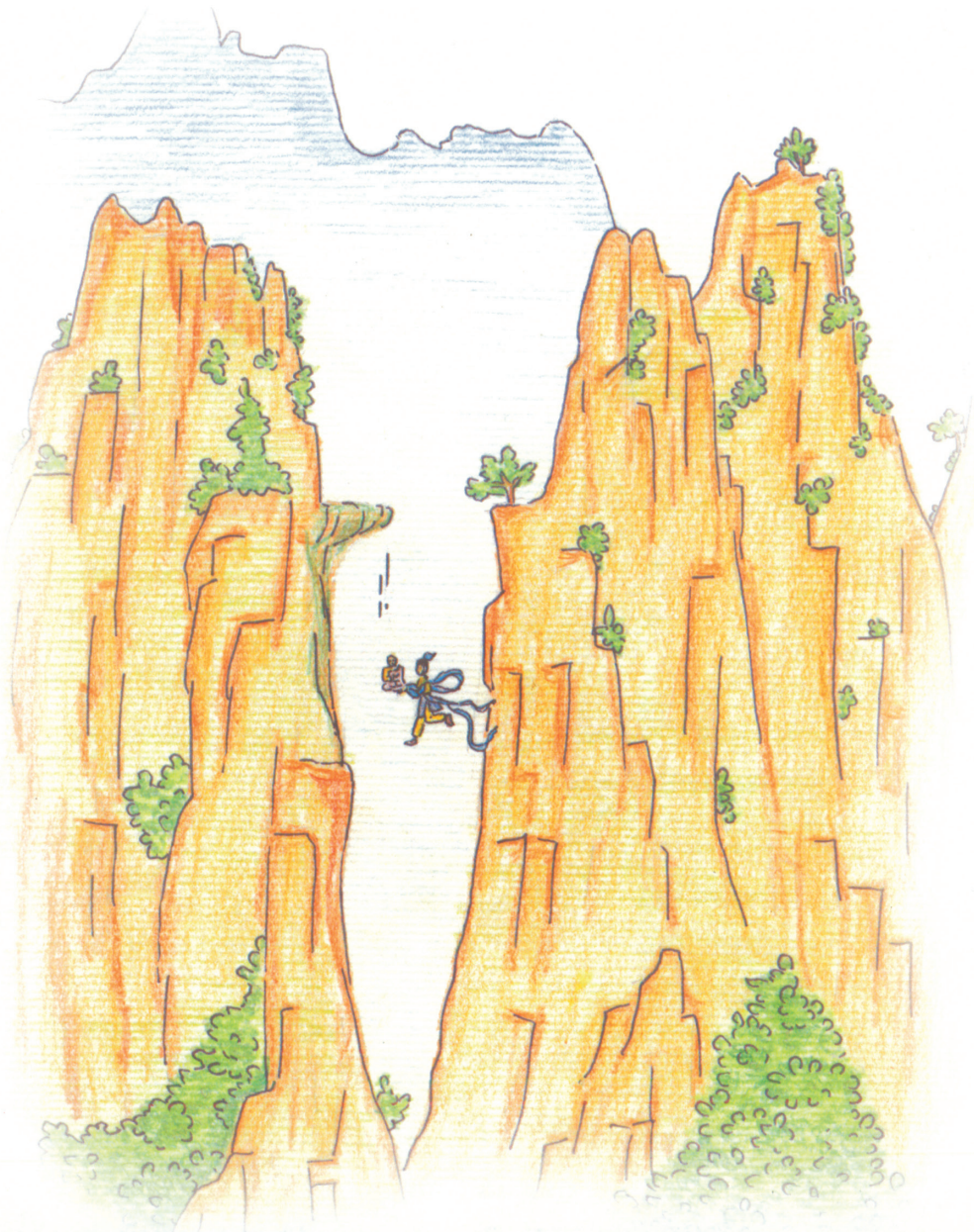
His rescuer answered, "Wei Tou."

Gao said smugly to himself, "I must be someone special for Wei Tou to save me."

He asked, "Elder, how many people in the world are vigorous like me?"

"There are as many people like you as hairs on an ox. Have you no shame? How can you brag? It will be eons before I protect you again!" exclaimed Wei Tou.

Too late for Gao. "I'm no good after all. It's wrong to think that I'm the best," he cried. "If only I could chase away arrogance, I would have great wisdom."



From the banks of the sparkling river where he fell, he looked up at the Heavenly Eye Mountain and said, "Before Wei Tou protected me, I sat in meditation. Why should I quit now?"

So he cut another stave and climbed up the mountain again. "My life is useless unless I can meditate well," he said.

This time he worked harder than ever at staying awake.

He meditated for one day and did not fall asleep.

Then for another day, he did not fall asleep. Three days went by and still he did not fall asleep. But on the fourth day, he dozed off again.

Again he slumped forward and toppled off careening down thousands of feet.

