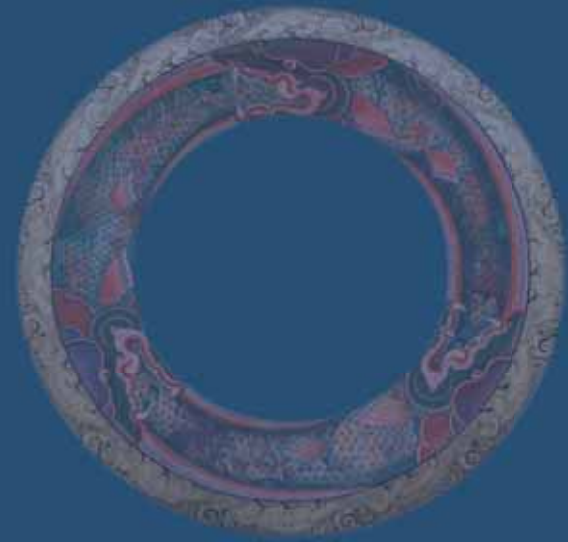


Ye dhammā hetuppabhavā
tesaṃ hetuṃ tathāgato āha,
tesañca yo nirodho
evaṃ vādī mahāsamaṇo

All phenomena arise from causes;
Those causes have been taught by the Tathagata,
And their cessation too has been
Proclaimed by the Great Samana



THE LIFE AND TRUTH OF THE LORD BUDDHA FROM MURALS



THE LIFE AND TRUTH OF THE LORD BUDDHA FROM MURALS



PALELAI BUDDHIST TEMPLE
SINGAPORE

*Tumhehi kiccaṃ atappaṃ
akkhātarō Tathāgatā;
patipañña pamokkhanti
jhāyino Mārabandhanā*

*It's for you to strive ardently.
Tathagatas simply point out the way.
Those who practice, absorbed in jhana:
from Mara's bonds they'll be freed.*

*Dhammapada 276
(Maggavagga)*



THE LIFE AND TRUTH OF THE LORD BUDDHA FROM MURALS

Original mural painting of Uposatha Hall, Wat Wangyai, Tambon Panomrak, Ampur Tha Ta Goh Nakhon Sawan Province, Thailand

- Ven. Phra Ajaan Den Nandhiyo : The Patron of the original mural painting project
- Ven. Phra Bhāvanavidhānapārijā : Pali Canonical guidance and narratives for artwork
- Ven. Phra Vinayadhammavidesa : The Patron of this publication
- Phra Thitamano Bhikkhu : Editor
- Mr. Jim Seah : Photographer
- Mr. Sebastian Wong : Editor's assistant and publication co-ordinator
- Mrs. Pimphan Hansrisakul : Publication co-ordinator & proof reading
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THE LIFE AND TRUTH OF
THE LORD BUDDHA
FROM MURALS



The Life and Teachings of Lord Buddha

Conveyed Through Art

Publisher's Foreword

Wat Wangyai, located at Moo 5, Tambon Panomrak, Ampur Tha Ta Goh Nakhon Sawan Province, Thailand is the home land of Luang Puu Thong (the late Abbot of Wat Asokaram, Samut Prakan Province, Thailand) and Phra Ajaan Den Nandhiyo, both of whom are cousins. Luang Puu Thong's father was Phra Ajaan Lee Dhammadharo's (founder of Wat Asokaram) older brother.

This big family of the same village donated the land for Wat Wangyai and sponsored the building of the monastery. Phra Ajaan Den returned to sponsor the building of the Uposatha Hall which was completed in 2014 and was also the patron of the mural painting project at Wat Wangyai.

A total of four murals were painted in the Uposatha Hall and these reflect the key events during the life of Lord Buddha and from them, one can also discern some of the key teachings of Lord Buddha as well.

These mural paintings were carried out by a group of Phra Ajaan Den's Disciples, coordinated by Phra Thitamano Bhikkhu, together with a team of artists. This project took a total of about three years, from 2551 – 2554 BE (2008-2011), to complete.

The objective of this book is to share with our readers the beauty of the artwork and more importantly, to elaborate on the key teachings of Lord Buddha. Without the accompanying narratives, a viewer of the artworks may only be able to admire their beauty per se but not truly appreciate the sublime message of the Lord Buddha that the artists were intending to convey by their works. This book, we hope, will help educate our readers on the finer aspects of Lord Buddha's Teachings and with that, encourage them to seek even more in-depth knowledge of the teachings themselves. However, theoretical knowledge of the teachings is not sufficient to enable a Buddhist to achieve the goal that Lord Buddha taught us to strive for; in order to gain complete release from the endless wandering on in samsara. That goal can only be attained by the Buddhist who sincerely

and wholeheartedly devotes him/herself in undertaking the Triple Training in virtue, concentration, and discernment.

Our readers may wonder how Palelai Buddhist Temple in Singapore is in turn connected to Wat Wangyai and the artists behind the mural paintings. As pointed out in the Foreword of this book, it is through the kamma of many individuals. Primarily, our President, Than Chao Khun Keng Khemako (Ven. Phra Vinayadhammavidesa), was a student of Phra Ajaan Den who was the sponsor of the original paintings in Wat Wangyai. Moreover, the artists behind the paintings were also the same ones who helped Palelai in all of the artworks that one finds in Palelai – from the Maha Samaya wall painting in our Main Shrine Hall, to all the sculptures and Thai classical façade for our Chedi Dhammasathit building, and now to our principal Buddha image and Dhamma Wheel artefacts for our Sima Hall.

We are especially grateful to Phra Thitamano Bhikkhu who was the coordinator and one of the artists behind our artworks. We receive with thanks the gift of a copy of the subject murals for display in our temple.

We would like to express our deep gratitude and thanks to Luang Phor Den Nandhiyo, the sponsor of the original wall murals at Wat Wangyai. We must also thank Phra Ajaan Thanissaro Bhikkhu, Abbot of Metta Forest Monastery; USA, who has very kindly helped to write the narratives accompanying each mural.

It is our hope that this book will be a source of inspiration to our readers to delve deeper into the teachings of Lord Buddha and to undertake the practice of the teachings with urgency.

May all beings be well and happy always.

The Sangha and Board of Management
Palelai Buddhist Temple
Singapore

1 July 2561 (2018)

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THE MURAL OF THE BUDDHA'S LIFE
FROM WAT WANGYAI
TO WAT PALELAI, SINGAPORE

THE MURAL OF THE BUDDHA'S LIFE

From Wat Wangyai
to Wat Palelai, Singapore

This short foreword will summarize the origins of the mural that “The Life and Truth of the Lord Buddha from the Murals of Wat Wangyai, Thailand” is based on. In particular, we will explore how a mural painting of the Lord Buddha’s life transcends ethnic, cultural, and national borders to become a religious text in another country.

We hope that this story will reflect the fundamental core of Buddhism: that all that occurs are the consequences of causes and effects (i.e. Lord Buddha’s teaching of Kamma).

Background

Wat Wangyai, located at Moo 5, Tambon Panomrok, Ampur Tha Ta Goh Nakhon Sawan Province, Thailand is a Temple that belongs to the Maha Nikaya order of Buddhism. This location is a fertile valley with a creek that runs through it. This creek flows from the highlands of Ampur Nong Bua to Boraped Lake in Tambon Panomsed and, just to the west of the Temple, forms a deep bend that locals call “Wangyai”. In the past, this creek provided the people in this area with much fertility: there were grains in the field and plenty of fish in the water during the rainy season. Before modern roads were constructed, it was also the primary means for people to get to the city which is accessible via Tambon Thap Krit on the other side of Boraped Lake. Today, the creek is shallow and can sometimes be dry during the dry season.

The ancestors of the large Wongwattana family emigrated from China to this area to engage in agriculture and commerce. The ancestors of this family donated the land and initiated the construction of the Temple. This kind gesture is in accordance with Buddhist norms in which a temple is always constructed to support each new community's religious needs. The Temple was formally established in 1927.

Even though this Temple belongs to the Maha Nikaya order, it maintains very close ties with the masters of the Dhammayuttika Nikaya order. Namely, a son-in-law of this family, Khun Lom Nareewong, is directly related, a blood brother, of Than Por Lee Dhammadharo who was a senior and close disciple of Phra Ajaan Mun, the founder of the Forest Meditation tradition of Thailand. Than Por Lee Dhammadharo, is the founder of the well-known Wat Asokaram, near Bangkok, Thailand and was the organizer of a grand celebration, marking 25 centuries of Buddhism.

Later, when Khun Lom Nareerwong's son came of age, Than Por Lee helped ordain his nephew into monkhood – auspiciously bestowing his nephew a new name appropriate to the monkhood: Phra Bhikkhu Thong Candasiri. Phra Bhikkhu Thong Candasiri (later known as Luang Por Thong or Phra Yannawisit) would go on to undertake the role of the third abbot of Wat Asokaram.

