

The Soil of the Heart



A Buddhist story on the cultivation of the mind.

An Outward Journey

The story begins with five hundred bhikkhus, followers of the Buddha, returning to the Jetavana monastery. They have just completed a long journey through the country, walking alongside their Teacher. Their minds are full of the sights they have seen.



A Discussion of the Earth



Assembling in the attendance hall, the monks begin to talk. Their conversation is not of teachings or insights, but of the physical world they have just traversed. They discuss the varied kinds of soil they encountered:

- Even and uneven ground
- Land abounding in mud
- Paths covered in gravel
- Patches of black clay and red clay

The Pivot to the Inner Ground



The Teacher approaches and asks what they are discussing. Upon hearing their answer, he gently redirects their attention with a profound statement:

“Bhikkhus, this is the outer soil. It is necessary for you rather to cleanse the inner soil of the heart.”

The Question of Knowing

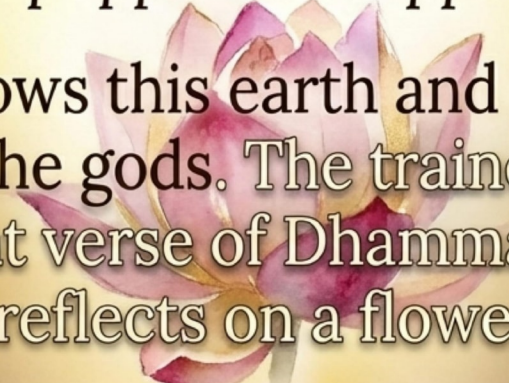
*Kõ imaṃ paṭhaviṃ vices sati
yamalokaṇ-ca imaṃ sadevakam?
Ko dhammapadam sudesitam
kusalo puppham-ivappacessati?*

Who will know this earth and the lower realm,
together with the gods? Who will try to reflect on
the well-taught verse of Dhamma as a good man
reflects on a flower?

The Answer of the Trainee

*Sekho paṭhaviṃ vicesati
yamalokañ-ca imaṃ sadevakam.
Sekho dhammapadam sudesitam
kusalo puppham-ivappacessati.*

The trainee knows this earth and the lower realm,
together with the gods. The trainee will reflect on
the well-taught verse of Dhamma as a good man
reflects on a flower.





The Cultivation of the Inner Soil

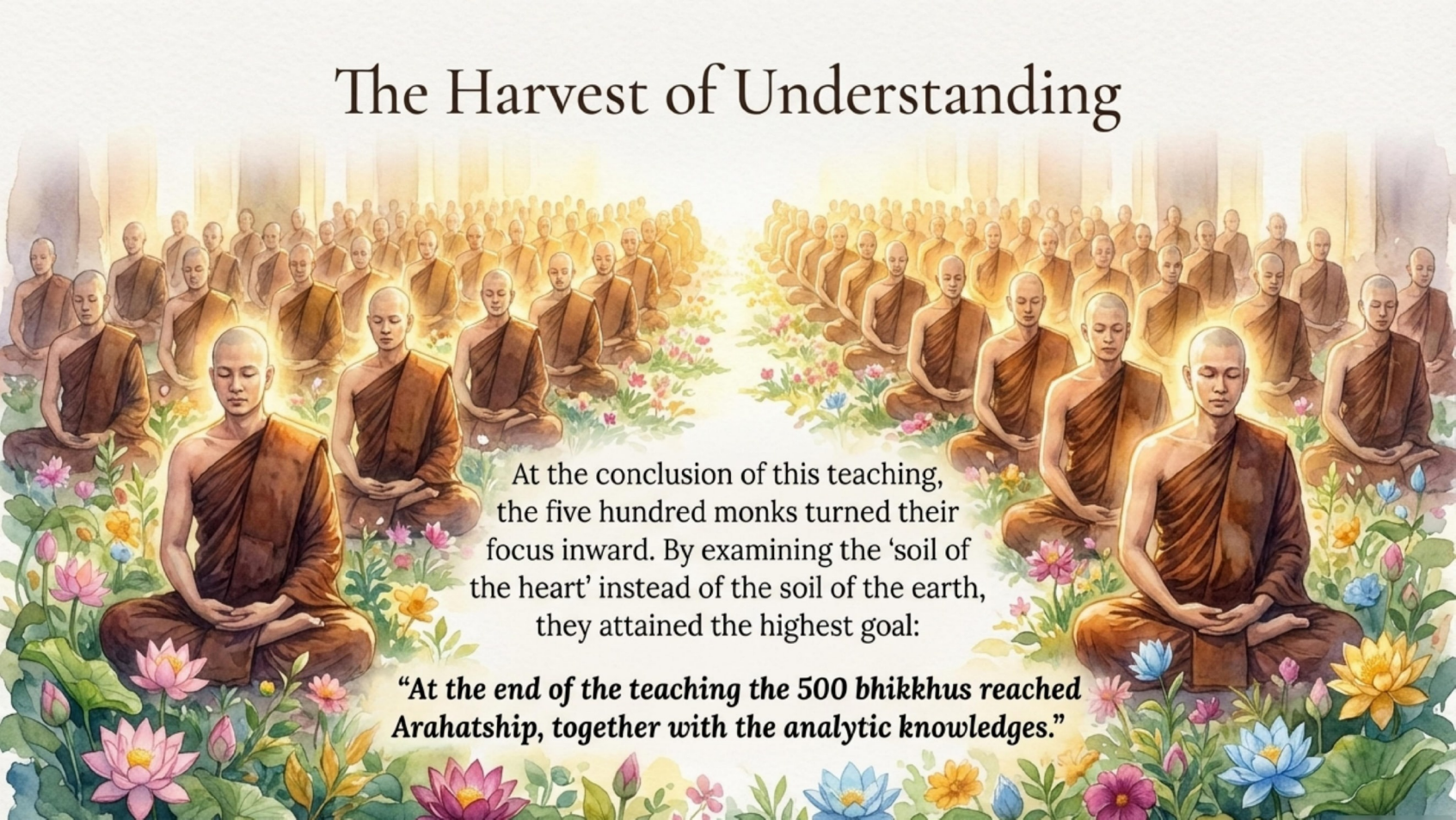
The "Sekho" is the trainee on the spiritual path. They are the one who stops mapping the outer world and begins to cultivate the inner one. This is the "cleansing of the inner soil of the heart" that the Buddha spoke of. It is a journey of turning attention inward to understand the nature of one's own mind.

The Wisdom of the Flower Garland-Maker



The verses compare reflecting on the Dhamma to how a skilled person (*'kusalo'*) selects a flower. A master garland-maker examines each flower with care, appreciating its unique qualities, and choosing only the best for their creation. In the same way, the trainee examines the teachings with meticulous, appreciative attention to truly understand them.

The Harvest of Understanding

A large group of Buddhist monks, depicted in a soft, painterly style, are shown in a meditative posture (Padmasana) within a lush garden. They are arranged in several rows, with some monks in the foreground appearing more prominent than others. The monks are wearing traditional brown robes. The garden is filled with various lotus flowers in shades of pink, blue, and yellow, along with green foliage. The background features tall, slender trees or pillars, creating a sense of depth and a serene atmosphere. The overall lighting is warm and golden, suggesting a peaceful, sunlit environment.

At the conclusion of this teaching,
the five hundred monks turned their
focus inward. By examining the 'soil of
the heart' instead of the soil of the earth,
they attained the highest goal:

***“At the end of the teaching the 500 bhikkhus reached
Arahatship, together with the analytic knowledges.”***

The True Ground of Being

The world offers endless landscapes to map and analyze. But the most vital territory for exploration lies within. The journey across the outer earth ends, but the cultivation of the inner ground yields a harvest of lasting peace.



Knowing This Body is Just Like Froth

The Story of the Elder Who Meditated on a Mirage





A monk's diligent practice had reached a difficult impasse.

After striving with "might and main," a dedicated bhikkhu was unable to attain Arahathship. Believing a different approach was needed, he resolved to return to the forest's edge and seek new guidance from the Teacher.



On his journey, the world presented him with a shimmering illusion.”

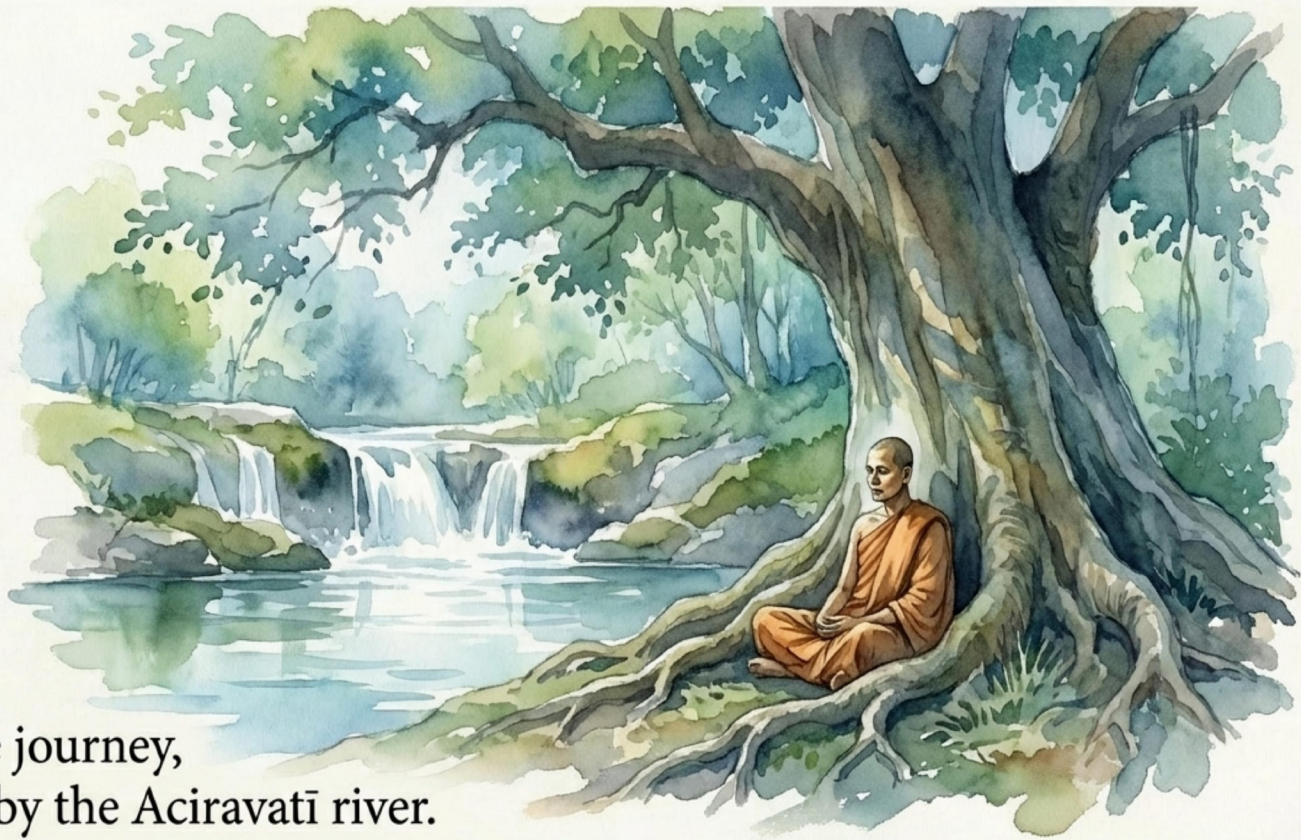
As he traveled, he saw a mirage, common in the season of heat. It appeared substantial and real from a distance, a perfect image of what was not there.



The illusion vanished
on approach, revealing
a profound truth.

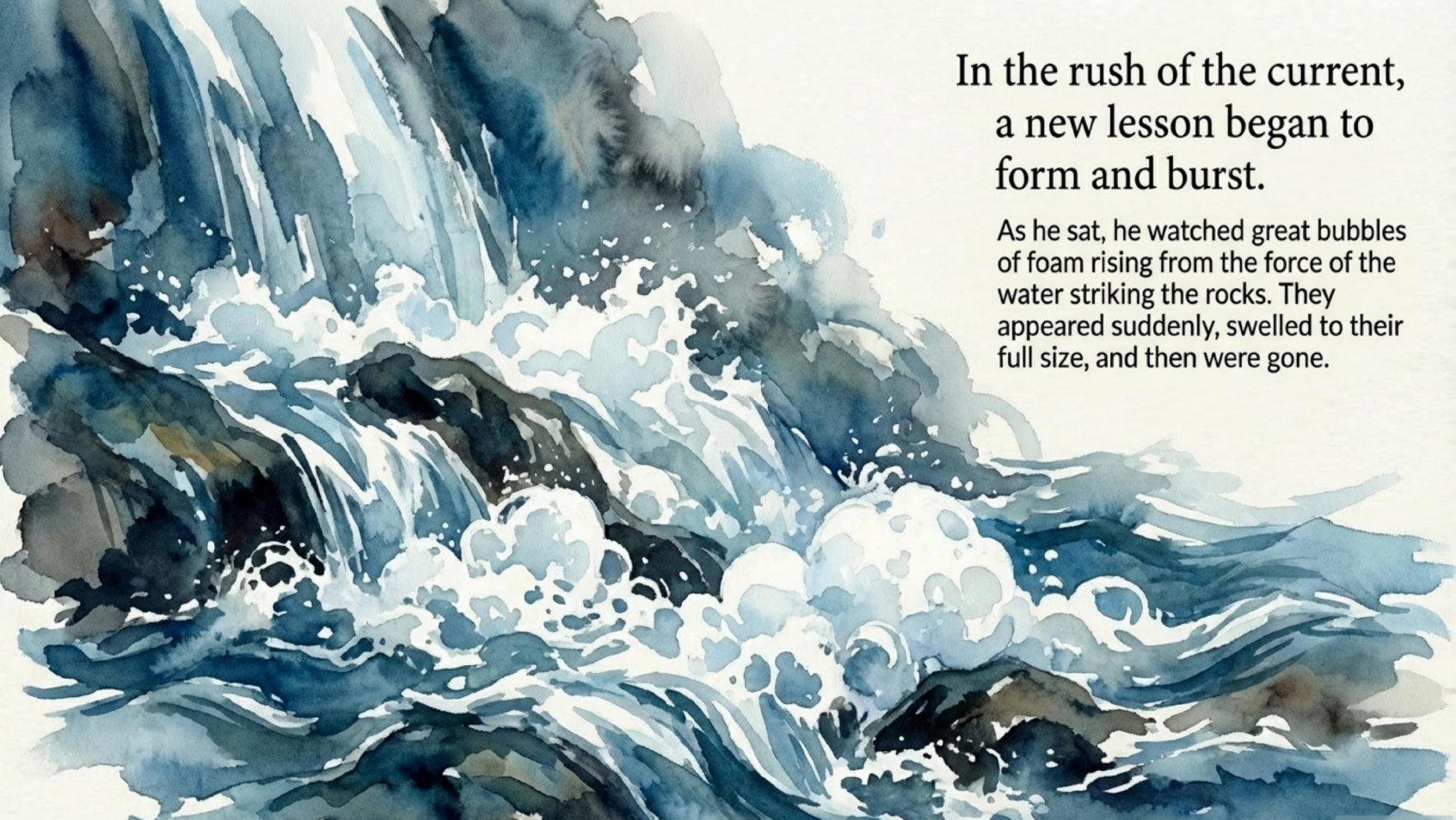
“Even as this mirage seen in the season
of the heat appears substantial to those
that are far off, but vanishes on nearer
approach, so also is this existence
unsubstantial by reason of birth and
decay.”

He fixed his mind on this insight,
turning the mirage into his subject of
meditation.



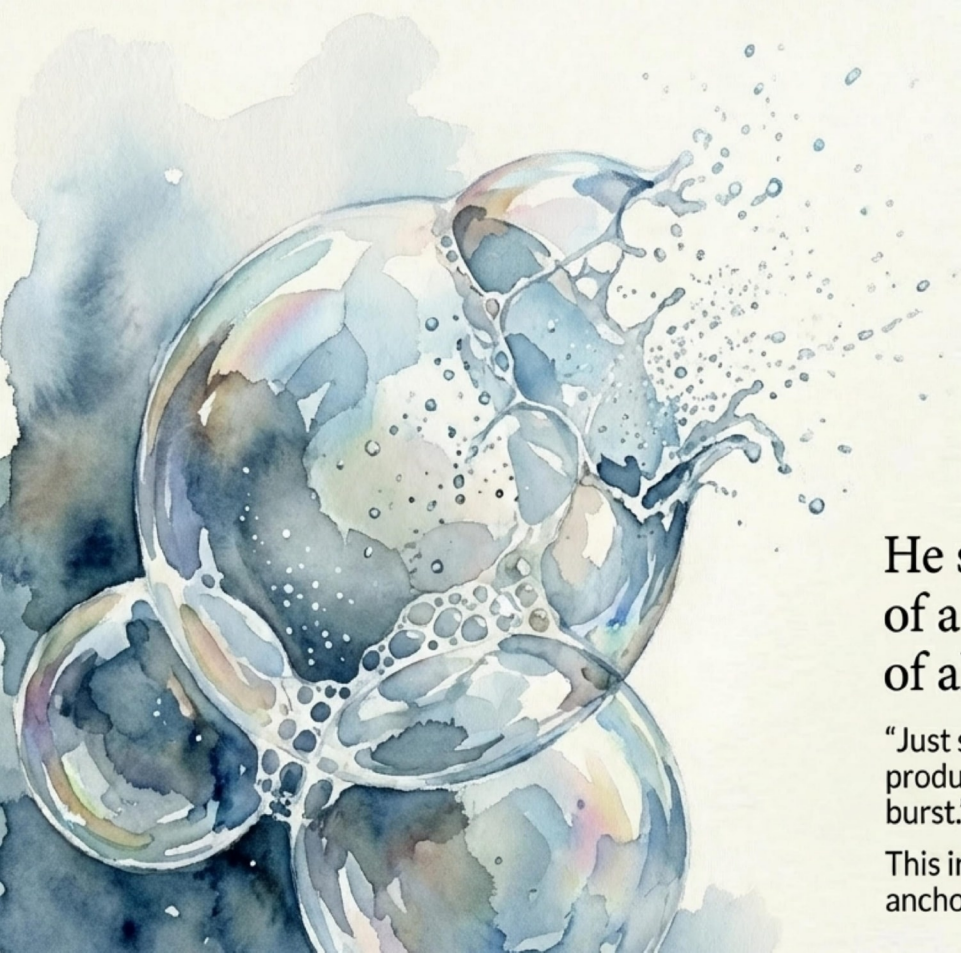
Wearied by the journey,
he sought rest by the Aciravatī river.

He bathed in the cool water and sat in the shade of a tree near a waterfall,
his mind still contemplating the nature of form.



In the rush of the current,
a new lesson began to
form and burst.

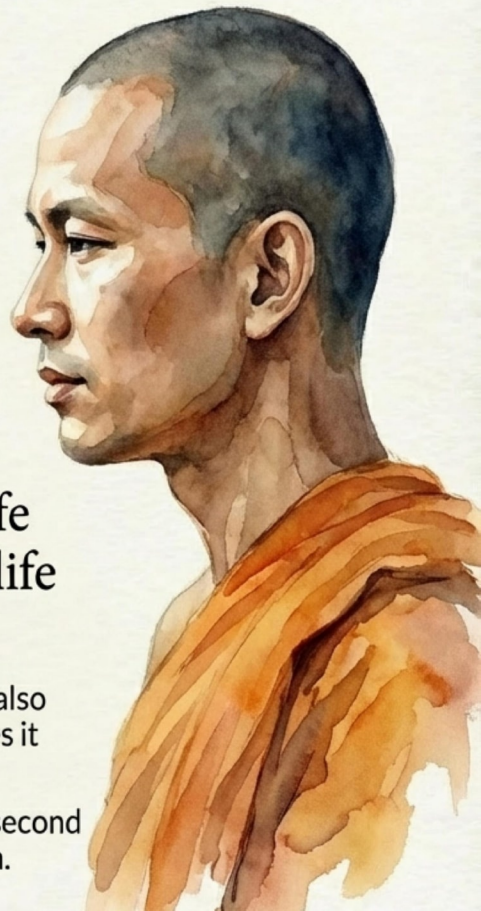
As he sat, he watched great bubbles
of foam rising from the force of the
water striking the rocks. They
appeared suddenly, swelled to their
full size, and then were gone.



He saw in the life
of a bubble the life
of all things.

