

The five men who had been with Gautama left him, for they believed that holiness could not be found by one who ate food like ordinary men. One of them said, "Gautama seeks a more pleasant life. He has failed."

But this was not true. As the day passed into evening, Gautama walked until he found shelter beneath the boughs of a lovely old tree.¹

Sitting down, he placed his hands together in his lap and folded his feet crosslegged beneath him. He resolved to never leave the spot until he reached enlightenment.

After continuous struggle all through the night, Gautama found the answers that he had been seeking. He became a Buddha. . . a Perfect One² He was 35 years old and the Memorable day was December 8th. Now, he knew how he could help the people.

Days went by and as the Buddha sat beneath the shade of the ancient tree his heart was full of peace and joy. And because he was a Buddha, great rainbow colors came from his body and spread for miles around.³

¹ It was this tree that became famous as the Bodhi Tree—or Tree of Enlightenment

² Forever thereafter, Prince Siddhartha was called Gautama Buddha, Śakyamuni Buddha or The Blessed One. (Śakyamuni means the "Sage of the Śakyas").

³ The colors used in the Buddhist Flag of today originates from this source.

After Gautama was enlightened, he did not go immediately to the people.

He hesitated because he wondered of the people would accept his teachings.

The people only knew of charms, superstitions and sacrifices. Many people believed that their sufferings were caused by the gods who were angry with them. Elaborate ceremonies were held to please the gods.

Compared with these ancient beliefs and customs, the Buddha's teachings were so different. He found that sacrifices and ceremonies were not necessary. Angry gods did not cause people to suffer. People brought on suffering by themselves through their own selfish desires and misunderstandings. The Buddha's way of teaching was to help people understand and accept life as it is. To desire more and more from life than is possible is bound to cause suffering. The Buddha wanted people to look within themselves for the reasons for their sufferings. He wanted the people to correct themselves.

"Would they do this?" he wondered.

In the end, he said to himself, "What good is my enlightenment if I keep it only for myself? My enlightenment is to help a suffering world."

The Buddha wanted to go first to his teachers to tell them about the truth he had found. But he learned that they were dead.

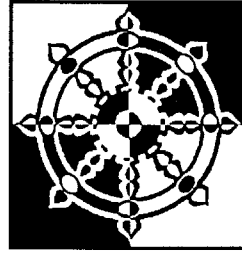
He thought of the five men who were with him in the forest of Uruvilva. He decided that they should be the first ones to hear his teaching.

Learning that the five men were living somewhere near the city of Benares, the Buddha went from village to village in search of them.

In a beautiful forest known as Deer Park, about six miles to the north from the city of Benares, he found his former disciples.

When the five men saw their former master coming, they agreed among themselves to pay little attention to him. As far as they were concerned, their master had failed.

But they all changed their minds completely when the Buddha began to speak.



With the preaching of his first sermon, Gautama (Buddha) made his teaching (Dharma) known to others. He had set the wheel of truth into motion.

The five men who listened to him became his first disciples (Sangha).

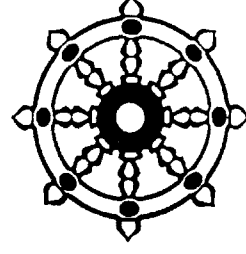
Thus, the Three Treasures (Buddha, Dharma, Sangha) was formed over 2,500 years ago from this small group of people who were gathered at Deer Park.

The five men who accepted the Buddha and his teachings recited the Three Treasures and became his faithful followers.

Each one solemnly repeated

I put my faith in the Buddha
I put my faith in the Dharma
I put my faith in the Sangha

Even to this day, the Three Treasures is recited by all faithful Buddhists.



In addition to reciting the Three Treasures, the disciples followed a set of rules called the precepts.

The precepts are many in number, but the most basic rules followed by all Buddhists are the Five Precepts.

The Five Precepts are:

1. I shall not harm any living thing.
2. I shall not take what does not belong to me.
3. I shall not do anything impure.
4. I shall not tell falsehoods.
5. I shall not take harmful foods and drinks.

The precepts were not commands forced upon the disciples by the Buddha.

Each disciple followed the precepts because they wished to live pure life as taught by the Buddha. The precepts helped the disciples to keep on the right path.