When he woke up, His nose again was just inches off the ground. Suddenly, a hand appeared and caught him as before.

Gao asked, "Who has saved me this time?"

His rescuer answered, "Wei Tou."

Gao was angry. "So you also lie? You said you would not protect me. Now what are you doing?"

Wei Tou gently put him down on a ledge. "That was when you were being proud. When I saw that you had chased away arrogance, I helped you. Correcting your faults is truly great wisdom. One true thought transcends eons of time."





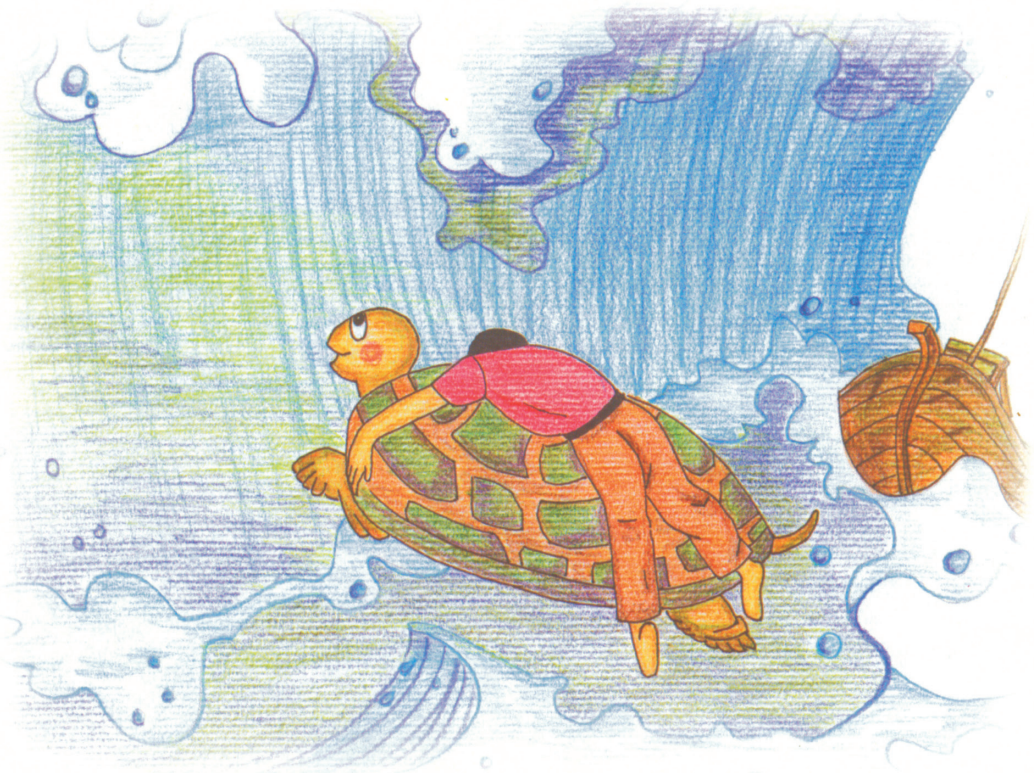
# A True Turtle Story

The following appeared in the newspaper in the 1950's:

In the middle of a storm in the Pacific Ocean, a Philippine boat sank. Most of the men quickly drowned, but some escaped in a lifeboat. Unknown to the others, one man was left alone struggling in the water to keep alive.

Suddenly a giant turtle swam under the man and lifted him up onto its back. Then the turtle swam across the waves to a Navy ship cruising nearby. It swam along side the ship until the crew spotted it with their binoculars. When they saw a live man on the turtle's back, they quickly rescued the man.

After the man was safely aboard, the giant turtle circled the ship three times. Then, facing the ship, he lowered its head in the water and swam away.



