

Buddhist Stories

from the

Dhammapada Commentary

Part II

Translated from the Pali

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17. Mara, The Evil One

Happy are companions when the need arises...

This instruction was given by the Teacher while he was dwelling in a forest-hut in the Himalaya country with reference to Mara.

Tradition has it that at this time kings who exercised rule oppressed the subjects over whom they ruled. As the Exalted One saw men punished and persecuted under the rule of these wicked kings, he was moved to compassion.

And he considered thus within himself, *"Is it not possible to exercise sovereignty without killing or causing to kill, without conquering or causing to conquer, without sorrow or causing sorrow, with justice and righteousness?"*

Now Mara the Evil One perceived within himself the thought that was passing through the mind of the Exalted One, and he reflected thus, "The monk Gotama is considering within himself, *'Is it not possible to exercise sovereignty?'* It must be that he now desires to exercise sovereignty. And this thing which is called sovereignty is an occasion of heedlessness.

If he does exercise sovereignty, I may be able to catch him off his guard. I will therefore go and arouse his ambition."1

Accordingly Mara the Evil One approached the Teacher and said, "Reverend sir, let the Exalted One exercise sovereignty; let the Happy One exercise sovereignty, without killing or causing to kill, without conquering or causing to conquer, without sorrow or causing sorrow, with justice and righteousness." Said the Teacher to Mara, "Evil One, what do you see in me that makes you speak thus to me?"

Said Mara to the Teacher, "Reverend sir, the Exalted One has developed to the full the four bases of spiritual power. For should the Exalted One resolve, 'Let the Himalaya, king of mountains, be turned to gold,' that mountain would turn to gold. I, too, will do with this wealth all those things which can be done with wealth. Thus you shall rule justly and righteously." Then said the Teacher:

A mountain made of gold,
Of only gold alone,
Given to one — not enough!

Knowing this, live steadily.

Having seen where suffering has its cause,
How can a person turn away to pleasures?
Knowing the "assets"2 as attachments in the world,
Let such a one by training subdue them.

With these stanzas the Teacher aroused and alarmed Mara the Evil One. Then he said to him, "I will admonish you yet again, Evil One. I have nothing in common with you. Thus do I admonish you." So saying, he pronounced the following stanzas:

Happy are companions when the need arises,
Contentment is happiness with just this and that;
Happy is merit when life is at an end,
Abandoning all suffering is happiness.

Happiness is it to serve one's mother here,
To serve one's father, too, is happiness;
Happiness is serving ascetics here.
To serve brahmanas3 is happiness.

Virtue till old age is happiness;
Happiness is faith planted firmly;
Happy is the gaining of wisdom,
Not doing evil — that is happiness.

— [Dhp 331-333](#)

18. The Buddha Settles a Quarrel .

We live indeed so happily...

This instruction was given by the Teacher while he was in residence

among the Sakiyas⁴ with reference to the cessation of a quarrel among kinsmen.

The story goes that the Sakiyas and the Koliyas caused the waters of the river Rohini to be confined by a single dam between the city of Kapilavatthu and the city of Koliya and cultivated the fields on both sides of the river. Now in the month Jetthamula the crops began to droop, whereupon the laborers employed by the residents of both cities assembled. Said the residents of the city of Koliya, "If this water is diverted to both sides of the river, there will not be enough both for you and for us too. But our crops will ripen with a single watering. Therefore let us have the water."

The Sakiyas replied, "After you have filled your storehouses, we shall not have the heart to take ruddy gold and emeralds and black pennies, and baskets and sacks in our hands, and go from house to house seeking favors at your hands. Our crops also will ripen with a single watering. Therefore let us have this water." — "We will not give it to you." — "Neither will we give it to you."

Talk waxed bitter, until finally one arose and struck another a blow. The other returned the blow and a general fight ensued, the combatants making matters worse by aspersions on the origins of the two royal families.

Said the laborers employed by the Koliyas, "You who live in the city of Kapilavatthu, take your children and go where you belong. Are we likely to suffer harm from the elephants and horses and shields and weapons of those who, like dogs and jackals, have cohabited with their own sisters?"

The laborers employed by the Sakiyas replied. "You lepers, take your children and go where you belong. Are we likely to suffer harm from the elephants and horses and shields and weapons of destitute outcasts who have lived in jujube-trees like animals?"

Both parties of laborers went and reported the quarrel to the

ministers who had charge of the work, and the ministers reported the matter to the royal households. Thereupon the Sakiyas came forth armed for the battle and cried out, "We will show what strength and power belong to those who have cohabited with their sisters." Likewise the Koliyas came forth armed for battle and cried out, "We will show what strength and power belong to those who dwell in jujube-trees."

As the Teacher surveyed the world at dawn and beheld his kinsmen, he thought to himself, "If I refrain from going to them, these men will destroy each other. It is clearly my duty to go to them."

Accordingly he flew through the air quite alone to the spot where his kinsmen were gathered together, and seated himself cross-legged in the air over the middle of the river Rohini.

When the Teacher's kinsmen saw the Teacher, they threw away their weapons and did reverence to him. Said the Teacher to his kinsmen, "What is all this quarrel about, great king?" — "We do not know, reverend sir." — "Who then would be likely to know?" — "The commander-in-chief of the army would be likely to know." The commander-in-chief of the army said, "The viceroy would be likely to know." Thus the Teacher put the question first to one and then to another, asking the slave-laborers last of all. The slave-laborers replied, "The quarrel is about water, reverend sir."

Then the Teacher asked the king, "How much is water worth, great king?" — "Very little, reverend sir." — "How much are Khattiyas⁵ worth, great king?" — "Khattiyas are beyond price, reverend sir." — "It is not fitting that because of a little water you should destroy khattiyas who are beyond price." They were silent. Then the Teacher addressed them and said, "Great kings, why do you act in this manner?"

Were I not here present today, you would set flowing a river of blood. You have done what should not be done. You live in strife, I

live free from strife. You live afflicted with the sickness of the evil passions, I live free from disease. You live in eager pursuit of the five kinds of sensual pleasure, but I live free from eager pursuit."

So saying, he pronounced the following stanzas:

We live indeed so happily
Unhating amidst the haters;
Among those who hate
We dwell free from hate.

We live indeed so happily
Unailing amidst the ailers;
Among those who are ailing
We dwell free from illness.

We live indeed so happily
Ungreedy amidst the greedy;
Among those who are greedy
We dwell free from greed.

— [Dhp 197-199](#)

19. A Certain Brahman .

From craving springs grief...

This instruction was given by the Teacher while he was in residence at Jetavana with reference to a certain brahman.

The story goes that this brahman, who was a holder of false views, went one day to the bank of the river to clear his field.

The Teacher, seeing that he was ripe for stream-entry, went to the place where he was. The brahman, although he saw the Teacher, paid

him no mark of respect, but remained silent.

The Teacher was the first to speak and said, "Brahman, what are you doing?" — "Clearing my field, Sir Gotama." The Teacher said no more and went his way. On the following day the brahman went to plow his field. The Teacher went to him and asked, "Brahman, what are you doing?" — "Plowing my field, Sir Gotama." The Teacher, hearing his reply, went his way.

On several days in succession the Teacher went to the brahman and asked the same question. Receiving the answers, "Sir Gotama, I am planting my field, I am weeding my field, I am guarding my field," the Teacher went his way.

One day the brahman said to the Teacher, "Sir Gotama, you have been coming here ever since I cleared my field. If my crop turns out well, I will divide it with you. I will not myself eat without giving to you. Henceforth you shall be my partner."

As time went on, his crop prospered. One day he said to himself, "My crop has prospered; tomorrow I will set the reapers to work." So he made ready for the reaping. But a severe rainstorm raged that night and beat down all his crops; the field looked as if it had been cut clean.

The Teacher, however, knew from the very first that his crop would not prosper. Early in the morning the brahman said to himself, "I will go look at my field." But when he reached the field and saw that it had been swept clean, he thought with deep grief, "The monk Gotama has visited this field from the day when I first cleared it, and I have said to him, 'If this crop of mine prospers, I will divide it with you. I will not myself eat without giving to you. Henceforth you shall be my partner.' But the desire of my heart has not been fulfilled." And he refused to eat and took to his bed.

Now the Teacher stopped at the door of his house. When the brahman heard that the Teacher had arrived, he said, "Bring my

partner in and give him a seat here." His servants did so. When the Teacher had taken his seat, he asked, "Where is the brahman?" — "He is lying in his room." — "Summon him."

When the brahman had come in response to the summons and had seated himself on one side, the Teacher said to him, "What is the matter, brahman?" — "Sir Gotama, you have visited me from the day when I first cleared my field, and I have said to you, 'If my crop prospers, I will divide it with you.' But the desire of my heart has not been fulfilled. Therefore sorrow has come upon me, and my food no longer agrees with me."

Then the Teacher said to him, "But brahman, do you know from what cause sorrow has come upon you?" — "No, Sir Gotama, that I do not know. But do you know?" The Teacher replied, "Yes, brahman. Whether sorrow or fear arises, it arises solely from desire." So saying, he pronounced the following stanza:

From craving springs grief,
From craving springs fear:
For one quite free of craving
There is no grief — how fear?