“Just so is this existence also
produced and just so does it
burst.”

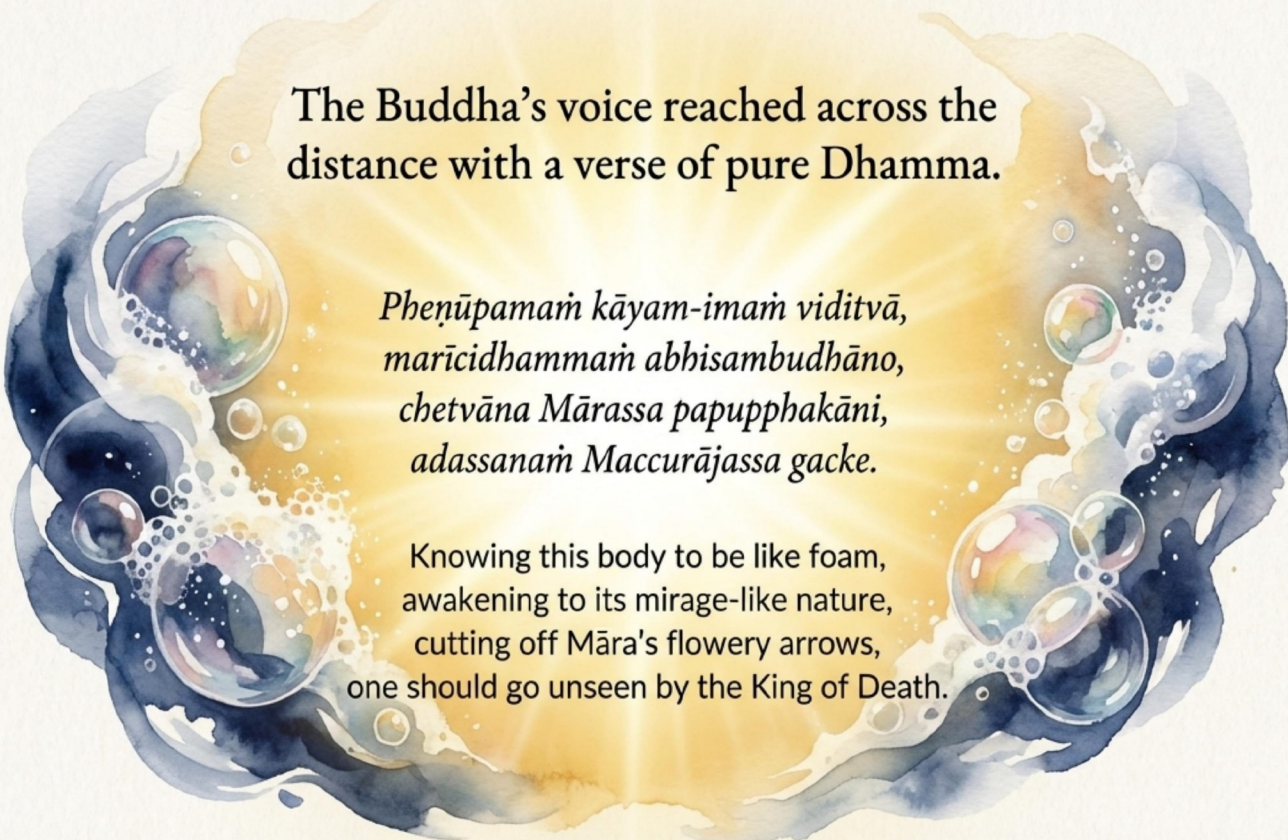
This insight became the second
anchor for his meditation.



From his chamber, the Teacher saw the elder's mind ripen.

Seated in his Perfumed Chamber, the Teacher perceived the monk's progress and understood that the moment was right to crystallize his understanding. He knew the monk's two insights were the foundation for complete liberation.



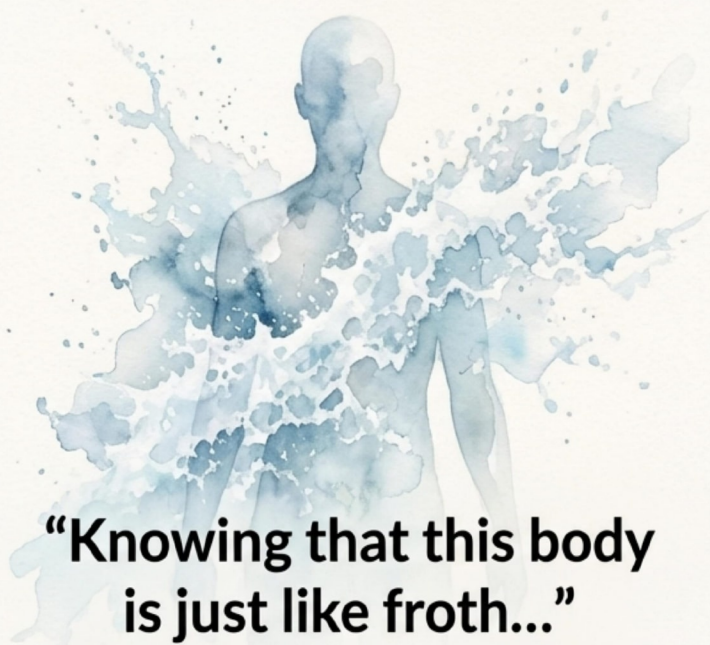


The Buddha's voice reached across the
distance with a verse of pure Dhamma.

*Pheṇūpamaṃ kāyam-imāṃ viditvā,
marīcidhammaṃ abhisambudhāno,
chetvāna Mārassa papupphakāṇi,
adassanaṃ Maccurājassa gacche.*

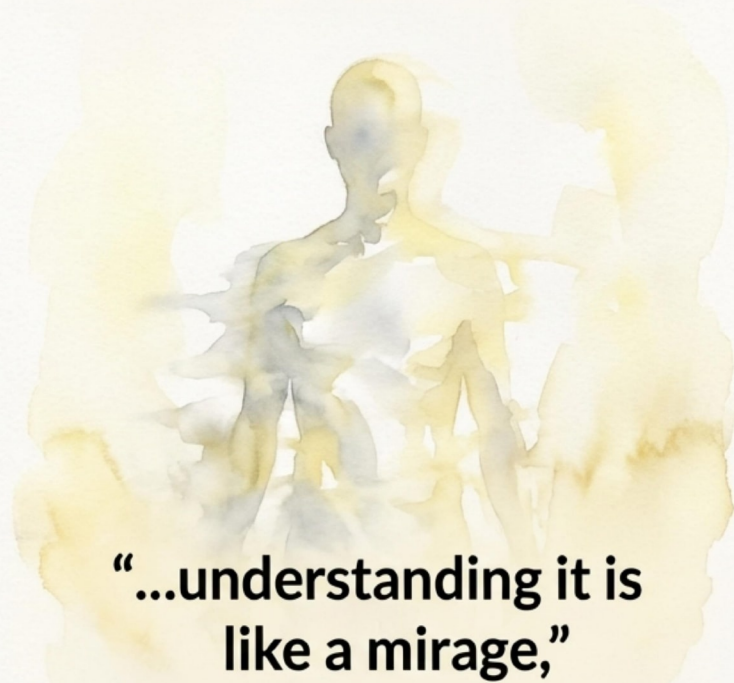
Knowing this body to be like foam,
awakening to its mirage-like nature,
cutting off Māra's flowery arrows,
one should go unseen by the King of Death.

The verse first affirmed the monk's own realizations.



**“Knowing that this body
is just like froth...”**

— Recognizing its fragile, momentary nature, arising and passing away.



**“...understanding it is
like a mirage,”**

— Seeing its substantial appearance as an illusion, empty of inherent essence.



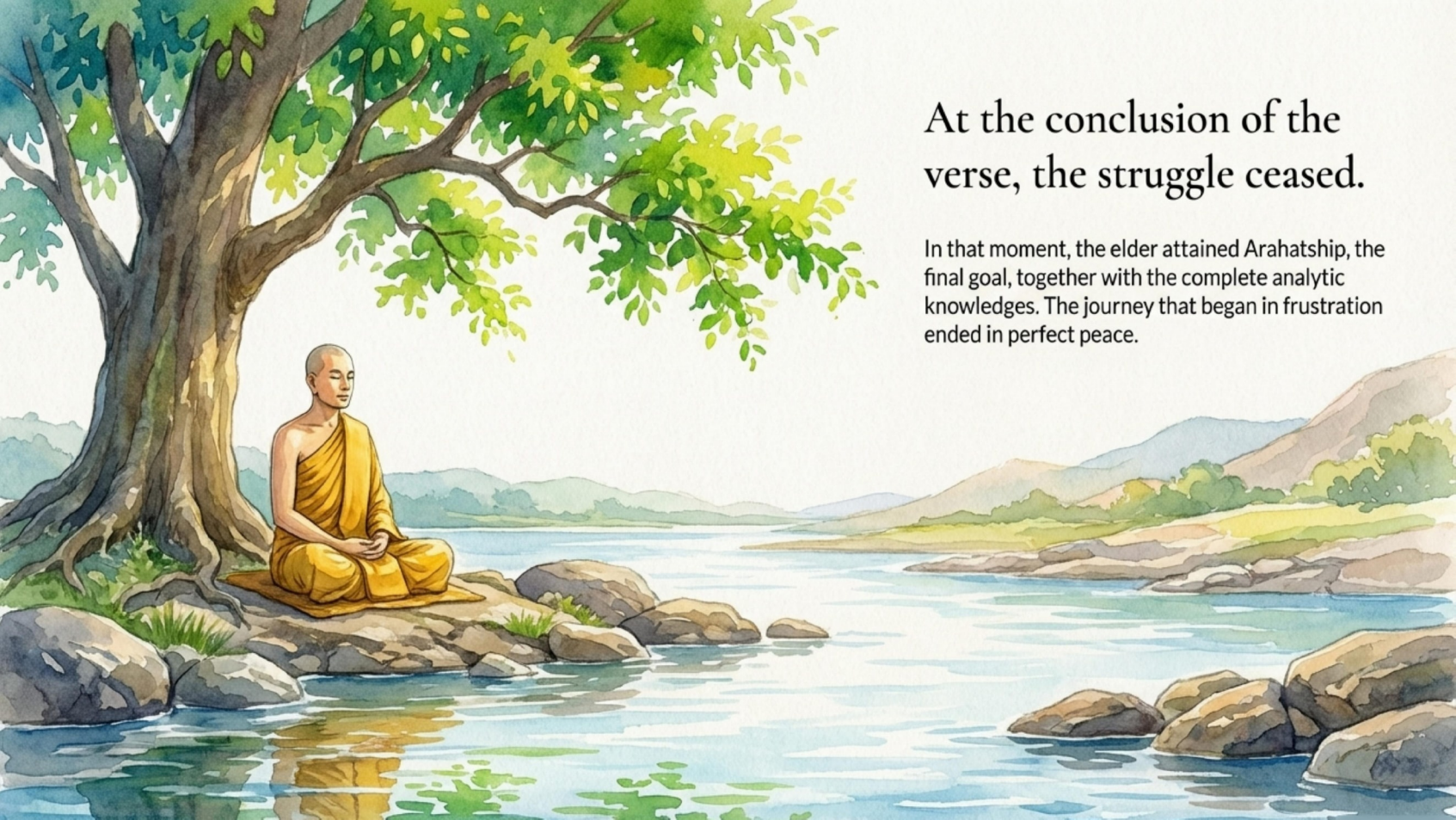
This clear seeing is the key
to transcending all danger.

**“...cutting off Māra’s
flower-tipped arrows,”**

— With this understanding, the lures of
temptation and attachment lose in
their power.

**“...one should go beyond
the King of Death’s sight.”**

— By seeing the true nature of the body, one
transcends the fear and finality of death.



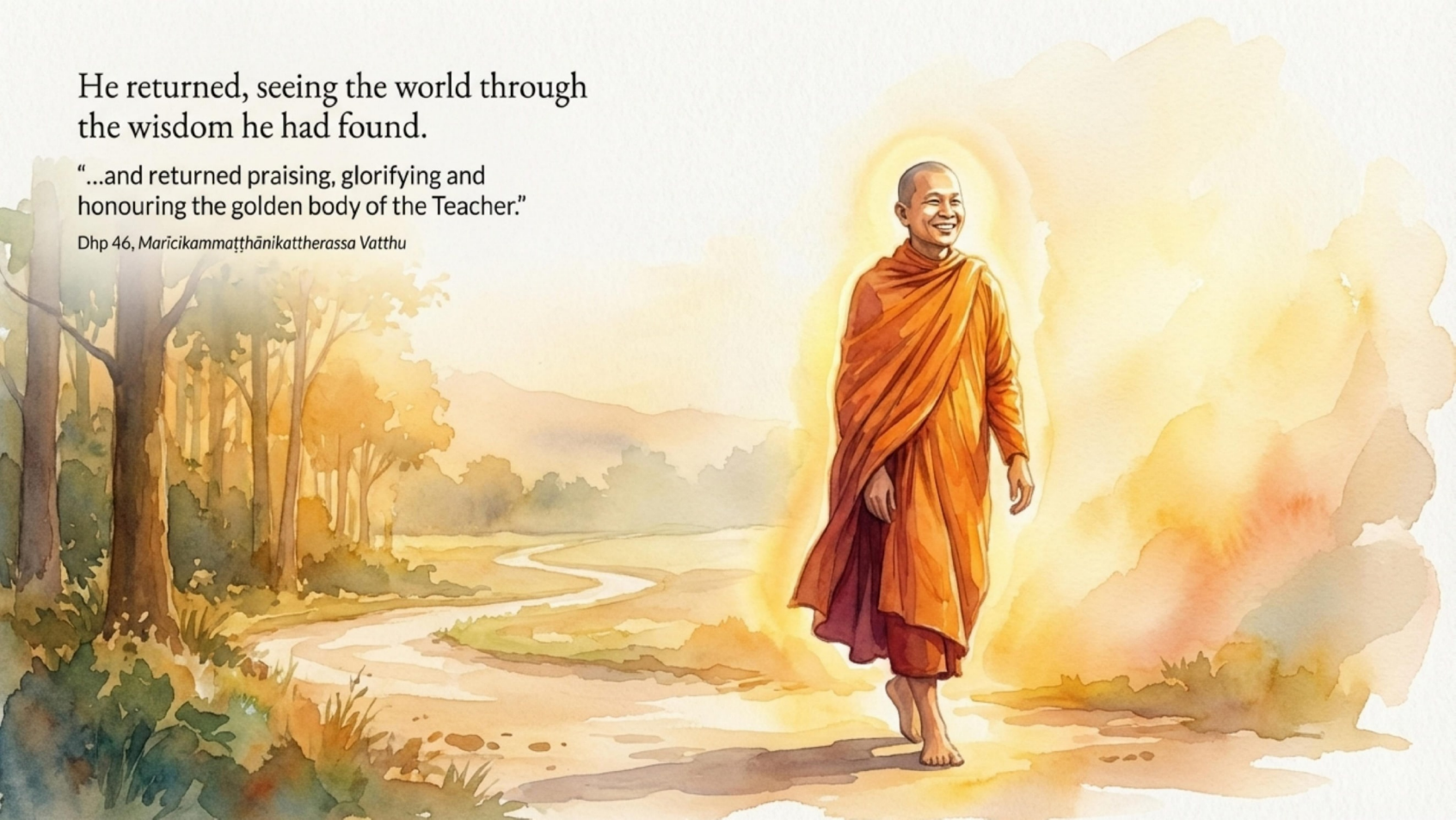
At the conclusion of the
verse, the struggle ceased.

In that moment, the elder attained Arahatsip, the
final goal, together with the complete analytic
knowledges. The journey that began in frustration
ended in perfect peace.

He returned, seeing the world through
the wisdom he had found.

“...and returned praising, glorifying and
honouring the golden body of the Teacher.”

Dhp 46, *Marīcikammaṭṭhānikattherassa Vatthu*



The background is a watercolor illustration. The top half is dominated by dark, swirling, and textured clouds in shades of deep blue and black. A thin, pale crescent moon is visible in the upper right, partially obscured by the clouds. Below the clouds, a village is depicted. The houses are small, simple structures with dark roofs, some of which are partially submerged or surrounded by turbulent, dark blue water. The water is rendered with thick, expressive brushstrokes, suggesting a powerful, unstoppable force. The overall mood is somber and dramatic.

The Unstoppable Deluge

Death takes up and carries away the one whose mind is attached to
collecting flowers, like a flood carries off a sleeping village.

A teaching given by the Buddha, inspired by the fate of
Prince Viṣṇuḍabha and the Sakyan people.

A Seed of Deceit is Sown in Pride



King Pasenadi of Kosala desired a wife from the Buddha's own kin, the noble Sakyans. Fearing the king yet too proud to give a high-born daughter to one they considered of unequal birth, the Sakyans schemed. Mahānāma, the Buddha's cousin, offered his own daughter, the beautiful Vāsabhā Khatṭiyā, concealing that her mother was a slave-woman. To seal the deception, Mahānāma staged a meal, only pretending to eat from the same dish as his daughter.

The Prince Born of a Lie



“ Vāsabhā Khattiyā bore King Pasenadi a son, who was named Viḍūḍabha. He was raised in princely state, appointed commander-in-chief as a boy, and knew nothing of his mother’s true origins. When he asked why he received no gifts from his maternal grandparents, his mother would deflect, saying only: ‘Your grandparents are Sākiyan kings, and they live a long way off.’ ”

A Welcome of Calculated Emptiness



At sixteen, Viḍūḍabha insisted on visiting his mother's family. Aware of his impending arrival, the Sakyans sent all the younger princes to the countryside, unable to bring themselves to pay homage to the son of a slave-woman. Viḍūḍabha was greeted with formal hospitality, but he noticed the strange absence of his peers. "How is it there are none that worship me?" he asked. The Sakyans replied coolly, "Friend, the younger princes have gone to the country."

The Vow that Poisoned the Stream



As Viḍūḍabha's retinue departed, a slave-woman washed the seat where he had sat with milk and water, remarking contemptuously: *"This is the seat on which sat the son of the slave-woman Vāsabhā Khattiyā!"*

A man who overheard her informed the army, and the truth was revealed to Viḍūḍabha. In that moment, he made a terrible vow: **'These Sākiyans now wash the seat whereon I sat with milk and water; when I am established in my kingdom, I will wash my seat with the blood of their throats.'**

The Still Pool of Equanimity



As Viḍūḍabha nursed his grudge, a different drama unfolded. Mallikā, wife of the general Bandhula, received a letter informing her that the king, in a fit of paranoia, had executed her husband and all thirty-two of their sons. She calmly placed the letter in her dress and continued serving alms to the invited monks. When a servant dropped and broke a jar of ghee, the Elder Sāriputta remarked, 'No notice should ever be taken of the breaking of anything that is capable of being broken.' Mallikā then revealed her letter, saying: 'Venerable Sir, when I heard this news, I took no thought. Much less, therefore, am I likely to take thought of the breaking of a mere jar.' She forbade her daughters-in-law from seeking revenge.

A Kingdom Seized by Vengeance



King Pasenadi, remorseful for killing the guiltless Bandhula, suffered from sleepless nights. Dīgha Kārāyaṇa, Bandhula's nephew and the new commander, sought his own revenge. While the 80-year-old Pasenadi was visiting the Buddha, Kārāyaṇa seized the symbols of royalty, made Viḍūḍabha king, and abandoned Pasenadi. The old king, exhausted and alone, died outside the city gates of Rājagaha. The path was now clear for Viḍūḍabha's revenge.

The Shade of Kinsmen



Remembering his grudge, the new King Viḍūḍabha marched his army towards the Sakyan capital. Seeing the impending doom of his kinsfolk, the Buddha went and sat at the foot of a tree with scanty shade on the border. Viḍūḍabha approached and asked, "Venerable Sir, **why do you sit** at the foot of this tree with scanty shade when it is so hot? Sit at the foot of this banyan tree which gives dense shade.' The Buddha replied, **"Be not concerned, great king. The shade of my kinsmen keeps me cool."** Understanding the message, Viḍūḍabha turned his army back. This happened three times.

The Unavoidable Debt



When Viḍūḍabha marched for the fourth time, the Buddha did not go. He surveyed the past deeds of the Sākiyans and saw the karmic cause for their destruction: in a previous existence, they had conspired together and thrown poison into a river. The consequences of this wicked deed could no longer be averted. The path for Viḍūḍabha's army was now open.