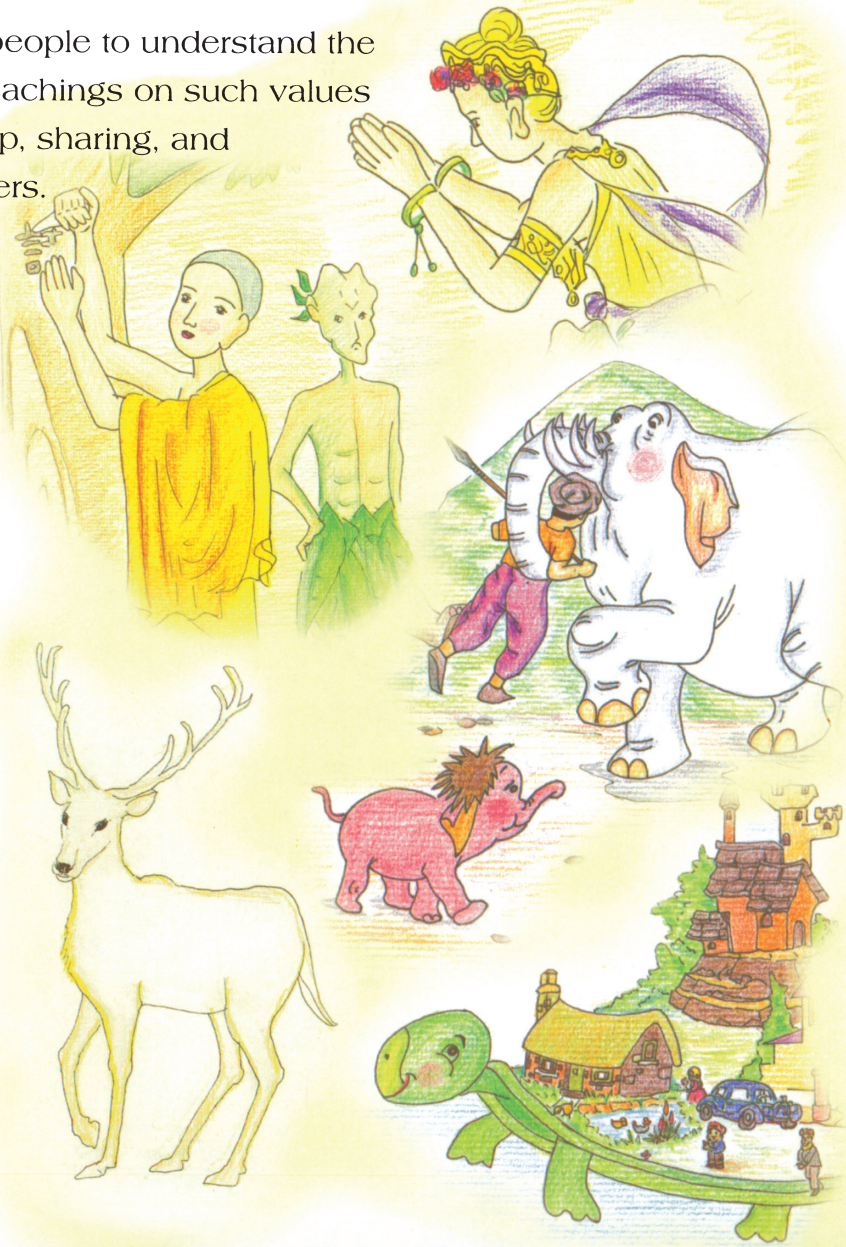
# Introduction to Jataka Tales

Before the Buddha became enlightened, he was reborn many times as a compassionate Bodhisattva.

Sometimes he appeared as a king or a poor man, sometimes as a tiger or a deer. In each of these lives, he found ways to ease the suffering of living beings.

The ancient stories of the Buddha's past lives are called Jataka Tales. These stories were told by the Buddha to his disciples almost 2,500 years ago and are still being told today.

They help people to understand the Buddha's teachings on such values as friendship, sharing, and helping others.



# The King Turtle

Once a long, long time ago, a Bodhisatva appeared in the deep blue sea to teach goodness to the aquatic creatures. He was very wise and kind and the other sea animals made him their king. Everyday he swam among the painted fish, the pearly-white oysters, and the blue whales, helping them with their problems and wishing them well. Everyone was happy and peaceful in his kingdom of the sea.

One day he crawled onto the sandy beach to take a nap. Because he was so big, a nap for him lasted a very, very long time.

During the nights, the rain came, dropping tiny raindrops onto the tortoise's back. Drip! Drip!

The turtle slept on.

The raindrops flowed between the cracks on the turtle's great shell, forming sparkling rivers and lakes.

The turtle slept on.

In the mornings, the winds came up, blowing tiny grains of sand onto the turtle's back. Whoo-sha! Whoo-sha! The sand grains joined together forming rocks and hills.

The turtle slept on.

In the afternoons, the birds flew over, dropping tiny seeds onto his back. Plink! Plink! The seeds sprouted and right there on the turtle's back grew flowers and grass.

The turtle slept on.

The sun warmed him by day.

The moon watched over him by night.

The seasons began on the little Turtle Mountain. Spring, summer, autumn, and winter came and went by. Birds nested in the trees. Deer and antelope grazed in the meadows. Tigers stretched out on the rocks, sunning themselves and fish swam in the glistening streams.

One day a child came to the little mountain to pick some wild flowers.

The next day she returned with her family. "This will be a good place to build a house. We can grow rice and get salt from the sea," said her father.

The next year another family moved to the little mountain, then another.

Some merchants came and set up shops.

A prince even built a palace.



More and more people moved to the little mountain. They built their houses and shops, grazed their animals, and burned their fires right there on the turtle's shell. Since the turtle was so huge, they did not know that the little mountain was the turtle's back.

People pulled their carts and rode their carriages over the streets cutting deep ruts in the turtle's shell. The rumbling of the city drummed in his ears. The fires burned his skin. The buildings were heavy.