— [Dhp 216](#)

20. A Certain Head of Family .

From endearment springs grief...

This instruction was given by the Teacher while he was in residence at Jetavana with reference to a certain head of a family.

The story goes that this layman, on losing his son, was so overwhelmed with grief that he went every day to the burning-ground and wept, being unable to restrain his grief.

As the Teacher surveyed the world at dawn, he saw that the layman had the faculties requisite for stream-entry. So when he came back from his alms round, he took one attendant monk and went to the layman's door.

When the layman heard that the Teacher had come to his house, he thought to himself, "He must wish to exchange the usual compliments of health and civility with me." So he invited the Teacher into his house, provided him with a seat in the house court, and when the Teacher had taken his seat, he approached him, saluted him, and sat down respectfully on one side.

At once the Teacher asked him, "Layman, why are you sad?" — "I have lost my son; therefore I am sad," replied the layman. Said the Teacher, "Grieve not, layman. That which is called death is not confined to one place or to one person, but is common to all creatures who are born into the world. Not one is permanent.

Therefore one should not give oneself up to sorrow, but should rather thoroughly recollect, even as it is said, 'That which is subject to death has died, that which is subject to destruction is destroyed.'

For wise men of old did not sorrow over the death of a son, but applied themselves diligently to meditation upon death, saying to themselves, "That which is subject to death has died, that which is subject to destruction is destroyed." The layman asked the Teacher, "Reverend sir, who were they that did this? When was it that they did this? Please tell me about it." So to make the matter clear, the Teacher related the following Story of the Past:[6](#)

Man quits his mortal frame when joy in life is past,
Even as a snake is wont its worn-out slough to cast.
While he burns he does not know
The lamentation of his kin, their woe.

Because of that I do not mourn,
Destined to birth he's gone to be born.

Uncalled he hither came, unbidden soon to go;
Even as he came, he went. What cause is here for woe?

While he burns he does not know
The lamentation of his kin, their woe.
Because of that I do not mourn,
Destined to birth he's gone to be born.

Though I should fast and weep, how would it profit me?
My kith and kin, alas! would more unhappy be.
While he burns he does not know

The lamentation of his kin, their woe.
Because of that I do not mourn,

Destined to birth he's gone to be born.

As children cry in vain to grasp the moon above,
So mortals idly mourn the loss of those they love.
While he burns he does not know
The lamentation of his kin, their woe.
Because of that I do not mourn,
Destined to birth he's gone to be born.

A broken pot of earth, ah! who can piece again?
So too to mourn the dead is nought but labor vain.
While he burns he does not know
The lamentation of his kin, their woe.

Because of that I do not mourn,
Destined to birth he's gone to be born .

When the Teacher had related in detail this Uruga Jataka (No. 354), he continued as follows:

"In times past wise men did not do as you are doing on the death of a son. You have abandoned your customary occupations, have deprived yourself of food, and spend your time in lamentation. Wise men of old did not do so. On the contrary, they applied themselves diligently to meditation upon death, would not allow themselves to grieve, ate their food as usual, and attended to their customary occupations.

Therefore do not grieve at the thought that your dear son is dead. For whether sorrow or fear arises, it arises solely because of one that is dear." So saying, the Teacher pronounced the following stanza:

From endearment springs grief;
From endearment springs fear;
For one quite free of endearment
There is no grief — how fear?

— [Dhp 212](#)

At the conclusion of this instruction the head of family was established in the fruit of stream-entry; the assembled company also profited by the teaching.

21. Merchant Great-wealth .

Here shall I spend the rains...

This instruction was given by the Teacher while he was in residence at Jetavana with reference to Merchant Great-wealth, Mahadhana.

The story goes that he loaded five hundred carts with cloths dyed with safflower and set out from Benares to trade. When, on his return to Savatthi, he reached the bank of the river, he thought, "Tomorrow I will cross the river," and unyoked his carts right there and spent the night.

During the night a severe storm came up and it rained all night long. For seven days the river was in flood; for seven days the citizens kept holiday. The result was that the merchant had no opportunity to dispose of his crimson cloths. Thought the merchant to himself, "I have come a long distance and if I go back again, I shall be delayed; right here will I dwell during the rain, during the winter and summer, doing my work and selling these cloths."

As the Teacher made his alms round through the city, he became aware of the merchant's intention and smiled. Thereupon the Elder Ananda asked him why he smiled. The Teacher replied, "Ananda, did you see Merchant Great-wealth?" — "Yes, reverend sir." — "Not realizing that the end of his life is near, he has made up his mind to dwell right here during this entire year for the purpose of selling his goods." — "But, reverend sir, is the end of his life at hand?" — "Yes, Ananda; he will live only seven days longer and then he will fall into the mouth of death." So saying, the Teacher pronounced the following stanzas:

Today the effort must be made:
Tomorrow death may come, who knows?
No bargain with Mortality
Can keep him and his hordes away.
But one who dwells thus ardently,
Relentlessly, by day, by night,
Him, the Hermit Stilled has called,
The ideal lover of solitude.⁷

"Reverend sir, I will go tell him." — "By all means go, Ananda."

The elder went to the enclosure formed by the carts and made his round for alms. The merchant reverently presented him with food. Then the elder said to the merchant, "How long a time do you expect to remain here?" — "Reverend sir, I have come a long distance, and if I go back again, I shall suffer delay; I shall remain here during this entire year, and when I have sold my goods, I shall go on." —

"Layman, though the end of one's life is near, yet it is hard to realize; one should be heedful." — "Why, reverend sir, is the end of my life at hand?" — "Yes, layman, it is; only seven days more will your life continue."

His heart stirred with deep emotion, the merchant invited the Order of Monks presided over by the Buddha to be his guests. For seven days he gave alms and finally took the Teacher's bowl to permit him to pronounce the words of thanksgiving.

Said the Teacher, in pronouncing the words of thanksgiving, "Disciple, a wise man should never allow himself to think, 'Right here will I dwell during the rain, during the winter, and during summer. I will do this work and I will do that work.' Rather a man should meditate on the end of his own life." So saying the Teacher pronounced the following stanza:

"Here shall I spend the rains,
Here the winter, here the summer,"
Thus speculates the fool
The danger he does not know.

— [Dhp 286](#)

At the conclusion of the lesson the merchant was established in the fruit of stream-entry; the assembled company also profited by the lesson.

The merchant accompanied the Teacher on his way for a short distance and then turned back. "I feel as if I have some trouble in my

head," said he, and laid himself on his bed. No sooner had he lain down than he died, and was reborn in the world of the Tusita gods.

22. The Brahman Who Asked About Loss .

Better the conquest of oneself...

This instruction was given by the Teacher while he was in residence at Jetavana with reference to a brahman who asked about loss.

The story goes that this brahman considered within himself, "Does the Supremely Enlightened One know gain alone or does he know loss also? I will ask him." Accordingly he approached the Teacher and asked him, "Reverend sir, tell me, please, do you know gain alone, and not loss?" — "Brahman, I know both gain and loss." — "Well, then, tell me about loss." At once the Teacher pronounced the following stanza:

Unprofitable is sleeping after sunrise, idleness,
A hot temper, and addiction to drink,
Traveling far by oneself,
Seeking after other men's wives;
Seek after these things, brahman, and you will gain
That which will be of no advantage to you.

When the brahman heard this, he applauded the Teacher, saying, "Well said, well said, teacher of the multitude, leader of the multitude! You know indeed both gain and loss." — "Indeed, brahman, there is none other that knows loss so well as I."

Then the Teacher considered within himself what motive actuated the brahman, and asked him, "Brahman, how do you make your living?" — "By gambling, Sir Gotama." — "But who wins, you or the other man?" — "Sometimes I win and sometimes the other man wins."

Then said the Teacher, "Brahman, a trifling matter is the victory of him who defeats another; there is no superior advantage in such a victory. But he who overcomes his defilements and so conquers self, wins a better victory, for such a victory no one can turn into defeat."

So saying, he showed the connection, and teaching the Dhamma, pronounced the following stanzas:

Better the conquest of oneself
Than that of other people;
The man who has trained himself
In conduct ever well-restrained —

Neither deva nor minstrel divine,
Nor Mara together with Brahma,
Can overthrow the victory
Of such a man as this.

— [Dhp 104-105](#)

23. The Maiden Rohini .

One should give up anger...

This instruction was given by the Teacher while he was in residence at Banyan Grove with reference to the maiden Rohini.

The Maiden with Blotches on her Face

The story goes that once upon a time the Venerable Anuruddha went with his retinue of five hundred monks to Kapilavatthu. When the elder's kinsfolk heard that he had arrived, all except his sister, a maiden named Rohini, went to the monastery where the elder was in residence and paid their respects to him.

The elder asked his kinsfolk, "Where is Rohini?" — "At home, reverend sir." — "Why didn't she come here?" — "Reverend sir, she

is suffering from an eruption of the skin, and on this account was ashamed to come." The elder caused her to be summoned, saying, "Summon her immediately." Rohini fastened a covering of cloth about her face and went to the elder.