A River of Blood Fulfills a Vow



Unwilling to kill, the Sakyans offered only symbolic resistance. Viḍuḍabha ordered his men to slay all who identified as Sakyans. True to their vow not to lie, some held blades of grass (*tiṇa*) and others reeds (*nala*) to distinguish themselves. Viḍuḍabha slaughtered all the others, “sparing not even infants at the breast.” He then commanded his men to seat of his command with the blood of his kinsmen’s throats, completing his vow.

The Price of Honor



Vidūdabha captured Mahānāma and prepared to eat with his 'grandfather.' But a noble Sakyan would rather die than eat with the son of a slave-woman. Under the pretense of bathing in a lake, Mahānāma made a choice. He knotted his long hair, hair, tied it to his great toes, and plunged into the water, drowning himself. His honor remained intact, but the cycle of pride and death continued.

The Flood that Washes All Away



That night, Viḍūḍabha and his army camped on the sandy bed of the Aciravatī river. Those who had been guilty of past wrongs were tormented by ants on the high ground and moved down to the sand for comfort. Suddenly, a storm broke and an incessant downpour of rain created a mighty flood. The river swelled and carried Viḍūḍabha and his entire retinue out to sea. All of them became food for fishes and tortoises.

Justice Across Lifetimes



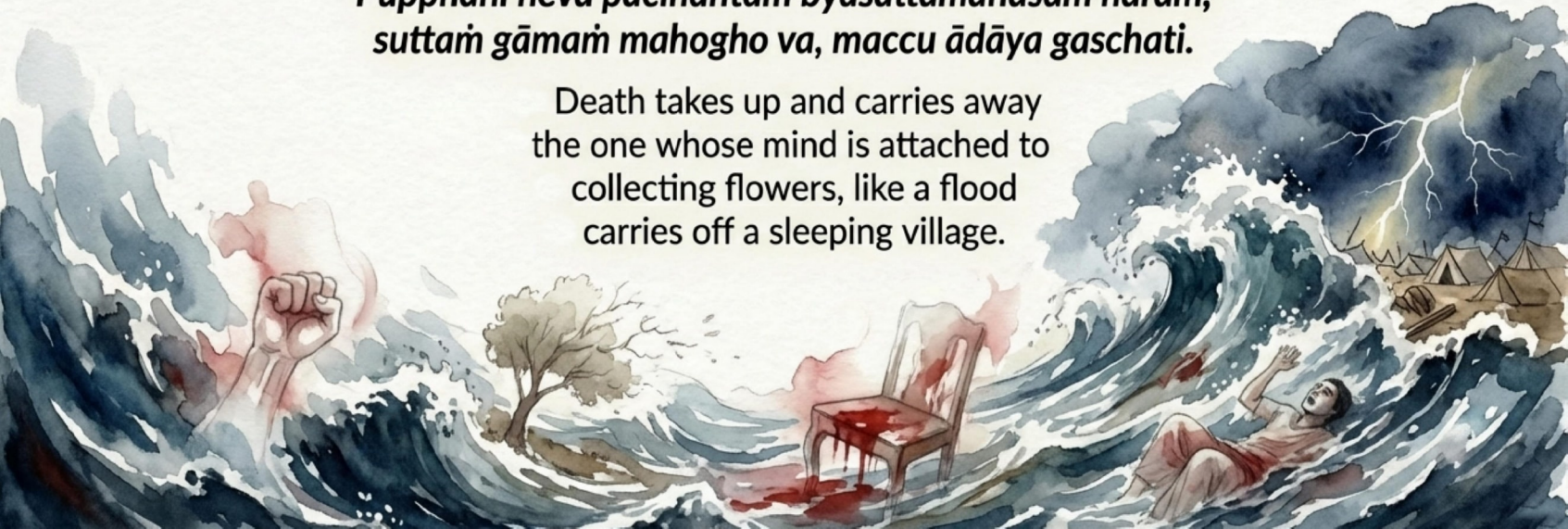
The monks discussed the terrible fate of the Sakyans and of Viḍūḍabha. The Buddha heard them and explained the nature of karma: **“Bhikkhus, if you regard only this present existence, it was indeed unjust that the Sākiyans should die in such wise. What they received, however, was entirely just, considering the wrong they committed in a previous state of existence. In a previous state of existence they conspired together and threw poison into the river.”**

The Sleeping Village and the Raging Flood

Reflecting on how Viḍūḍabha and his men were destroyed before the desires of their hearts could be fulfilled, the Teacher repeated his teaching, its meaning now laid bare by their story:

***Pupphāni heva pacinantam byāsatttmanasam naram,
Pupphāni heva pacinantam byāsattamanasam naram,
suttam gāmaṃ mahogho va, maccu ādāya gaschati.***

Death takes up and carries away
the one whose mind is attached to
collecting flowers, like a flood
carries off a sleeping village.



The Flower Collector and the End-Maker



A Teaching on Time, Life, and Heedlessness

An Unsettling Silence

The monks arrive at their Assembly Hall in Sāvattthī. For years, their devoted benefactor, Patipūjikā, ensured it was a place of welcome, with seats prepared and fresh water waiting. Today, something is wrong. The hall is uncared for.



“Yesterday at eventide... she died.”

The monks learn of Patipūjikā's sudden death. The source text notes two distinct reactions among them: those still in training are unable to restrain their tears, while the fully enlightened are overcome with a deep sense of spiritual urgency. Their shared question rises: *Where has this good woman been reborn?*



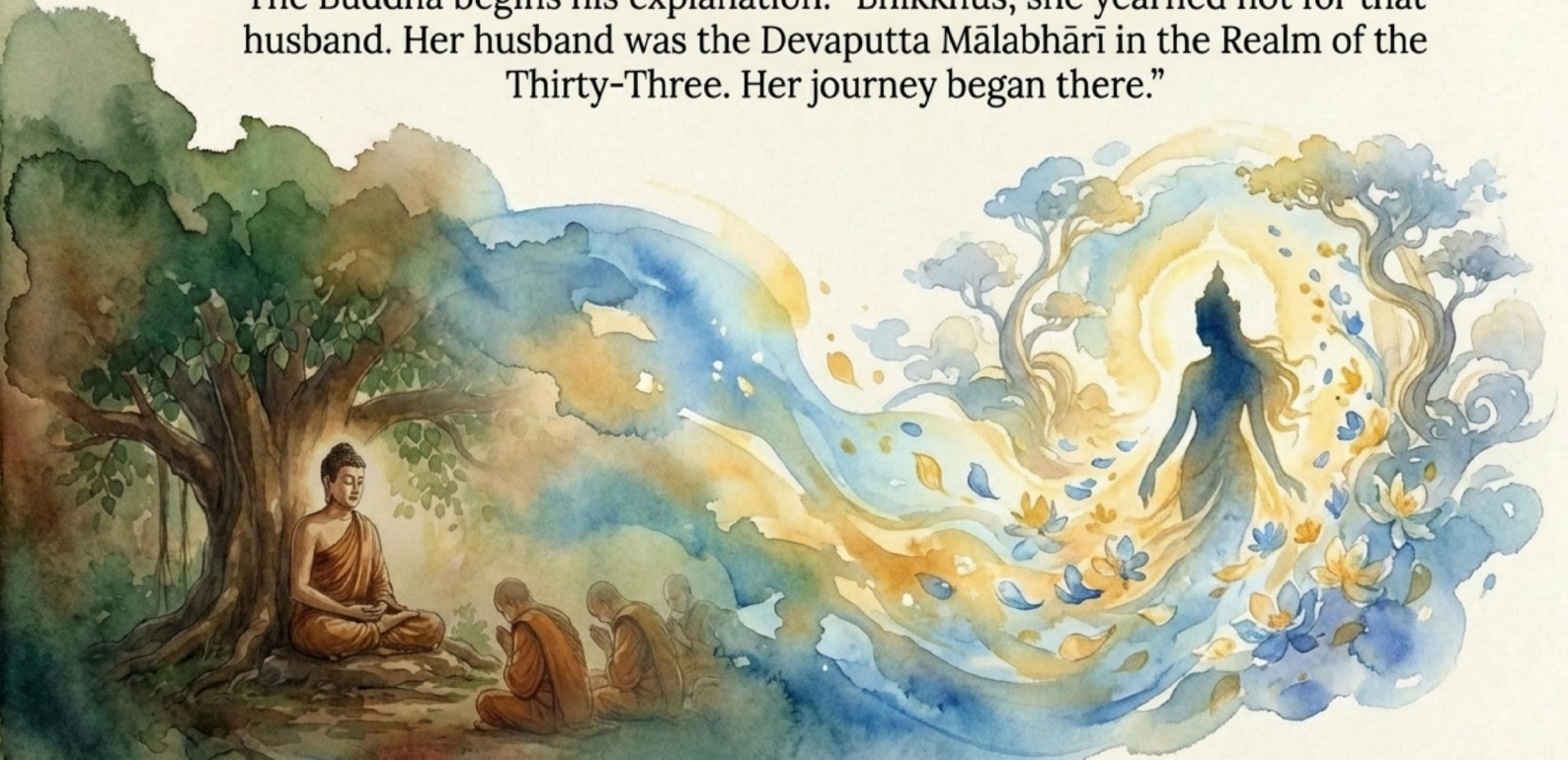
A Question for the Teacher

Seeking an answer, the monks approach the Buddha. They ask, “Venerable Sir, Patipūjikā, busy and active, performed all manner of works of merit and yearned only for her husband. Now she is dead. *Where was she reborn?*”



Her story does not begin on earth.

The Buddha begins his explanation. “Bhikkhus, she yearned not for that husband. Her husband was the Devaputta Mālabhārī in the Realm of the Thirty-Three. Her journey began there.”



The Garland-Wearer's Consort

In this divine realm lived the Devaputta named Mālabhārī, the “Garland-Wearer.” He was attended by a thousand Accharās, or celestial nymphs. Five hundred would climb the divine trees to throw down flowers, while five hundred others would gather them to adorn him.

Our protagonist was one of these nymphs.



Vanishing Like the Flame of a Lamp

As she sat on a tree branch, her celestial life came to its end. Her body vanished instantly, and she was conceived in the womb of a human mother in Sāvatthī.



Patipūjikā, the “Husband-Honorer”

Born with the memory of her past life, her every act of merit was dedicated to a single aspiration: “May this assist me to be reborn with my former husband.” She married at sixteen, bore four sons, and faithfully cared for the monks, who gave her the name Patipūjikā, or “Husband-Honorer.”



A Lifetime in a Moment

After a life of dedicated merit, she died from a sudden sickness. In that very instant, she was reborn in the Tāvatisa Heaven, appearing before her celestial husband who was still being adorned with flowers.



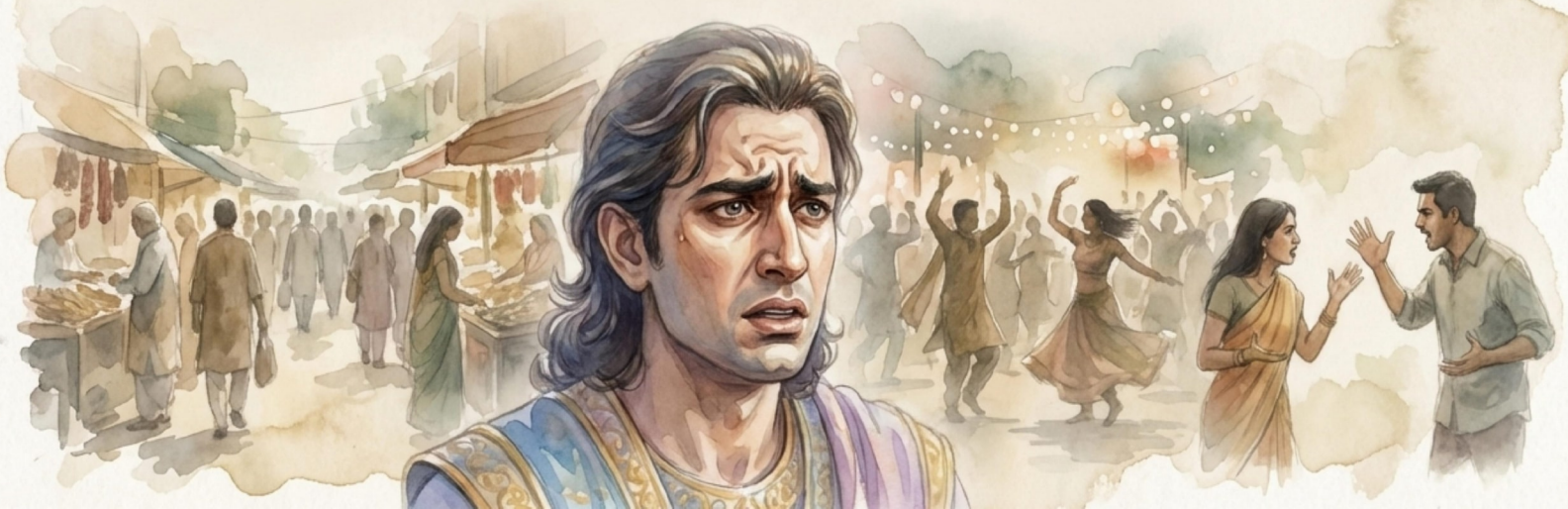
“We have not seen you since morning. Where have you been?”

For Mālabhārī, only a moment had passed. He asked about her brief absence. She replied, “Husband, I passed from this existence. I was reborn in Sāvattthī. I lived there, married, bore four sons, performed acts of merit, and died.”



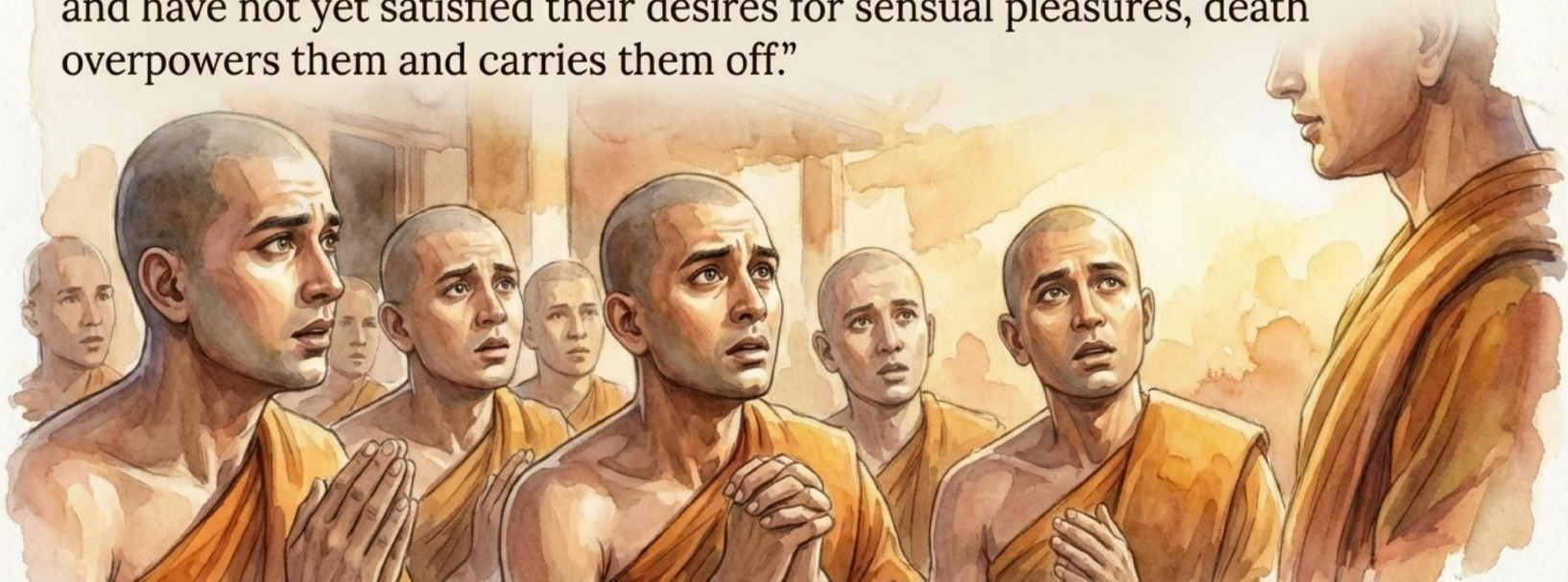
"100 human years is but a single day and night for us."

Mālabhārī was shaken. "If human life is so short, do they live mindfully, or heedlessly asleep?" Patipūjikā answered: "They are ever heedless, husband, as if they will never know old age or death." For the gods of Tāvatisa, a lifetime is a thousand celestial years, or thirty-six million human years.



"Yes, Bhikkhus. The life of creatures is indeed short."

The Buddha finishes the story, connecting it directly to the monks' experience. "While creatures in this world yet yearn for the things of earth and have not yet satisfied their desires for sensual pleasures, death overpowers them and carries them off."



The End-Maker Takes Control

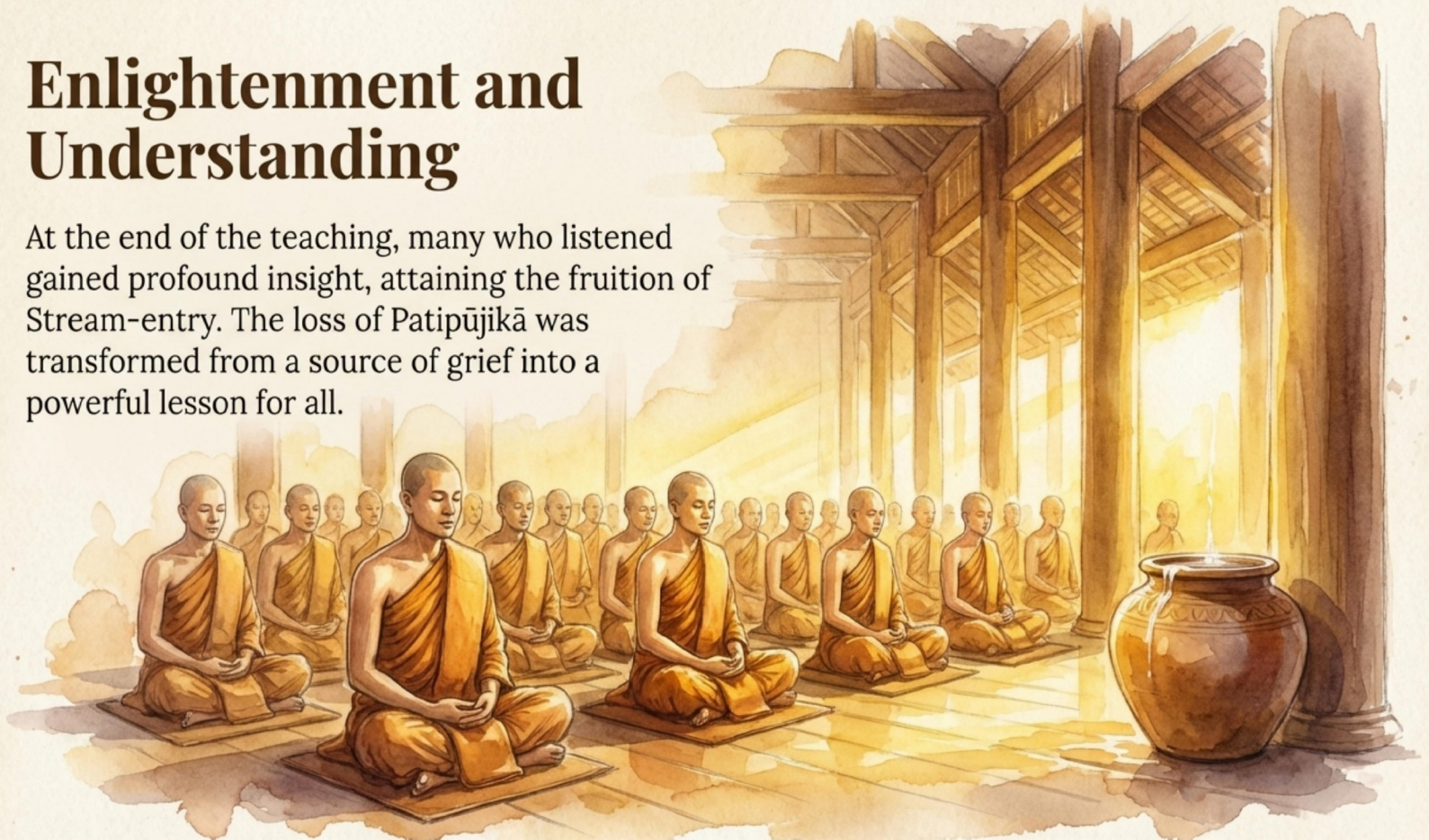
*Pupphāni heva pacinantam
byāsattamanasam naram,
atittam yeva kāmesu Antako
kurute vasam.*

The End-Maker takes control
of the one whose mind is
attached to collecting flowers,
even though he is unsated
with pleasures.