And so it went until one day the fires awakened the king turtle! He began to crawl to the sea. He wanted to cool himself off. "Earthquake! Earthquake!" shouted the people and animals, running hither and yon.

Upon reaching the sea, the giant turtle slowly immersed himself in the cool water to ease his agony. When the dwellers on his shell saw water rising all around them, they screamed, "Flood! Flood! We'll be drowned!"

Hearing their cries, the kind turtle carefully crawled back on the beach. He did not want to hurt anyone.

Then he took another long nap. He let the fires burn his skin and the rumbling of the city shake him. Only in the day would he sleep, holding back the tears that would come in the night. So great was his pain and so pitiful were his cries that he did not want anyone to hear them.

The seasons changed and the years went by, until at last the king turtle could no longer bear the pain. Slowly, he raised his head and called out, "I am a giant turtle. Do not be afraid. I won't hurt you. You are living on my shell. I must go back into the water or I will die."

One by one, he gently rolled the people and their belongings off his back onto the beach.

The people and animals were so moved by the kindness of the giant turtle, that they bowed to him and said, "You have given us homes and saved our lives. You are a great King Turtle. You are a great Bodhisattva. Someday, you will become a Buddha!"

Birds flew high above the turtle, placing garlands of fragrant flowers around his neck. Monkeys rubbed his sores with healing herbs and elephants trumpeted sweet music to soothe his ears.

The villagers swept the sand with peacock feathers, removing the pebbles from the path back into the sea.

The Bodhisattva crawled back into the cool water.

After the telling of this tale, the Buddha said, "I was that giant turtle and the people and animals that lived on the turtle's shell became my disciples."



# The White Elephant

The Buddha told this story to his disciples. "Once there was a great Bodhisattva who was a mighty white elephant with six spectacular tusks. Many people hunted the white elephant just for these tusks.

"One day the elephant was alone in the forest. A hunter spotted him among the trees and shot him right in the heart.

"Now it so happened that the white elephant was the king of a great herd of elephants. As soon as he was shot, he trumpeted loudly through his huge trunk. The sound blasted through the forest and out to the grasslands where his herd was grazing.

"His mate raised her head and cried, 'The great white elephant has been shot. We must go at once and avenge his killer.'

"She then gathered the hundreds of elephants around her and led them to attack. Clouds of dust rose in the air as the herd trampled the earth. Trumpet sounds bellowed loudly from swinging trunks and wild beasts quickly scuttled away. Birds flew to safety to the tops of tall trees. Snakes slid deep into their holes and mice scampered here and there to escape.

"The thundering elephants plunged into the forest and came to a halt under the tree where their great white leader was waiting. To their surprise, he had his trunk wrapped around the hunter as if to protect him.

"He said to his mate, 'You must not be angry and attack the hunter. Perhaps he has a reason to shoot me. Let's ask him why.'

"The hunter said, 'Because I want your tusks.'

"With that, the elephant used his trunk and pulled out his long tusks. Giving them to the hunter, he said, 'You have what you want. Now go on your way. No one will harm you.'

“Then he told his mate and the other elephants, ‘We must treat our enemies with kindness in our hearts and not be so quick to take revenge. All he wanted were my tusks, which I gladly gave to him.’

“The elephants said, ‘Now we understand what great compassion is.’ Then they followed the great white elephant into a grove of trees.”

This is the way of a Bodhisattva,” said the Buddha. Not only did he save the life of his enemy, he also taught his whole herd a lesson in compassion and kindness.”





# Two Lines of Verse

A Two Character Play

Cast in order of appearance

Buddhist Monk

Rakshasa Ghost

Rakshasa Ghost as a Heavenly God

STAGE SETTING: A big tree and a large rock. A small stone is lying on the ground.

RAKSHASA GHOST: (Enters on stage, reciting a verse.)

“Nothing lasts forever, Things come, then they are gone.”

MONK: (Enters on stage.) You are reciting one of the Buddha's verses. I am delighted to hear an old rakshasa ghost like you speak the Dharma. But you've left something out. The Buddha always spoke verses in four lines. Please tell me the last two lines.

RAKSHASA GHOST: So you want to hear more Dharma, do you?

Well, I'm hungry and I need to eat. I can't speak anymore without eating someone. Let me eat you, then I'll speak the rest of the verse.

MONK: But if you eat me, I won't be able to hear it. If I don't hear it, I won't be able to die happy. Please speak the last two lines, then you can eat me.

RAKSHASA GHOST: All right then...

“When the coming and going both stop,  
That stopping is true joy.”

MONK: Just a minute, I want to....