Subsequently, Bhikkhu Thong Candasiri helped ordain other members of the Wongwattana family into monkhood. Bhikkhu Thong Candasiri ordained Phra Bhikkhu Den Nandhiyo first, followed soon after by Phra Bhikkhu Den's brother, as Phra Bhikkhu Boonchuay Poonyawanto. Phra Bhikkhu Boonchuay Poonyawanto currently holds the ecclesiastical title of Phra Kru Palad and serves as the abbot of Wat Pa Purithat Pathipataraam in Ampur Sam Khok, Pathum Thani.

It can be said that the origins of up to three important monks of the Dhammayuttika Nikaya order – Luang Puu Mun Bhuridatto, Than Phor Lee, and Luang Puu Jia (a disciple of both Luang Puu Mun and Than Phor Lee and Phra Bhikkhu Den Nandhiyo’s teacher) - can be traced back to Wat Wangyai.

These three Phra Theras have always continuously supported Wat Wangyai as they see appropriate. The founding of Wangwittaya Community School was largely a result of Phra Yannawisit’s support which he followed through until his death.

Phra Bhikkhu Den Nandhiyo helped provide the necessary funds and organized fund-raising events needed to build the main uposatha hall of Wat Wangyai. The construction of the uposatha hall began in 1997 and was completed in 2014.

Subsequently, Phra Ajaan Den returned to sponsor (as patron) the mural painting project. The mural depicts the life of the Lord Buddha so that Buddhists can pay homage to his life and perpetuate the teachings of Lord Buddha. The content of the mural was expanded to cover more of the Lord Buddha’s life, meanwhile the artists were given some ideas from Phra Ajaan Den to design, layout, and deliver an expanded story through the mural to fit the current hot issues about religion. This combination of the comprehensive content and the artists’ freedom to express themselves resulted in a one-of-a-kind mural which we will detail in the following sections.

Defeat of Māra

This scene, located on the east wall in front of the principal Buddha image, depicts Lord Buddha as he is about to attain enlightenment. The demons that Lord Buddha faced weren't literal demons, on the contrary, they were the desires within oneself that obstructed the path to enlightenment. These desires are fueled by external stimulants. The demons that are most effective are not the hideous stimulants that strike fear, but those that fuel our hedonistic desires – the allure of wealth, beauty, social status, praise, and power. These insatiable earthly desires are what prevent us from achieving enlightenment – forever entangling us in a perpetual state of suffering.

Thus, unlike most other murals, the demon in this mural is depicted with grandeur atop a royal throne that emanates a bright aura. This Demon King is a stark contrast to the Lord Buddha who is situated under the Bodhi Tree. Foot soldiers under the order of the Demon King, Mara, are depicted in the background. Additionally, the mural also includes different beings – humans and animals – who are trapped within the cycle of desire and suffering.

In the foreground, a circle depicts the universally endless cycle of births and deaths, driven by impermanence, suffering, and not-self.

The artists who painted this mural were careful to depict the characters in clothings and styles that are very different from what is traditionally considered Thai. This is to reflect the fact that the characters in this artwork are those from ancient India in the period that the Lord Buddha lived. Lord Buddha is portrayed with all the characteristics of an esteemed figure.

It should be noted that, overall, the mural should be considered as an idealistic traditional piece of art not to be referred to the academic.

Wall Area : Approximately 400 square meters

Technique : Tempera and gold leaves on cement

Period : 2008 - 2011

From Wat Wangyai, Thailand to Wat Palelai, Singapore

In 1987, Phra Ajaan Thong Candasiri, led the ordination of Phra Bhikkhu Keng, Khemako (lay name Ong Kah Keng) at Wat Asokaram. Phra Bhikkhu Keng, Khemako later resided at Wat Dhammasathit, Rayong. At the temple, Phra Ajaan Geoffrey Thanisaro, an American, helped mentor Phra Bhikkhu Keng on the day-to-day routines of monkhood.

One day, in the second vassa of Phra Bhikkhu Keng's monkhood, an unknown middle-aged monk rode into Wat Dhammasathit temple and rudely exclaimed that Phra Bhikkhu Keng should join him. Phra Bhikkhu Keng disapproved of such an aggressive behaviour from the mysterious monk, so he refused the offer.

As Phra Bhikkhu Keng entered the third vassa of his monkhood, he found that he was unable to find the inner peace and concentration needed to successfully meditate. His mind kept flashing back to the incident with the mysterious monk. After a little investigation, Phra Bhikkhu Keng found out that the mysterious monk was, in fact, Phra Ajaan Den and so he set out to seek him. Phra Bhikkhu Keng ended up spending six years practicing meditation under the guidance of Phra Ajaan Den in the mountains of Sam Muen Toong District, Ampur Mae Sod, Tak province. Phra Bhikkhu Keng also became a

disciple of Luang Puu Jia Chundo. Under the two masters, Phra Bhikkhu Keng suffered much hardship, discipline, and pain, but he was able to persevere due to his sheer resolve to master the teachings and practice of Buddhism. The environment and factors that helped shape Phra Bhikkhu Keng into a devout monk is hard to find today.

From that day onwards, Phra Bhikkhu Keng, (later to be given the ecclesiastical title of Chao Khun Phra Vinayadhammavidesa) became the Dhammayuttika Nikaya monk who proudly brought true Dhammayuttika Nikaya practices from Thailand to Singapore.

In 2017, Than Chao Khun Phra Vinayadhammavidesa sent Mr. Jim Seah, a professional Singaporean photographer and one of his disciples, to take pictures of the murals at Wat Wangyai. This was because Than Chao Khun Phra Vinayadhammavidesa appreciates the work of his mentor and wishes to include the artwork in his publication of “The Life and Truth of the Lord Buddha from Murals” which was printed to celebrate the consecration (pattasima) of the Sima Hall at Wat Palelai on July 1, 2018.

As evident, this story reflects the fundamental core of Buddhism that all events are the consequences of causes.

With Metta,
Phra Thitamano Bhikkhu





1

BACKGROUND

○ BODHISTTA IN TUSITA REALM

Before being born as Prince Siddhattha, the Bodhisatta was a king of the Tusita (Contented) Deva realm, named Santusita. This was after his last previous life as a human being named Prince Vessantara, who had developed the greatest perfection of generosity.

When the proper time arrived, most of the devas assembled to invite him to be reborn and gain awakening as Buddha so as to train those beings fit to be trained to free themselves from saṃsāra.

○ DEVAS ASSEMBLY

Most of the devas from the whole celestial realm, from the base to the topmost, the realm of the four great kings who safeguard each direction, such as ; Virupakkha, the nāga king, guardian of the western direction;

Kuvera, the yakkha king, guardian of the northern direction;

Dhataratṭha, the gandhabba king, guardian of the eastern direction;

Virūḷha, the kumbaṇḍa king, guardian of the southern direction.

Another upper realm, Yāmā devas, Sakka the king of the Tāvātīmisa heaven with his followers.

Above the Tusita realm are Nimānaratī devas, Paranimmitavasavattī devas, also other devas, such Suriya the deva of the sun, Chandra the deva of the moon ..etc.. The topmost are all levels of the Brahmā devas.

Most of them assembled for the most important event.



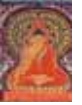
○ THE FIVE MAHĀVILŌKANA

The Bodhisatta reflected and saw that the five suitable conditions for his final birth were met:

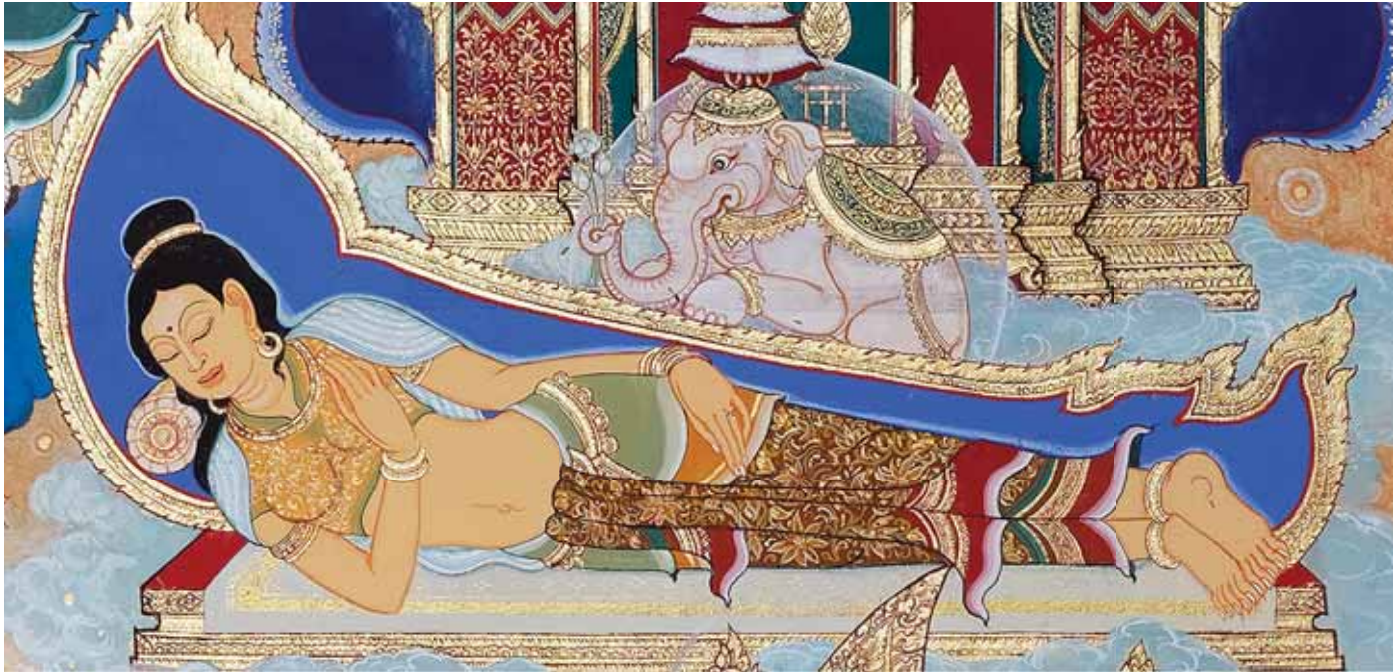
- 1) location: Jambūdīpa (the Indian subcontinent);
- 2) the length of the human lifespan : 120 years;
- 3) the highest status in human society: the noble warrior caste ;
- 4) the parents: King Suddhodana as his father, Queen Siri Mahāmāyā as his mother;
- 5) the remaining lifetime of his mother: ten months and seven days.

So King Santusita consented by pouring water from a golden vase (central panel).





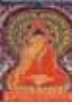
○ QUEEN SIRI MAHĀMĀYĀ' S DREAM



Meanwhile, Queen Siri Mahāmāyā had a dream that night. She was carried onto her bed to the palace in the Himalayan forest. She was bathed in the Anotatta lake and dressed in heavenly clothes and ornaments.

She was respectfully received by devas. A young white elephant emerged from a mountain, holding in his trunk a white lotus flower. After circling around her three times, he entered through her right side to reside in her womb. That was the point where she became pregnant.





2

BIRTH

○ LUMBINĪ FOREST

The Bodhisatta stayed in his mother's womb for a full ten months. When Queen Siri Mahāmāyā was close to giving birth, she set out for her home city, Devadahana, in line with the tradition of the time. Traveling with an escort of soldiers and courtiers, she stopped halfway at the Lumbinī Forest to rest under a Sala tree in full bloom. Unexpectedly, she gave birth to the Bodhisatta while standing up.



○ THE NEWBORN CHILD

The newborn son took seven steps and proclaimed valiantly, “I am supreme in the world. I am chief in the world. I am best in the world. This is my last birth. There is now no further becoming.”

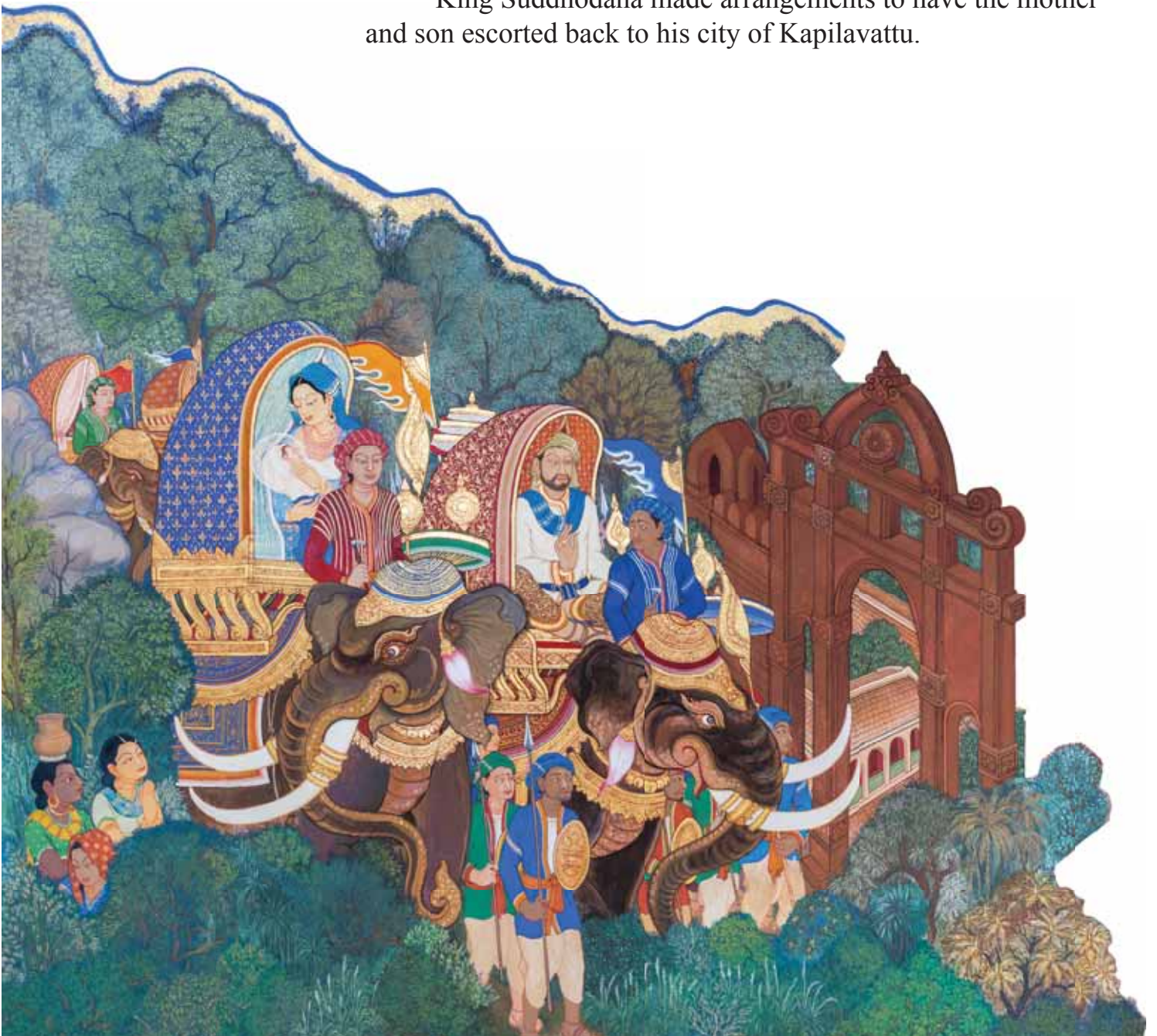
At that moment, marvels appeared—an earthquake, a bright radiance—and most of the devas came to bless and pay respect to the newborn child.

This is on the full moon day of the month of Visākha, eighty years before the Buddhist era.



○ BACK TO THE CITY
OF KAPILAVATTU

King Suddhodana made arrangements to have the mother and son escorted back to his city of Kapilavattu.

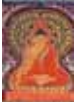




- *Yathā bubbulakaṃ passe,
yathā passe marīcikaṃ,
evaṃ lokaṃ avekkhantaṃ
maccurājā na passati.*
- *See it as a bubble,
see it as a mirage:
one who regards the world this way
the King of Death doesn't see.*

*Dhammapada 170
(Lokkavagga)*







3

CHILDHOOD

○ ASITA THE HERMIT

Asita the hermit, learning of the birth, came to the palace and asked permission of the king to see the baby.