Enlightenment and Understanding

At the end of the teaching, many who listened gained profound insight, attaining the fruition of Stream-entry. The loss of Patipūjikā was transformed from a source of grief into a powerful lesson for all.





The Bee and the Flower

A Lesson in Skillful Action

“Just as a bee, without hurting
the flower, its colour or scent,
gathers its nectar and escapes,
so should the seer roam in village.”

Dhammapada, Verse 49



A Man Possessed by His Possessions



In the town of Jaggery lived a rich man named Kosiya, possessed of 800 million of treasure.

Never a drop of oil small enough to stand on the tip of a blade of grass did he give to others or use for himself.

His wealth, great as it was, yielded no enjoyment... but remained unused, like a pool haunted by demons.

The Secret Craving for a Single Cake



A simple sight sparked a craving for a round cake, but the fear of sharing consumed him.

He negotiated with his wife, rejecting her offers to feed the town, the street, or even their own family. His final demand:

“Very well, I will bake just enough for you alone.”

A Fortress of Selfishness



To protect his secret meal, he commanded his wife: "Go up to the top floor of our seven-storied mansion, and there I will sit down all by myself and eat."

He climbed from one floor to another, closing and bolting each door after him.

A Visitor at the Highest Window



The Buddha, seeing Kosiya's potential, addressed Elder Mahā Moggallāna:
"Go there, overcome that rich man, inculcate in him the virtue of self-denial."
"By psychic power, the Elder appeared before the window, like a jeweled image."
Kosiya's reaction: "It was for fear of just such persons that I came to this place; yet
here this fellow comes."

A Test of Wills in the Pathless Air



“You may walk up and down... but for all that you will get nothing.” The elder walked.

“You may sit down cross-legged... but you will get nothing.” The elder sat.

“You may belch forth smoke... but you will get nothing.” The elder belched forth smoke until the whole mansion was one mass of smoke.

The Uncontrollable Abundance



Relenting, Kosiya told his wife to cook one tiny cake for the monk.

She took a little dough, but it grew into a big cake, filling the pot.

He took even less, but it grew even larger.

Finally, they tried to take just one from the basket, but all the cakes stuck together.

The Surrender

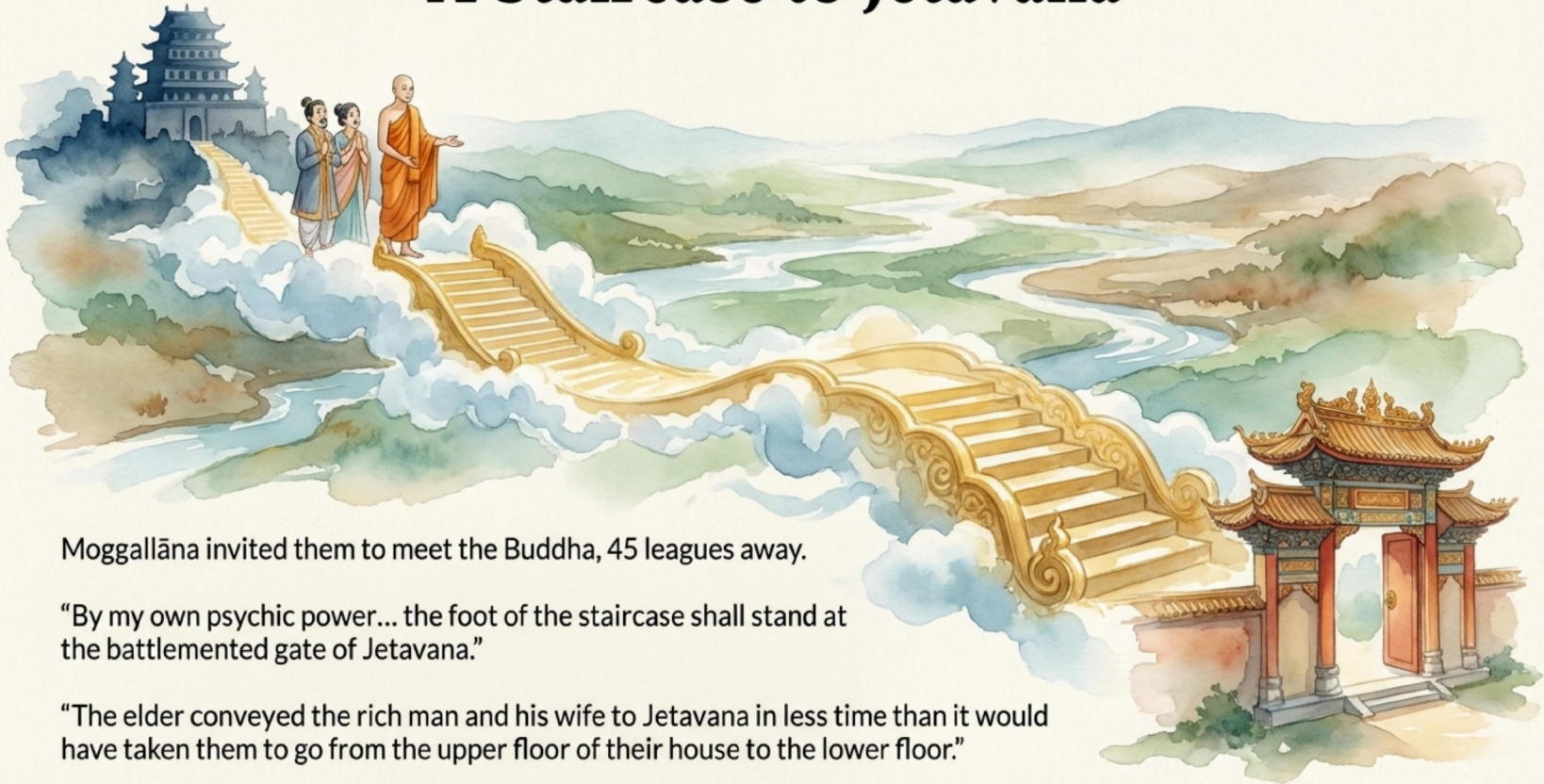


As the rich man struggled with the cakes, sweat poured forth from his body and his craving disappeared.

He said to his wife: *"Wife, I have no need of the cakes. Take the cakes and the basket and give them to him."*

The elder then taught the Dhamma to the rich man and his wife, proclaiming the virtues of the Three Jewels.

A Staircase to Jetavana



Moggallāna invited them to meet the Buddha, 45 leagues away.

“By my own psychic power... the foot of the staircase shall stand at the battlemented gate of Jetavana.”

“The elder conveyed the rich man and his wife to Jetavana in less time than it would have taken them to go from the upper floor of their house to the lower floor.”

From Fried Cake to Fried Cake Mountain

The rich man and his wife offered the cakes to the Buddha and the five hundred bhikkhus.

Yet there was no end to the cakes that remained. They reported, “the cakes suffer no diminution.”

The leftovers were piled up, creating a place known to this day as “Fried Cake Mountain.”

At the conclusion of the words of thanksgiving both the rich man and his wife were established in the fruition of Stream-entry.



An Echo from a Previous Life



The monks praised Elder Moggallāna's great supernatural power. The Buddha explained: "Bhikkhus, this is not the first time that rich man has been converted by the Elder Moggallāna. In a previous state of existence also he converted him." He then related The Illisa Birth Story.

The Generous Doppelgänger



In a past life, Kosiya was a miser named Illisa. His father, reborn as the deity Sakka, took on his son's form. The disguised Sakka opened the treasuries and proclaimed: "This is my gift to you; take what you will." When the real Illisa returned, he was beaten by his own servants and thrown out.

A Revelation in the King's Court



Before the king, no one could tell the two apart.

Sakka revealed himself, declaring: ***“Not Illīsa am I, O king, but Sakka... Illīsa, mine was the wealth, not thine; I am your father.”***

He commanded his son: ***“If you will rebuild my alms house and show bounty to the poor, it shall be accounted to you for righteousness. But, if you will not... I will cleave your head with the thunderbolt of Sakka, and you shall die.”***

The Flower, Unharmmed

"Bhikkhus, a bhikkhu who would convert a household without impairing faith, without impairing riches, without wearying or oppressing that household, must approach that household... as a bee approaches a flower to gather honey therefrom."



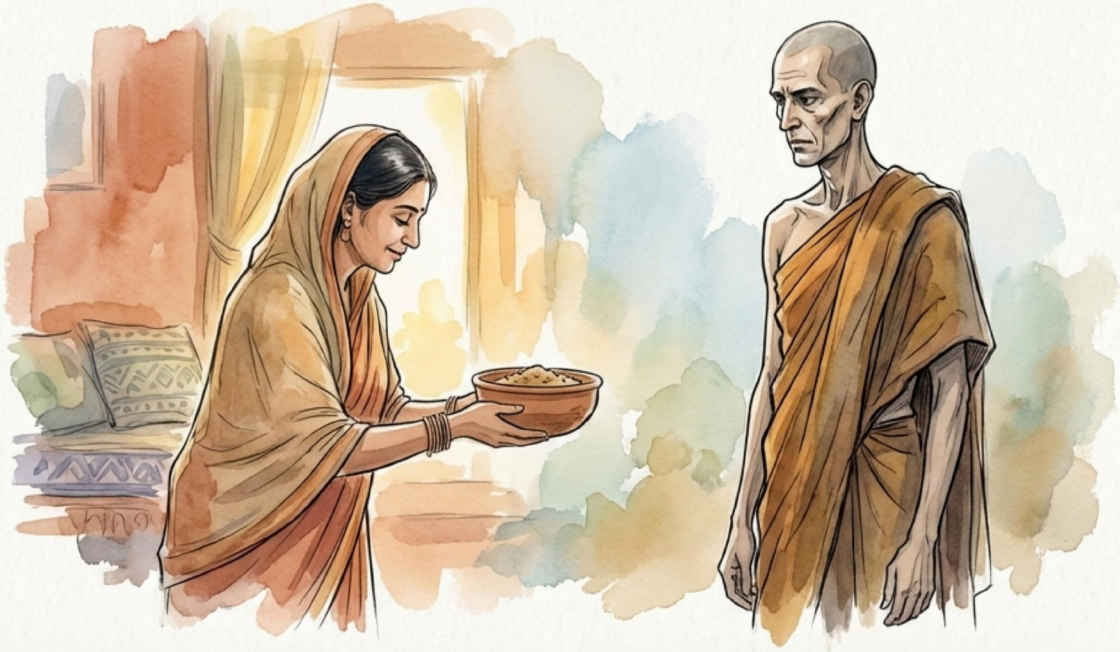
"Just as a bee, without hurting the flower, its colour or scent, gathers its nectar and escapes, so should the seer roam in village."



The Mirror of the Self

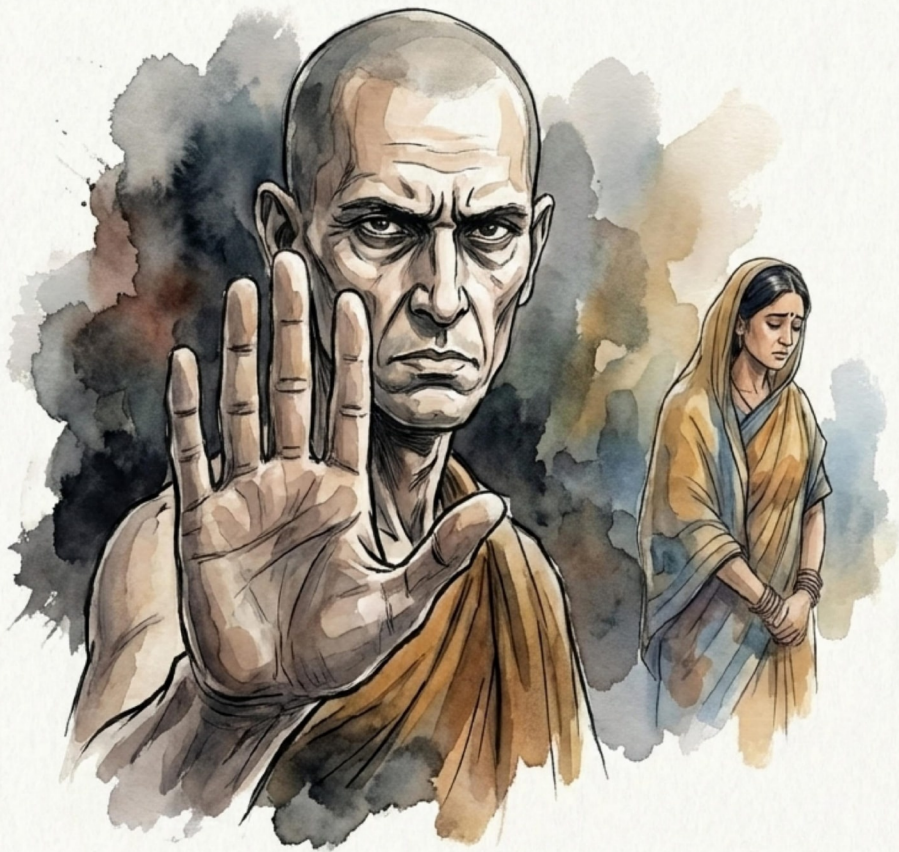
A Parable of True Focus on What
We Have Done and Not Done

Dhammapada Verse 50



In Sāvattthī, a devoted woman ministered to the needs of an ascetic named Pāṭhika, treating him as her own son.

But after hearing her neighbors praise the Buddha's teachings, a deep desire to listen for herself took root in her heart.



Each time she asked to visit
the monastery and hear the
Dhamma, the ascetic forbade her.

“Do not go,” he insisted,
closing the path.



Undeterred, she resolved: ‘Since this Ājīvaka will not permit me to go to the monastery and hear the Dhamma, I will invite the Teacher to my own house and hear the Dhamma right here.’



She sent her son to invite the Teacher. But the jealous ascetic intercepted the boy, twisting the message with a deceitful plan.



Pāṭhika instructed the boy:
“When you invite the Teacher, do not
say where our house is. Act as if
you live nearby, then run off on a
different road and come back here.”

His motive was clear: ‘Let the two of
us eat the fine things prepared for
him.’



As neighbors prepared the home for an honored guest, the ascetic and the boy hid in the back room, scheming to eat the food intended for a guest who, they hoped, would never arrive.



But the Buddhas need no guide. On the day of their Awakening, all paths become plain to them. The Teacher walked straight to her door.



When the Teacher had finished his meal, he began his address.

The lay disciple listened, applauding his sweet voice:
'Well said! Well said!'

From the back room, the
Ājīvaka heard her praise and
could no longer control himself.



The ascetic stormed out.

‘Hag, you are lost for applauding this man thus!’ he shrieked, reviling both the woman and the Teacher before he ran off.



The ascetic's insults
shattered her concentration.

'Good and venerable Sir,'
she confessed to the Teacher,
'my mind is completely
distracted by his insulting
words.'



The Teacher spoke gently:
'One should not consider the
talk of such a one who eats the
remains of food; one should
pay no attention to such as he.
One should regard only one's
own wrongs of commission
and omission.'

**Na paresaṃ vilomāni,
na paresaṃ katākataṃ
attano va avekkheyya,
katāni akatāni ca.**

Not the wrong of others, or what others have done or have not done, one should consider, but what has been done and not done by oneself.



At the end of the teaching, the laywoman was established in the fruition of Stream-entry, her mind liberated by looking not outward at the faults of others, but inward at the mirror of herself.



Just like a
beautiful flower...

Colour without Fragrance



Just like a beautiful flower,
which has colour, but lacks fragrance,
so are well-spoken words fruitless
for the one who acts not on them.
(Dhp 51)

Colour with Fragrance



Just like a beautiful flower,
which has both colour and fragrance,
so are well-spoken words fruitful
for the one who will act on them.
(Dhp 52)



The King and the King of Kings

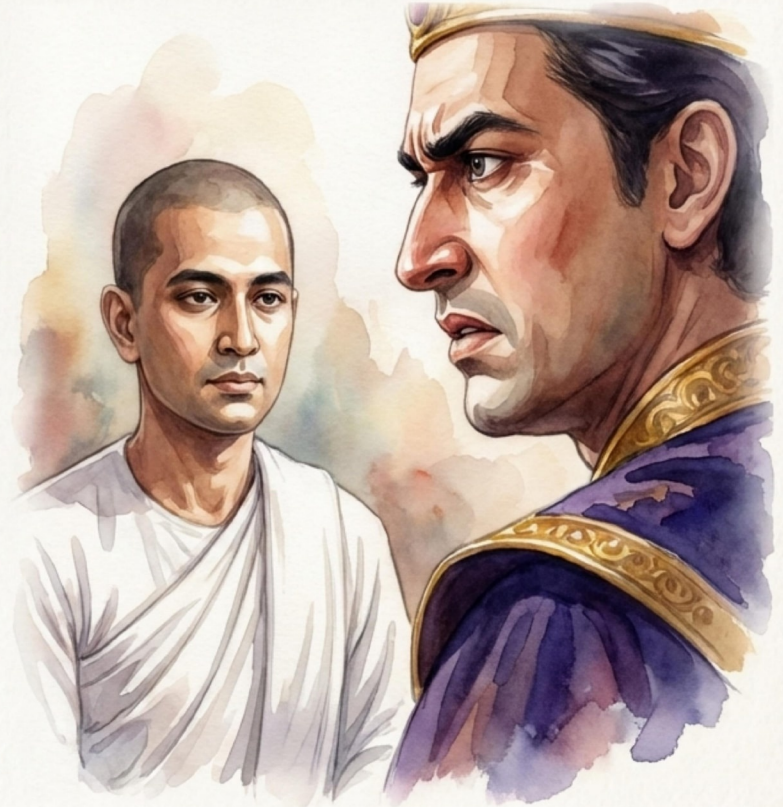
In Sāvattthī, a wise lay disciple named Chattapāṇi, a Non-returner versed in the Three Baskets, sat listening to the Teacher. At that moment, King Pasenadi arrived to pay his own respects. Seeing the king approach, Chattapāṇi faced a choice.

A Question of Respect

As the king drew near, Chattapāṇi did not rise. His reasoning was clear:

“Since I am seated in the presence of the king of kings, I am not called upon to rise on seeing the king of one of his provinces... If I rise, the king will be honored, and not the Teacher.”

King Pasenadi's heart filled with anger at what he perceived as a slight.



The Praise of a Wise Man



The Teacher, observing the King's anger, spoke:
“Great king, this lay disciple Chattapāṇi is a wise man, knows the Dhamma, is versed in the Three Baskets, is content both in prosperity and adversity.”
As the King listened to the Teacher's praise, his anger subsided.

A Summons to the Palace



Later, the King summoned Chattapāṇi to his palace. Before entering the King's presence, the disciple laid aside his parasol and sandals.

"Evidently, then, you have today learned that I am king," the King challenged.

"I always knew that you were king," Chattapāṇi replied. "Had I, seated in the presence of the king of kings, risen on seeing you, I should have shown disrespect for the Teacher. Therefore I did not rise."

A Cautious Refusal



Impressed, the King asked Chattapāṇi to recite the Dhamma in the women's quarters. Chattapāṇi declined.

"Why not?" the King asked.

"A king's house is subject to severe censure... It is a censurable act for householders to go about performing the functions of bhikkhus. Send for someone who is a bhikkhu and ask him to recite the Dhamma."

A Teacher is Appointed



The King took the wise advice and sent a request to the Teacher. The Buddha, explaining that it is impossible for Buddhas to go regularly to any one place, assigned the duty to the Elder Ānanda.

The elder was tasked to go regularly and teach the Dhamma to the King's two consorts: Queen Mallikā and Queen Vāsabhā Khattiyā.

The Two Gardens of the Mind



Queen Mallikā learned thoroughly, rehearsed faithfully, and heeded her teacher's instruction.



But Vāsabhā Khattiyā did not learn thoroughly, nor did she rehearse faithfully, nor was she able to master the instruction she received.

The Teacher's Inquiry



One day, the Teacher asked the Elder Ānanda: 'Ānanda, are your female lay disciples mastering the Dhamma?'

