

The Light of Asia

The Legend of Prince Siddārtha

The Scripture of the Saviour of the World,
Lord Buddha—Prince Siddārtha styled on earth—
In Earth and Heavens and Hells Incomparable,
All-honoured, Wisest, Best, most Pitiful;
The Teacher of Nirvāna and the Law.





The Divine Descent

High in the heavenly spheres, the Buddha waited. Seeing the five sure signs that his time as a Deva was ending, he announced his departure to the Gods:

“Now I go to help the World.
This last of many times; for birth and death
End hence for me and those who learn my Law.”

He looked down upon the earth and chose to be born among the Sākya, under the snows of the Himalayas, where King Suddhōdana ruled with justice.



Queen Maya's Dream

That night, Queen Maya dreamed of a
star and a six-tusked white elephant,
white as milk, entering her womb.
Upon waking, bliss filled her breast.

The event rippled across the cosmos:
the hills shook, waves quieted, and
a tender whisper pierced the deeps:

“The dead that are to live,
the live who die,
Uprise, and hear, and hope!
Buddha is come!”



The Miraculous Birth

Born under a bowing Palsa tree, the birth was painless. The child arrived bearing the thirty-two marks of a blessed life. When the palanquin arrived to carry him, the bearers were no ordinary men, but the four Regents of the Earth—Angels of the East, South, West, and North—disguised in human garb to serve the World-Saviour.



Asita's Prophecy

The saint Asita wept not for sorrow, but because he would die before the child became the Buddha. He told the King:

‘This is that Blossom on our human tree
Which opens once in many myriad years.’

But he warned of the destiny ahead: ‘A sword must pierce thy bowels for this boy,’ for the Prince would leave his royal roots to save the world.

The Omniscient Student

When tasked to write, the young Prince did not just learn the alphabet; he recited the sacred verse *Gāyatrī* in every known script. He wrote in Nagri, Dakshin, and the tokens of cave-men and sea-peoples. He knew the scripts of those who worship snakes and those who adore the flame. Visvamitra, the teacher, realized the boy possessed wisdom “without the books.”





The Master of Numbers

The Prince counted beyond the Lakh, to the Kātha (stars of night) and the Antah-Kalpas (aeons). He explained the Paramānus (atoms), describing how they form the universe. Visvamitra bowed to the floor, proclaiming: “Thou art Teacher of thy teachers—thou, not I, art Guru.”