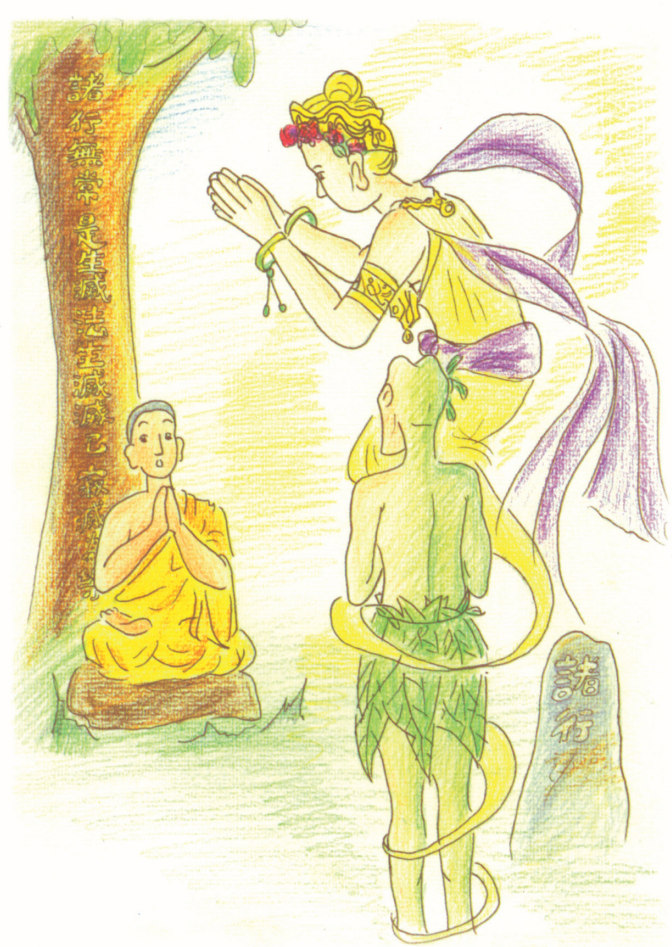
RAKSHASA GHOST: Ah, ha! As I expected. You're trying to get out of your part of the deal.

MONK: Not at all. But if I die, no one else can hear the verse. Let me carve it on the trunk of that tree. Then whoever passes by can read the verse and can learn the Dharma. Then you can eat me.

RAKSHASA GHOST: (Grumbling) Oh, very well. I guess I can wait a little longer to eat. Go ahead.

MONK: (Picks up a stone and carves the verse on the tree trunk. The RAKSHASA GHOST then steps up and grabs at the MONK.) Not so fast, Wait!

RAKSHASA GHOST: Wait for what? You've carved the verse on the trunk. What more do you want?



MONK: With all the wind and rain, the words will get worn away. Then no one can read it. Let me carve the verse on that big rock. Then you can certainly eat me.

RAKSHASA GHOST: Well, go ahead! Let me know when you are finished! (Leaves stage.)

MONK: (Carves verse on rock, then sits in meditation) I'm ready. You can come and eat me now.

RAKSHASA GHOST as a Heavenly God: (Appears on stage)  
 Good indeed! Good indeed! I am a god, disguised as a rakshasa ghost to test you. You were willing to give up your life so the Dharma can remain in the world. You will become a Buddha in the future. (To the audience) This is the story of how Shakyamuni Buddha, in a past life, was willing to give up his life for the sake of two lines of verse.

# The Deer Park

A Play

Characters in order  
of appearance:

Narrator 1

Narrator 2

Chorus

Prince

Banyan Deer

Branch Deer



NOTE: This play can be performed as a Reader's Theater, a Puppet Show, or a Mime. Use musical instruments throughout the play such as: drums, bells, tambourines, cymbals, gongs, etc.

## ACT I

NARRATOR 1: Once upon a time, the Buddha was born as Banyan Deer. He was golden like the sun and his horns glistened like silver. He lived in a forgotten forest and was the king of a herd of 500 deer.

NARRATOR 2: In the same forest, lived another herd of deer. They were watched over by another beautiful golden deer named Branch. In the tall grass and shadows of the deep forest, the two herds lived together in peace, except for one thing.

CHORUS: Oh, kindly tell us, we want to hear. What did the deer of the forest fear?

NARRATOR 1: The prince of the kingdom of Benares loved nothing more than to hunt. One day he was out on a hunt and spied the beautiful green forest where the deer lived.

PRINCE: What a fine hunting ground! Look at all those deer!

NARRATOR 1: "Attack," cried the prince, and into the forest he dashed with his thousands of hunters and began to madly shoot his arrows. The deer became frantic and raced around wildly. They hurt each other with their horns and hooves in an effort to escape. By the end of the hunt, the prince had killed several deer. The prince was very happy, but the deer were not!

NARRATOR 2: Then every day the prince would return to the forest. And everyday, more innocent deer were killed.

NARRATOR 1: But the prince could eat only one deer a day.

NARRATOR 2: And that meant that more deer were being killed than were needed.

CHORUS: The prince was killing more deer than he could eat.  
Oh, how could the poor deer escape such a fate?

NARRATOR 1: Everyday Banyan Deer would walk among his herd saying...