Ānanda reported on their progress:

"Venerable Sir, Mallikā learns thoroughly, rehearses faithfully, and can understand thoroughly... But your kinswoman does not learn thoroughly, nor does she rehearse faithfully, nor can she understand thoroughly."

The Flower Without Scent



Hearing the elder's reply, the Teacher explained that for one who is not faithful in **hearing and practicing**, the Dhamma is profitless.

“Just like a beautiful flower, which has colour, but lacks fragrance, so are well-spoken words fruitless for the one who acts not on them.”

The Flower With Fragrance



But for one who is **faithful in hearing, learning, rehearsing, and teaching**, the Dhamma returns abundant fruit and **manifold blessings**.

Just like a beautiful flower,
which has both colour and fragrance,
so are well-spoken words fruitful
for the one who will act on them.

The Fragrance of Practice



The beauty of wise words is in their hearing.
Their true fragrance is released only through practice.

The Garland of Merit: A Life Woven from Good Deeds

“Just as from a heap of flowers,
one might make a lot of garlands,
so should many good deeds be done
by one who is born a mortal.”



The story of Visākhā, the chief female lay disciple, is the story of how such a garland is woven, one flower at a time.

The First Bloom: A Seed of Faith

At just seven years old, Visākhā, daughter of the rich man Dhanañjaya, was chosen to welcome the Buddha to her city. Knowing what was reasonable, she rode as far as she could, then approached the Teacher on foot. Pleased by her grace, race, the Teacher taught her the Dhamma. At the end of his discourse, Visākhā and her five hundred maidens were established in Stream-entry—the first irreversible step toward enlightenment.



The Flower of Wisdom: Poise in the Rain

Sought for her 'five beauties' (hair, flesh, bone, skin, and youth), her true virtue was her wisdom. Caught in a sudden storm, she did not run. When questioned, she explained calmly:

- ❖ Four persons do not appear to advantage while running: an anointed king, a state elephant, one gone forth (an ascetic), and a woman.
- ❖ 'We are goods for sale... if we, while running, were to fall and break either a hand or a foot, we should be a burden on our family. But if the clothes we wear get wet, they will dry.'

Observing her grace and the beauty of her teeth as she spoke, the Brahmins searching for a bride knew they had found her.





The Ten Admonitions: A Father's Hidden Wisdom

Before she departed for her new home, Visākḥā's father gave her ten cryptic instructions for life in her husband's family.

1. The indoor fire is not to be carried outside.
2. The outdoor fire is not to be carried inside.
3. Give only to him that gives.
4. Give not to him that gives not.
5. Give both to him that gives and to him that gives not.
6. Sit happily.
7. Eat happily.
8. Sleep happily.
9. Tend the fire.
10. Honor the household divinities.

This advice, heard by her father-in-law Migāra from the next room, would soon become a test of her character.

The Flower of Steadfast Faith: A House of Wrong View

Visākhā's father-in-law, Migāra, was a supporter of naked ascetics. He first commanded her to pay homage to them, which she refused, recognizing they were not true Arahats. Later, while Migāra was eating, he ignored a Buddhist monk seeking alms. Seeing this, Visākhā quietly told the monk:

"Pass on, venerable Sir. My father-in-law is eating stale fare."

Climax: Enraged, Migāra shouted, "Expel the woman from this house! She accuses me of eating unclean food!"



The Unraveling of Truth

Visākhā refused to be cast out unfairly. She reminded her father-in-law: “When I set out to come here, my father summoned eight householders and placed me in their hands... Send, therefore, for my sponsors and let them clear me of the charge.”

Her Defence:

Before the arbiters, she clarified her words. “I thought to myself: ‘My father-in-law is acquiring no fresh merit in his present state of existence, but is consuming only stale merit.’ So I said... ‘My father-in-law is eating stale fare.’ What fault is to be found with me for so doing?”

The Verdict:

The householders agreed: “None at all. What our daughter said was entirely proper.”



Wisdom Revealed: The Meaning of the Ten Admonitions

Key Interpretations



The indoor fire is not to be carried outside: Do not speak of the faults of your husband or in-laws to others.



The outdoor fire is not to be carried inside: Do not bring gossip about your in-laws from outsiders into the home.



Give only to him that gives: Lend only to those who return what they borrow.



Give both to him that gives and to him that gives not: Help poor kinsfolk, whether they can repay you or not.



Sit, Eat, Sleep happily: Show respect by standing for elders; serve them before you eat; and attend to your duties before you rest.



Tend the fire & Honor the household divinities: Regard your mother-in-law, father-in-law, and husband as a flame of fire or as your divinities.

Hearing this, Migāra sat with bowed head, unable to make answer.
Visākhā was found entirely without fault.



The Mother of Migāra: A Heart Transformed

Pardoning her father-in-law, Visākhā made one condition to stay: “If I may be permitted to minister to the Saṅgha of bhikkhus... I will remain.” Migāra agreed.

The next day, she invited the Buddha. Persuaded by his Jain advisors, Migāra listened to the Buddha’s sermon from behind a curtain. As the Teacher taught, Migāra became established in the fruition of Stream-entry. Overcome, he rushed from behind the curtain, took Visākhā’s breast in his mouth, and declared, “Today henceforth you are my mother.”

From that day, she was known as ‘Mother of Migāra.’

The Weight of Merit: The Great-Creeper Ornament

A bridal gift from her father, its creation took four months and the work of five hundred goldsmiths.

✧ Cost

90 million in materials,
100,000 for workmanship.

✧ Materials

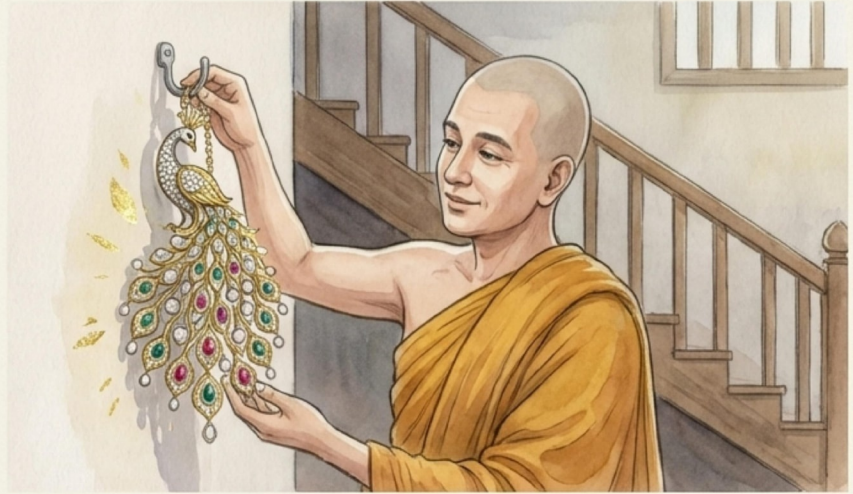
Thousands of measures of diamonds,
pearls, coral, and rubies, woven,
woven with silver threads.

✧ Centerpiece

A peacock with 500 feathers of ruddy
gold on each wing. Its beak was
coral, its eyes and neck of gems.



This ornament was the fruit of a past life during the time of
Buddha Kassapa, when she donated bowls, robes, thread,
needles, and dyes to twenty thousand bhikkhus.

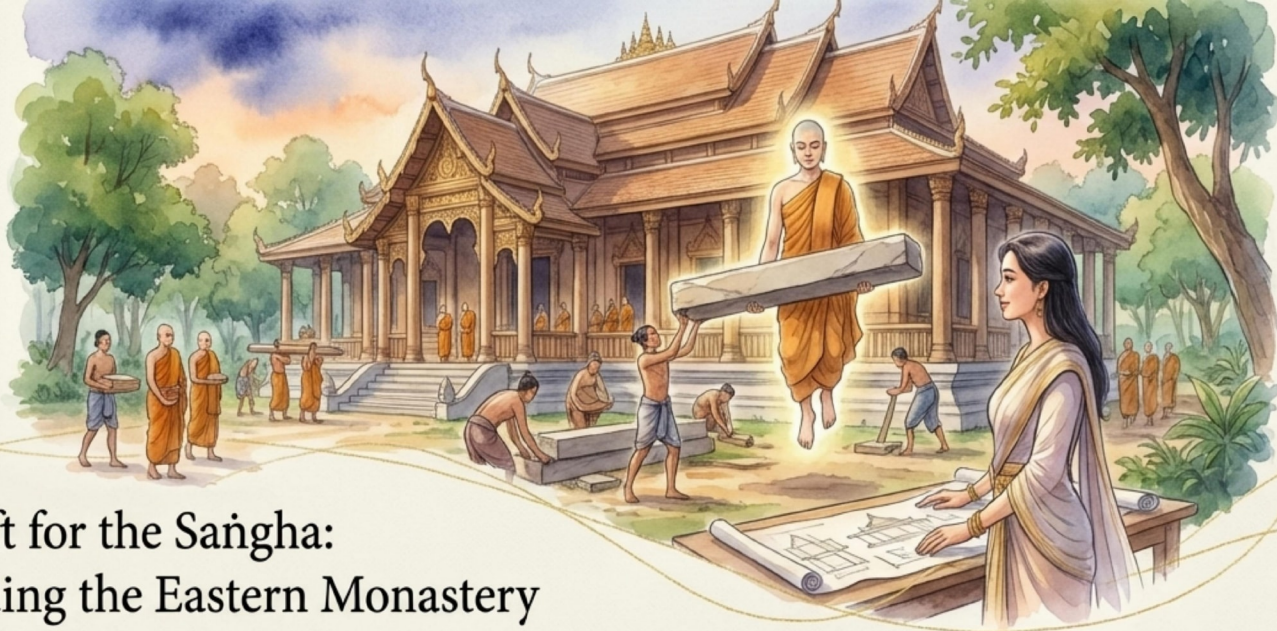


The Flower of Supreme Generosity: A Gift Freely Given

One day, after listening to the Dhamma, Visākhā's slave-girl forgot the Great-Creeper Ornament at the monastery. Elder Ānanda, as was his custom, found it and put it away for safekeeping.

When the slave-girl returned, Visākhā instructed her: "In case the noble Elder Ānanda has taken it up and put it away, do not bring it to me... I give it freely to the noble elder."

Upon learning it had been touched by the elder, she declared, "I will wear nothing that has been touched by the noble master. I will therefore sell it and give my noble masters the equivalent of the money it brings."



A Gift for the Saṅgha: Building the Eastern Monastery

Finding no one rich enough to buy the ornament, Visākha paid the price herself. She asked the Buddha how best to use the funds.

❖ *"Visākha, would it suit you to erect a dwelling-place for the bhikkhus at the eastern gate?"*

The Cost

- ~ Her total offering was 270 million of treasure.
- ~ 90 million for the site.
- ~ 90 million to build the monastery.
- ~ 90 million for the celebratory alms-giving.

The monastery was two stories high, with five hundred rooms on each floor, and was completed in just nine months with the help of Elder Mahā Moggallāna.

A Life of Abundant Fruits

Viśākhā's merit manifested in a life of incredible abundance and fortune.

- **Longevity:** Lived to be 120 years old, yet “there was not a single gray hair in her head; she always seemed to be about sixteen years old.”
- **Family:** She had 20 children, who in turn gave her 8,420 direct descendants, none of whom died during her lifetime.
- **Strength:** She possessed the strength of five elephants, once effortlessly pushing back one released by the king to test her.

She was considered a bringer of good luck, and on festivals, the people of Sāvattthī always invited her first to their feasts.



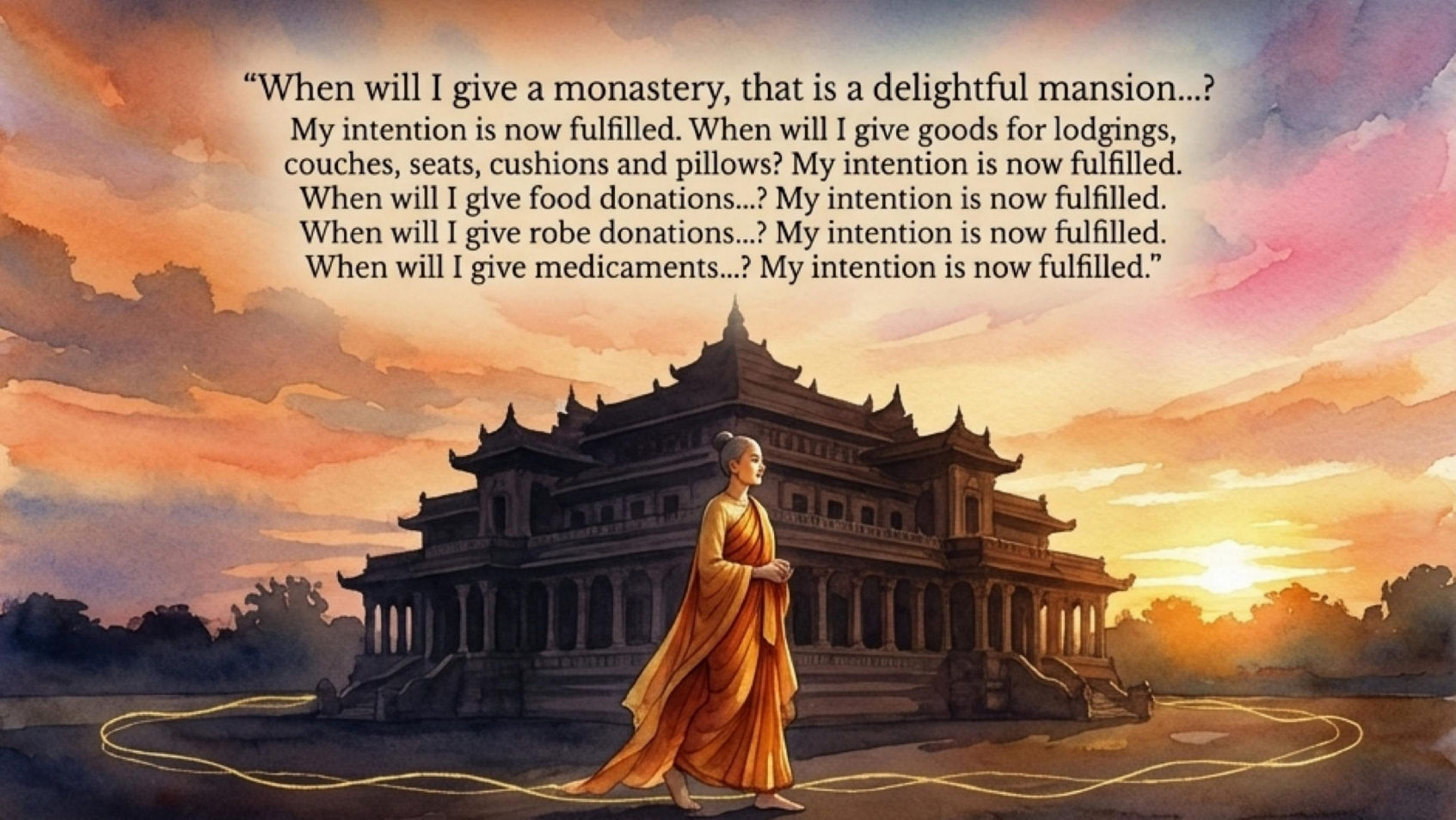
“When will I give a monastery, that is a delightful mansion...?

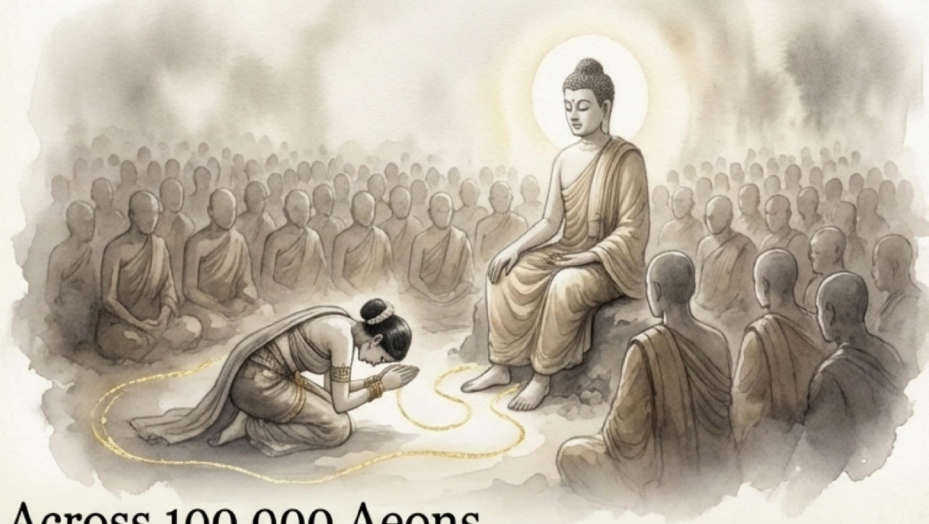
My intention is now fulfilled. When will I give goods for lodgings, couches, seats, cushions and pillows? My intention is now fulfilled.

When will I give food donations...? My intention is now fulfilled.

When will I give robe donations...? My intention is now fulfilled.

When will I give medicaments...? My intention is now fulfilled.”





The Ancient Aspiration: A Vow Across 100,000 Aeons

When the monks wondered if Visākhā had gone mad with song, the Buddha explained: “My daughter is not singing. But her aspiration is now fulfilled.” He recounted her past life, 100,000 aeons ago, during the time of the Buddha Padumuttara. Inspired by that Buddha’s chief female benefactor, she made a powerful aspiration:

“Venerable Sir, I seek not... sovereignty over the gods; but may I receive the eight boons at the hands of a Buddha like you, may I stand in the relation of a mother to him, and may I be the foremost of the women entitled to provide him with the four requisites.”

The Buddha Padumuttara foresaw that her aspiration would be fulfilled in the future, when she would be reborn as Visākhā.

The Garland is Complete

“Bhikkhus, even as out of a great heap of flowers of various kinds a skillful garland-maker makes all manner of garlands of flowers, even so the mind of Visākhā inclines to the doing of all manner of good deeds.”

Just as from a heap of flowers
one might make a lot of garlands,
so should many good deeds be done
by one who is born a mortal.





The Fragrance That Travels Against the Wind

A Teaching on the Scent of Virtue



“The Fortunate One possesses the three perfumes of superlative excellence...
Each of these perfumes, however, goes only with the wind.”



Is there possibly a substance whose perfume goes against the wind, or is there possibly a substance whose perfume goes both with the wind and against the wind?



Accordingly he approached the Teacher and put the question to him.



Ānanda, there is a substance whose perfume goes with the wind,
a substance whose perfume goes both with the wind and against the wind.



If in any village or market-town
in this world any human being,
whether man or woman,
seeks refuge in the Buddha,
seeks refuge in the Dhamma,
seeks refuge in the Saṅgha...