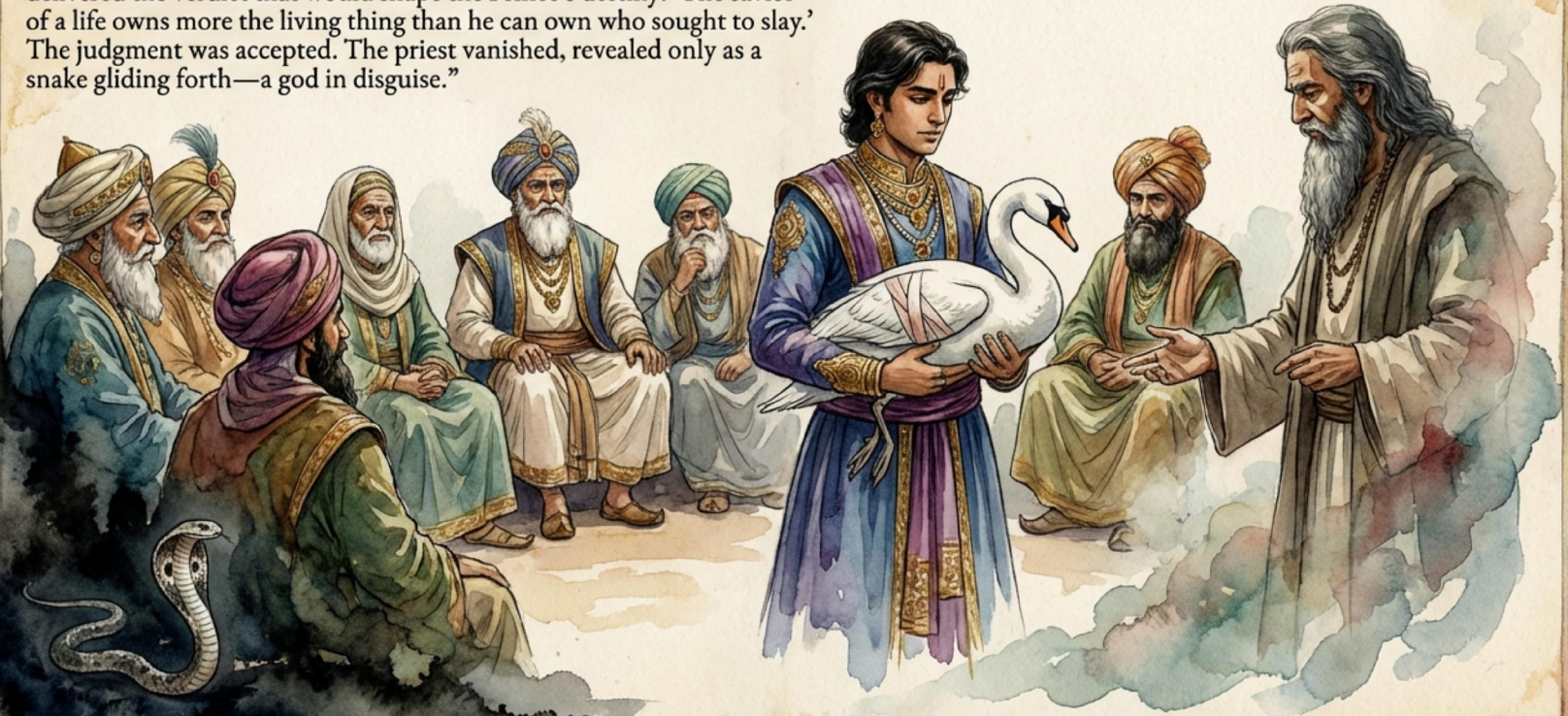
The Incident of the Swan

Devadatta shot a swan, but Siddārtha caught it. He calmed the bird and extracted the steel arrow.

To understand the creature's suffering, the Prince pressed the arrow's barb into his own wrist and "winced to feel it sting." He refused to give the bird up, claiming that while the slayer might own the dead, the life belonged to the savior.

“The Judgment of Mercy”

Body: “The dispute came before the council. An unknown priest delivered the verdict that would shape the Prince’s destiny: ‘The savior of a life owns more the living thing than he can own who sought to slay.’ The judgment was accepted. The priest vanished, revealed only as a snake gliding forth—a god in disguise.”





The Ploughing Festival

To hide the 'glories and sufferings of a Buddh,' the King took the Prince to the 'pleasance of the spring.' The town was hung with lamps, and the fields were alive with sowers and dancers. "All things spoke peace and plenty, and the Prince saw and rejoiced.' But his eyes were soon to open to what lay beneath.

The Reality of Nature

Looking deeper, Siddārtha saw
“the thorns which grow upon
this rose of life.”

He observed the mutual murder
in the grass:

“Lizard fed on ant,
and snake on him,
And kite on both...
Each slew a slayer
and in turn was slain,
Life living upon death.”

He realized the fair festival
veiled a vast, grim conspiracy
of survival.





The Sorrow of Existence

He saw the peasant sweating for a wage
and the oxen with 'dewlaps blistered
with the bitter yoke.'

He sighed:

'Is this that happy earth they brought
me forth to see?

How salt with sweat the peasant's bread!
The rage to live which makes all living
strife.'

Overwhelmed, he sought a space to
meditate on this woe.

The First Meditation

Seated under a Jambu-tree, he began to meditate on the 'deep disease of life.'

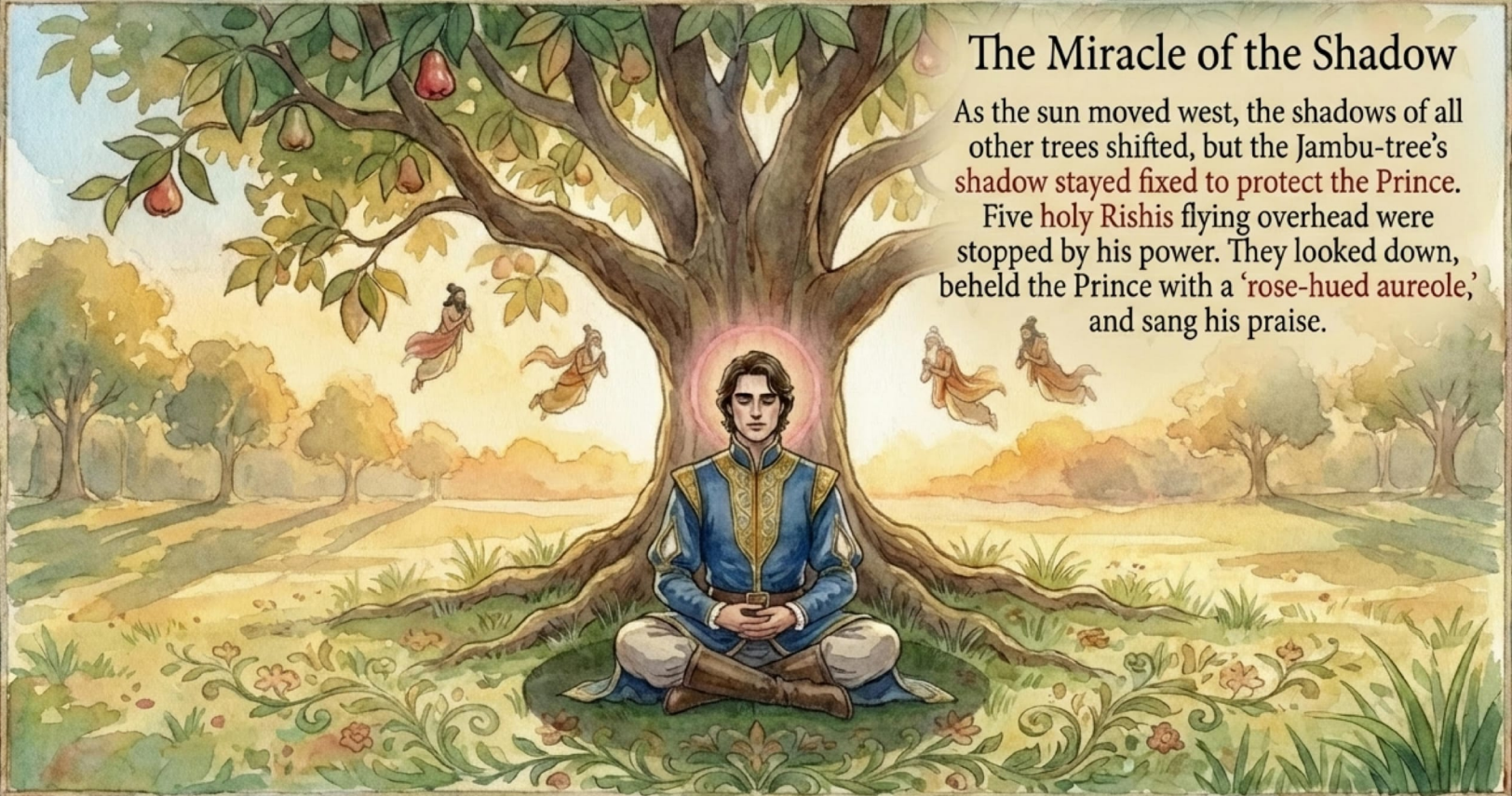
Driven by vast pity and a passion to heal pain, he purged his spirit of sense and self, attaining *Dhyāna*, the first step of the path to enlightenment.