○ THE 32 MARKS OF A GREAT MAN

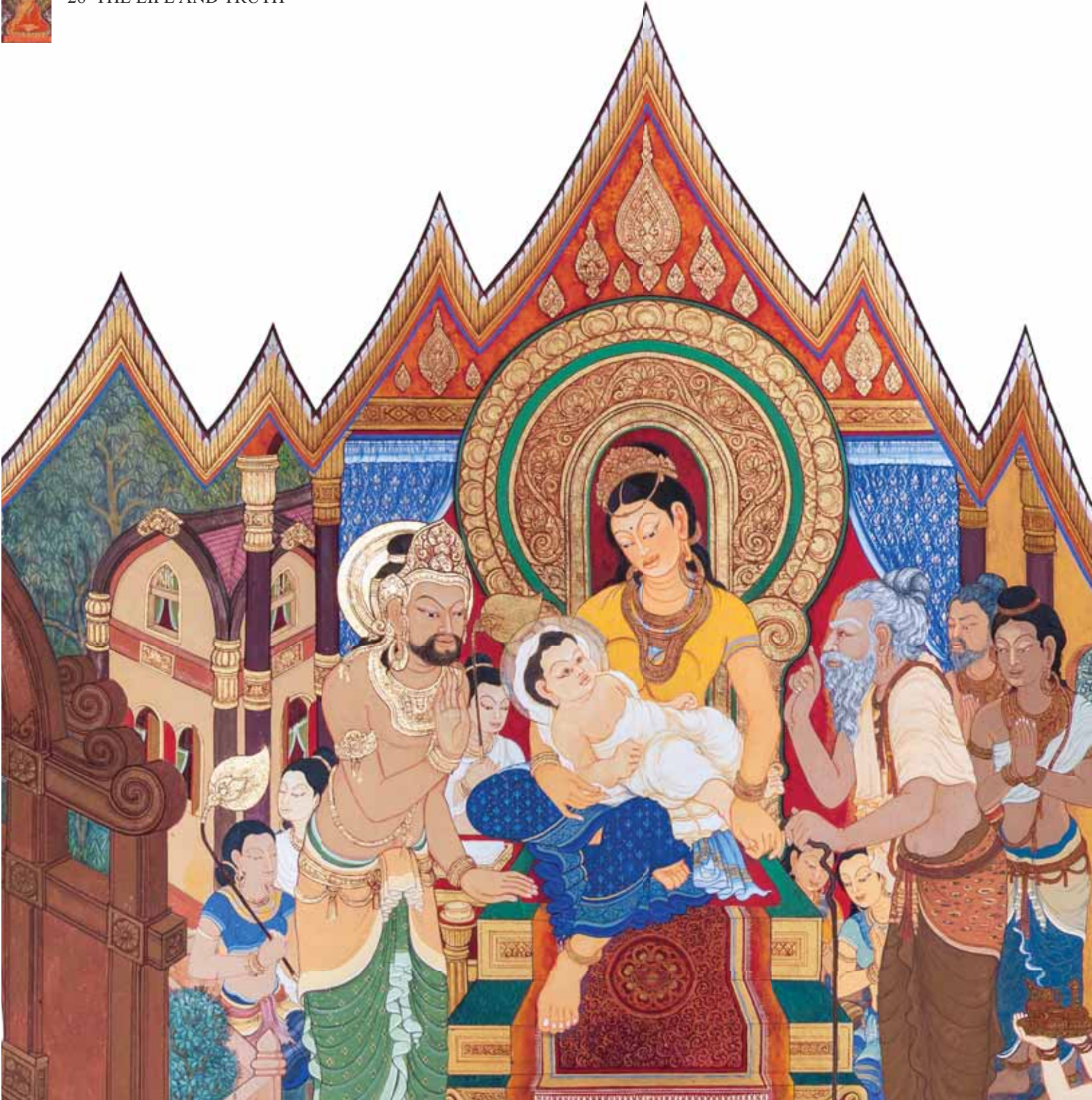
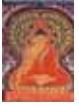
Noticing in the baby's body the 32 marks of a great man, he realized that the baby would grow up to be a Buddha. So he bowed down to him.

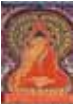
The king followed suit, bowing down to his son as well. Then tears flowed from the hermit's eyes, frightening the parents. "What will befall our son?" they asked.

"No misfortune will befall him," the hermit replied. "He will go forth, become awakened, and teach many devas and human beings to gain freedom from saṃsāra. But before that happens, I will be reborn for an eon in a Brahmā realm where I will not have the opportunity to hear his Dhamma that leads out from saṃsāra". Asita then left.

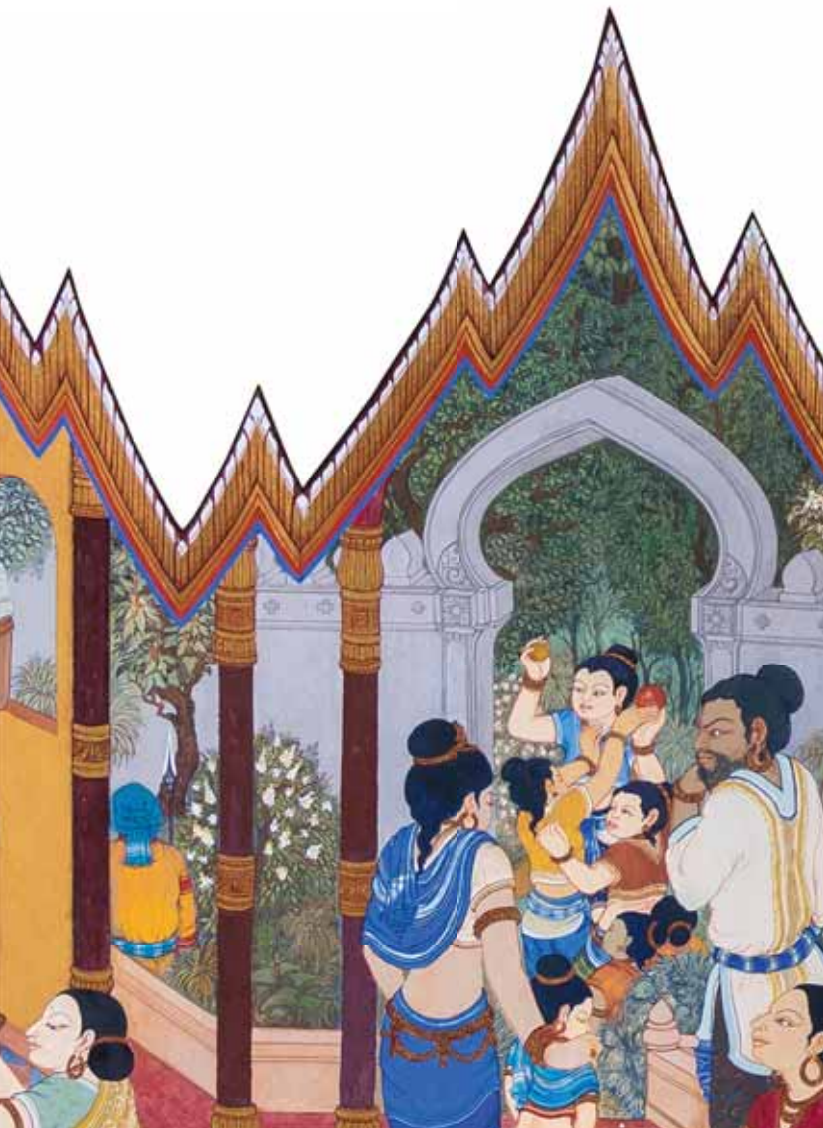
○ SIDDHATTHA : HE WHO HAS ATTAINED HIS AIMS

In a great ceremony, the newborn child was named Siddhattha, which means, "He Who Has Attained His Aims."





He grew up in luxury among his royal relatives, studying all the sciences and arts that a young prince should learn: morality, the fine arts, language, martial arts, and the skills of governance.





○ THE FIRST SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCE

At the age of seven years, the young prince had his first spiritual experience. Sitting alone under a tree while his father was participating in a plowing ceremony, the prince focused on his breath and spontaneously entered the first jhāna: rapture and pleasure born of seclusion, accompanied by directed thought and evaluation. To the surprise of everyone who saw him, the shade of the tree did not move even as the sun passed overhead. On seeing this, the king bowed down to his son for a second time.



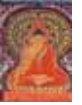


- *Etha passath' imam lokam,
cittam rājarathūpamam,
Yattha bālā visīdanti
natthi saṅgo vijānatam.*
- *Come look at this world all decked out
like a royal chariot,
where fools plunge in,
while those who know don't cling.*

Dhammapada 171
(Lokavagga)







4

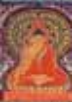
THE HOLLOW PLEASURES OF PRINCELY LIFE



○ THE THREE PALACES

Despite Asita's forecast, King Suddhodana wanted Prince Siddhattha to inherit the throne and rule as a great emperor, rather than become awakened as the Buddha. So he arranged for his son to live in an environment totally devoted to sensual pleasures. He had three palaces built for him to live in, one each for the hot season, the rainy season, and the cold season.





○ YASODHARĀ BIMBĀ

When the prince was 16 years old, the king arranged for him to marry his cousin, Prince Yasodharā (also known as Bimbā). For his prince's entertainment, the king arranged for beautiful women to woo him with music, song, and dance. He decreed that no old people or sick people should come into the range of the prince's sight.