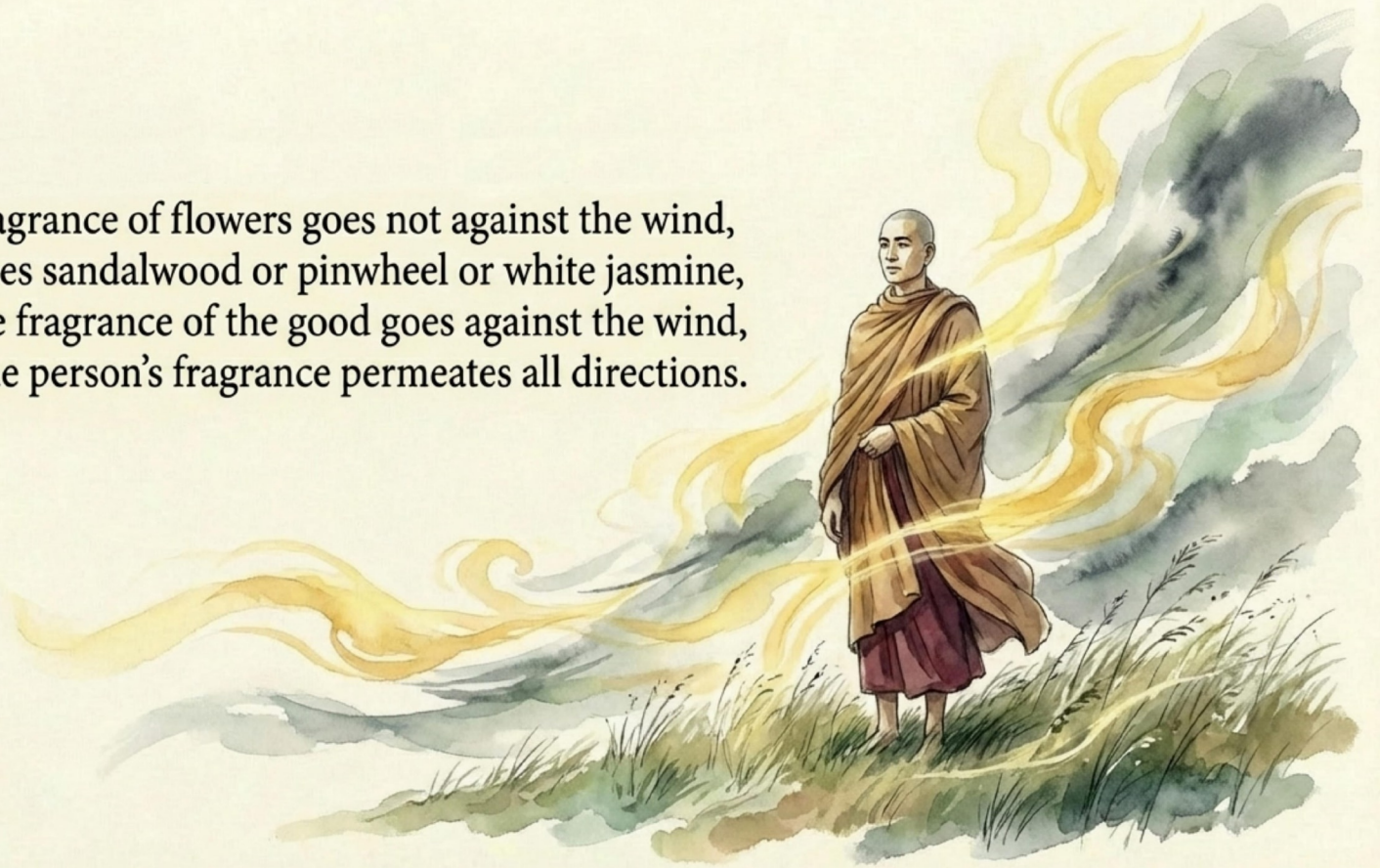


...if he refrains from taking life,
from taking that which is not
given, from indulgence in the
sensual wrongdoings and from
lying, and avoids
occasions of heedlessness
through the use of liquor or
spirits or other intoxicants...



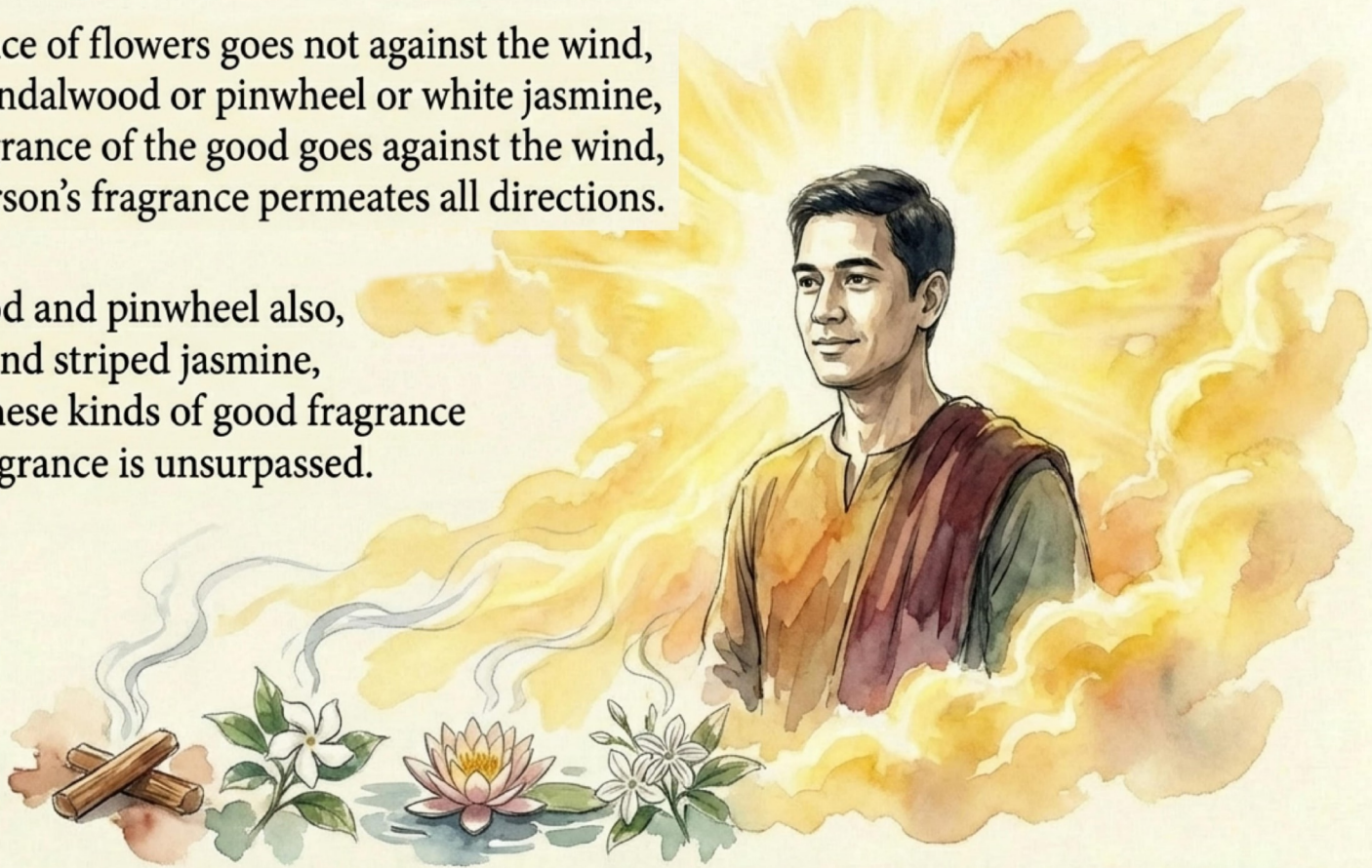
...if he lives the life of a householder in righteousness, with a heart free from the stain of avarice; if he is liberal and generous, if he is open-handed, if he takes delight in the distribution of alms...

The fragrance of flowers goes not against the wind,
nor does sandalwood or pinwheel or white jasmine,
but the fragrance of the good goes against the wind,
the true person's fragrance permeates all directions.



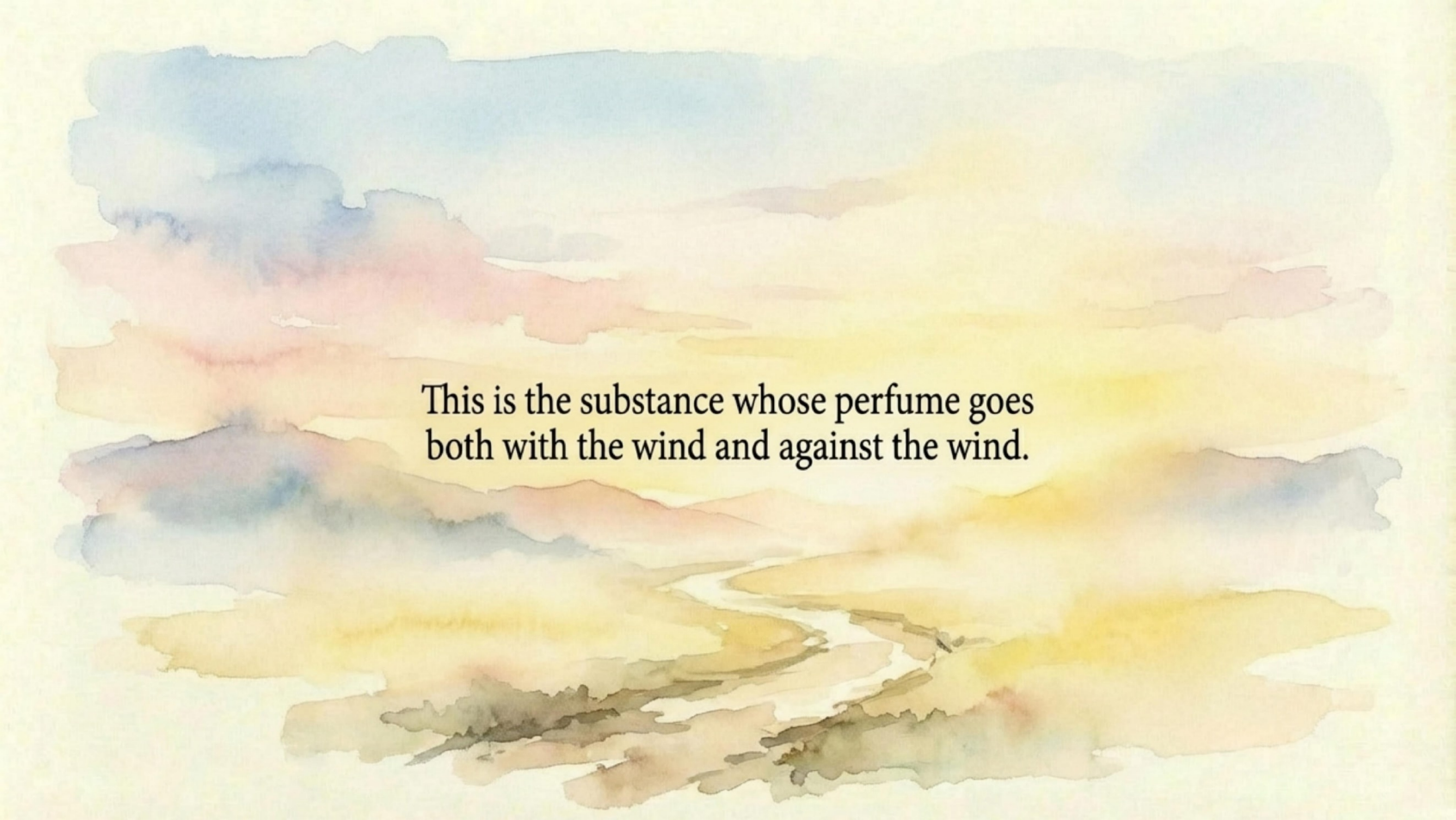
The fragrance of flowers goes not against the wind,
nor does sandalwood or pinwheel or white jasmine,
but the fragrance of the good goes against the wind,
the true person's fragrance permeates all directions.

Sandalwood and pinwheel also,
water lily and striped jasmine,
amongst these kinds of good fragrance
virtue's fragrance is unsurpassed.





In all parts of the world ascetics and Brahmins utter his praise.
Devatās utter his praise.

A watercolor illustration of a landscape. The scene features a winding path or river that flows from the foreground towards the background. The foreground is characterized by dark, textured brushstrokes in shades of brown and grey, suggesting rocks or dense vegetation. The middle ground is dominated by broad, horizontal washes of color in soft blues, pinks, and yellows, creating a dreamy, ethereal atmosphere. The background is a pale, hazy yellow, blending into the overall soft palette. The text is centered in the middle ground, overlaid on the colorful washes.

This is the substance whose perfume goes
both with the wind and against the wind.



Of all fragrances, virtue's is unsurpassed.

The Fragrance of Virtue

A Story of Merit and the Scent
that Reaches the Heavens

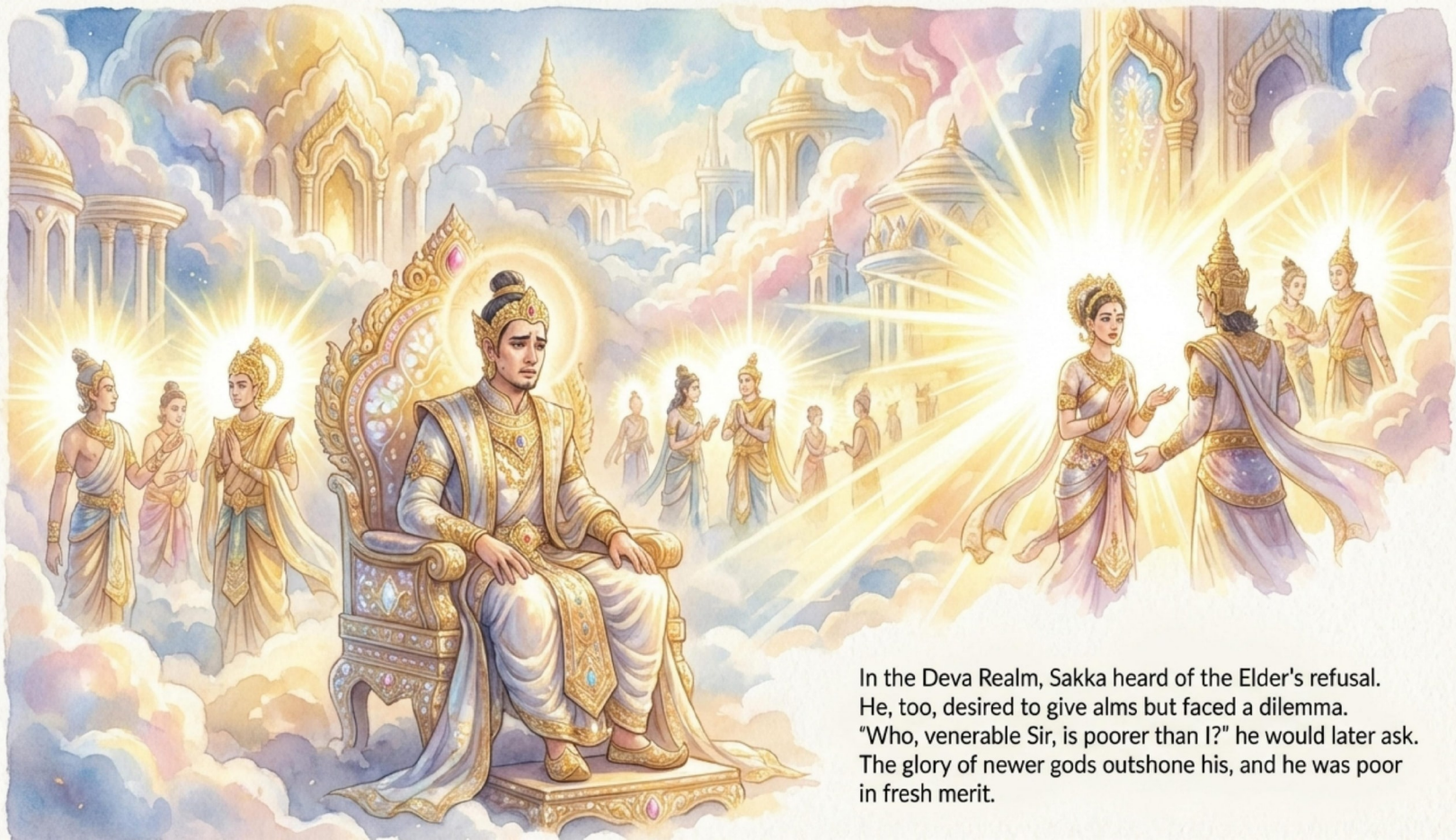




After seven days absorbed in deep meditation, the Elder Mahā Kassapa arose. His intention was simple and pure: to walk an unbroken alms round in the city of Rājagaha and bestow his favor upon the poor.



Celestial spirits, the wives of Sakka, Lord of the Devas, appeared before him with five hundred portions of alms. “Do us a favor,” they pleaded. But the Elder knew them and refused, stating, “I intend to bestow my favor on the poor. Begone!”



In the Deva Realm, Sakka heard of the Elder's refusal. He, too, desired to give alms but faced a dilemma. "Who, venerable Sir, is poorer than I?" he would later ask. The glory of newer gods outshone his, and he was poor in fresh merit.

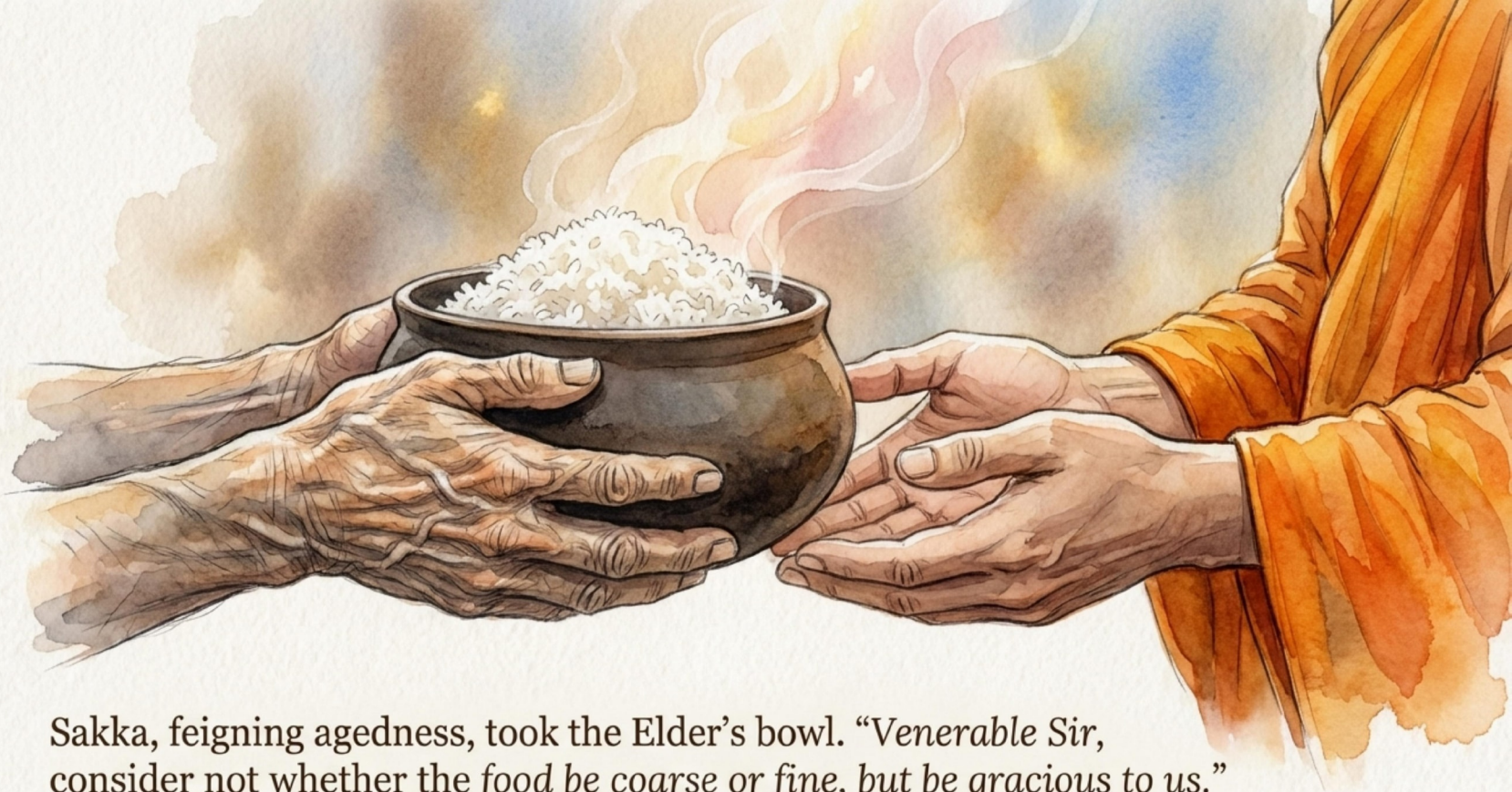


To succeed where others failed, Sakka devised a plan. He disguised himself and the Devadhītā Sujā as old weavers, worn out by age. They created a small, impoverished lane outside the city, where they sat spinning out thread, waiting for the Elder.





As **Mahā Kassapa** entered the city, he saw the weavers' lane. He thought to himself: "These two persons are doing manual labor in old age; there are doubtless no persons in this city poorer than these two. I will bestow my favor upon them."



Sakka, feigning agedness, took the Elder's bowl. "Venerable Sir, consider not whether the food be coarse or fine, but be gracious to us." He filled the bowl with rice and placed it in the Elder's hands.



Instantly, the portion of alms, richly flavored with all manner of sauces and curries, filled the whole city of Rājagaha with its divine fragrance. The Elder Kassapa immediately knew this was no ordinary food.



‘This man is weak, but his alms are as powerful as the food of Sakka,’ the Elder thought. Perceiving the truth, he said, ‘You have done a grievous wrong in depriving poor folk of the opportunity to acquire merit. Any poor man might have obtained the post of rich man.’