The Miracle of the Shadow

As the sun moved west, the shadows of all other trees shifted, but the Jambu-tree's shadow stayed fixed to protect the Prince.

Five holy Rishis flying overhead were stopped by his power. They looked down, beheld the Prince with a 'rose-hued aureole,' and sang his praise.





“The Prophecy Fulfilled”

A voice from the blossoms declared, ‘From his heart my shadow will not shift.’

The Prince had begun his work. His compassion for the wounded swan and the sweating ploughman had set him on the inevitable course to become the Buddha, the one who would deliver the world from ignorance.

The Light of Asia: Book Two

The Prince, The Contest, and The Gilded Cage



At eighteen, Prince Siddhartha lived in a world designed to hide the truth. His father, King Siddhodana, sought to shield him from the “shadows of his meditation” and the harsh realities of life, fearing a prophecy that would lead the boy away from the throne.

The Three Houses of Perfection

To bind the Prince to the earth, the King commissioned three stately houses: Subha for winter warmth, Suramma for summer cool, and Ramma for the rains. Every hour provided a new delight, ensuring the Prince's life was rich, banking his existence with 'perpetual flowers' to mask the passing of time.





The King's Fear

Despite the luxury, the Prince's eyes often turned wistful.

The King recalled the prophecy: his son would either trample the necks of enemies as a 'King of Kings' or tread the lowly path of self-denial.

Desperate to ensure the former, the King sought counsel: how to turn the boy's heart from the heavens to the earth?

A Tether of Love

The ministers advised that “Love will cure these thin distempers.”

They argued that while brazen chains cannot hold a mind, “a girl’s hair lightly binds.”

They proposed a festival of beauty, where the realm’s maidens would compete for the Prince’s favor, hoping to cheat his Highness into happiness.



The Festival of Maidens

The 'city's flowers' flocked to the gate—fresh-bathed, scented, and adorned. They paced past the throne, trembling at his divine grace.

Yet Siddhartha remained unmoved. He gave gifts with a gentle hand, but his heart sat empty, like a lake silvered by clouds.





“The Meeting of Eyes”

Then came Yasodhara. Siddhartha started. She alone gazed full into his eyes. 'Is there a gift for me?' she asked. 'The gifts are gone,' he replied, 'yet take this for amends.' He loosed his emerald necklet and clasped it round her waist. Their eyes met, and from that look sprang love.

The Wheel of Birth and Death

This was no new love. Ages ago, they were a hunter and a forest girl; in another life, a tiger and a tigress. 'That which hath been must be between us two.' As hidden seeds shoot after rain, their ancient bond bloomed instantly.



The Martial Challenge

Yasodhara's father refused to give her to a 'cloistered' prince. By Sākyan law, the suitor must prove superior in martial arts. Siddhartha laughed low and accepted the challenge, summoning the kingdom to see if he had 'dared too much' in seeking her.





The Test of Sinhahānu's Bow

Rivals hit targets at great distance, but Siddhartha demanded a target barely visible. He called for the ancient bow of Sinhahānu—kept in the temple, unstrung for generations. He bent the black steel “like a bison-horn,” and his arrow clove the sky, vanishing from sight.

The Stroke of the Sword

Nanda cut through nine stems, but Siddhartha faced two trees grown together.