○ THE TURNING POINT

One day, the prince, seeking to explore the world outside the palace, rode in a horse-drawn chariot through the royal forests. Despite the king's precautions, the prince saw a pitiful old man beside the way. Stopping the chariot, he asked the charioteer what this was. The charioteer replied that it was an old man. "Why is he like that?" the prince asked. "Old age comes to everyone," the charioteer replied. "No one can escape it."

This shocked the young prince, who reflected, for the first time with great dismay, that he, too, would be subject to aging.

Later a sick person appeared beside the way; and then later, a dead person. In each case, the young prince learned with dismay that he, too, like all beings, was subject to illness and death.

Finally, the prince saw a wilderness mendicant. On learning who he was, the prince decided that he, too, must follow the life of a wilderness mendicant if he was to find the way out of aging, illness, and death.





○ THE RENUNCIATION

One night, when he was 29, and soon after the birth of his son, Rāhula, the prince woke up in the middle of the night after having been entertained by his minstrels. Seeing the women asleep—snoring, drooling, exposed—he felt as if he were surrounded by dead bodies in a graveyard.

After going to look one last time at his wife and newborn son, who were fast asleep, he left the palace to go forth as a wilderness mendicant, escorted by Channa, and riding a horse named Kanthaka.





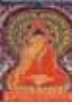
○ *Uyyuñjanti satimanto
na nikete ramanti te,
haṃsā vā pallalam hitvā
okamokaṃ jahanti te.*

○ *The mindful keep active,
don't delight in settling back.
They renounce every home,
every home, like swans taking off from a lake.*

*Dhammapada 91
(Arahantavagga)*







5

THE GOING – FORTH

○ THE ANOMĀ RIVER BANK

On the smooth, sandy banks of the Anomā River, under a great tree, the Bodhisatta cut off his hair with a sharpened sword and dedicated himself to the life of a wilderness mendicant. Hoping for a sign, he threw his hair into the air, asking that if he was to attain full awakening the hair not fall to the ground. Sakka, the deva king, knowing of the Bodhisatta's request, took the hair in a golden tray and, spiriting it up to the sky, installed it in a stūpa in the Tāvatiṃsa heaven. Then a Brahmā came to offer the Bodhisatta a set of robes and a clay pottery alms bowl.

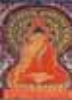
The Bodhisatta told Channa to take his garments and ornaments back to the palace, and to reassure his parents that he

would be well. Kanthaka the horse shed tears and a few moments later, when the Bodhisatta was out of sight, died of a broken heart. Immediately, he was reborn as a deva in the Tusita heaven.

Channa returned alone to the palace in great sadness.







6

THE QUEST FOR THE TRUTH

○ ALĀRA KĀLAMA

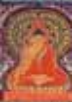
The Bodhisatta went to study under Aḷāra Kālāma, a hermit who taught meditation up to the level of the dimension of nothingness. In no long time, the Bodhisatta was able to reach that attainment, and Aḷāra offered to let the Bodhisatta teach along with him. Realizing, however, that this meditation, on its own, led not to full awakening but only to rebirth in the Brahmā heaven of nothingness, the Bodhisatta left.





○ UDDAKA RĀMAPUTTA

He then went to study under another teacher, Uddaka Rāmaputta, who taught a higher meditation, the dimension of neither perception nor non-perception. In no long time, the Bodhisatta was able to reach that attainment. On informing Uddaka, the latter offered to let the Bodhisatta lead his community in his stead. But realizing that this meditation, on its own, led only to rebirth in the Brahmā heaven of neither perception nor non-perception, the Bodhisatta departed.



○ THE BANKS OF THE NERAÑJARĀ RIVER

From there he went to Uruvela, and stayed on the banks of the Nerañjarā River, to strive for awakening on his own.



○ THE FIVE ASCETICS

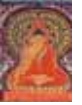
At this point, he was joined by five ascetics, known as the Five Brethren, led by Koṇḍañña. Years earlier, Koṇḍañña had been a priest attending the ceremony at which the young Bodhisatta had been named. He alone among the priests forecast that there was only one future for the baby: that of becoming a Buddha. So now he persuaded four of his brethren to join him in attending to the Bodhisatta, in hopes that when the latter became awakened, they would be the first to learn of the path to awakening from him.





○ SELF AFFLICTION

For six years the Bodhisatta stayed in Uruvela, practicing various self-afflictions in hopes of purifying his mind from all desire for pleasure. His austerities included such practices as fasting, taking fire baths, sitting and sleeping on thorns, and holding his breath. Although he performed these austerities with great patience and endurance, not allowing his mind to be overcome by the resulting pain, he succeeded only in damaging his body to a point of near death without gaining the supreme awakening he sought.



○ TURNING TO THE MIDDLE PATH

Finally, recognizing that these austerities were not the right way, he reflected to see if there might be another way. He remembered the incident from his childhood when he had spontaneously entered the first jhāna, and realized that this was the way to awakening. Even though jhāna brought great pleasure, it was not a pleasure to be feared, for it was blameless and not connected with sensuality. But he also realized that, with his body so emaciated, he did not have the strength to enter jhāna. So he stopped his fast and began going for alms and eating food again. The Five Brethren, seeing this, thought that the Bodhisatta had given up on the search for awakening, so they left him in disappointment.



○ THE FOUR BASES OF SUCCESS

Meanwhile, the Bodhisatta regained strength while staying on at the banks of the Nerañjarā River. With his newfound strength, he began developing the four bases of success—desire, persistence, intent, and discernment—necessary for the practice of jhāna and the development of the other factors needed for awakening.

○ ON THE FULL MOON DAY OF VISĀKHA MONTH

Finally, on the morning of the full moon day in the month of Visākha, after preparing to go for alms, he sat for a spell under a banyan tree, shedding radiance in all directions.

○ SUJĀTĀ

Meanwhile, Sujātā, the daughter of a wealthy financier living nearby, had prepared a bowl of excellent milk rice to offer to the protective deva of the banyan tree, in the belief that the deva had responded to her wish for a good husband and for her first son. Placing the milk rice in a golden tray, she went to the banyan tree together with her entourage.

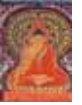
Seeing the Bodhisatta sitting there in full radiance, she and her entourage were delighted, thinking that this was the deva revealing himself to them. Sujātā bowed down to him and offered the milk rice with extreme respect. The Bodhisatta received the tray together with the rice, and Sujātā did not ask for the return of the tray, even though it was of great price. Instead, she paid respect again and left in great joy.





○ THE FLOATED UPSTREAM GOLDEN TRAY

The Bodhisatta divided his meal of milk rice into 49 morsels, which would suffice to sustain his body for the next 49 days. After his meal, he went to the riverbank and made a vow: As a sign that he would attain full awakening, the tray would float upstream against the currents of the river. After leaving his hand, the tray went to the middle of the river and then floated upstream until it sank into the abode of the great serpent, Kālanāga.



○ KĀLANĀGA

Kālanāga, who slept for immense periods of time, woke when he heard the sound of the golden tray striking against the golden trays left by the three previous Buddhas of our eon on the days of their awakening. Thinking, “Today, another Buddha appears, just like yesterday,” the serpent recited a verse in praise of the Buddha, and then went back to sleep.

○ SOTTHIYA

The Bodhisatta bathed and then rested for the remainder of the day. In the evening, Sotthiya, a brahman who cut grass for a living, offered eight bundles of grass to the Bodhisatta. He took the grass.





○ THE SUPREME VOW

The Bodhisatta went to the Bodhi tree and placed the bundles of grass on the ground to make a seat for himself, facing the east. As he sat down to meditate, he made a vow: *“Gladly would I let the flesh and blood in my body dry up, leaving just the skin, tendons, and bones, but if I have not attained the unexcelled full awakening, I will not get up from this seat.”*



- *Kiccho manussapatilābho,
kiccham maccāna jīvitam,
Kiccham saddhammassavanam,
kiccho buddhānam uppādo.*
- *Hard the winning of a human birth.
Hard the life of mortals.
Hard the chance to hear the true Dhamma.
Hard the arising of Awakened Ones.*

*Dhammapada 182
(Buddhavagga)*







7

AWAKENING

○ MĀRA'S TROOPS

At first, most of the devas came from their many realms to bless the Bodhisatta. Then, however, Vassavati Māra—realizing that if the Bodhisatta gained full awakening, he would lead many beings beyond the range of his power—rallied his troops to threaten him.