BANYAN DEER: Do not give up! We have fresh, cool water to drink and green grass to eat. Where there is life, there is hope. I will find a way to save you. Don't give up!

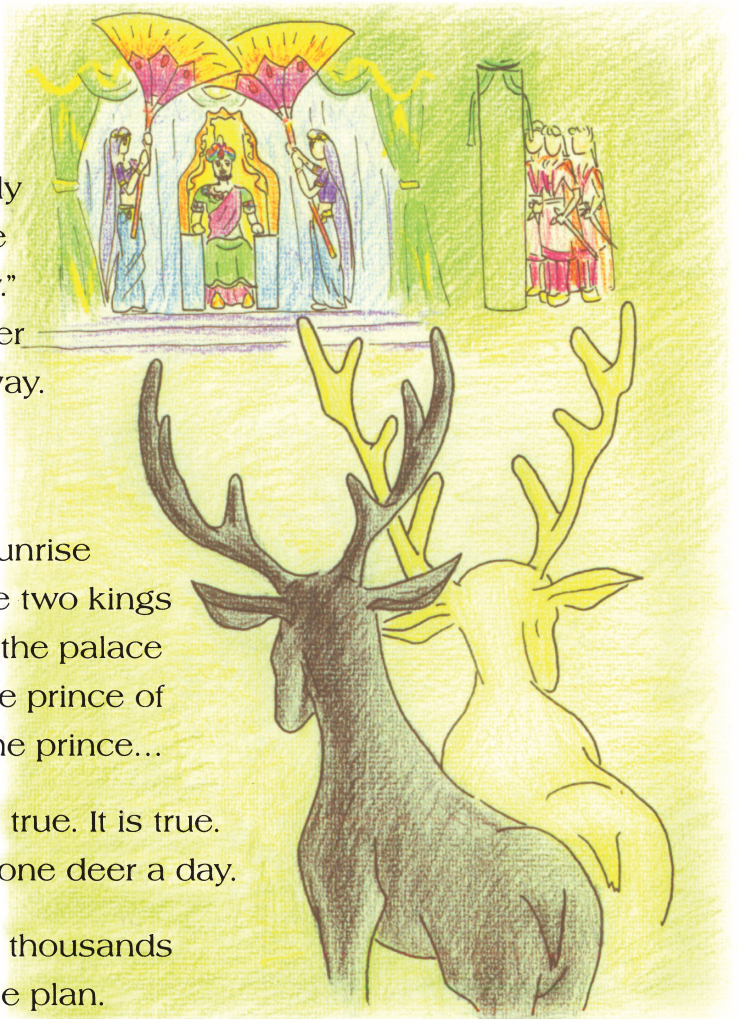
NARRATOR 2: And as it went, Banyan did find a way. He met with Branch Deer, the leader of the other herd, and told him his plan. Said Banyan Deer...

BANYAN DEER: The arrows fall like rain everyday and there is no escape from death, but this needless killing must be stopped! Let the deer draw lots and take turns each day and go to the palace to be shot—one day from my herd, the next day from your herd.

NARRATOR 1: Said Branch Deer...

BRANCH DEER: Very well.

CHORUS: What a good plan!  
The prince will surely say, "I can't eat more than one deer a day."  
More lives of the deer can be saved that way.