When she came into his presence, the elder asked her, "Rohini, why didn't you come here before?" — "Reverend sir, I am suffering from an eruption of the skin, and on this account I was ashamed to come." — "But ought you not to perform works of merit?" — "What can I do, reverend sir?" — "Cause an assembly-hall to be erected." — "What funds have I to use for this purpose?" — "Have you not a set of jewels?" — "Yes, reverend sir, I have." — "How much did it cost?" — "It must have cost ten thousand pieces of money." — "Well then, spend this in building an assembly-hall." — "Who will build it for me, reverend sir?"

The elder looked at her kinsfolk who stood near and said, "This shall be your duty." — "But, reverend sir, what will you do?" — "I shall stay right here; therefore bring her the building materials." — "Very well, reverend sir," said they, and brought them.

The elder superintended the arrangements for the erection of the assembly-hall. Said he to Rohini, "Cause an assembly-hall two stories in height to be erected and as soon as the planks are put in place above, you take your stand below, sweep constantly, prepare seats, and keep the water-vessels filled with water." — "Very well, reverend sir," replied Rohini.

So she spent her set of jewels in the erection of an assembly-hall two stories in height. As soon as the planks were put in place above, she took her stand below, swept, and performed the other duties, and monks sat therein constantly. Even as she swept the assembly-hall, the eruption subsided.

When the assembly-hall was completed, she invited the Order of Monks presided over by the Buddha; and when the Order of Monks

presided over by the Buddha had taken their seats, filling the assembly-hall, she offered them choice food, both hard and soft. When the Teacher finished his meal, he asked, "Whose is this offering?" — "Your sister Rohini's, reverend sir." — "But where is she?" — "In the house, reverend sir." — "Summon her." She was unwilling to go. But in spite of her unwillingness, the Teacher caused her to be summoned all the same.

When she had come and saluted him and taken her seat, the Teacher said to her, "Rohini, why didn't you come before?" — "Reverend sir, I was suffering from an eruption of the skin and was ashamed to come." — "But do you know the reason why this eruption of the skin broke out on your body?" — "No, reverend sir, I do not." — "It was because of anger that this eruption of the skin broke out on your body." — "Why, reverend sir, what did I do?" — "Well then, listen," said the Teacher. So saying, he told her the following story.

Story of the Past: The Jealous Queen and the Nautch-girl.

In times long past, the chief consort of the king of Benares took a dislike to one of the king's nautch-girls and said to herself, "I will make her suffer." So she procured a number of large ripe scabs, reduced them to powder, and summoning that nautch-girl to her, contrived secretly to place the powdered scabs in her bed and cloak and her goats' hair coverlet. Then, as if in fun, she sprinkled some of the powder on her body.

Immediately the girl's body became covered with pimples and boils so as to have a horridly angry look, and she went about scratching herself. When she lay down on her bed, there, too, the powdered scabs ate her up, and she suffered yet harsher pain. The chief consort at that time was Rohini.

~ End of Story of the Past ~

When the Teacher had related this Story of the Past, he said, "Rohini,

that was the evil deed which you committed at that time. Anger or jealousy, however slight, is always unbecoming." So saying, he pronounced the following stanza:

One should give up anger and abandon pride
And all the fetters one should overcome;
Suffering does not fall on one desiring naught,
Clinging not to mind or body.

— [Dhp 221](#)

At the conclusion of the lesson many obtained the fruit of stream-entry and the fruits of the second and third paths. Rohini also was established in the fruit of stream-entry and at that moment her body took on a golden hue.

Sequel: The Celestial Nymph .

Rohini passed from that state of existence and was reborn in the world of the Thirty-three Gods at the meeting-point of the boundaries of four deities. She was fair to look upon and possessed the perfection of beauty.

When the four deities looked upon her, desire arose within them, and they began to quarrel over her, saying, "She was reborn within my boundary, she was reborn within my boundary." Finally they went to Sakka king of gods and said to him, "Sire, a dispute has arisen among us over this nymph; decide the dispute for us."

When Sakka looked at the nymph, desire arose within him also. Said he, "What manner of thoughts have arisen within you since you saw this nymph?" The first deity said, "As for me, the thoughts which have arisen within me have no more been able to subside than a battle drum." The second said, "My thoughts have run wild like a mountain torrent." The third said, "From the time I first saw this nymph, my eyes have popped out like the eyes of a crab." The fourth

said, "My thoughts have no more been able to stand still than a banner raised on a shrine." Then Sakka said to them, "Friends as for you, your thoughts are on fire. For my part, if I can have this nymph I shall live, but if I cannot have her, I shall surely die."

The deities replied, "Great king, there is no need of your dying." So saying, they yielded the nymph to Sakka and went their way. She was Sakka's darling and delight. If she ever said, "Let us go engage in such and such sport," he could not refuse her.

24. The Weaver's Daughter .

This world is indeed blind...

This instruction was given by the Teacher while he was in residence at Aggalava Shrine with reference to a certain weaver's daughter.

For one day, when the Teacher came to Alavi, the residents of Alavi invited him to a meal and gave alms. At the end of the meal the Teacher spoke the words of thanksgiving, saying: "Practice meditation on death, saying to yourselves, 'Uncertain is my life. Certain is my death. I shall surely die. Death will be the termination of my life. Life is unstable. Death is sure.' For they that have not practiced meditation on death will tremble and fear when their last hour comes, and will die screaming screams of terror, even as a man without a stick, on seeing a snake, is stricken with fear.

But those who have practiced meditation on death will have no fear when their last hour comes, but will be like a steadfast man who, seeing a snake even afar off, takes it up with his stick and tosses it away. Therefore practice meditation on death."

With a single exception all those who heard this discourse remained absorbed in their worldly duties as before. Only a single weaver's daughter, about sixteen years of age, said to herself, "Marvelous

indeed is the speech of the Buddhas; it behooves me to practice meditation on death." And she did nothing else but practice meditation on death day and night. The Teacher left Alavi and went to Jetavana. Then that maiden for three years developed just the meditation on death.

Now one day, as the Teacher surveyed the world at early dawn, he perceived that this maiden had entered the net of his knowledge. When he saw her, he considered within himself, "What will happen?" And he became aware of the following, "From the day when this maiden heard my discourse on the Dhamma, she has practiced meditation on death for three years. I will now go to Alavi and ask this maiden four questions. On each of the four points she will answer me correctly, and I will congratulate her. I will then pronounce the stanza, *This world is indeed blind*. At the conclusion of the stanza she will be established in the fruit of stream-entry. By reason of her, my discourse will be profitable to the multitude besides."

So the Teacher, with his retinue of five hundred monks, departed from Jetavana, and in due course arrived at the Aggalava monastery.

When the people of Alavi heard that the Teacher had come, they went to the monastery and invited him to be their guest. That maiden also heard that he had come, and her heart was filled with joy at the thought, "Here has come, so people say, one that is my father, my master, my teacher, one whose countenance is like the full moon, the mighty Gotama Buddha." And she reflected, "Now, for the first time in three years, I am to see the Teacher, the hue of whose body is as the hue of gold; now I am to be permitted to behold his body, whose hue is as the hue of gold, and to hear him preach the sublime Dhamma, containing within itself all sweetness."

But her father, on his way to the workshop, said to her, "Daughter, a garment for a customer is on the loom, and a span of it is yet

incomplete. I must finish it today. Quickly replenish the shuttle and bring it to me."

Thought the maiden, "It was my desire to hear the Teacher preach the Dhamma, but my father has thus addressed me. Shall I hear the Teacher preach the Dhamma, or replenish the shuttle and carry it to my father?" Then this thought occurred to her, "If I should fail to bring my father the shuttle, he would strike me and beat me. Therefore I will first replenish the shuttle and give it to him, and wait until afterwards to hear the Dhamma." So she sat down on a stool and replenished the shuttle.

The people of Alavi waited upon the Teacher and provided him with food, and when the meal was over, took his bowl and stood waiting for him to speak the words of rejoicing (with the merits of the donors). Said the Teacher, "I came here on a journey of thirty leagues for the sake of a certain maiden. As yet she finds no opportunity to be present. When she finds the opportunity to be present, I will speak the words of rejoicing."

Having so said, he sat down and remained silent. Likewise his hearers also remained silent. (When the Teacher is silent, neither men nor gods dare utter a sound.)

When the maiden had replenished the shuttle, she put it in her basket and set out in the direction of her father's workshop. On her way she stopped in the outer circle of the congregation and stood gazing at the Teacher. The Teacher also lifted up his head and gazed at her.

By his manner of gazing at her she knew, "The Teacher, sitting in such a congregation, signifies by gazing at me that he desires me to come, that his sole desire is that I come into his very presence." So she set her shuttle-basket on the ground and went into the presence of the Teacher.

(But why did the Teacher gaze at her? The following thought, we are told, occurred to him, "If this maiden leaves, she will die as a

worldling⁸ and her future state will be uncertain. But if she comes to me, she will depart established in the fruit of stream-entry, and her future state will be certain, for she will be reborn in the world of the Tusita gods." We are told that there was no escape from death for her that day.)