'Have I acquired merit?' Sakka asked. 'You have,' the Elder replied. Overjoyed, Sakka and Sujā flew into the sky, breathing forth an exalted utterance: 'Ah giving! The best gift is well established on Kassapa!'



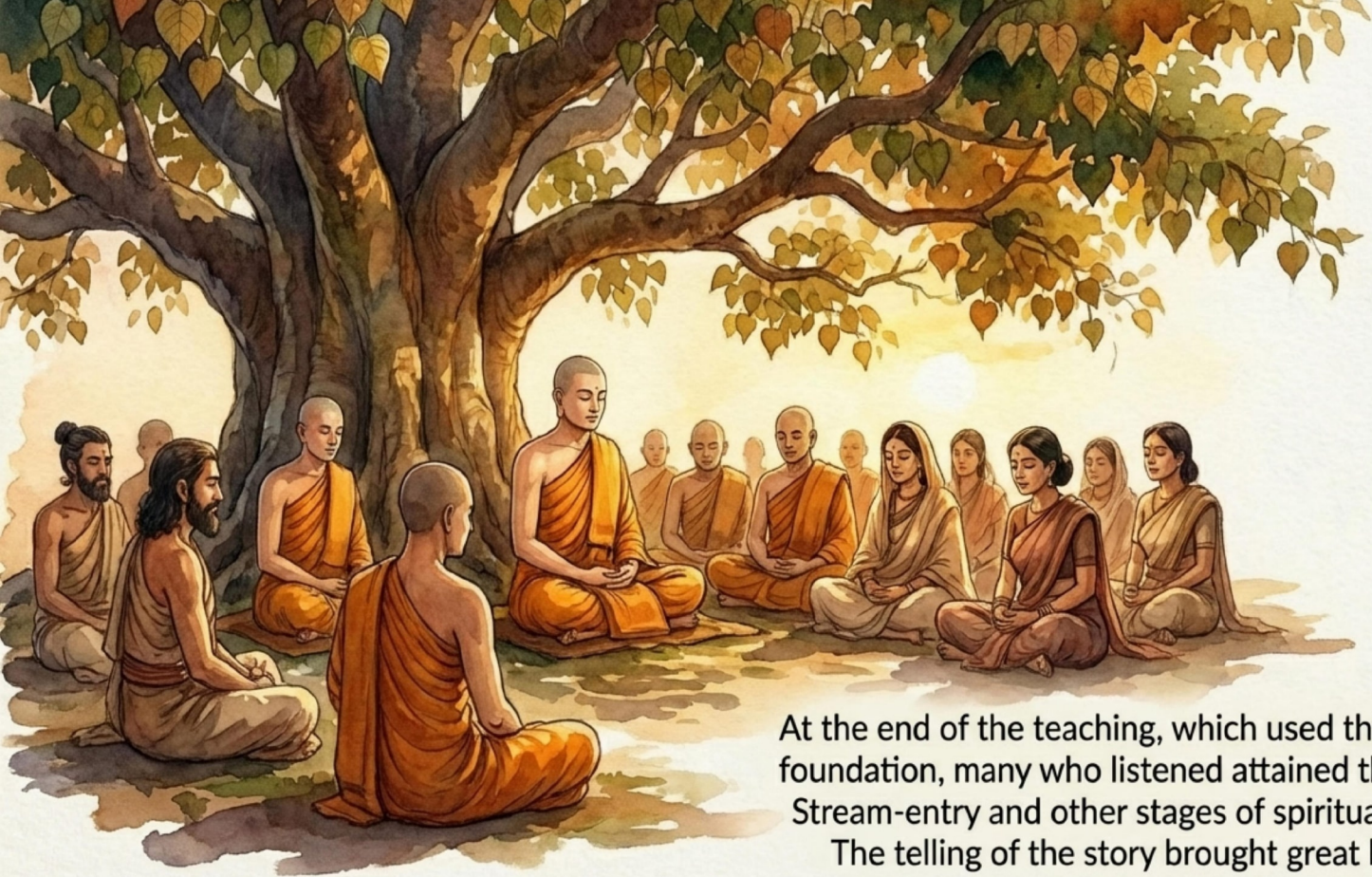
‘At the monastery, the Buddha heard Sakka’s cry with his divine ear-element, which surpasses that of normal men. He addressed the bhikkhus: “Behold Sakka, the Lord of the Devas. He has given alms to my son Kassapa through deception and now utters his joy.”



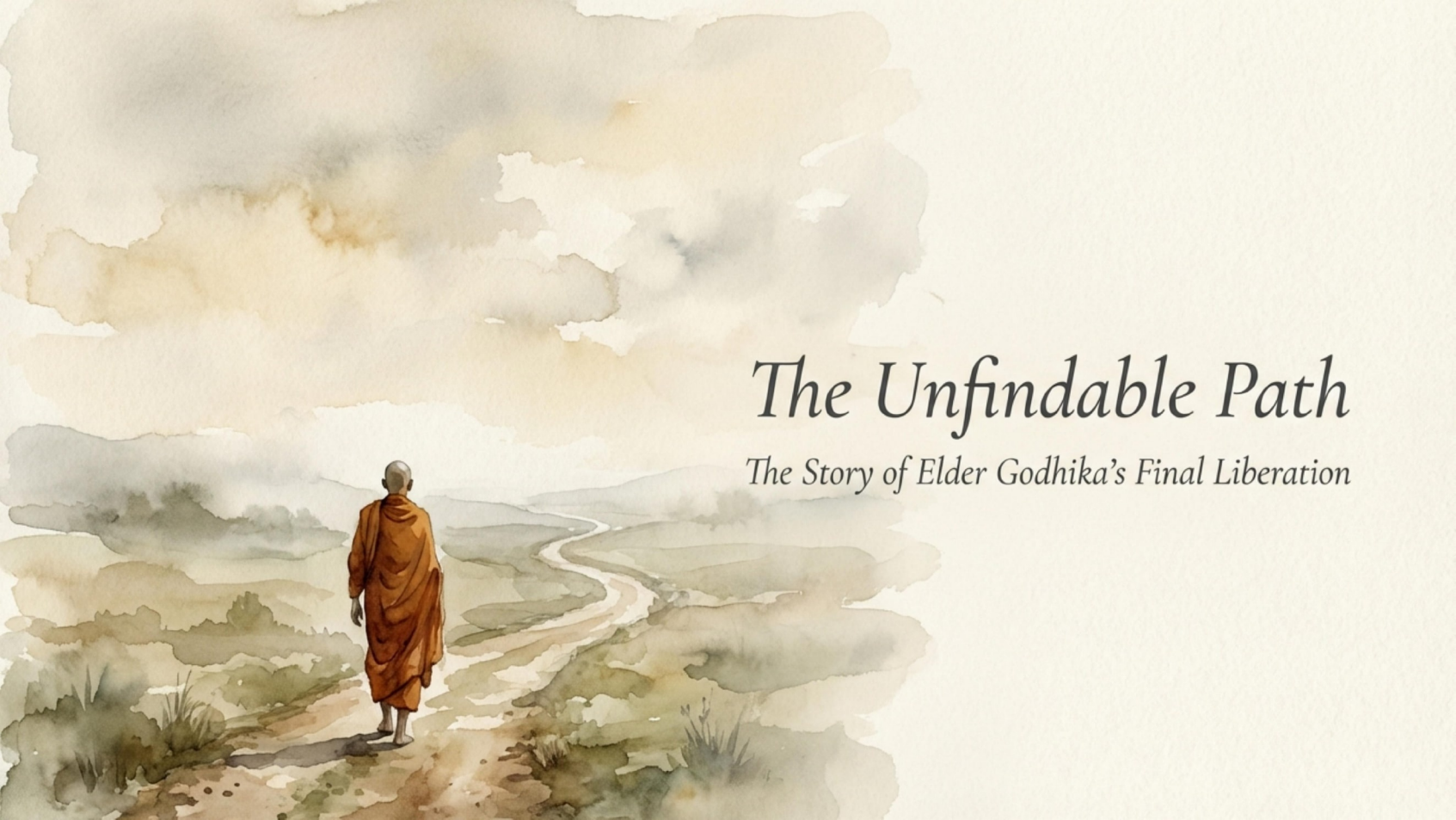
The **Buddha** explained, 'Bhikkhus, Sakka, the Lord of the Devas, approaching my son with the perfume of virtue, gave alms to him.' He then prepared to reveal a truth about the scent that truly matters.

**Pinwheel and sandalwood fragrance
are insignificant, but the fragrance
of one who has virtue flutters
supreme amongst the gods.**

– The Buddha (*Dhp* 56)



At the end of the teaching, which used this story as its foundation, many who listened attained the fruition of Stream-entry and other stages of spiritual awakening. The telling of the story brought great benefit to all.



The Unfindable Path

The Story of Elder Godhika's Final Liberation



On Mount Isigili,

the venerable Elder Godhika dedicated himself to meditation. He was heedful, ardent, and resolute in his practice, seeking the final emancipation of the mind. Through diligence, he reached profound states of absorption.



Yet, his practice was assailed by a persistent illness. Six times he entered a state of deep meditative absorption, and six times he fell away from it. The path to liberation seemed to close before him again and again.



Upon attaining absorption
for the seventh time, he thought:
“Six times I have fallen away.
Doubtful is the future state. Now
is the time for me to use the razor.”

He lay down, resolved to sever his
windpipe, indifferent to life itself.



Māra, the Tempter,
perceived the elder's intention.
He knew that those who use the
razor are indifferent to life and
could win the highest state.

Fearing this outcome, he resolved
to intervene.



Māra thought: “This bhikkhu will pay no attention to my words. I will induce the Teacher to prevent him.” Taking on the guise of an unknown figure, he approached the Fortunate One to make his appeal.



Māra spoke to the Buddha:

“Great Hero, One who is Great in Wisdom, Your disciple,
though having overcome death, still wishes and thinks
about dying, prohibit it, Resplendent One.”



The Teacher, perceiving it was Māra,
spoke as the elder drew his knife:

“Exactly this the wise ones do,
they do not yearn for life, having
overcome craving at the root,
Godhika attained Parinibbāna.”



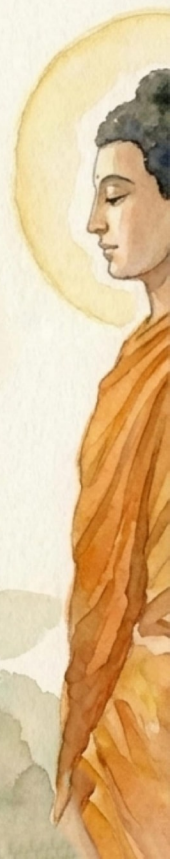
The Buddha, arriving with his monks, pointed to the searching darkness. “Bhikkhus, that is Māra, the Wicked One, searching for the consciousness of Godhika. He thinks: ‘Where has his rebirth-consciousness fixed itself?’”

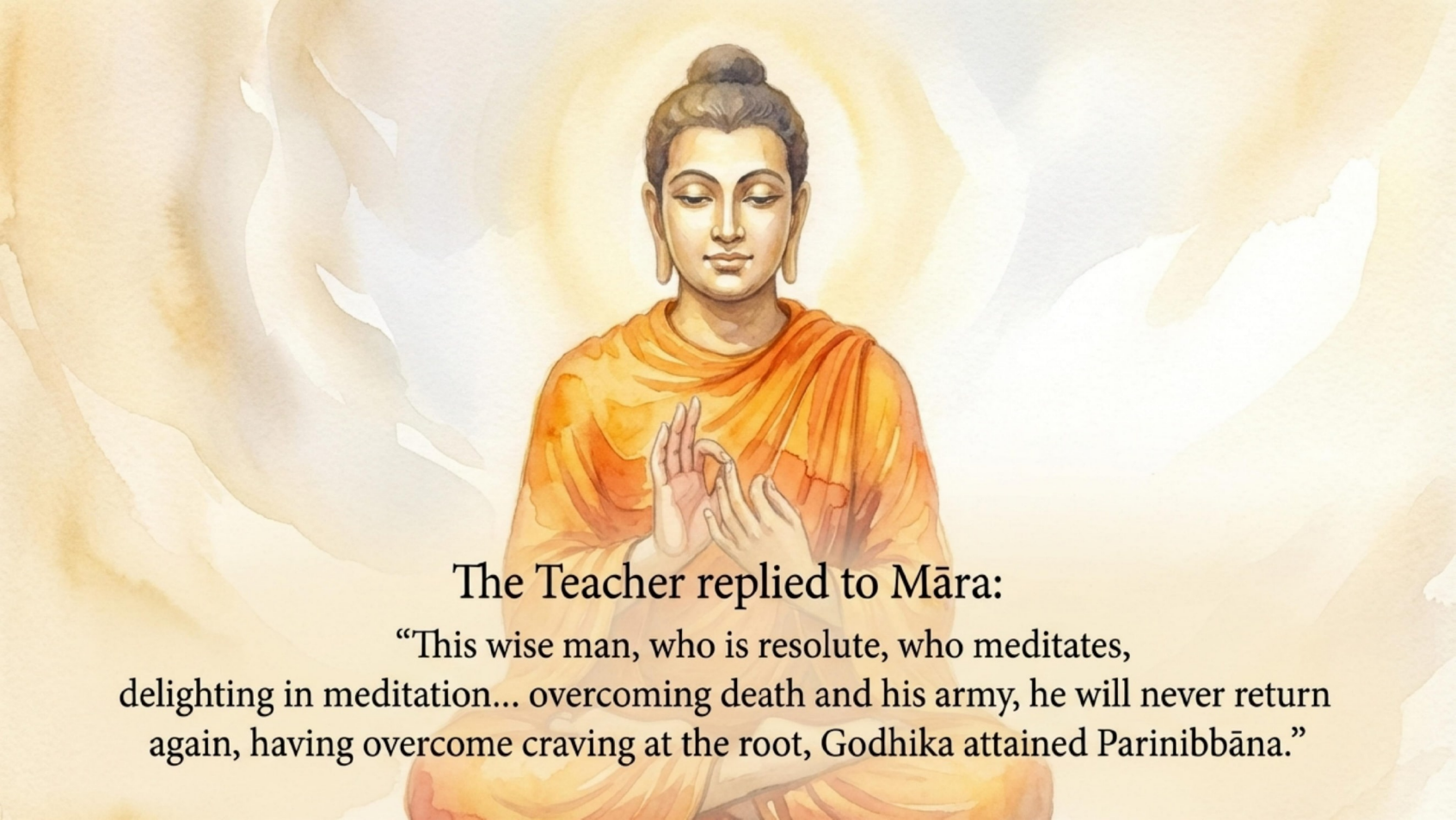


“But, bhikkhus, the consciousness of the youth of good family
Godhika has not fixed itself. For, bhikkhus, the youth of good family
Godhika has passed into Parinibbāna.”
His consciousness is unestablished, untraceable.



Māra, unable to find him,
took the form of a prince with a lute
and asked the Teacher:
“Above, below, and across the middle,
in every point and intermediate points,
I sought him, without finding him,
whereabouts has Godhika gone?”



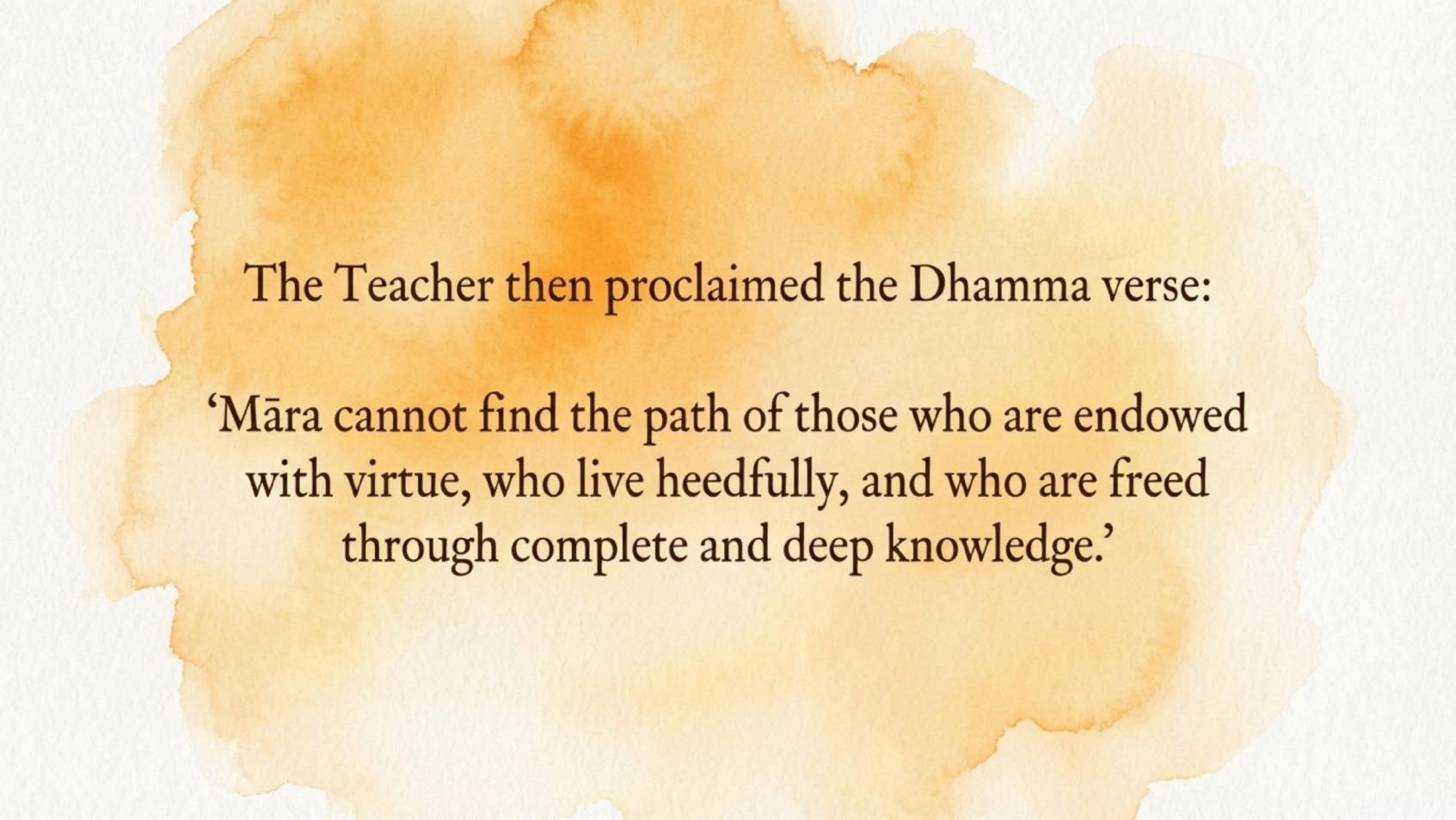


The Teacher replied to Māra:

“This wise man, who is resolute, who meditates,
delighting in meditation... overcoming death and his army, he will never return
again, having overcome craving at the root, Godhika attained Parinibbāna.”