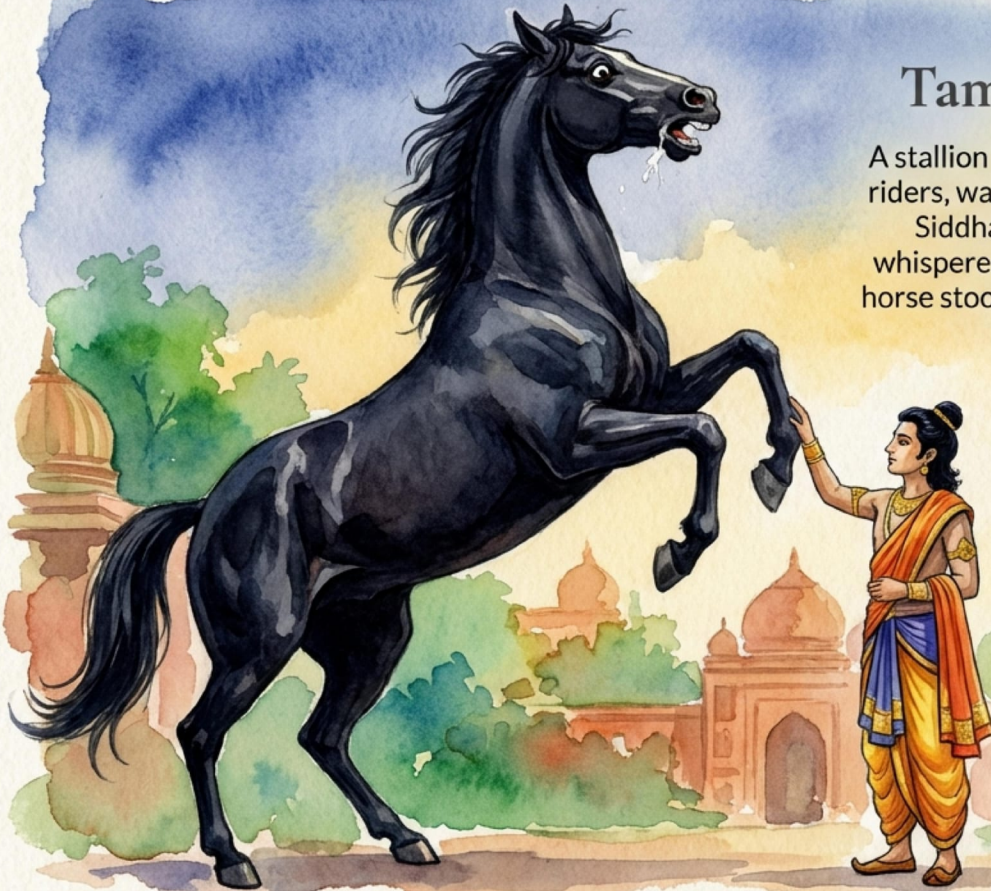
His blade shredded them with a stroke so keen and smooth that the trunks remained upright.

The crowd doubted the cut until a southern breeze blew, and both great crowns crashed to the sand.



Taming the Black Stallion

A stallion 'dark as night,' which had trampled other riders, was brought forth. While others used whips, Siddhartha touched the beast's forelock and whispered low words. The 'furious crest' sank; the horse stood subdued and meek, knowing its Master.