At the mere hint of his look she approached the Teacher, and penetrating the rays of six-colored light that shone from his body, she paid obeisance to him and stood respectfully at one side. No sooner had she paid obeisance to the Teacher and taken her stand beside him, seated in silence in the midst of the assemblage there gathered together, than he thus addressed her, "Maiden, from where do you come?" — "I do not know, reverend sir." — "Where are you going?" — "I do not know, reverend sir." — "Do you not know?" — "I know, reverend sir." — "Do you know?" — "I do not know, reverend sir." Thus the Teacher asked her four questions.

The multitude were offended and said, "Look, this daughter of a weaver talks as she pleases with the Supremely Enlightened One. When he asked her, 'From where do you come?' she should have answered, 'From the weaver's house.' And when he asked her, 'Where are you going?' she should have answered, 'To the weaver's workshop.'"

The Teacher put the multitude to silence and asked her, "Maiden, when I asked you, 'From where do you come?' why did you say, 'I do not know'?" She answered, "Reverend sir, you yourself know that I came from the house of my father, a weaver. So when you asked me, 'From where do you come?' I knew very well that your meaning was, 'From where did you come when you were reborn here?' But as for me, from where I came when I was reborn here, that I do not know." Then the Teacher said to her, "Well said, well said, O maiden! You have answered correctly the question I asked you."

Thus did the Teacher congratulate her, and having done so, he asked

her yet another question, "When I asked you, 'Where are you going?' why did you say, 'I do not know'?" — "Reverend sir, you yourself know that I was going to the weaver's workshop with my shuttle-basket in hand. So when you asked me, 'Where are you going?' I knew very well that your meaning was, 'When you pass away, where will you be reborn?' But as for me, where I shall be reborn when I have passed from this present existence, that I do not know." Then the Teacher said to her, "You have answered correctly the question I asked you."

Thus did the Teacher congratulate her the second time, and having so done, asked her yet another question, "When I asked you, 'Do you not know?' why did you say, 'I know'?" — "Reverend sir, this I know, that I shall surely die; and therefore I said so." Then the Teacher said to her, "You have answered correctly the question I asked you."

Thus did the Teacher congratulate her the third time, and having done so, he asked her yet another question, "When I asked you, 'Do you know?' why did you say, 'I do not know'?" — "This only do I know, reverend sir, that I shall surely die; but at what time I shall die, whether in the night or in the daytime, whether in the morning or at some other time, that I do not know; and therefore I said so." Then said the Teacher to her, "You have answered correctly the question I asked you."

Thus did the Teacher congratulate her the fourth time, and having so done, addressed the assemblage as follows: "Those among you who failed to understand the words she spoke, you only were offended. For those who lack the eye of understanding, they only are blind; those who possess the eye of understanding, they only see." So saying, he pronounced the following stanza:

This world is indeed blind
Few are those who deeply see.

Like birds escaping from a net
Few will go to heaven.

— [Dhp 174](#)

At the conclusion of the discourse that maiden was established in the fruit of stream-entry.

Then the maiden took her shuttle-basket and went to her father. He was asleep even as he sat at the loom. Not observing that he was asleep, she presented the shuttle-basket. As she did so, the basket hit the tip of the loom and fell with a clatter. Her father awoke, and accidentally, as a result of taking hold of the loom, gave it a pull, whereupon the tip of the loom swung around and struck the maiden in the breast. Then and there she died and was reborn in the world of the Tusita gods. Her father looked at her as she lay there, her whole body spotted with blood, and saw that she was dead.

Straightaway there arose within him intense grief. Wailing, "There is none other that can extinguish my grief," he went to the Teacher and told him what had happened. "Reverend sir," said he, "extinguish my grief." The Teacher comforted him, saying, "Grieve not, disciple, for in the round of existences without conceivable beginning, you have even thus, over the death of your daughter, shed tears more abundant than the water contained in the four great oceans."

In this way the Teacher discoursed on the round of existences without conceivable beginning. The disciple's grief was assuaged, and he requested the Teacher for the going forth. Afterwards he gained acceptance into the Order and in no long time attained arahantship.

25. A Certain Layman .

Hunger is the greatest disease...

This instruction was given by the Teacher while he was in residence at Alavi with reference to a certain lay disciple.

For one day, as the Teacher seated in the Perfumed Chamber at Jetavana surveyed the world at dawn, he beheld a certain poor man at Alavi. Perceiving that he possessed the faculties requisite for attaining the fruit of stream-entry, he surrounded himself with a company of five hundred monks and went to Alavi. The inhabitants of Alavi straightaway invited the Teacher to be their guest.

That poor man also heard that the Teacher had arrived and made up his mind to go and hear the Teacher teach the Dhamma. But that very day an ox of his strayed off. So he considered within himself, "Shall I seek that ox, or shall I go and hear the Dhamma?" And he came to the following conclusion, "I will first seek that ox and then go and hear the Dhamma." Accordingly, early in the morning, he set out to seek his ox.

The residents of Alavi provided seats for the Order of Monks presided over by the Buddha, served them with food, and after the meal took the Teacher's bowl, that he might pronounce the words of rejoicing.

Said the Teacher, "He for whose sake I came here on a journey of thirty leagues has gone into the forest to seek his ox which was lost. I will not teach the Dhamma until he returns." And he remained silent.

While it was still day, that poor man found his ox and straightaway drove the ox back to the herd. Then he thought to himself, "Even if I can do nothing else, I will at least pay my respects to the Teacher."

Accordingly, although he was oppressed with the pangs of hunger, he decided not to go home, but went quickly to the Teacher, and having paid obeisance to the Teacher, sat down respectfully on one side.

When the poor man came and stood before the Teacher, the Teacher said to the steward of the alms, "Is there any food left over by the Order of Monks?" — "Reverend sir, it is all there." — "Well then, serve this poor man with food." So when the steward had provided that poor man with a seat in a place indicated by the Teacher, he served him dutifully with rice-porridge and other food, both hard and soft. When the poor man had eaten his meal he rinsed his mouth. (We are told that with this single exception there is no other instance on record in the Three Pitakas of the Tathagata's having thus inquired about the supply of food.)

As soon as the poor man's physical sufferings had been relieved his mind became tranquil. Then the Teacher taught the Dhamma in orderly sequence, expounding one after another the Four Noble Truths. At the conclusion of the lesson, the poor man was established in the fruit of stream-entry. Then the Teacher pronounced the words of thanksgiving, and having done so, arose from his seat and departed. The multitude accompanied him a little way and then turned back.

The monks who accompanied the Teacher were highly indignant and said, "Just consider, brethren, what the Teacher did. Nothing of the sort ever happened before. But today, seeing a certain poor man, the Teacher inquired about the supply of food and directed that food to be given to another." The Teacher turned around, stopped, and said, "Monks, what are you saying?" When he heard what they were saying, he said to them, "It is even so, monks. When I came here on a journey of thirty leagues, a long and difficult journey, my sole reason for coming was the fact that I saw that this lay disciple possessed the faculties requisite for the attainment of the fruit of stream-entry.

Early in the morning, oppressed with the pangs of hunger, this man went to the forest and spent the day in the forest seeking his ox

which was lost. Therefore I thought to myself, 'If I preach Dhamma to this man while he is suffering from the pangs of hunger, he will not be able to comprehend it.' Therefore I did what I did. Monks, there is no affliction like the affliction of hunger." So saying, he pronounced the following stanza:

Hunger is the greatest disease,
Conditioned things are the greatest suffering.
For one who has known this as it is
Nibbana is the bliss supreme.

— [Dhp 203](#)

26. Kala, Anathapindika's Son .

Better than sole sovereignty over the earth...

This instruction was given by the Teacher while he was in residence at Jetavana with reference to Kala, son of Anathapindika.

Tradition has it that Kala, although the son of so distinguished a father, a treasurer endowed with faith, never showed any desire to visit the Teacher, or to see him when he came to his father's house, or to hear the Dhamma, or to perform services for the Order.

Moreover, whenever his father said to him, "Dear son, do not do this," he paid no attention to what he said. Now his father thought to himself, "If this son of mine adopts such an attitude as this and acts accordingly, the Avici hell will be his end. But it would not look well for me if my son went to hell before my very eyes. Now there is no living being here in the world who may not be broken by gifts; I will therefore break him with gifts." So he said to his son, "Dear son, take upon yourself the precepts of Uposatha day,⁹ go to the monastery, listen to the Dhamma, and then return. If you will do so, I will give you a hundred pieces of money." — "Will you really give me this,

dear father?" — "That I will, dear son."

After his father had repeated his promise three times, Kala took upon himself the precepts of Uposatha day and went to the monastery. But not caring to listen to the Dhamma, he lay down to sleep in a pleasant place and returned home early in the morning. Thereupon his father said, "My son has undertaken the precepts of Uposatha day; bring him rice-porridge and other food straightway." So saying, his father caused food to be brought and given to him. But Kala said, "Unless I receive the money, I will not eat." So saying, he steadfastly refused whatever was brought to him. His father, who could not endure forcing him to eat, ordered that the money be presented to his son. The son took the purse of money into his hands and ate the food that was brought to him.