The sky drew dark with thunder and lightning, a terrible storm whipped up huge waves in the ocean, and trees fell from the mountains. The other devas fled in fear, leaving the Bodhisatta to

meditate steadfastly alone. Vassavati Māra transformed his appearance, giving himself a thousand heads and a thousand hands, holding many types of weapons. Riding on an elephant, Grimekhala, that was as tall as a mountain, he was surrounded by his troops that took the form of half human beings, half ferocious animals, leading the attack on the Bodhisatta.



○ THE THRONE

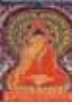
Māra shouted at the Bodhisatta with a clap of thunder:
“What right do you have to be on my throne?”

The Bodhisatta responded,

“How is this your throne? It was created by my merit.”

“How can you prove that?” Māra replied.

The Bodhisatta touched the ground, saying, “May the Earth be my witness.”



Suddenly the Earth deva rose from the ground and squeezed from her hair an immense flood of water, symbolizing the merit developed by the Bodhisatta over many eons, washing away Māra's troops just as a strong wind would blow away a cloud of dust. Grimekhala collapsed on his knees; Vassavati Māra returned to his original form and fled in defeat.



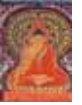


○ THE METAPHOR

This scene may be appreciated as a metaphor, in which Māra stands for the obstructions of awakening, i.e., the passions and defilements of the mind, such as sensuality, greed, aversion, and delusion. Thus, in the depiction here, the forces of Māra are shown engaged in the many kinds of actions that people do under the sway of defilement.

At the same time, the water from the Earth deva's hair represents the force of the colossal merit developed by the Bodhisatta over many lifetimes in overcoming the power of defilement.





○ THE THREE KNOWLEDGES

After Māra left, the Bodhisatta gained awakening first by bringing his mind to the fourth jhāna—abandoning pleasure and pain, and experiencing purity of equanimity and mindfulness—and then by applying his concentrated mind to gain three knowledges.

In the first knowledge, gained in the first watch of the night, he saw his many past lifetimes, going back many hundreds of thousands of eons (*pubbenivāsānussati-ñāṇa*).

In the second knowledge, gained in the second watch of the night, he saw how all beings die and are reborn in line with the skillful and unskillful actions they have performed under the power of right and wrong views (*cutūpapāta-ñāṇa*).

In the third knowledge, gained in the third watch of the night just before dawn, he realized the four noble truths—suffering, its cause, its cessation, and the path leading to its cessation—and completed the duties appropriate to each: comprehending suffering, abandoning its cause, realizing its cessation, and developing the path.



With this knowledge, his mind was released from the effluent of sensuality, the effluent of becoming, and the effluent of ignorance. He realized that this was his last birth, and there was now for him no further becoming. This knowledge is called the knowledge of the ending of effluents (*āsavakkhaya-ñāṇa*).



○ ENLIGHTENMENT

With this third knowledge, the Bodhisatta's mind reached unbinding (nibbāna).

Thereupon, he spoke these words of victory:

*Through the round of many births I roamed
without reward,
without rest,
seeking the house-builder.
Painful is birth again
& again.*

*House-builder, you're seen!
You will not build a house again.
All your rafters broken,
the ridge pole dismantled,
immersed in dismantling,
the mind has attained to the end of craving.*

Prince Siddhattha, the Bodhisatta, was now the Buddha, at the age of thirty – five.





60 THE LIFE AND TRUTH





8

THE BLISS OF RELEASE

○ THE SEVEN WEEKS AFTER AWAKENING

For the first seven weeks after awakening, the Buddha experienced the bliss of release, spending each week in a different location in the vicinity of the Bodhi tree.

The first week: The Buddha sat in meditation under the Bodhi tree in one session without moving.

The second week: The Buddha went and stood to the northeast of the Bodhi tree, staring at it without blinking in recognition of the benefits he had gained from sitting under the tree.

The third week: The Buddha did walking meditation between that point and the tree.

The fourth week: Devas created near the tree, a throne for the Buddha to sit on and to proclaim the Dhamma to which he had awakened.

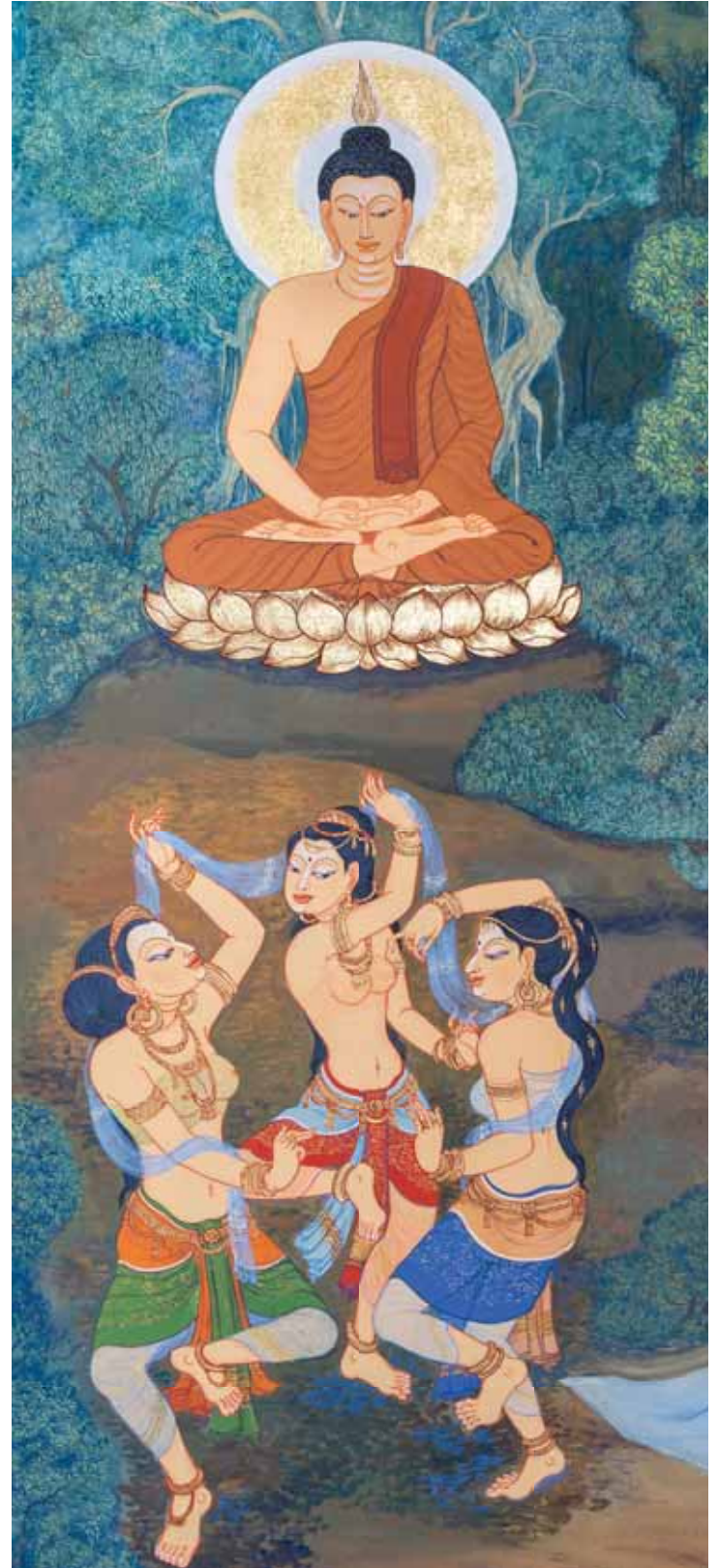
○ RESPECT THE DHAMMA

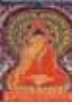
The fifth week: The Buddha moved to a banyan tree nearby and sat in meditation. He reflected that there was no one to whom he should pay respect, as there was now no higher being in the universe. But at the same time, he also reflected that people live in misery if they have no one or nothing to respect. So he decided to respect the Dhamma.



○ MĀRA'S DEJECTION

During this period, Vassavati Māra appeared in the forest and sat beside the path, despondent that the Buddha was now beyond his power. Taking a stick in hand and drawing lines in the ground, he dejectedly thought of the reasons why the Buddha had defeated him. First he drew ten lines in the ground, standing for the ten perfections of generosity, virtue, renunciation, discernment, persistence, endurance, truth, determination, goodwill, and equanimity. Then he crossed these ten lines with six more, representing the six higher knowledges that came with the awakening: the ability to display supernatural powers, clair audience, the ability to read the minds of others, recollection of past lives, clairvoyance, and knowledge of the ending of the effluents.





○ MĀRA'S DAUGHTERS

Māra's daughters — Craving, Discontent, and Passion — sensing their father's sadness, went to him and volunteered to bind the Buddha and bring him under his power. They went to the Buddha and, bowing down to him, offered to lavish attention on him. He didn't even glance at them. So they transformed themselves into many hundreds of different feminine forms, corresponding to the many varieties of male lust, each form vowing to lavish attention on the Buddha, but he didn't even glance at them. So finally Māra's daughters also surrendered, and Māra scolded them for their foolishness.