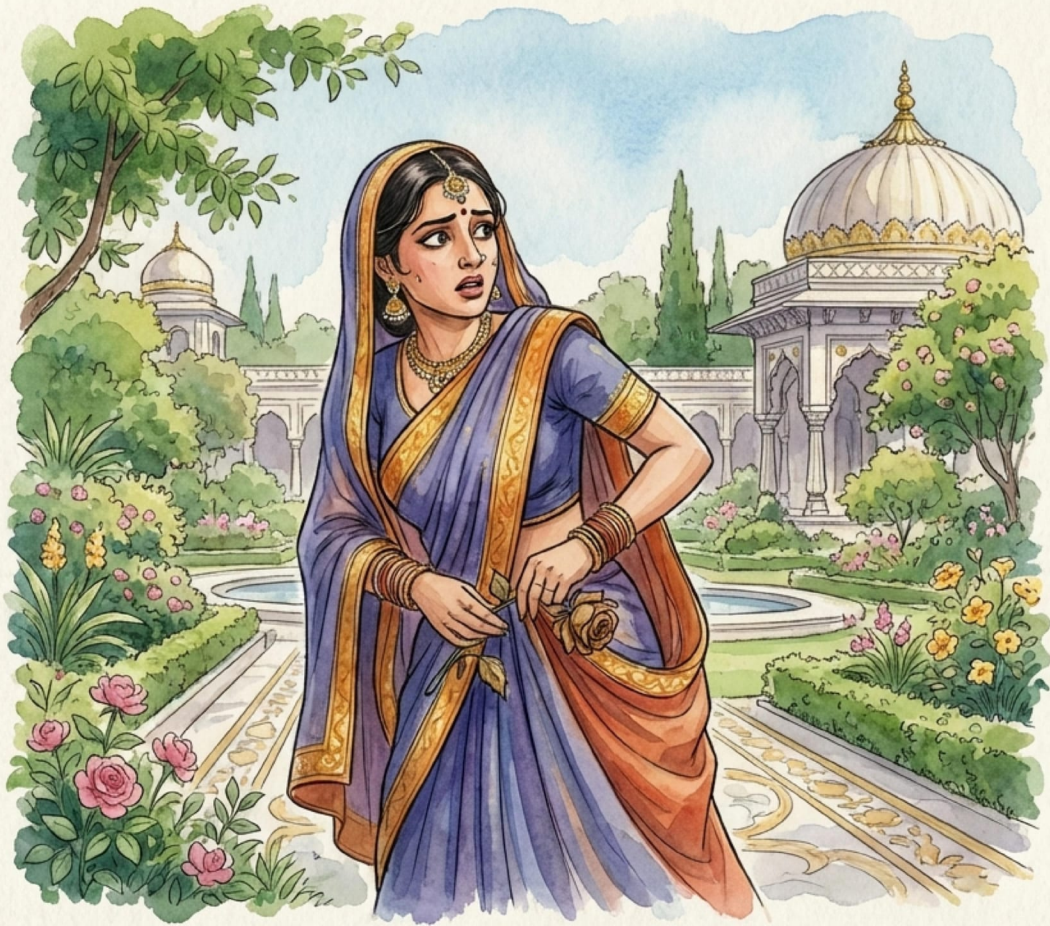
The Victor's Crown

Yasodhara publicly claimed him, hanging the fragrant wreath upon his neck. When the stars were good, the marriage was sealed with fire and water. The 'grey father' blessed them, and for a time, love was all in all.

Vishramvan: The Pleasure Place

Yet the King trusted not love alone. He built a new 'prison-house,' Vishramvan, a marvel of the world. With pillared cloisters, crystal fountains, and tame gazelles, it was a paradise designed to lull the mind and shut out the world.





The Forbidden Truths

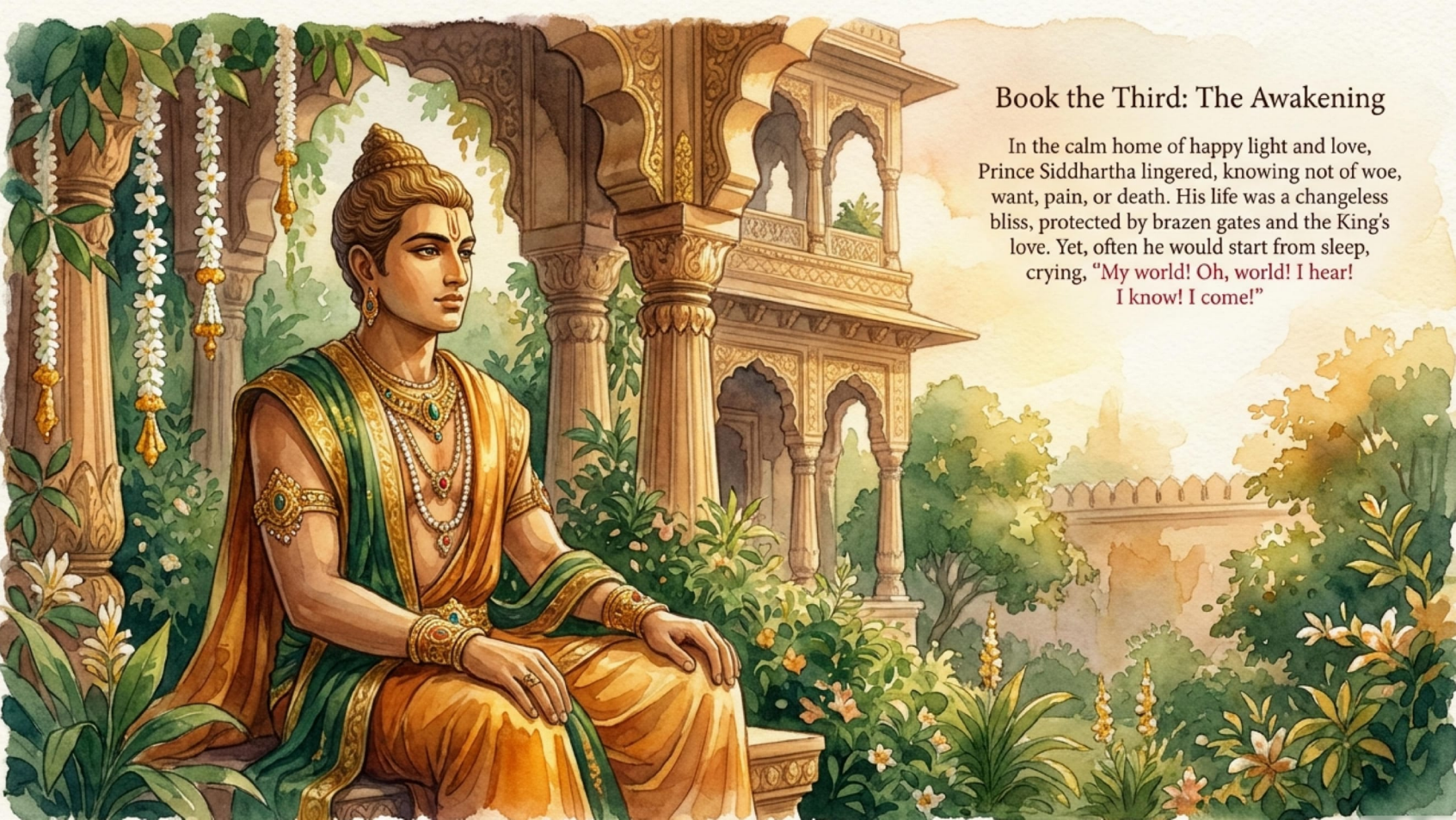
A strict decree ruled these halls:
No mention of death, age, sorrow, or
pain. 'Guiltless criminals'—fading
flowers or sad faces—were exiled
instantly. The Prince was to live in a
perpetual 'now,' kept from brooding
on the 'empty eggs of thought.'