On the following day the treasurer sent him forth, saying to him, "Dear son, I will give you a thousand pieces of money if you will stand before the Teacher, learn a single verse of the Dhamma, and then return to me." Accordingly Kala went to the monastery and took his stand before the Teacher. But no sooner had he mastered a single verse than he desired to run away. The Teacher therefore caused him to misunderstand the true meaning of the verse. Kala, failing to understand the verse, said to himself, "I will master the following verse." Therefore he remained and continued to listen. (Those who listen to the Dhamma with a firm resolution to learn, listen attentively; and to those who thus listen, the Dhamma gives the fruit of stream-entry and the remaining fruits.)

Kala listened to the Dhamma with a firm resolution to learn; but the Teacher, as before, caused him to misunderstand the true meaning. "I will master the following verse," said Kala. So he remained and listened and was established in the fruit of stream-entry.

On the following day he accompanied the Order of Monks presided over by the Buddha to Savatthi. When the great treasurer saw him,

he said to himself, "Today the demeanor of my son pleases me." And straightaway the following thought occurred to the son, "I hope my father will not give me the money today in the presence of the Teacher. I hope he will conceal the fact that it was for the sake of money that I took upon myself the precepts of the Uposatha day." (But the Teacher knew all the same that it was for the sake of money that Kala took upon himself the Uposatha precepts on the preceding day.)

The great treasurer presented rice-porridge to the Order of Monks presided over by the Buddha and then presented the same to his son. Kala sat down in silence, drank the porridge, ate the hard food, and then ate the boiled rice. When the Teacher had finished his meal, the great treasurer placed the purse containing a thousand pieces of money before his son and said, "Dear son, you will remember that I persuaded you to take upon yourself the Uposatha precepts and to go to the monastery by promising to give you a thousand pieces of money; here are your thousand pieces of money." When Kala saw the thousand pieces of money presented to him in the very presence of the Teacher, he was greatly embarrassed and said, "I do not care for the money." — "Take the money, dear son," said the father. But the son refused to touch it.

Then his father saluted the Teacher and said, "Reverend sir, today the demeanor of my son pleases me." — "How is that, great treasurer?" — "The day before yesterday I sent him to the monastery, saying to him, 'I will give you a hundred pieces of money.' Yesterday he refused to eat because I did not give him the money; but today, when I give him the money, he refuses to touch it."

The Teacher replied, "It is even so, great treasurer. Today, in attaining the fruit of stream-entry your son has attained that which surpasses the attainment of a Universal Monarch, the attainment of the world of the gods, the attainment of the world of Brahma." So

saying, he pronounced the following stanza:

Better than sole sovereignty over the earth,
Better than going to heaven,
Better than lordship over all worlds
Is the fruit of entering the stream.

— [Dhp 178](#)

27. A Brahman of Saketa .

Those inoffensive sages...

This instruction was given by the Teacher while he was in residence at Añjanavana near Saketa with reference to a question asked by the monks.

The story goes that once upon a time, as the Exalted One, accompanied by the Order of Monks, was entering Saketa for alms, a certain old brahman who lived in Saketa passed out of the city, and seeing the Master of the Ten Powers entering within the gate, fell down before his feet, and grasping him firmly by the ankles, said to him, "Dear son, is it not the duty of sons to care for their mother and father when they have grown old? Why is it that for so long a time you have not shown yourself to us? This is the first time I have seen you. Come look upon your mother." And taking the Teacher with him, he escorted him into his house. When the Teacher had entered the house, he sat down on the seat prepared for him, together with the Order of Monks.

The brahman's wife also approached the Teacher, and falling before his feet, said, "Dear son, where have you been all this time? Ought not mothers and fathers to be cared for when they have grown old?" And she directed her sons and daughters to salute the Teacher, saying, "Go and salute your brother." Delighted at heart, the

brahman and his wife offered food to the Order of Monks presided over by the Buddha, saying, "Reverend sir, take all of your meals right here." The Teacher replied, "The Buddhas never take their meals regularly in the same place." Then said the brahman and his wife, "Well then, reverend sir, be good enough to send to us all those who come to you and invite you to be their guest."

From that time forward, the Teacher sent to the brahman and his wife all those who came to him with an invitation to be their guest, saying, "Go tell the brahman." Such persons would then go and say to the brahman, "We would invite the Teacher for tomorrow," and the brahman on the following day would take from his own house vessels of boiled rice and curries, and go to the place where the Teacher sat. In case the Teacher was invited nowhere else, he always took his meal in the house of the brahman. Both the brahman and his wife gave alms regularly to the Tathagata, listened to the Dhamma, and in the course of time obtained the fruit of the third path.

The monks began a discussion in the Hall of Truth: "Friends, the brahman knows perfectly well that the Tathagata's father is Suddhodana and that his mother is Mahamaya. But although he knows this, both he and his wife address the Tathagata as 'our son,' and the Teacher acquiesces in this form of address; what can be the explanation of this?" The Teacher overheard their talk and said, "Monks, both the brahman and his wife are addressing their own son when they say to me, 'Our son.'" Having said this, he related the following story.

Story of the Past .

"Monks, in times past this brahman was my father for five hundred¹⁰ successive existences, my uncle for five hundred existences, and my grandfather for five hundred existences; likewise the brahman's wife was my mother for five hundred existences, my aunt for five hundred existences, and my grandmother for five

hundred existences. Thus I was brought up by this brahman during fifteen hundred states of existence, and by the wife of this brahman during fifteen hundred states of existence." Having thus explained that he had been their son during three thousand states of existence, he pronounced the following stanzas:

If the mind rests satisfied, and the
heart reposes confidence in a man,
One may repose confidence in that man,
though it be the first time one has seen him.
Through previous association or present advantage,
That old love springs up again like the lotus in the water.

(End of the Story of the Past.)

For the entire period of three months during which the Teacher spent the rains-residence, he resorted only to that family for his meals and at the end of the three months they attained arahantship and passed into Nibbana. People rendered high honors to their bodies, placed both bodies on one hearse, and carried them out. The Teacher, surrounded by a retinue of five hundred monks, accompanied the bodies to the burning ground.

Hearing the report, "They were the mother and father of the Buddha," a great multitude went forth from the city. The Teacher entered a certain hall near the burning ground and remained there. People saluted the Teacher, saying to him, "Reverend sir, do not grieve because your mother and father are dead," and held amiable conversation with him. Instead of repulsing them by saying, "Speak not thus," the Teacher surveyed the thoughts of the company and preaching the Dhamma with reference to that particular occasion, recited the Jara Sutta, as follows:[11](#)

Short indeed is this life —
Within a hundred years one dies,

And if anyone lives longer,
Then he dies of decay.

People grieve for what is "mine":
Indeed possessions are not permanent,
And this is subject to destruction —
See this and homeless dwell!

In death it is abandoned
Yet men think 'it is mine';
Knowing this, the wise devoted to me
Should not stoop down to making 'his own.'

As a man awake sees not
The things he met in sleep,
So, too, the beloved one is not seen,
Having departed and done his time.

People now are seen and heard
And thus are called by name,
But alone shall the name remain
For the departed to be spoken of.

The greedy in mine-making do not give up
Sorrow, lamentation, avarice;
Therefore sages, leaving possessions,
Have wandered about, Seers of the Secure.

For a bhikkhu practicing seclusion,
Keeping company with the secluded mind,
All are agreed and say of him,
'He should not show himself again in becoming!'

The sage is unsupported in all circumstances;
Nothing he makes dear nor what is not dear;
Sorrow and avarice stain him not
Just as water stays not upon a leaf.

As a water-drop upon a lotus plant,
As water does not stain a lotus flower,
Even so the sage is never stained
By what has been seen, heard, and sensed by him.

Certainly the wise man does not conceive
By what has been seen, heard, and sensed,
Nor through another does he wish for purity
For he is not attached nor yet is he displeased.

The monks, not knowing that the brahman and his wife had attained Nibbana, asked the Teacher, "Reverend sir, what will be their future state?" The Teacher replied: "Monks, in the case of such as they, arahants and sages, there is no future state. Such as they attain the Eternal, the Deathless, Great Nibbana." So saying, he pronounced the following stanza:

Those inoffensive sages
In body ever restrained
Go to the Everlasting State
Where gone they grieve no more.

— [Dhp 225](#)

28. Santati the King's Minister .

Though he be adorned, if he lives at peace...

This instruction was given by the Teacher while he was in residence at Jetavana with reference to the king's minister Santati.

For once upon a time Santati returned from suppressing disorder on King Pasenadi Kosala's frontier, and the king was so pleased that he turned over his kingdom to him for seven days and gave him a woman who danced and sang. For seven days Santati steeped himself in liquor, and on the seventh day, adorned with all adornments, he mounted the back of the state elephant and set out for the bathing place. As he passed out of the gateway, he saw the Teacher entering the city for alms. Remaining seated as he was on the back of the elephant, he nodded his head by way of salute to the Teacher and passed on.