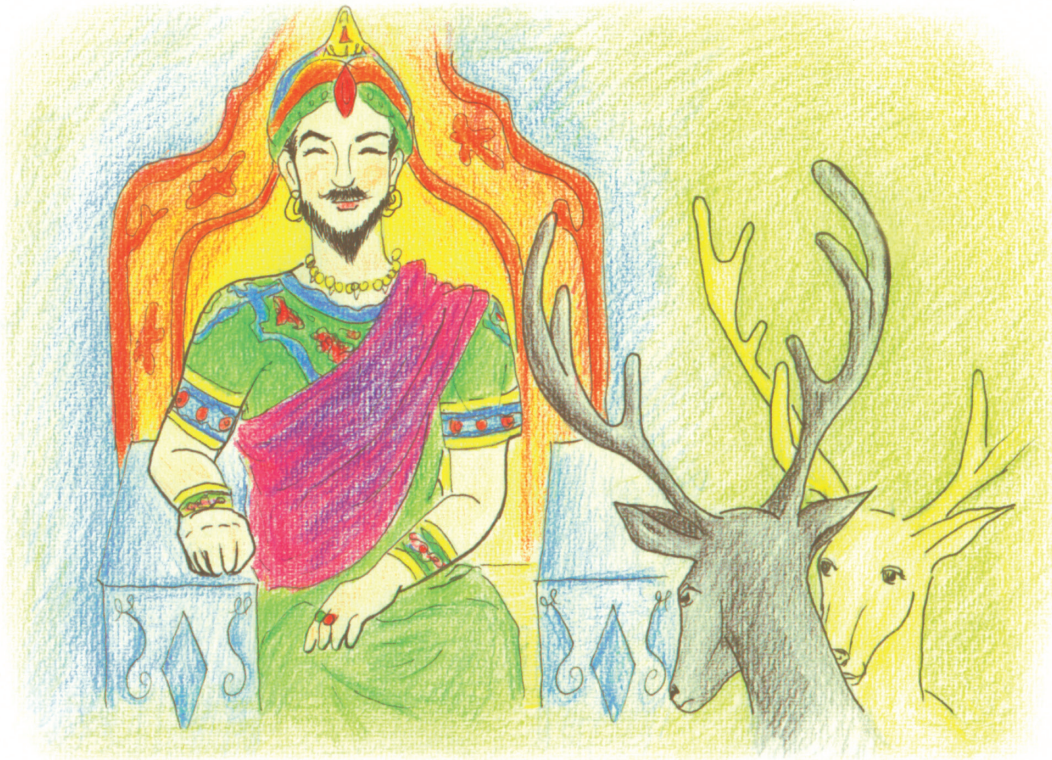


## Act II

NARRATOR 1: In the glory of sunrise the next day, the two kings of deer went to the palace and spoke to the prince of the plan. Said the prince...

PRINCE: So be it! So be it! It is true. It is true.  
I can't eat more than one deer a day.

NARRATOR 2: And he told his thousands of hunters of the plan.



### Act III

NARRATOR 1: On the first day of the lottery, the turn fell on a pregnant doe from Branch's herd. She went before Branch Deer and said...

MOTHER DEER: If I go now, both my unborn fawn and I will be killed. Please spare me! Once my fawn is safely born, I will take my turn.

BRANCH DEER: The law is the law. You must go!

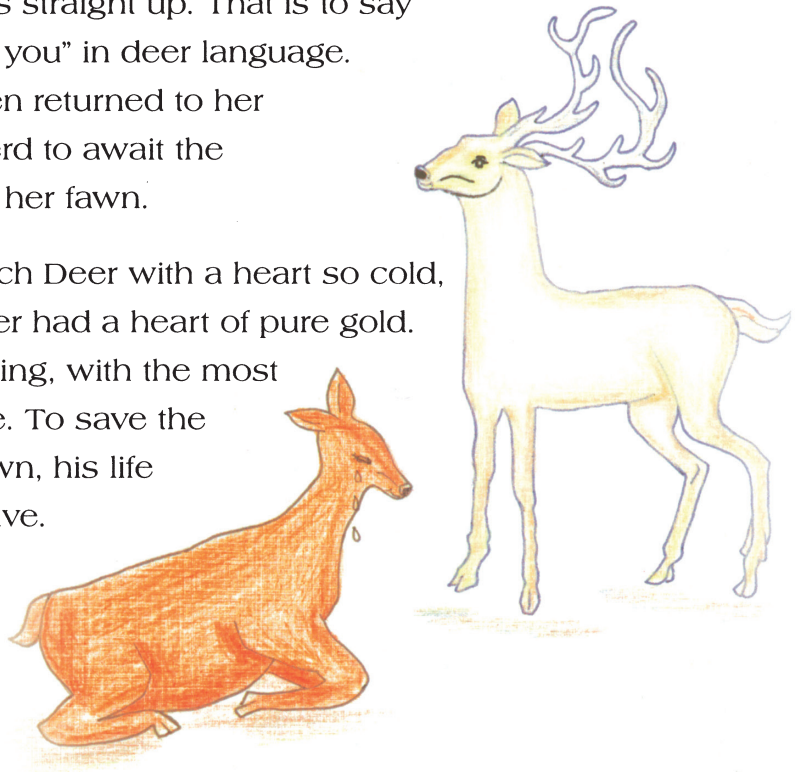
CHORUS: Oh dear, dear, the sorrow the doe must face. There is not a single deer to take her place.

NARRATOR 2: In despair the doe went to Banyan Deer and explained her plight. Said Banyan Deer...

BANYAN DEER: Be at peace. Your fawn will live. Your turn will fall upon another.

NARRATOR 1: With that, the doe bounded into the air and pointed her ears straight up. That is to say “Thank you” in deer language. She then returned to her own herd to await the birth of her fawn.

CHORUS: Unlike Branch Deer with a heart so cold, Banyan Deer had a heart of pure gold. As a deer king, with the most years to live. To save the doe and fawn, his life he would give.



## Act IV

NARRATOR 1: And so, the golden deer king went to the palace and stood by the gate to be shot. A deep silence fell over the forest.

NARRATOR 2: When the prince saw the golden deer king standing at his gate, he was surprised.

PRINCE: You are the leader of the herd. You should be the last to die!

BANYAN DEER: I came to save the life of a doe and her unborn fawn.

NARRATOR 1: A tear rolled down the cheek of the prince.

BANYAN DEER: You are a deer with a human heart. And I am a human with a deer heart. Arise! I spare your life and the life of the doe!