The Bronze Gates

To secure this illusion, the King built three massive walls. The outer gate, with brazen folding doors, required a hundred men to move. The command was absolute: 'Suffer no man to pass... even though it be my son.'

The cage was locked. The Prince was safe.
Or so the King believed.



Book the Third: The Awakening

In the calm home of happy light and love,
Prince Siddhartha lingered, knowing not of woe,
want, pain, or death. His life was a changeless
bliss, protected by brazen gates and the King's
love. Yet, often he would start from sleep,
crying, "My world! Oh, world! I hear!
I know! I come!"

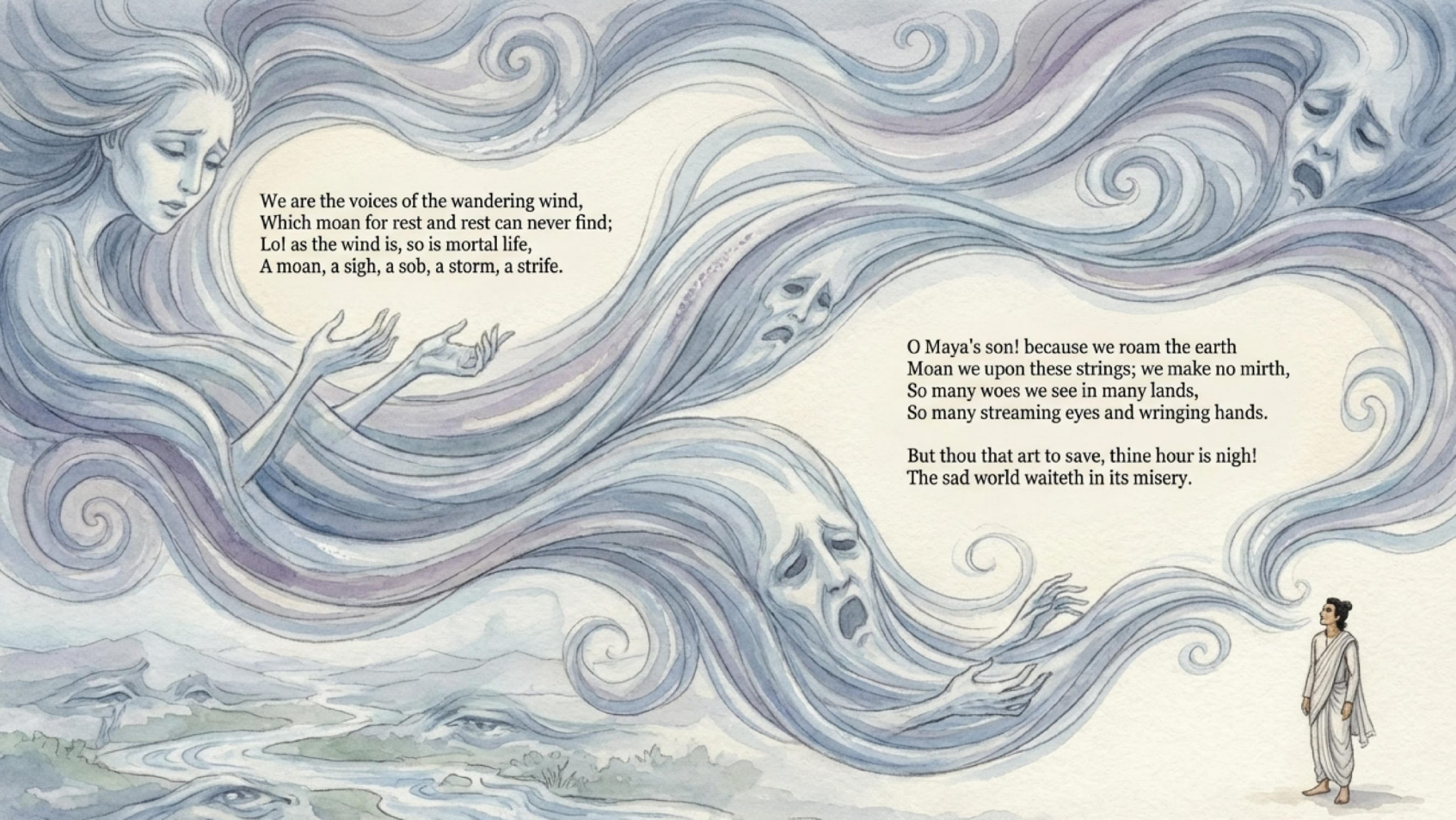
The Wind-Harp's Song

A wind-harp sat upon the sill,
where the breeze lingered over silver strings.