○ MUCALINDA NĀGA

The sixth week: The Buddha went to sit under the Mucalinda tree, absorbed in the bliss of release. A great storm blew up, with heavy rain, thunder, and lightning. There appeared a great serpent, the Mucalinda nāga, who coiled his body around the Buddha's body and spread his head over the Buddha's head to protect him from the wind and rain. When the storm abated, the nāga assumed a human form, paid respect to the Buddha, and then left.



○ MĀRA'S REQUEST

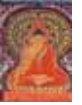
The seventh week: The Buddha went to sit under the Rājāyatana tree. Māra appeared once more to request that the Buddha enter total unbinding without teaching the Dhamma. The Buddha replied that he would not pass away into total unbinding until he had established his Dhamma, and his male and female followers were competent to teach the Dhamma in his place. So once again, Māra left.



○ TAPUSSA AND BHALLIKA

On the last day of the week, two merchants named Tapussa and Bhallika, brothers traveling from a faraway region, led their caravan through the forest. Seeing the Buddha, they offered him his first meal at the end of the seven-week session and, before leaving, took refuge in the Buddha and the Dhamma.





○ SAHAMPATI BRAHMĀ

Then the Buddha returned to the banyan tree. He reflected that the Dhamma he had discovered was very profound and refined, hard for people to understand. If he were to teach with no one to understand him, his efforts would be in vain. So he inclined his mind against teaching. Sahampati Brahmā, sensing the Buddha's thoughts, left his realm as quickly as a strong man would flex or extend his arm, and appeared in front of him. Kneeling down on one knee, he implored the Buddha to teach: There would be those with little dust in their eyes who would understand.

○ ALL KINDS OF LOTUSES

The Buddha reflected, seeing that those he might teach were like four groups of lotuses: some standing high above the water, ready to bloom at the first touch of the sun; some standing just above the water, blooming later; some standing at

water level, blooming still later; and some staying under water, where they would become food for the fishes and turtles. Realizing that there would be those who would understand the Dhamma, he kindly accepted the invitation to teach.







9

THE FIRST SERMON

○ VĀRĀNASĪ

The Buddha first thought of teaching his first former teacher, Āḷāra Kālāma, but then realized that Āḷāra had passed away seven days ago. He then thought of his second former teacher, Uddaka Rāmaputta, but realized that Uddaka had died the day before. Finally, he thought of the Five Brethren, and realized that they were staying in the Isipatana Forest near Vārāṇasī. So he traveled to Vārāṇasī by foot.

○ DHAMMACAKKAPPAVATTANA SUTTA

At first, the Five Brethren were disinclined to believe the Buddha's claim that he had achieved full awakening, but when he reminded them of his integrity and of the fact that he had never made

such a claim before, they agreed to listen to his Dhamma. So he delivered the Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta, the Discourse Setting the Wheel of Dhamma in Motion. This was on the full moon night of the month of Āsāḷha, two months after the Buddha's awakening.

The “wheel” of the discourse was the passage in which he explained the four noble truths and the three levels of knowledge appropriate to each: knowledge of the truth, knowledge of the duty appropriate to the truth, and knowledge that the duty had been completed. Only when he had completed all twelve “spokes” of the wheel, he said, did he claim full awakening.



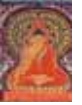
○ AÑÑĀ KŌṄDAÑÑĀ

On hearing the discourse, Koṅḍañña, the leader of the group, attained the Dhamma eye, seeing that whatever is subject to causation is all subject to passing away. Together with this understanding, he saw what is not subject to causation or passing away—the Deathless. With this, he attained the first noble attainment, stream-entry, so-called because it leads inevitably to full awakening, just as the water in a stream will flow inevitably to the ocean.

○ THE TRIPLE GEMS OF BUDDHISM

Koṅḍañña asked to become a bhikkhu, and so the Buddha gave him the Going-forth. Thus he was the first member of the Bhikkhu Saṅgha. The Triple Gem of the Buddha, Dhamma, and Saṅgha was now complete.





○ ANATTALAKKAṆA SUTTA

In the next few days, the remaining four brethren, listening to the Buddha give more explanations of the Dhamma, also gained the Dhamma-eye and received the Going-forth. Finally, the Buddha gave them the discourse later known as the Anattalakkāṇa Sutta, the Not-self Characteristic, and all of the Five Brethren reached the final stage of awakening, arahantship.

○ ADITTAPARIYĀYA SUTTA

Later, the Buddha separated from the five new monks to go to the region of Rajgir, teaching the Adittapariyāya Sutta, the Fire Sermon, to the three brother hermits—Uruvela Kassapa, Nadī Kassapa, and Gayā Kassapa—along with their 1,000 followers, all of whom became arahants in the course of the sermon.





Note: The next two scenes in the murals do not follow a chronological order.



10

OPENS THE THREE REALMS

○ THE DEVA WHO HAS BEEN QUEEN SIRI MAHĀMĀYĀ

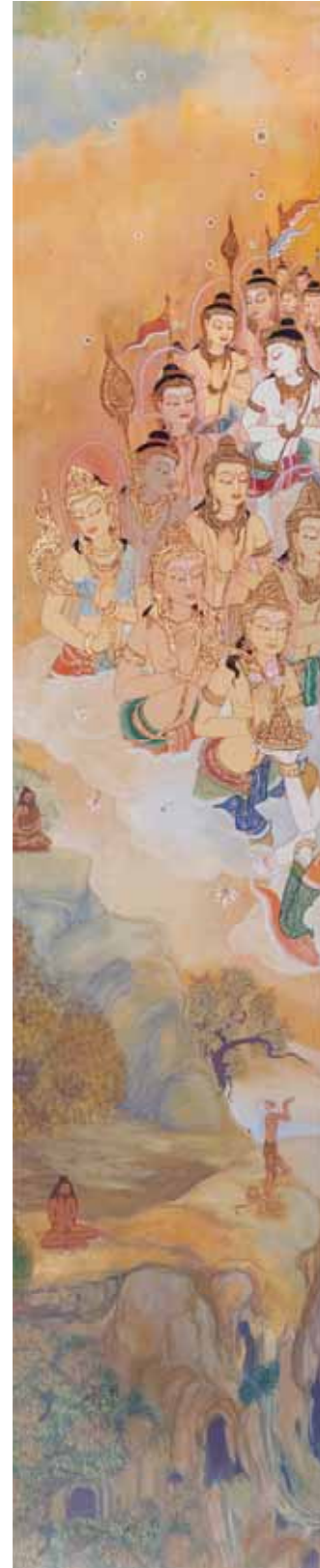
During the seventh rains retreat, the Buddha went to the Tāvātimsa Heaven to preach the Dhamma to the devas who assembled there from many deva realms.

In particular, he focused on teaching one of the devas who had come down from the Tusita Heaven, and who had been his mother, Queen Siri Mahāmāyā, before the latter died seven days after the Bodhisatta's birth.



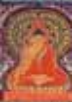
○ THE CITY OF SAṄKASSA

At the end of the Rains Retreat, the Buddha returned to Earth, escorted by many devas, descending a golden staircase created through his supernormal powers and reaching from heaven to Earth with its foot in the city of Saṅkassa. A huge crowd of the Buddha's followers—bhikkhus, bhikkhunīs, laymen, and laywomen—went there to welcome him back to Earth.