The Teacher smiled. "Why do you smile, reverend sir?" asked the Elder Ananda. Said the Teacher, explaining the reason for his smile, "Ananda, just look at the king's minister Santati! This very day, adorned as he is with all adornments, he will come into my presence, and at the conclusion of a stanza consisting of four lines he will attain arahantship. He will then assume a sitting posture at a height of seven palm-trees above the earth and will then and there pass into Nibbana."

The populace heard the words that passed between the Teacher and the elder. Those of the crowd who held false views thought to themselves, "Look at the way the monk Gotama acts! Whatever comes into his head he speaks with his mouth! This very day, so he says, that drunken sot, adorned as he is with all adornments, will come into his presence and listen to the Dhamma and pass into Nibbana! But that is precisely what will not happen; this very day we shall catch him in a lie."

On the other hand those of right view thought to themselves, "The Buddhas are of great might! Today we shall get the chance to see both the grace of the Buddha and the gracefulness of Santati the

king's minister."

Santati spent a portion of the day at the bathing place sporting in the water, and then entered his pleasure garden and sat down in his drinking hall. Straightaway a woman came down to the center of the stage and began to display her skill in dancing and singing. Now she had fasted for seven days that she might display more perfect grace of body; and the result was that on that particular day, as she was displaying her skill in dancing and singing, knife-like pains arose in her belly and as it were cut the flesh of her heart asunder. And then and there with open mouth and open eyes she died.

Santati the king's minister said, "Look to the lady!" — "She is dead, master," was the reply. As soon as Santati heard those words, he was overwhelmed with mighty sorrow; and in an instant the liquor he had drunk during the preceding week vanished away like a drop of water on a red-hot potsherd. He said to himself, "With the single exception of the Teacher, who is able to extinguish my sorrow?"

So in the evening, surrounded by his force of men, he went to the Teacher, and having saluted him, spoke as follows, "Reverend sir, such and such sorrow has come upon me. I have come to you because I know that you will be able to extinguish my sorrow. Be my refuge." Then the Teacher said to him, "You have indeed come into the presence of one who is able to extinguish your sorrow. On the numberless occasions when this woman has died in this very manner and you have wept over her, you have shed tears more abundant than all the water contained in the four great oceans." So saying, he pronounced the following stanza:

Whatever in the past was produced by excellence
Let there be for you no ownership afterwards,
And if in the present you will not grasp at all
You will fare on to the perfect peace.

At the conclusion of the stanza, Santati the king's minister attained arahantship. Thereupon he surveyed his own aggregate of life, and perceiving that he had but a little while to live, he said to the Teacher, "Reverend sir, permit me to attain (final) Nibbana." The Teacher, although he himself knew what had been Santati's meritorious deed in a previous state of existence, thought to himself, "Those of wrong views who have gathered themselves together for the purpose of catching me in a lie will not succeed in doing so; and those of right view who have assembled with the thought in their minds, 'We shall behold the grace of the Buddha and the gracefulness of Santati the king's minister,' when they hear about the meritorious deed he performed in a previous state of existence, will increase in esteem for works of merit."

Therefore the Teacher said to Santati the king's minister, "Well then, rehearse to us all the meritorious deeds you did in a previous state of existence. Do not, however, rehearse it to us standing on the ground, but rehearse it to us poised in the air at a height of seven palm trees above the ground."

"Very well," replied Santati. So saluting the Teacher, he rose into the air to the height of one palm tree and then descended to the ground. Then he saluted the Teacher once more, and rising gradually to the height of seven palm trees above the ground, he seated himself cross-legged in the air, and said, "Listen, reverend sir, to the meritorious deed I performed in a previous state of existence." So saying, he related the following story.

Story of the Past: The Preacher of the Dhamma and the King.

"Ninety-one cycles of time ago, in the dispensation of the Buddha Vipassi, I was reborn in a certain household in a city named Bandhumati. And the following thought occurred to me, 'What labor will do away with the want and sufferings of others?'

While I was pondering this thought, I observed the labors of those who went about proclaiming the Dhamma, and from that time forth I labored at that very task. I incited others to perform works of merit, and I performed works of merit myself. On Uposatha days I took upon myself the Uposatha precepts; I gave alms; I listened to the Dhamma. And I went about proclaiming, 'There are no jewels comparable to the Three Jewels named the Buddha, the Dhamma, and the Order; therefore do honor to the Three Jewels.'

"Now the great King Bandhumati, father of the Buddha, hearing my voice, sent for me and asked me, 'Friend, on what business are you going about?' I replied, 'Your majesty, I am going about proclaiming the virtues of the Three Jewels, and inciting the populace to perform works of merit.' — 'What vehicle do you use on your travels?' asked the king. I replied, 'I travel about on my two legs, your majesty.'

Thereupon the king said, 'Friend, it is not fitting that you should go about in that fashion. Deck yourself with this garland of flowers and seat yourself on the back of a horse and go about in this fashion.' So saying, he gave me a garland of flowers similar in appearance to a string of pearls, and at the same time he gave me a horse.

"After the king had done me this kindness, I went about as before proclaiming the Dhamma. Thereupon the king summoned me again and asked me, 'Friend, on what business are you going about?' — 'The same as before, your majesty,' I replied. 'Friend,' said the king, 'a horse is not good enough for you; sit herein as you go about.' So saying, he presented me with a chariot drawn by four Sindh horses.

Again, the third time the king heard my voice, whereupon he sent for me and asked me, 'Friend, on what business are you going about?' — 'The same as before, your majesty,' I replied. 'Friend,' said the king, 'a chariot is not good enough for you.' And forthwith he presented me with great wealth and a splendid set of jewels, and at the same time he gave me an elephant.

Accordingly I decked myself with all my jewels and seated myself on the back of the elephant, and in this manner for eighty thousand years I went about performing the meritorious work of proclaiming the Dhamma.[12](#)

And during all that time there was diffused from my body the fragrance of sandal and from my mouth the fragrance of the lotus. This was my meritorious deed in a previous state of existence."

~ End of Story of the Past ~

As Santati the king's minister thus related the story of his meritorious deeds in a previous state of existence, sitting cross-legged in the air, he applied himself to meditation on the element of fire; and having thus induced a state of deep meditation, he entered therein and straightaway attained Nibbana.

Instantly flames of fire burst from his body and consumed his flesh and blood, and his relics floated down like jasmine flowers. The Teacher spread out a pure white cloth, and his relics fell upon it.

Then the Teacher deposited them at a crossing of four highways, caused a stupa to be erected over them, and said, "By doing reverence to these relics the populace will earn much merit."

The monks started up a discussion in the Hall of Truth, "Santati the king's minister attained arahantship at the conclusion of the stanza, and though adorned and dressed in state, sitting cross-legged in the air, he attained Nibbana. Ought one to speak of him as a monk or as a brahman?" At that moment the Teacher entered and asked the monks, "Monks, what is it that engages your attention as you sit here all gathered together?" When they told him, he said, "Monks, it is proper to speak of my son as a monk, and it is equally proper to speak of him as a brahman." So saying he preached the Dhamma by pronouncing the following stanza:

Though he be adorned, if he lives at peace,

Calm, tamed, restrained, and pure,
Having laid down the rod towards all beings:
He is a brahman, an ascetic, a monk.

— [Dhp 142](#)

29. The Elder Bahiya Daruciriya .

Though a thousand verses are made of meaningless lines...

This instruction was given by the Teacher while he was in residence at Jetavana with reference to the Elder Bahiya Daruciriya, Bahiya of the Bark Garment.

For once upon a time a party of men set out to sea in a ship. When they were well out to sea, the ship sprang a leak. Thereupon all of the men, with a single exception, became food for fishes and tortoises.

Only one man, who seized a plank and struggled with all his might, succeeded in reaching land near Supparaka Port. When he came to land, he lacked both under and upper garments. So for lack of anything better, he wrapped himself with dry twigs and sticks and bark, and obtaining a potsherd from the royal household, went to Supparaka Port. All who saw him gave him broth, rice-porridge, and other kinds of food, and did reverence to him, saying, "This is an arahant."

He thought, "If I clothe myself in under and upper garments of fine texture, I shall no longer receive gain and honor."

Therefore he avoided such garments, using only the bark of trees to clothe himself. As many persons greeted him with the salutation "Arahant! Arahant!" the following consideration presented itself to his mind, "Am I perhaps one of those who are arahants in this world,

or who have entered the path leading to arahantship?" Thereupon a certain thought occurred to a deity who was a former blood-relative of his.

Story of the Past .

By "former blood-relative" is meant one who formerly practiced meditation with him. It appears that in former times, when the dispensation of the Buddha Kassapa was disappearing from the earth, seven monks, observing a change for the worse in the conduct of novices and others, their emotions deeply stirred, said to themselves, "So long as our dispensation has not yet disappeared, we will establish ourselves in it."

So after reverencing their golden shrine, they entered the forest, and seeing a certain mountain, they said, "Let those who still cherish attachment for the life of this world turn back; let those who have rid themselves of such attachment ascend this mountain."

Thereupon they set up a ladder, and all of them ascended the mountain, whereupon they kicked the ladder down and devoted themselves to meditation. After but a single night had passed, one of them, the elder of the assembly, attained arahantship.