To the court, it was just wild music.
But Prince Siddhartha heard the Devas play,
singing of the wandering wind and
the sorrows of a world he had never seen.

"Rise, Maya's child! Wake! Slumber not again!"





We are the voices of the wandering wind,
Which moan for rest and rest can never find;
Lo! as the wind is, so is mortal life,
A moan, a sigh, a sob, a storm, a strife.

O Maya's son! because we roam the earth
Moan we upon these strings; we make no mirth,
So many woes we see in many lands,
So many streaming eyes and wringing hands.

But thou that art to save, thine hour is nigh!
The sad world waiteth in its misery.

“Tell me what lies beyond our brazen gates,” the Prince asked.

King Suddhōdana granted the wish but commanded the city be decked as a capital of an enchanted land.

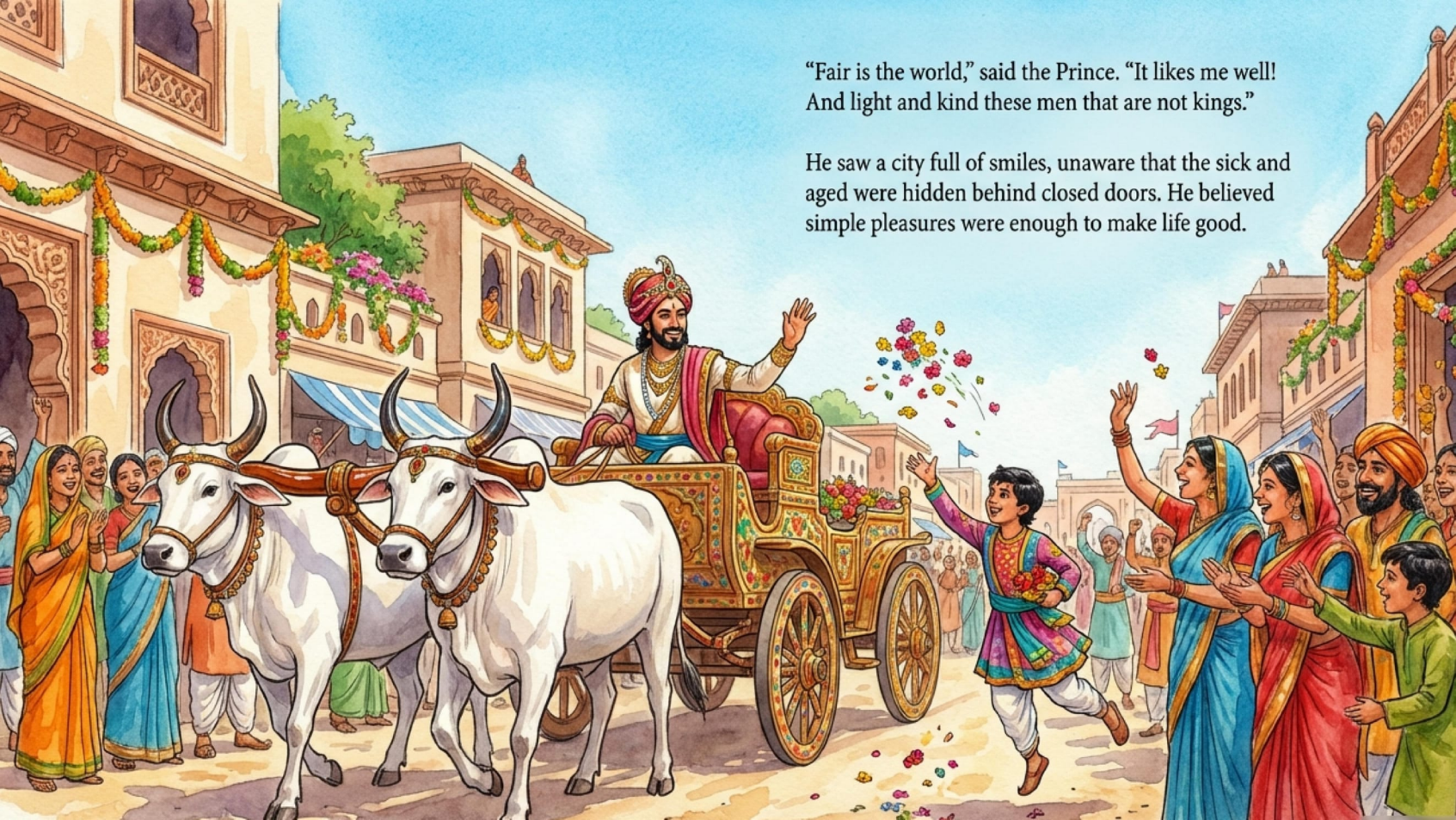
“Let no one blind or maimed, none that is sick, or stricken deep in years, come forth.”