Note:

Receiving the Three Treasures and promising to follow the Precepts, the monks wore the yellow robe of the Brotherhood. The robes were made of pieces of old, discarded rags patched together. From this origin comes the colorful, larger "Kesa" worn by some priests on special occasions which are also made of pieces of cloth sewn together. The narrow, circular band of cloth worn on ordinary occasions is the simplified form of the "kesa."

Sunday School Handbook,
(Hawaii)

While the Buddha stayed at Deer Park, the news about him and his teachings spread swiftly among the people. Many came who were eager to hear of the joy and the ending of human sorrow.

After three months, when there were about sixty disciples he said, "We have a great duty to perform—let us part company, and each take a different way so that no two shall go in the same direction.* —preach the doctrine to all men and declare the truths which I have made known to you."

The followers of the Buddha set forth in all directions to help spread the teachings.

Gautama Buddha, himself, left the Deer Park to travel from place to place giving comfort and happiness to all who heard him.

* Later, when there were more followers, they traveled about the country together with other disciples.

In the days of Gautama Buddha, India had a system of dividing people into different classes. This system was known as the caste system. According to the caste system, there were four classes of people.

1. nobles
2. warriors
3. common citizens
4. slaves

People belonged to a certain class according to their births. The hope of bettering themselves was lost to all those who belonged to the lower classes.

Gautama Buddha whose love extended to everyone, did not consider people in terms of the caste system. He said, "I do not call a man noble, because of his caste, but by his deeds, good and beneficial, I call him noble. I do not call a man noble because of his background or his parents, but the poor who is free from all attachment, I call him noble."*

What is of importance is the act, and not the actor; the deed, and not the doer.

People of all classes came to hear the Buddha speak. The rich and poor, wise and ignorant, old and young, men and women all mingled together and were equally blessed.

Day by day the followers of the way of truth increased. At times, large groups of people all at once became disciples of the Buddha. This happened when leaders of other beliefs together with their own disciples became the Buddha's followers.

* Dhammapada



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From the Deer Park near Benares, the Buddha and his disciples made their way from village to village to the city of Rajagrha.

Nearly seven years had passed since the first time he had been in Rajagrha. He remembered how he had made a promise* to King Bimbisara. He had told the King that if he ever found the truth he was seeking, he would return and teach him. He had come to fulfill his promise to the king.

King Bimbisara, who was summoned by a messenger went to the palm grove where the Buddha and his disciples were staying. He bowed reverently at the feet of the Buddha and listened to the words of truth. Accepting the words of the Buddha with joy, the king received the Three Treasures and became a follower of the Buddha

The people of Rajagrha were greatly excited. Their king had become converted to the new religion. Who would be next they all wondered.

* Refer to Number 24

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In Rajagrha at that time, there were two friends by the name of Sariputra and Maudgalyayana. They were chief followers of another religion. These two friends had promised each other that if either of them came to know of a higher truth, he would immediately tell the other.

One day Sariputra happened to see a disciple of the Buddha who was begging for his food. Sariputra was struck by the calm and beautiful expression of the face of this disciple. He asked the young boy about his religion and about his master. The young boy told what he knew to Sariputra with deep sincerity and joy that Sariputra wanted to hear more.

Sariputra went in search of Maudgalyayana. Together the two friends went to the Buddha to hear his teachings.

They joined the brotherhood of monks and soon became the Buddha's truest disciples.



As the Buddha's followers increased, the news of his greatness spread for miles around.

In Kapilavastu, many miles from Rajagṛha, King Sudhodana heard that his son had become a Buddha. Seven years had gone by since he had last seen his son. The King longed to see him again.

To his messengers he said, "Go to my son. Tell the Buddha that the King, his father, wishes to see him. Bring him with you when you return."

When the first messenger did not return, King Sudhodana sent other men to do his bidding. Many messengers were sent before the Buddha received the message. Each man who had been sent by the King had become believers of the Buddha's teaching and had joined the Brotherhood. After hearing the Buddha speak, none remembered the King's message.

It was a man by the name of Udayin* who finally delivered the King's message to the Buddha. Like the other messengers he, too, had become converted, but he remembered his promise to the King.