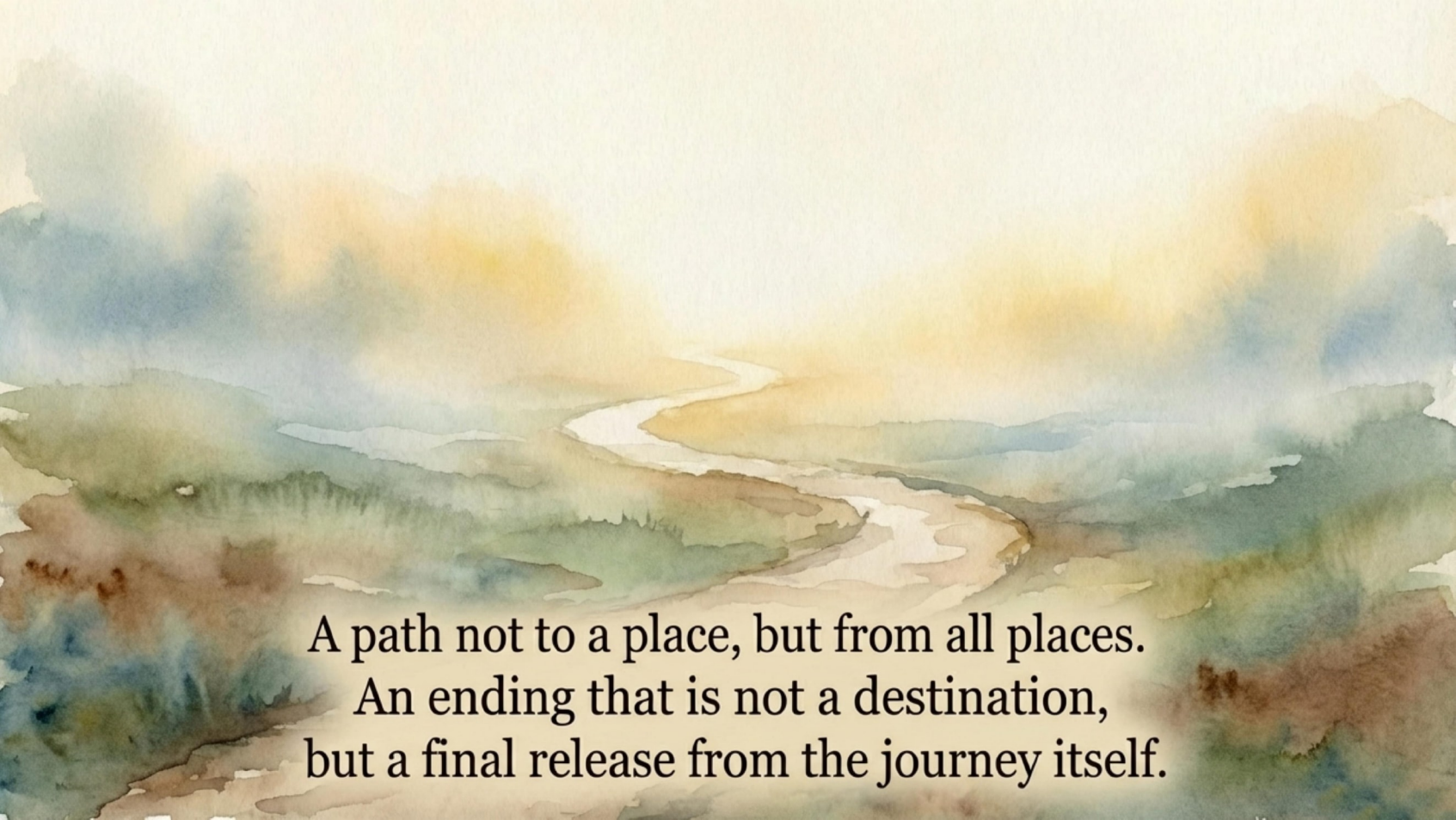


Then Māra, the Wicked One, lamented:
“He is overcome with grief, his Vīṇā dropped
from the arms, then did that Yakkha, depressed,
disappear right there and then.”



The Teacher then proclaimed the Dhamma verse:

‘Māra cannot find the path of those who are endowed
with virtue, who live heedfully, and who are freed
through complete and deep knowledge.’



A path not to a place, but from all places.
An ending that is not a destination,
but a final release from the journey itself.

Two Friends, Two Paths

In the city of Sāvattthī lived two close friends. Sirigutta was a devoted disciple of the Buddha. His friend, Garahadinna, was a fervent supporter of the Nigaṇṭhas, a rival group of ascetics. Garahadinna constantly urged his friend to abandon the Buddha and instead give alms to his own 'noble teachers,' creating a tension between their friendship and their faith.



The Boast of Omniscience

‘There is nothing my noble teachers do not know,’ Garahadinna claimed. ‘They know all about the past, the present, and the future. They know everybody’s thoughts, words, and actions.’

Hearing this, Sirigutta feigned conviction and invited the Nigaṇṭhas to his home for a meal, setting the stage for a test of their supposed all-knowing power.



A Trap of Dung and Deception

Sirigutta prepared no feast. Instead, he had a long ditch dug and filled with dung and slime. Over it, he placed seats with their back legs balanced precariously on ropes, hidden beneath coverlets.

Nearby, he set out empty earthenware pots, smeared on the outside with bits of food to create the illusion of a grand meal being prepared.



The Fall From Grace

The 500 Niganṭhas arrived. Unaware of the trap and instructed to sit all at once for 'etiquette,' they took their seats simultaneously. The ropes gave way, and the ascetics were tipped backwards and flung headfirst into the ditch of filth. As they scrambled out, Sirigutta's men beat them with sticks, calling out, 'So you know all about the past, the present, and the future!'



A Challenge Forged in Revenge

Enraged by the humiliation of his teachers and a subsequent legal defeat, Garahadinna feigned reconciliation with Sirigutta. He then proposed his own test: he would invite the Buddha and his monks for a meal. Secretly, he planned a far more lethal trap, hoping to inflict a terrible revenge and disprove the Buddha's wisdom.



The Fiery Trap

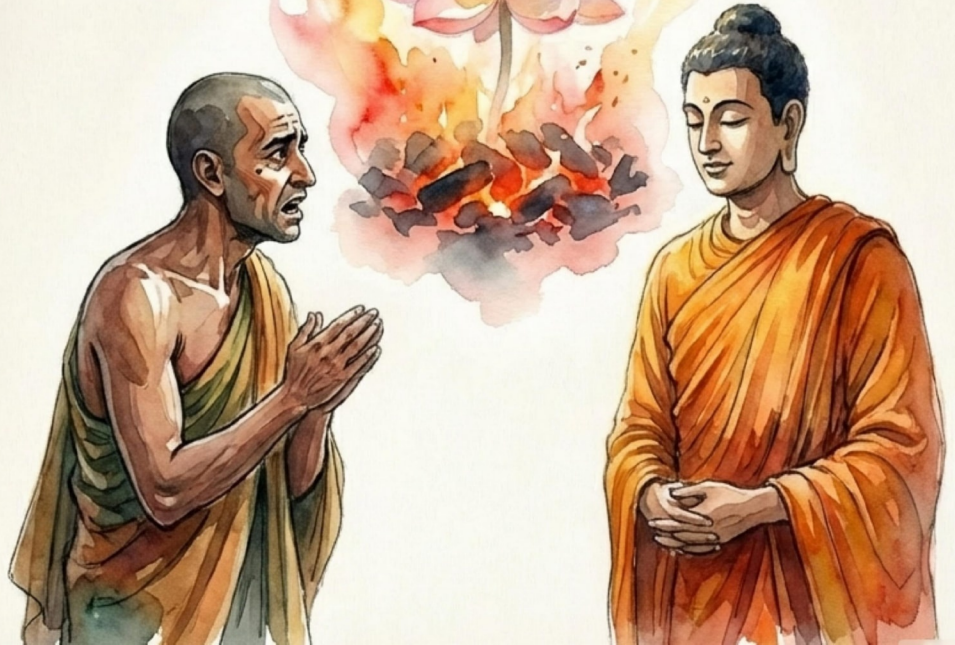
Garahadinna's trap was a great pit filled with eighty cartloads of acacia-wood. His men used bellows to burn the wood all night long, until it became a mass of blazing, red-hot charcoal.

The pit was concealed with a flimsy covering of matting and sticks, designed to break the moment anyone stepped on it.



The Buddha's Knowing Acceptance

Sirigutta warned the Buddha, suspecting a trap. The Teacher, using his faculty of insight, already knew everything. He foresaw the charcoal-pit, the gigantic lotus that would spring from it, and the enlightenment of thousands. Understanding the profound good that would result, he calmly accepted the perilous invitation.



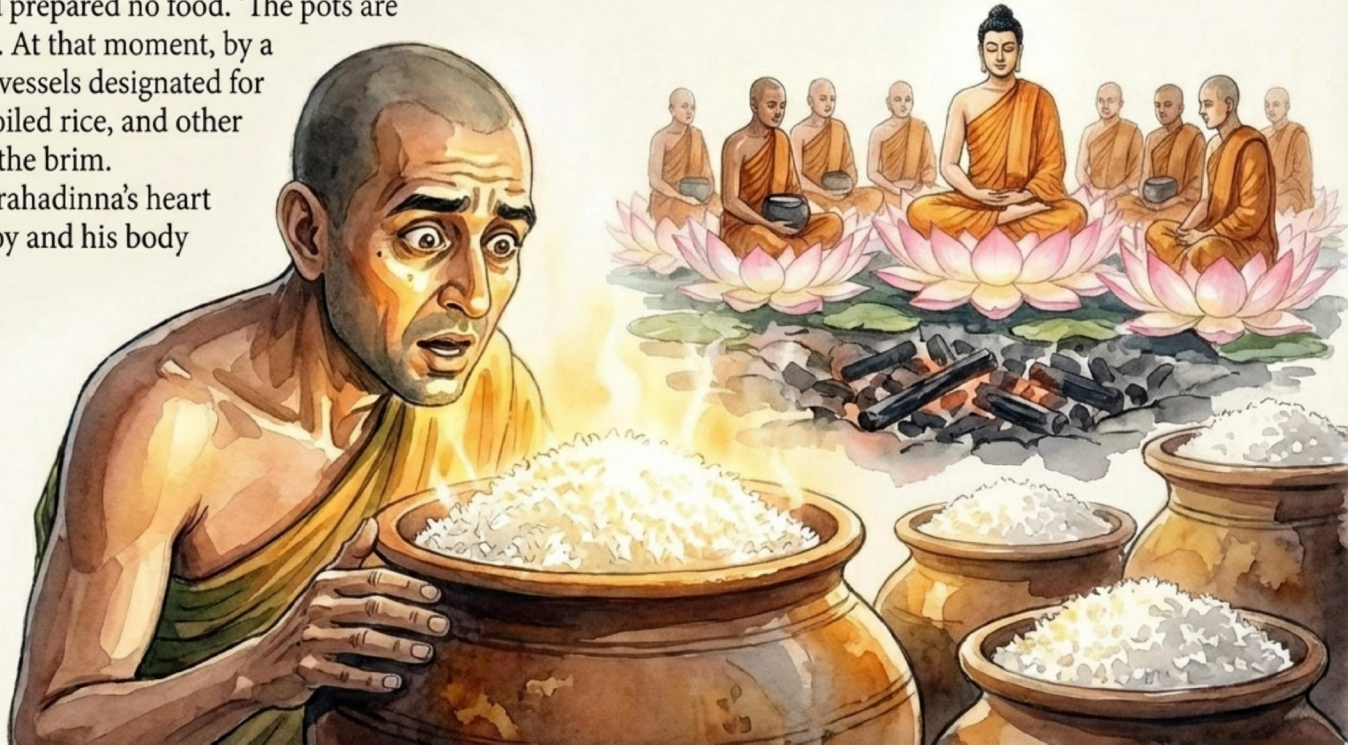
A Path of Lotuses on a Bed of Coals

As the Buddha approached the trap, Garahadinna stepped back and urged him forward. The Teacher extended his foot. Instantly, the matting disappeared and gigantic lotus flowers, as large as wheels, burst forth from the embers. The Buddha stepped onto the first lotus and walked across the fiery pit, followed by his 500 monks on a miraculous floral bridge.



A Miracle of Substance

Terrified and awestruck, Garahadinna confessed to Sirigutta that he had prepared no food. 'The pots are empty,' he lamented. At that moment, by a second miracle, the vessels designated for rice-porridge, boiled rice, and other foods were filled to the brim. Witnessing this, Garahadinna's heart was suffused with joy and his body with reverence.



The Lotus that Blooms from the Rubbish Heap

After the meal, the Buddha delivered a teaching crystallized in these verses:

Just as in a discarded heap
along the highway
a lotus might arise,
with a pure fragrance,
delighting the mind,



so amongst the forsaken,
the Sambuddha's disciple
outshines the blind
and unattained folk
through his wisdom.

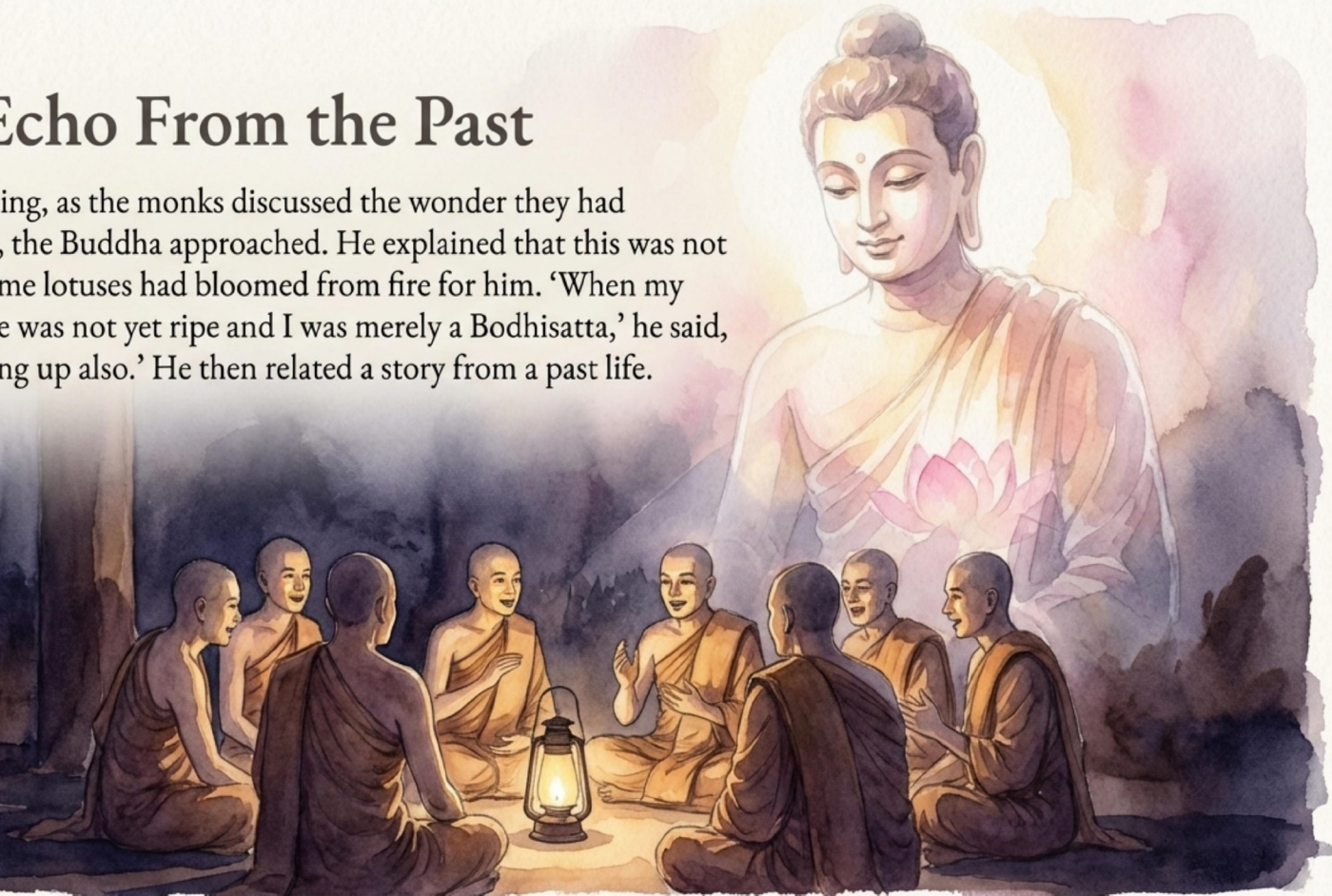
Two Friends, One Path

At the end of the Buddha's teaching, 84,000 beings comprehended the Dhamma. Both Garahadinna and Sirigutta attained the fruition of Stream-entry, the first stage of enlightenment. Their former rivalry dissolved, the two friends stood united in their devotion and thereafter dispensed their great wealth in support of the Buddha's dispensation.



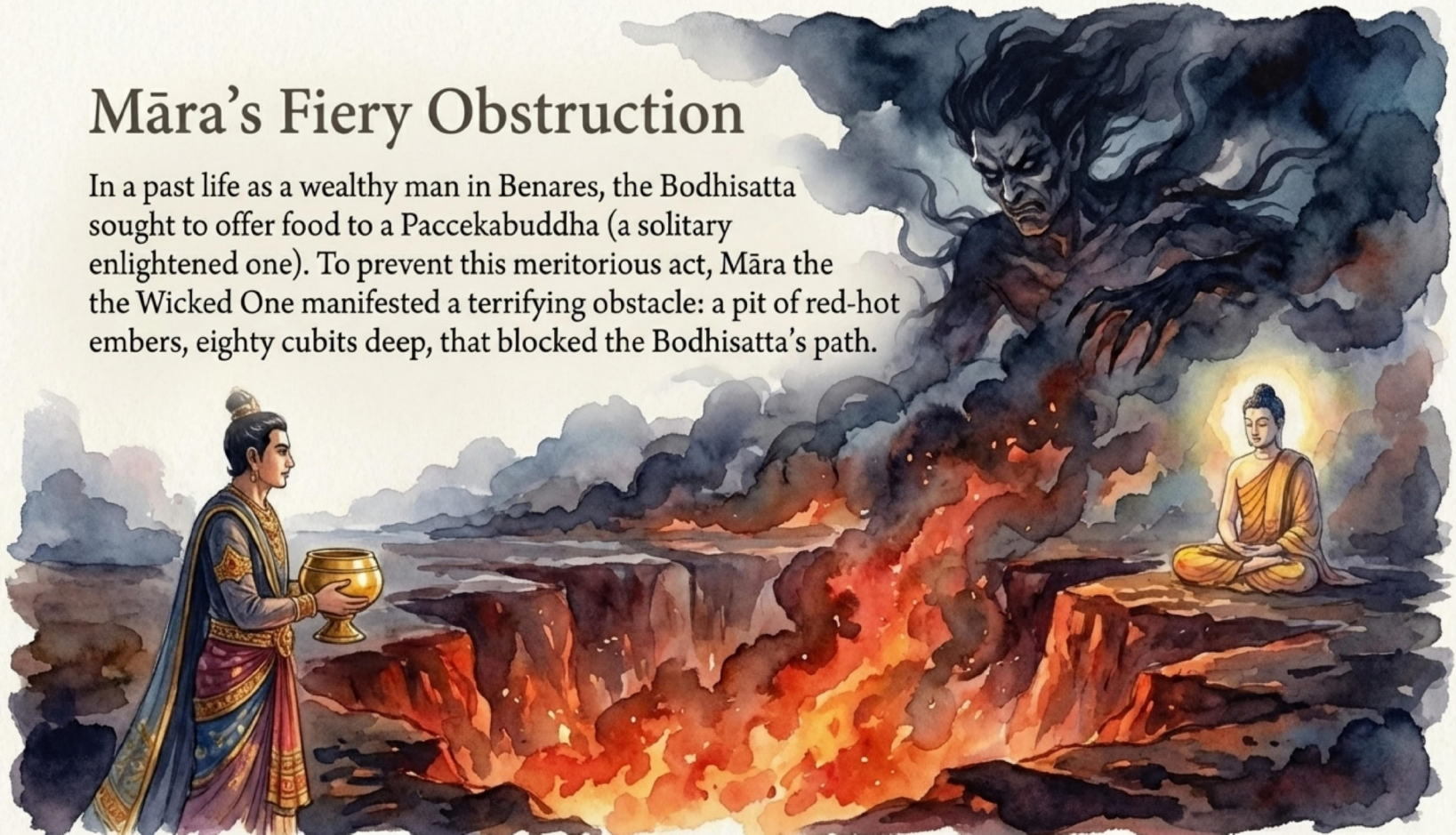
An Echo From the Past

That evening, as the monks discussed the wonder they had witnessed, the Buddha approached. He explained that this was not the first time lotuses had bloomed from fire for him. 'When my knowledge was not yet ripe and I was merely a Bodhisatta,' he said, 'they sprang up also.' He then related a story from a past life.



Māra's Fiery Obstruction

In a past life as a wealthy man in Benares, the Bodhisatta sought to offer food to a Paccekabuddha (a solitary enlightened one). To prevent this meritorious act, Māra the Wicked One manifested a terrifying obstacle: a pit of red-hot embers, eighty cubits deep, that blocked the Bodhisatta's path.



A Vow That Transcends Fear

Undaunted, the Bodhisatta looked to the heavens, saw Māra, and declared his intent. Standing on the brink of the fire, he cried out to the Paccekabuddha, making a powerful vow that he would complete his offering, even if it meant falling headlong into the flames. He proclaimed:

‘Gladly will I fall... but I will not do anything ignoble, come, accept this rice.’



The Enduring Power of a Pure Heart

As the Bodhisatta strode forward, a peerless lotus rose from the eighty cubits of fire to receive his feet. Standing upon it, he placed the food in the Paccekabuddha's bowl. This timeless event reveals an enduring truth: for a mind guided by wisdom and resolute in compassion, even the most daunting obstacles are transformed into a path of beauty and merit.