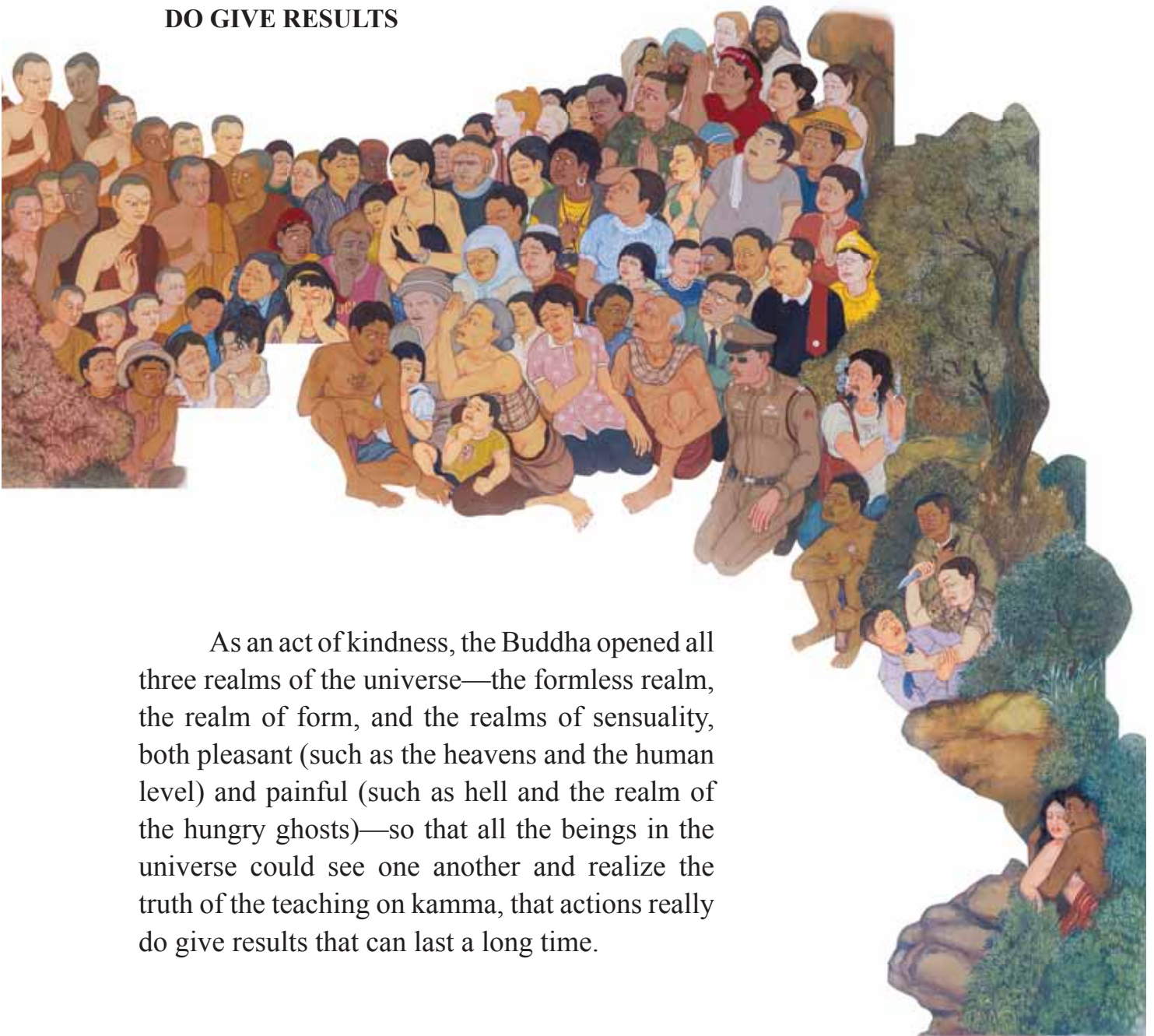








○ ACTIONS REALLY DO GIVE RESULTS



As an act of kindness, the Buddha opened all three realms of the universe—the formless realm, the realm of form, and the realms of sensuality, both pleasant (such as the heavens and the human level) and painful (such as hell and the realm of the hungry ghosts)—so that all the beings in the universe could see one another and realize the truth of the teaching on kamma, that actions really do give results that can last a long time.

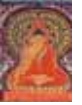


○ *Khantī paramaṃ tapo tīikkhā
Nibbānaṃ paramaṃ vadanti Buddhā.
Na hi pabbajito parūpaghātī
Samaṇo hoti paraṃ vihethayanto.*

○ *Patient endurance: the foremost austerity.
Unbinding: the foremost, so say the Awakened.
He who injures another is no contemplative.
He who mistreats another, no monk.*

*Dhammapada 184
(Buddhavagga)*





11

THE BUDDHA'S VICTORIES



○ THE BUDDHA – JAYA – MAṄGALA GĀTHĀ

The Buddha's victories over those who tried to destroy him, as related in the Buddha-jaya-maṅgala Gāthā, the Verses of the Blessings of the Buddha's Victories.

The center of the circle shows the Buddha in many forms, performing the Yamaka-paṭihāra, the "Twin Miracle," one of the victories not recorded in the verses.





Around this circle, the victories related in the verses are depicted clockwise, beginning at the top left.

The first verse, beginning Vassavati Māra, riding the elephant Grimekhala and accompanied by his troops, capitulates to the Buddha through the force of the latter's virtues, beginning with generosity.

The second verse, beginning, Mārātirekam-abhiyujjhita-sabba-rattim: The Buddha patiently answers all the riddles posed by a yakkha who had threatened to rip out his heart and hurl him across the Ganges River if he couldn't provide the answers.

The third verse, beginning, Nālāgirim gaja-varam atimattabhūtam: The Buddha, through the power of his goodwill, tames a fierce elephant that Devadatta had set loose with the purpose of killing the Buddha.

The fourth verse, beginning, Ukkhitta-khaggam-atihatthasudāruṇantam: The Buddha converts the great bandit, Aṅgulimālā, with a display of psychic powers.

The fifth verse, beginning, Katvāna kaṭṭham-udaram iva gabbhinīyā: The Buddha defeats the claims of a woman who had fashioned a false belly and claimed that the Buddha had made her pregnant. As the Buddha remains silent, the belly comes undone, showing that her claim is false.





The sixth verse, beginning, *Saccam vihāya mati-saccaka-vāda-ketuṃ:*

The Buddha, through the light of his discernment, defeats Saccaka, a famous debater who had threatened to make the Buddha shake and sweat through the force of his debating skills.

The seventh verse, beginning, *Nandopananda-bhujagam vibudham mahiddhim:* The Buddha sends Ven. Moggallāna, one of his disciples, to defeat with psychic power a many-headed serpent of great might but wrong views.

The eighth verse, beginning, *Duggāha-diṭṭhi-bhujagena sudaṭṭha-hattham:* The Buddha, through his superior knowledge, defeats Baka, a Brahmā who had mistakenly believed himself to be immortal.

All of these incidents surround a circle behind a large figure of the Buddha standing in the Abhaya—Fearless or Danger-free—pose.





- *Sīladassanasampannaṃ dhammattham
saccavedinaṃ attano kamma kubbānaṃ
taṇ jano kurute piyaṃ.*
- *One consummate in virtue & vision,
judicious, speaking the truth,
doing his own task: the world holds him dear*

*Dhammapada 217
(Piyavagga)*







12

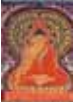
THE RELATIVES' ASSISTANCE

Buddha's relationship to his family and relatives.

○ THE FIRST VISIT

After his awakening, he returned two times to his home city of Kapilavattu. During his first visit, he taught the Dhamma to his father, King Suddhodana; his step-mother, Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī; his former wife, Princess Yasodharā Bimbā; and his son, Rāhula, as well as many other relatives.

A large number of these relatives were later ordained as bhikkhus and bhikkhunīs.



○ THE SECOND VISIT

During the Buddha's second visit, King Suddhodana became an arahant shortly before dying.

Most of the relatives who ordained also became arahants, and played an important role in the spread of the Dhamma. Among them were Venerables Ānanda, Anuruddha, Rāhula, and Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī bhikkhunī.

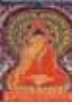


- *Jiranti ve rājaratha sucitta atho
Sariram pi jaraṃ upeti,
Satan ca dhammo na jaraṃ upeti,
Santo have subbhi pavedayanti.*
- *Even royal chariots well-embellished get run down,
and so does the body succumb to old age.
But the Dhamma of the good doesn't succumb to old age :
the good let the civilized know*

*Dhammapada 151
(Jaravagga)*







13

THE GREAT TOTAL UNBINDING

○ IN THE ROYAL GROVE OF KUSINĀRĀ

The last scene depicts the events surrounding the Buddha's final total unbinding. He passed away at night in the royal grove of the Mallans of Kusinārā at the age of eighty.

○ SUBHADDA, THE LAST DISCIPLE

Before his passing, he taught one last disciple, Subhadda the wanderer, who quickly became an arahant.



○ THE BUDDHA'S LAST WORDS

The Buddha's last words were: "I exhort you, monks: All fabrications are subject to decay. Reach consummation through heedfulness."

After he totally unbound, the Earth quaked and celestial flowers fell from the sky. All those who came to pay respect—from devas to human beings—mourned his passing, except for those who had attained arahantship and had fully realized what lies beyond death.

○ THE FUNERAL AND RELICS

The Mallans conducted an eight-day funeral ceremony as would have befit an emperor.

After the cremation, kings from various regions came with their troops, each claiming all of the relics. Doṇa the brahman averted a potential war by offering a fair share to all. The relics were then taken to many countries to be enshrined in stūpas where their generation and later generations could pay respect and remind themselves of the Buddha's teachings.









2560 YEARS AFTER

The night of the Buddha's passing marked the beginning of the Buddhist era. We are now in the year 2560 of that era. What are we doing with our lives? The Buddha's words are still as true as ever.



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