As the days grew warmer and the road became fit for traveling, the Buddha accompanied by his disciples set forth for Kapilavastu.

* Udayin had grown up with Prince Siddhartha and knew him well.

Since the Buddha and his disciples traveled on foot, it took about two months before they reached Kapilavastu.

The city was made lovely with masses of flowers and flags. Outside the city gate in a shady grove, the people of Kapilavastu had shelters made ready for the Buddha and his disciples. King Sudhodana and other members of the royal family had come to the city gate to welcome the Buddha.

When the King saw his son as a perfect Buddha, he bowed down before him. But the next morning when the Buddha roamed the city begging for his food, the King was angered.

"Why do you shame your family by begging?" he exclaimed.

The Buddha explained that this was a custom followed by him and his disciples. Giving up all the pleasures of life, they wandered from place to place in order to spread the good teachings to the people. They ate to keep themselves well and strong. But they did not eat more than necessary. They only ate once a day before noon, eating whatever was given to them by people. It was also their way not to complain if only a little or nothing was given.*

The King's heart was softened as he listened to the words spoken by the Buddha

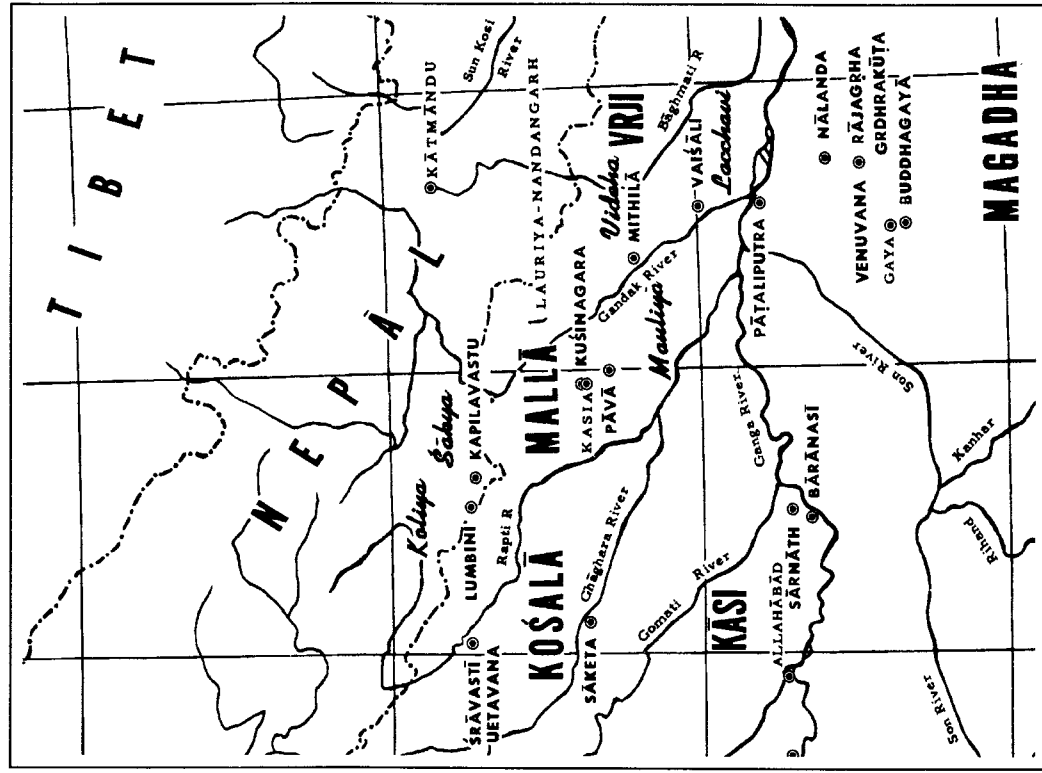
* The people in Buddhist countries love and honor the monks and consider it a privilege to supply them with food—even the poorest put by a small portion of rice or a little fruit in readiness for the monks' daily visit.

In the evening the Buddha gave the teachings to the people of Kapilavastu. King Sudhodana, Queen Prajapati and Princess Yasodhara also came to hear the Blessed One speak. As they listened to him speak, their fears and doubts were cast away. In the heart of the Princess, bitterness slowly melted away as she found peace in the teachings of the Buddha.