The elder of the assembly chewed a tooth-stick of serpent-creeper at Lake Anotatta, rinsed his mouth, brought food from North Kuru, and said to those monks, "Friends, chew this tooth-stick, rinse your mouths, and then eat this food." But this they refused to do, saying, "But, reverend sir, did we make the following agreement, 'All shall eat the food brought by him who first attains arahantship'?" — "We made no such agreement, friends." — "Well then, if, like you, we also develop something special, we will bring food for ourselves and eat it."

On the second day the second elder attained the fruit of the third path, whereupon he likewise brought food to the monks and invited

them to eat it. But they said, "But, reverend sir, did we agree not to eat the food brought by the chief elder, but to eat that which should be brought by a subordinate elder?" — "We did not so agree, friends." — "In that case, if, like you, we also develop something special, we shall be able by our own unaided efforts to provide ourselves with food, and we shall so provide ourselves with food." Thus did they refuse to eat the food he had brought.

Of the seven monks, the elder of the assembly who had attained arahantship attained (final) Nibbana; he who had attained the fruit of the third path was reborn in the Brahma-world; and the remaining five, unable to develop something special, wasted and withered away, died on the seventh day, and were reborn in the world of the gods.

In the period of this present Buddha they passed from that state of existence and were reborn in various households. One of them was King Pukkusati, one was Kumara Kassapa, one was Daruciriya, one was Dabba Mallaputta, and one was the monk Sabhiya. The term "former blood-relative" therefore refers to the monk who was reborn in the Brahma-world.

~ End of Story of the Past ~

The Story of Bahiya Daruciriya (concluded)

To this denizen of the Brahma-world, then, occurred the following thought, "This man was associated with me in setting up the ladder and in the ascent of the mountain and in the practice of meditation; but now he has adopted false views, and by his present course of conduct he is in danger of perdition; I will stir him up."

Accordingly he approached him and spoke thus, "Bahiya, you are not an arahant, nor have you entered the path that leads to arahantship; moreover, the course that you have adopted is not such that you will thereby attain arahantship or enter the path that leads to

arahantship."

As Maha Brahma, poised in the air, spoke these words, Bahiya looked upon him and thought to himself, "Oh, what a plight I am in! I thought to myself, 'I am an arahant'; but that spirit says to me, 'You are not an arahant, nor have you entered the path that leads to arahantship.' Is there perhaps any other arahant in the world?"

Accordingly Bahiya asked the spirit, "Deity, are there perhaps now in the world arahants or those who have entered the path leading to arahantship?" Then the deity informed him as follows, "Bahiya, there lies to the north a city named Savatthi; and there, at the present time, dwells he that is the Exalted One, the Arahant of arahants, the Supremely Enlightened One; and he that is the Exalted One, the Arahant of arahants, preaches the truth of arahantship."

As Bahiya listened in the night time to the speech of the deity, he became deeply moved in his heart; and instantly departing from Supparaka, within a single night he arrived at Savatthi.¹³ At the moment when he arrived, the Teacher had entered the city for alms.

When Bahiya had finished breakfast, he observed many monks taking their exercise in the open air by walking up and down, and he asked them, "Where is the Teacher now?" Said the monks, "He has just entered Savatthi for alms." Then the monks asked Bahiya, "But from where have you come?" — "I have come from Supparaka." — "When did you leave Supparaka?" — "Yesterday evening." — "You have come a long way. Just sit down, bathe your feet, anoint them with oil, and rest a while. When the Teacher returns, you will see him." — "Reverend sir, I do not know when the Teacher may die, or when I may die myself. I came here in the space of but a single night, neither stopping nor sitting down anywhere to rest. I have come on a journey of a hundred and twenty leagues. As soon as I have seen the Teacher, I will rest."

When he had thus spoken, his body trembling all over, he entered

Savatthi and beheld the Exalted One making his round for alms with the incomparable grace of a Buddha. He said to himself, "At long last I see Gotama, the Supremely Enlightened One." And from the point where he had first seen him, he proceeded with his body inclined in an attitude of profound reverence; even as he stood in the street, he paid obeisance to him, and took him firmly by the ankles, and spoke thus to him, "Let the Exalted One teach me the Dhamma; let the Happy One teach me the Dhamma, that it may for a long time lead to my welfare and salvation."

But the Teacher turned him away, saying, "You come at the wrong time, Bahiya; I have entered among the houses for alms." When Bahiya heard these words, he said, "Reverend sir, as I have passed through the round of existences, previously I have received solid food, but I do not know the hour when you or I shall die; then teach me the Dhamma." But the Teacher turned him away the second time as before. (This, we are told, was the thought that occurred to him: "From the time this man first saw me, his whole body has been suffused with joy; from the great shock of joy he has received, though he should listen to the Dhamma, he would not be able to comprehend it. Let him remain for a time in a state of placid equanimity.") Therefore the Teacher turned him away twice. When Bahiya put his request the third time, the Teacher, remaining where he was in the street, said to him:

"Herein, Bahiya, you should train yourself thus: 'In the seen will be merely what is seen; in the heard will be merely what is heard; in the sensed will be merely what is sensed; in the cognized will be merely what is cognized.' In this way you should train yourself, Bahiya.

"When, Bahiya, in the seen is merely what is seen... in the cognized is merely what is cognized, then Bahiya, you will not be 'with that' (wrong view, passion etc.); when Bahiya, you are not 'with that,' then Bahiya, you will not be 'in that situation' (of being impassioned by

passion, enraged by hate, deluded by delusion); when Bahiya, you are not 'in that situation,' then Bahiya, you will be neither 'here' (in this world) nor 'beyond' (in the next life) nor 'in between both' (going from one to another). Just this is the end of suffering." [14](#)

Even as Bahiya listened to the Teacher's discourse, he threw off all the taints and attained arahantship together with the analytical knowledges. Straightaway he asked the Teacher to admit him to the Order. The Teacher asked him, "Have you bowl and robe complete?" — "I have not bowl and robe complete," replied Bahiya. Then the Teacher said to him, "Well then, seek bowl and robe." So saying, the Teacher went his way.

As Bahiya was seeking bowl and robe, a certain ogress in the form of a heifer approached, struck him with her left shoulder, and deprived him of life. The Teacher, after making his round for alms and after eating his breakfast, came forth with a large company of monks and saw the body of Bahiya lying prostrate on the dust-heap.

Straightaway he commanded the monks as follows, "Monks, bring a litter which stands at the door of a certain house, carry the body of this man out of the city, burn it, and erect a mound over the remains." The monks did so, and having so done, returned to the monastery, approached the Teacher, told him what they had done, and inquired about the future state of the dead man.

Thereupon the Teacher announced that he had attained Nibbana, and assigned him pre-eminence, saying, "Monks, pre-eminent among my disciples and monks who are quick to learn the truth is Bahiya Daruciriya." Then the monks asked him, "Reverend sir, you say, 'Bahiya Daruciriya has attained arahantship'; when did he attain arahantship?" — "Monks, it was when he heard me preach the Dhamma." — "But when did you preach the Dhamma to him?" — "While I was making my rounds for alms, standing in the middle of the street." — "Was not the discourse you delivered standing in the

middle of the street an extremely short one, reverend sir? How was it that he developed something special after hearing so very little?"

Then the Teacher said to them, "Monks, do not measure my Dhamma as being 'little' or 'much.' There is no virtue even in many thousands of stanzas. A single line of a stanza which contains the truth is better." And when he had thus spoken, he showed the connection, and teaching the Dhamma, he pronounced the following stanza:

Though a thousand verses
Are made of meaningless lines,
Better the single meaningful line
By hearing which one is at peace.

— [Dhp 101](#)

30. Uggasena the Treasurer's Son .

Let go what is before, let go what is behind...

This instruction was given by the Teacher while he was in residence at Veluvana with reference to Uggasena.

The story goes that once a year, or once every six months, five hundred acrobats used to visit Rajagaha and give performances for seven days before the king. By these performances they earned much gold and money; in fact there was no end to the gifts tossed at them from time to time. The people stood on beds piled on top of beds and watched the acrobats perform their feats.

One day a certain female acrobat climbed a pole, turned somersaults thereon, and balancing herself on the tip of the pole, danced and sang as she trod the air.

Now on this occasion, a certain treasurer's son, accompanied by a

companion, stood on top of a pile of beds watching her. The grace and skill with which she managed her hands and feet attracted his attention, and he straightaway fell in love with her. He went home and said, "If I can have her, I shall live; but if I cannot have her, I shall die right here." So saying, he flung himself down on his bed and refused to take food.

His mother and father asked him, "Son, what is wrong with you?" The son replied, "If I can have that acrobat's daughter, I shall live; if I cannot have her, I shall die right here." Said his mother and father, "Do not act in this way. We will bring you another maiden, our equal in birth and wealth."

But he made the same reply as before and remained lying in bed. His father argued with him at length but was unable to make him see things in a better light. Finally, he sent for his son's friend, gave him a thousand pieces of money, and sent him off, saying to him, "Tell the acrobat to take this money and give his daughter to my son."