CHORUS: The prince, who had eaten so much meat,  
Had become like an animal with four feet.  
Banyan Deer with compassion, we can see,  
Had become as wise as any man could be.

NARRATOR 2: Banyan Deer did not move. Said he...

BANYAN DEER: So we will be free, but what about the other deer?

PRINCE: They shall also be free.

BANYAN DEER: And the other four-footed animals?

PRINCE: They shall also be free.

BANYAN DEER: And the fish in the sea and the birds in the air?

PRINCE: They shall also be free! All the animals shall be free!

NARRATOR 1: Then Banyan Deer King raised his golden head and  
returned to the forest.

CHORUS: Banyan Deer saved the life of the doe.  
The Buddha told this story a long time ago.  
To teach us kindness and how to give,  
To inspire goodness in all those who live.



## GLOSSARY

ARHAT- One of the stages of enlightenment. It has three meanings, which are: 1. Worthy of offerings

2. Killer of evil

3. Will not be reborn

ASURAS- Beings who have spiritual powers, but no blessings. The men are ugly. They like to fight and drink wine. The women are beautiful and like to cause trouble. Asuras can appear as people or animals.

BANYAN TREE- A sacred tree in India. Roots ascend from its branches, take root in the soil and become trunks. There can be as many as 200 trunks that encompass a 900 ft. circle.

BHIKSHU- An ordained monk.

BODHI TREE- A sacred tree under which Shakyamuni Buddha became enlightened.

BODHISATTVA- A compassionate being that enlightens himself and helps others to be enlightened.

BUDDHA DHARMA- The teachings of the Buddha.

CULTIVATE- To develop wisdom and compassion by following the teachings of the Buddha.

CULTIVATOR- One who cultivates the Buddha Dharma through practice.

DHARMA- A rule or method; the teaching of the Buddha.

DHARMA MASTER- A polite term to address a teacher of the Dharma.

ENLIGHTENMENT- Understanding the truth of life, freedom from ignorance and desire.

FULL LOTUS- A meditation posture with both legs crossed over each other and resting on the thighs.

GILD- To paint with gold.

JETA GROVE- A monastery in Shravasti given to the Buddha by the merchant Sudatta.

JATAKA TALES- Stories of the past lives of the Buddha.

KARMA- "Action" or the law of cause and effect. For every action there is a cause. Good actions lead one closer to perfect happiness or Nirvana; bad actions lead one away.

LAYPERSON- A Buddhist who is not a nun or monk.

LEAVE HOME- To renounce the home like and devote oneself to the Buddha Dharma.

LOTUS FLOWER- A symbol of enlightenment.

MANTRA- A symbolic phrase made of harmonious sounds that is chanted or recited.

MEDITATION- Sitting quietly to focus the mind for inner calmness and peace.

MONASTERY- A place where monks nuns, live, study, and worship.

NIRVANA- A state of everlasting joy and peace attained by enlightened sages.

OFFERING BOWL- A bowl in which nuns and monks collect offerings of food.

ORDAINED- To take the full precepts to become a monk or nun.

PRATYEKA BUDDHA- A hermit who is self enlightened.

PRECEPTS- Rules of conduct given by the Buddha to his disciples. The Five Precepts are: no killing, no stealing, no sexual misconduct, no false speech, and no intoxicants

REBIRTH- The belief that one is reborn in a different body after death.

RECITING- Half-singing, half-speaking sacred phrases or texts; very calming and peaceful.

SAMADHI- A state of deep meditation in which one gains insight.

SANGHA- The community of Buddhist nuns and monks.

SANSKRIT- An ancient Indian language. Many sacred Buddhist books were written in Sanskrit.

SHARIRA- The remains of a part of the body or something left behind by a holy person.

SPIRITUAL PENETRATIONS- The power to see future and past lives and to transform oneself into various forms.

SUTRAS- Truths spoken by the Buddha and his disciples under the Buddha's direction.

TANG DYNASTY- From 618 AD to 907 AD. A time when Buddhism flourished in China.

TRANSLATE- To put in a different language.

TRAYASTRIMSĀ HEAVEN- The second of the six heavens in the realm of desire.

TUSHITA HEAVEN- The first of the six heavens of desire.



**When the Buddha  
arrived in Shravasti,  
he emitted a light  
that flooded the land,  
making  
the universe bright.**



**Bodhisattvas are  
enlightened beings  
who enlighten others.  
They have very big hearts  
and want to help  
all living beings.**



Namo Dharma Protector Wei Tuo Bodhisattva



## Verse of Transference

May the merit and virtue accrued from this work

Adorn the Buddhas' Pure Lands,

Repaying the four kinds of kindness above

And aiding those suffering in the paths below.

May those who see and hear of this

All bring forth the resolve for Bodhi

And, when this retribution body is over,

Be born together in the Land of Ultimate Bliss.

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May the merit and virtue  
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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**

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