The people of Kapilavastu accepted the teachings and rejoiced in their new joy. Members of the royal family too, praised the Buddha. Nanda, the half-brother of the Buddha, gave up his royal state to become a monk. Cousins of the Buddha, Ananda and Devadatta, and their barber named Upali also decided to join the Brotherhood.

Now, in the Brotherhood, the monks were considered elders in the order they entered. It so happened that Upali had joined shortly before the members of the royal family. Upali, the slave, was now an elder of his former masters. Since this condition was hard to accept by some members of the Sangha, the Buddha explained, "Those who enter the Sangha first should lead those who enter later. Those who consider themselves noble because of their royal birth are like people who consider themselves good because of their fine clothes. It is wrong to think Upali as only a slave because he was born in the lowest class. All classes of people should live together in harmony."

So saying, the Buddha received the new group and welcomed them all. Among the new group of men who entered, Ananda was especially devoted to the Buddha. With simplicity and goodness, Ananda served his master in many ways and took care of the Buddha's personal needs. As time went on, he became the Buddha's closest companion.



As young as he was, Rahula also joined the Brotherhood and wore the yellow robe of the monk.

Rahula was just a baby when his father left home to search for the Truth. When his mother told him that his father had returned to Kapilavastu, Rahula wanted to see him very much.

Yasodhara dressed her son in his finest robe and said, "Today you shall see your father. For seven long years we have waited for this day to come. Go now and see him. Ask him for your inheritance."

Rahula did as he was told. He followed his father everywhere and asked him repeatedly for the inheritance. Finally, the two arrived at the grove where the Buddha was staying. There, the Buddha spoke to Sariputra, "My son asks me for wealth and treasures which I do not possess. Even if I had these treasures to offer him, they will not bring him true happiness. As his inheritance, I will give him the treasures of my teachings."

The Buddha asked his son, "Would you like to be admitted to the Brotherhood to seek the Truth and the greatest happiness known to man?"

Rahula answered eagerly, "Yes, I do" and entered the Order to be trained as a monk.

Rahula was the youngest person belonging to the Sangha. He was adored by many persons and given so much attention that he soon became very spoiled. He did not always follow the rules of the brotherhood. He ate whenever he pleased and was noisy when he should be quiet meditating. He enjoyed fooling the other disciples by telling lies.

One day the Buddha went to Rahula's room. Rahula was happy to see his father and offered him a pan of water to wash his feet. After his feet were clean, the Buddha pointed to the water in the pan and asked, "Is that water fit to drink?"

The child replied, "No."

The Buddha said, "People who tell lies are like this water. They have made their minds unclean."

After the water was thrown out, the Buddha asked Rahula, "Is the pan now fit for holding water to drink?"

"No," said Rahula, "it is not. The pan is unclean from the water that was in it."

The Buddha spoke again, "No matter how wonderful the Buddha's teaching, no matter if you wear the yellow robe of the monk, if you have become unclean through telling lies, you are not fit to do any noble work."

Rahula looked down ashamed as the Buddha continued to speak. "And if this pan should break no

one would care, for it is unclean and not fit for any high purpose. The same is true for people who do not speak the truth and do not live noble lives. When they die, nobody feels the loss."

It is said that as Rahula grew into a man, he learned the teaching and became a wise disciple.

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Although many members of the royal family gladly gave up their life of ease and luxury to follow the way of the Buddha, it took time for the King Suddhodana to appreciate the truth that his son had found. It was hard for him to understand the Buddha's teaching. But as the days passed, the King realized the noble truth of his son's teaching. The King never became a monk, but he became a firm believer and follower in the Buddha's teaching.

Several years after his son's first visit to Kapilavastu, King Suddhodana called his son once more. Being very old, he knew he was dying. When the Buddha came with former members of the King's family, King Suddhodana was overjoyed. Surrounded by his loving family he passed away very quietly to enter the pathway of peace (Nirvana).