"I will not give my daughter for money," replied the acrobat, "but if it be true that he cannot live without my daughter, then let him travel about with us; if he will do this, I will give him my daughter."

The mother and father communicated this information to their son. The son immediately said, "Of course I will travel about with them." His mother and father begged him not to do so, but he paid no attention to anything they said, and went and joined the acrobats.

The acrobat gave him his daughter in marriage, and traveled about with him through villages, market-towns, and royal cities, giving exhibitions everywhere. In no long time the female acrobat, after living with her husband, gave birth to a son. As she played with the boy, she would address him as "son of a cart-driver" or "son of a fetcher-of-wood and drawer-of-water," or "son of a know-nothing."

It appears that the husband used to attend to everything relating to their carts. Wherever they halted, he would fetch grass for the oxen.

Wherever they gave an exhibition, he would procure whatever apparatus was required, set it up, and remove it.

It was with reference to duties such as these performed by her husband that this woman employed such terms as these in playing with her son. The husband came to the conclusion that the songs she sang were about himself, and asked her, "Do you refer to me?" — "Yes, I refer to you." — "In that case I will run away and leave you." — "What difference does it make to me whether you go away or not?" replied the wife. And over and over again she sang the same song. It appears that by reason of the beauty she possessed and the large amount of money she earned, she was utterly indifferent to him.

"Why is it that she is so proud?" thought the husband to himself. Straightaway he perceived within himself, "It is because of her skill as an acrobat." So he thought to himself, "Very well! I will learn acrobatic feats myself."

Accordingly he went to his father-in-law and learned all the feats that he knew. And he exhibited his art in villages, market-towns, and royal cities, one after another, until finally he came to Rajagaha. And he caused proclamation to be made throughout the city, "Seven days from today Uggasena the treasurer's son will exhibit his art to the residents of the city." The residents of the city caused platform above platform to be erected and assembled on the seventh day. Uggasena climbed a pole sixty cubits in height and balanced himself on the top of it.

On that day, as the Teacher surveyed the world at dawn, he perceived that Uggasena had entered the net of his knowledge. And he considered within himself, "What will become of him?" Straightaway he became aware of the following, "The treasurer's son will balance himself on the tip of the pole for the purpose of displaying his skill, and a great multitude will assemble for the

purpose of witnessing his exhibition.

At this point I will pronounce a stanza consisting of four verses. Hearing this stanza, 84,000 living beings will obtain comprehension of the Dhamma, and Uggasena himself will be established in arahantship."

So on the following day, taking note of the time, the Teacher set out, attended by the Order of Monks, and entered the city of Rajagaha for alms.

A moment before the Teacher entered the city, Uggasena motioned to the multitude as a sign for applause, and balancing himself on the tip of the pole, turned seven somersaults in the air, alighted on his feet, and balanced himself once more on the tip of the pole.

At that moment the Teacher entered the city, and so contrived that the multitude looked not at Uggasena, but at himself. When Uggasena looked at the audience and perceived that they were not looking at him at all, he was overwhelmed with disappointment. Thought he, "Here is a feat which it has taken me a year to perfect, but when the Teacher enters the city, the audience, instead of looking at me, looks at the Teacher. My exhibition has failed completely."

The Teacher, perceiving the thought that was passing through his mind, addressed the Elder Moggallana, "Go inform the treasurer's son that the Teacher desires him to exhibit his skill." The elder went and stood at the base of the pole, and addressing the treasurer's son, pronounced the following stanza:

"Please look, Uggasena, acrobat of mighty strength.
Perform for the crowd; make the people laugh."

When Uggasena heard the words of the elder, he was delighted at heart. "Doubtless the Teacher desires to witness my skill," he thought. And even as he balanced himself on the tip of the pole, he pronounced the following stanza:

"Please look, Moggallana, mighty in wisdom and power.
I perform for the crowd; I make the people laugh."

So saying, he sprang into the air from the top of the pole, turned fourteen somersaults in the air, and alighting on his feet, balanced himself once more on the tip of the pole. The Teacher said to him, "Uggasena, a man that is wise should let go attachment for the aggregates in the past, the present, and the future; even so should he win release from birth, decay, disease, and death." So saying, he pronounced the following stanza:

Let go what is before, let go what is behind,
Let go the middle and get beyond becoming:
Thus with a mind released in every way
To birth and decay you shall come no more.

— [Dhp 348](#)

At the conclusion of the lesson 84,000 living beings obtained comprehension of the Dhamma. The treasurer's son, even as he stood poised on the tip of the pole, attained arahantship together with the higher powers.

The treasurer's son straightaway descended from the pole, advanced to the Teacher, saluted him respectfully and requested the Teacher to admit him to the Order. The Teacher stretched out his right hand and said to him, "Come, monk!"

At that moment he was supernaturally provided with the eight requisites, and had the appearance of an elder of sixty rains. The monks asked him, "Friend Uggasena, had you no fear as you descended from that pole sixty cubits in height?" Uggasena replied, "Friends, I have no fear." The monks said to the Teacher, "Reverend sir, Uggasena says, 'I have no fear'; he says that which is not true, utters falsehood." Said the Teacher, "Monks, those monks who, like my son Uggasena, have severed the attachments, have no fear or

perturbation." So saying, he pronounced the following stanza:

He who having severed
All the fetters trembles not,
Gone beyond ties, free from bonds —
That one I call a brahmana.

— [Dhp 397](#)

Again one day the monks began the following discussion in the Hall of Truth: "Friends, how did it happen that a monk, endowed as was this monk with the faculties requisite for the attainment of arahantship, traveled about with acrobats for the sake of an acrobat's daughter? And how did it happen that he was endowed with the faculties requisite for the attainment of arahantship?"

The Teacher drew near and asked them, "Monks what is the subject you are discussing as you sit here all gathered together?" When they told him, he said, "Monks, both of these things happened through one and the same circumstance." And to make the matter clear, he related the following story.

Story of the Past: A Joke in Earnest .

The story goes that in times long past, while the golden shrine for the relics of the Buddha Kassapa was being built, the children of certain respectable families living in Benares loaded carts with an abundant supply of food and set out for the shrine to do the work of laborers. As they proceeded, they saw along the way a certain elder entering the city for alms. Now a certain young woman looked at the elder and said to her husband, "Husband, our noble elder is entering the city for alms, and there is an abundant supply of food both hard and soft in our cart. Fetch his bowl, and let us give him food." Her husband fetched the elder's bowl, and when they had filled it with food both hard and soft, they placed it in the hands of the elder, and both husband and wife made the following earnest wish, "Reverend

sir, may we be partakers of the Truth you have seen."

Now this elder was an arahant, and therefore looked into the future to see whether their earnest wish would be fulfilled. And perceiving that it would be fulfilled, he smiled. The woman noticed the smile and said to her husband, "Husband, our noble elder smiled; he must be some actor." Her husband replied, "He must be indeed, my dear wife," and passed on. This was their deed in a former birth.

~ End of Story of the Past ~

Remaining in this state of existence during the term of life allotted to them, they were reborn in the world of the gods, and passing from that state of existence in the dispensation of the present Buddha, that woman was reborn in the household of an acrobat, the man in the household of a treasurer. Because he returned the reply, "He must be indeed, my dear wife," he traveled about with actors; and because he gave a portion of food to an elder who was an arahant, he attained arahantship. The acrobat's daughter said to herself, "Whatever future state my husband shall attain, that will I also attain." So saying, she went forth into homelessness and became established in arahantship.

Notes

1. See the [verse 178](#) spoken to Anathapindika about his son ("Than o'er the earth sole sovereignty...") in Section B Part III.
2. *Upadhi*, the substrata of the mind ensuring continued rebirth: the five aggregates (*khandha*), sense desire (*kama*), defilements, and intentional action (*kamma*).
3. Here *brahmanas* means "arahants"; *samanas* are monks.
4. The Buddha's kinfolk. In Sanskrit, *Shakya*.
5. Warrior-nobles, later the stock from which royal families sprang.
6. Jataka 354. This is an excellent Jataka to read and consider deeply.

For this reason all the verses from that story have been inserted here.

7. These verses (found in full in [MN 131](#)) are a combination of the renderings of Ven. Ñānamoli Thera and Ven. Ñānananda Bhikkhu. See *The Wheel* No. 188, [Ideal Solitude: An Exposition of The Bhaddekaratta Sutta](#), by Ñānananda Bhikkhu.

8. That is, not a Noble One who has penetrated to the Truth of Dhamma.

9. The Eight Precepts for a lay person's special practice on the Full and New Moon days. See *Mirror of the Dhamma*, *Wheel* No. 54. And see [Lay Buddhist Practice](#), *Wheel* No. 206/207.

10. This number, in Pali, always means "many."

11. [Sutta-nipata 4.6](#). The complete sutta is not given in the text but has been inserted here.

12. In the time of this Buddha, human beings are reputed to have lived very long.

13. This is quick work on foot. The distance could be 2000 miles! [BPS ed.]

14. Based on a translation by John Ireland appearing in *Pali Buddhist Review* 2,3 (1977). Passages in brackets are based on the commentary.

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