The Ten Great Disciples of the Buddha

1. Sariputra
2. Maudgalyayana
3. Mahakasyapa
4. Anuruddha
5. Subhuti
6. Purna
7. Katyayana
8. Upali
9. Rahula
10. Ananda

After the King's death, Queen Prajapati and Princess Yasodhara followed by other women of the Sakya clan asked the Buddha to allow them to join the Buddhist Order as nuns.

They had asked once before when the Buddha had first visited Kapilavastu. At that time they had been refused admission. The Buddha had told them that it was not necessary to give up their home and family to become a disciple of the Buddha. He said that the Buddha's teaching could be followed anywhere.

But now that the King had passed away, these women felt that they had no cause to remain in Kapilavastu. Instead, they wished to serve the Buddha and help in womanly ways to strengthen the Sangha.

Hearing the earnest pleadings of the women, the Buddha finally yielded. The Buddhist Sisterhood was founded in this manner by Queen Prajapati.

Shortly after the Buddha was enlightened, he was presented a bamboo grove called Venuvana by King Bimbisara of Rajagṛha. A dwelling place, or a viihara as it was called, was also constructed at Venuvana.

It was to the Venuvana viihara that the Buddha and his disciples returned after their visit to Kapilavastu. While staying here, a rich merchant by the name of Anathapindada came to Rajagṛha. Hearing the Buddha speak, Anathapindada became a follower immediately. Like King Bimbisara, he, too, wished to present the Brotherhood a place to stay.

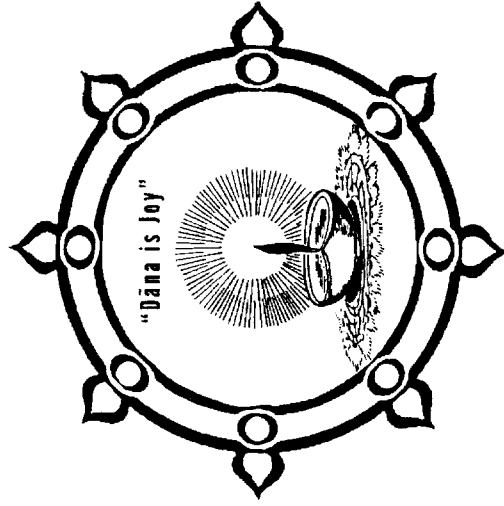
Returning home to Sravasti, he looked for a suitable place. At last after several days he came upon a beautiful grove which he thought was most ideal for the Buddha and his disciples. But, alas, the land was not his to give because it belonged to another. The owner was Prince Jeta who refused to sell the land to Anathapindada.

The rich merchant did not give up his plan until one day the prince said, "Very well, I will give you the garden if you pay me the amount of gold needed to cover the whole area."

Anathapindada was overjoyed. He had the money brought in carts pulled by bullocks. His men laid the coins, side by side, over the whole garden.

Prince Jeta was astonished, not so much by the large amount of money but by the unselfishness and devotion of Anathapindada. The prince only accepted half of the gold saying, "Yours is the land, mine are the trees. I will give the trees as my share of this offering to the Buddha."

The garden was named Jetavana and became famous in Buddhist history



The gift of Dhamma exceeds all gifts;
The sweetness of the Dhamma exceeds all
sweetness, —

Dhammapada No. 354

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Many people came to the Jetavana vihara to gain wisdom from the Buddha's teaching. On one occasion, a young mother by the name of Kisagotami came weeping to the Buddha. The cause of her sorrow was the death of her baby.

The baby died so suddenly that Kisagotami could not believe that her son was gone. The poor, distracted woman truly believed that there was something that could make her child live again. A disciple of the Buddha who had seen and talked with her had brought her before the Blessed One.

Kisagotami bowed low to the Buddha and asked him for medicine to bring back life to her child.

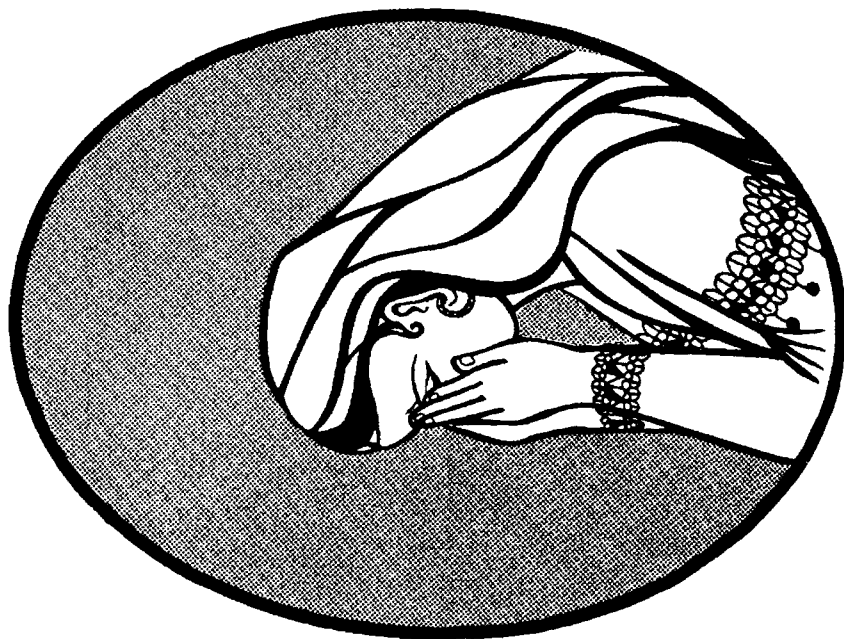
The Buddha answered, "Bring me a handful of mustard seed. You must remember, though, that the mustard seed must come from a house where had been no death."

Full of hope in her heart, Kisagotami went in search of the mustard seed. She thought happily to herself, "Soon . . . soon her baby would be alive in her arms again."

But as she went from house to house, the truth became clear to her.

The people were willing to give her some mustard seed. Only, Kisagotami could not accept, for each family she visited had, at one time or another, experienced the loss of a dear one.

Returning to the Jetavana vihara, she said to the Buddha, "There is non who has not known the sorrow of death. My suffering is shared by all."



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Many came to join the Buddhist Order. Day by day the number increased.

But it must be remembered that the followers of the Buddha's teaching were not limited only to those who joined the Order. There were many who could not join, for one reason or another. These people vowed to follow the Buddha's teaching at home.

For those who left their homes to join the Brotherhood, there was no set age limit. Young and old alike were able to join.

There was once a very young boy who had traveled a long distance to find the Blessed One. After making the boy welcome, the Buddha said, "Your brother disciples will gladly tell you of our rules and show you what to do."

Eagerly the boy sought out an elder brother. "What do I do now? How shall I get my daily food? Where shall I sleep tonight?"

Smiling, the older one said, "Have no fear, lad, for while we are in this district, food and shelter are provided for us. Nearby lives the kindly Anathapindada who gives us shelter and the good

* Today in many Buddhist countries in Asia, it is customary for Buddhists to join the Brotherhood at one time or another during their lives.

woman Visakha* who furnishes our daily food. Go to the door of Visakha in the morning for your food and go to the door of Anathapindada in the evening for a place to sleep."

Early the next morning even before the Master and his disciples were awake, the young disciple arose. Taking his brand new begging bowl in hand, he hurried to the home of Visakha. He stood waiting and waiting, by the door. But no one came to give him food.

"This is a fine way to treat a new disciple," he thought to himself. With a sharp knock at the sleeping household he left noisily. Straightway, he went to the home of Anathapindada to arrange for his place to sleep. But here, too, all was silent.

"So this is the way I get treated, after leaving my own good home and bed." Angry, the young boy walked away slowly. Full of disappointment, he rambled here and there. Suddenly, he realized that people were stirring about, children running and shouting and the sun already sending down waves of heat. A very empty feeling in his middle sent him scurrying back to the door of Visakha. . . just in time to see the servants putting away the last bowl. Everything was gone.

* One of the most famous women in Buddhist history. Read the story of Visakha, *The Gospel of Buddha*, pages 94-98.

This time a black anger traveled from his face to his heart. With great strides he stormed back to the place where the disciples were staying.

"You cheaters. . . you. . . you pigs. So I would have no worries about food? You tricked me. . ." After saying these words and many more, the young disciple left the brotherhood.

He went about the city telling everyone, "Anathapindada did not find shelter for me. Visakha waited until I left her door and then passed out the food."

When the gossip reached the ears of the Buddha, he found the young disciple and said, "Because you went too early and then too late to find food and lodging, you are blaming two kind people. It is wrong to go about speaking ill of anyone. Even in ages past, holy men have never grown angry when they received no food, nor did they go about speaking ill of those who did not help them. Please try to forget ill thoughts, and try hard to learn the pure teaching."

Just as there was great difference in the ages of the Buddha's disciples, there was also much difference in the learning ability of the disciples. Among the members of the Brotherhood were men of great learning. On the other hand, there were those who could not memorize any of the Buddha's teaching.

To each and all the Buddha found ways to show the truth in the way it was most understandable.

Among the Buddha's disciples there was a man named Panthaka who found learning very difficult. Nevertheless, he was able to understand the teaching. His understanding of the teaching came about in another way.

Panthaka's joy in life was found in serving his master. Knowing this, the Buddha asked Panthaka for his help in keeping the place clean.

Day after day, Panthaka picked up his broom and swept the entire area.

As the days went by, a remarkable thing happened. Panthaka understood why the Buddha had suggested this work for him. Unlike the other who learned simply by listening, Panthaka needed something more to help him understand. Keeping the place clean made him realize that just as constant sweeping is necessary to keep a place clean, he must constantly strive to keep his thought, speech, and actions clean to keep himself pure.

Panthaka learned a basic truth that was constantly stressed by the Buddha in his teaching. The following story shows how much the Buddha stressed the importance of keeping thought, speech and actions as pure as possible.

Among the Buddha's disciples was once named Anuruddha. One day he wanted to do some mending on his robe. But he could not see very well and could not thread the needle. He asked, "Will someone thread this needle for me?" The Buddha was the first to do his bidding.

When Anuruddha learned that the Buddha had threaded his needle, he was so surprised. He asked his master, "Must you still do good deeds even after you become a Buddha?"

The Buddha answered, "There is non as earnest as the Buddha in doing good, noble deeds. Do not commit evil even though the evil deeds be as tiny as a needle point. At the same time seek and do even the smallest good deed—so small that it can easily pass through the eye of a needle."

During the rainy season, which lasted for about three months, the Blessed One and his followers remained in one place. For the Buddha's disciples, this was a time for quiet meditation and religious training.

As for the people of India the rainy season was a welcome and necessary change after a long period of hot, dry weather. On the other hand, day after day of continual rain made people restless. They looked forward to sunny days. For this reason July 15th which marked the end of the rainy season was a very special day. The celebration of the Ullumbana was held.

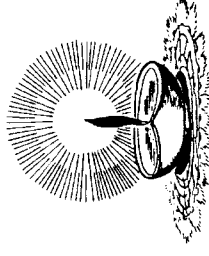
The people were especially happy on this day. Their joy expressed the deep gratitude they felt in their hearts. Many offerings were made as a part of the celebration.

But during this time when everyone was happy, Maudgallyayana was in grief. Through deep meditation he had seen his dead mother suffering in the hell of hungry demons. As hungry as she was, she could not eat. All the food that touched her lips burst into flames. Seeing his mother in agony, Maudgallyayana tried to help, but was unable to do anything. He quickly went to the Buddha and told him everything.

With great understanding, the Buddha listened to Maudgallyayana. Then the Buddha said, "There is a way to help your mother. Give of yourself freely, purely and selflessly and your mother shall be saved."

The celebration of the Ullumbana was to be held in a few days. Maudgallyayana prepared a huge feast for the members of the Brotherhood. His act of selfless giving brought happiness to others and to himself.

In his happiness he saw that his mother was saved. Overjoyed, Maudgallyayana began to dance and the others who were there joined him with gladness.



During good weather Gautama Buddha and his followers spent most of their time wandering from place to place. Most of their journeys took place between Venuvana vihara and Jetavana vihara. Since the journey from Rajagrha to Sravasti took many days, many rest houses were built along the way. Going from one place to the next they spread the teaching of Truth.

As the people's love for him grew and grew, there were a few among them who were jealous of the Blessed One's popularity. They spread all kinds of false stories about him and his followers.

When asked by his disciples as to what they should do about the matter, Gautama Buddha answered, "Pay no attention to them, and remember one thing. Hatred cannot be silenced by hate but by love and truth."

The disciples obeyed their master. Soon by their right conduct and goodness, they silenced the evil tongues of their enemies.

Disharmony did not occur only between the people and the Brotherhood. At times there was disharmony even among the disciples. But in his quiet way, the Buddha was able to restore peace. There was a time, however, when the Buddha and the Brotherhood was seriously threatened by one of its members.

Devadatta, who became a disciple of the Buddha expected to gain honor and high rank because he was a cousin to the Buddha. Then he found that he did not receive special favors, he became very angry. As time passed his anger grew into hatred, and he began to think of ways to gain power over the Buddha. He plotted with his friend, Prince Ajatasatru, who was the son of King Bimbisara.

"Imprison your father and become the king. Then with your help, I will have enough power to become the new Buddha," said Devadatta.

Prince Ajatasatru listened to the advice of Devadatta and did as he was told. He imprisoned his father and quickly became the ruler of the kingdom.

How great must have been the sorrow of King Bimbisara to find himself placed in such a position by his own son. Everyday the queen did all she could to help until she, too, was imprisoned for giving aid.

When King Bimbisara died, Ajatasatru was so influenced by the evil of Devadatta that the news of his father's death did not affect him in any way. In fact, he and Devadatta began to plan their next move to bring harm to the Buddha. But every attempt to do so failed.

Little by little, Ajatasatru began to see the evil that he had done. He freed his mother from prison. Still, he was tortured by the thought of his own evil. When he could no longer stand it, he went before the Buddha to seek peace.

The Buddha received Ajatasatru kindly and taught him the right way of salvation.

Ajatasatru was so deeply touched by the Buddha's words that he decided to lead a good life according to the Buddha's teaching. Like his father, King Bimbisara, he became a helper of all good causes.

As for Devadatta, he continued to seek ways to become a leader in place of the Buddha.

When the Buddha heard of Devadatta's death, he sorrowed deeply. Some one who thought this strange asked him why he should be so sad. The Buddha replies, "Devadatta is as dear to me as my son Rahula."

As the story has been told so far, many memorable events took place in the life of Gautama Buddha. Some events were happy. Some were sad. Yet the Blessed One took each happening calmly with great understanding of the truth he taught. From day to day he lived for the sake of others. In no time at all, forty-five years went by since his enlightenment, and he was eighty years old.

Despite his age, he still traveled until he became ill at Vaisali on the way from Rajagṛha to Sravastī. He continued his journey, however, from Vaisali until he and his disciples reached Kusinagara. There at Kusinagara, he rested in the shade of two large sala trees. Even as he lay there, he continued to preach until the last moment.

Then the Buddha noticed that Ananda was overcome with sorrow, he said, "Do not grieve, Ananda. It must always be thus. The time of parting with those we live must come sooner or later. It is the nature of everything that is born into this world that it must also die. How could it be otherwise?"

As time drew near his passing into Nirvana, the Buddha left these undying words for all eternity. "After my death Truth shall become your teacher. Follow Truth and you will be true to me."

Thus passed the greatest of the world's teachers and the kindest of men.

Conclusion

Everyday, we walk through many doors. In the morning, we walk out of our bedroom door into the bathroom, out of it and in through the kitchen doorway, where Mother is making breakfast. After awhile, we say goodbye to Mother and we are soon walking through our schoolroom doorway. All day long we are busy hurrying from one doorway to another.

When Prince Siddhartha gained Enlightenment, he walked through a very special door. We say that he walked through the doorway to ETERNAL PEACE AND HAPPINESS.

These events did not take place suddenly for Prince Siddhartha. As a young boy his heart was full of tenderness. Without ever giving up he kept trying to find a way of happiness for all. When he walked through the special door and found true happiness, he kept the door open for us.

By entering this door, we, too, will be able to see life in the right way and follow in the Buddha's Path.

Let us take refuge in the Three Treasures:

I PUT MY FAITH IN BUDDHA
I PUT MY FAITH IN DHARMA
I PUT MY FAITH IN SANGHA

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