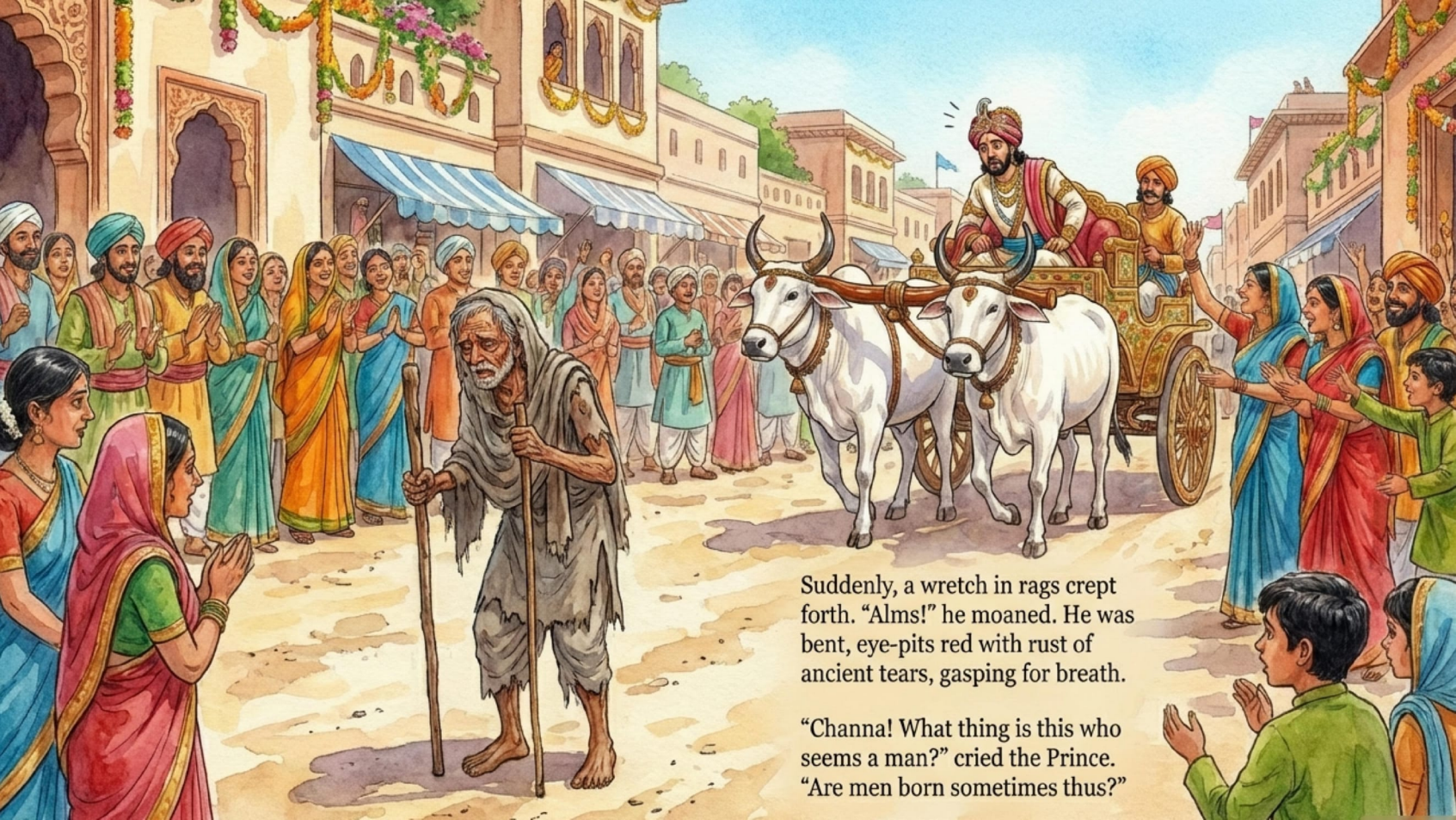
The harsh reality of life was swept away, hiding the truth from the Prince.



“Fair is the world,” said the Prince. “It likes me well!
And light and kind these men that are not kings.”

He saw a city full of smiles, unaware that the sick and
aged were hidden behind closed doors. He believed
simple pleasures were enough to make life good.





Suddenly, a wretch in rags crept forth. "Alms!" he moaned. He was bent, eye-pits red with rust of ancient tears, gasping for breath.

"Channa! What thing is this who seems a man?" cried the Prince. "Are men born sometimes thus?"

“This is no other than an aged man,” Channa explained. “The thievish years have sucked his sap away.”

“But shall this come to others, or to all?” asked the Prince.

“To all, Great Sir.”

Siddhartha turned back, his heart darkened with dread. Even his beloved Yasōdhara would one day grow loveless, weak, and old.



King Suddhōdana dreamed seven troublous dreams:



King Suddhōdana dreamed seven troublous dreams:
a rent flag, ten elephants, a flaming chariot,
a spinning wheel of gold, a mighty drum, a tower
raining jewels, and six weeping men.

A hermit in deer-skin robes declared:
‘The fortune of my Lord the Prince is more than kingdoms.’
The dreams foretold the shaking of the world with the Truth.

"I would know the people and the streets,
their simple usual ways," the Prince pleaded.

He went forth again, disguised in a merchant's
robe. He walked the common way, seeing the
sweat of the porter, the heat of the blacksmith's coal,
and the struggle for survival.



‘Brother, what is ill with thee?’

The man gasped. Channa spoke: “This man is smitten with some pest; his blood leaps and boils. The plague hath had its work in him.”

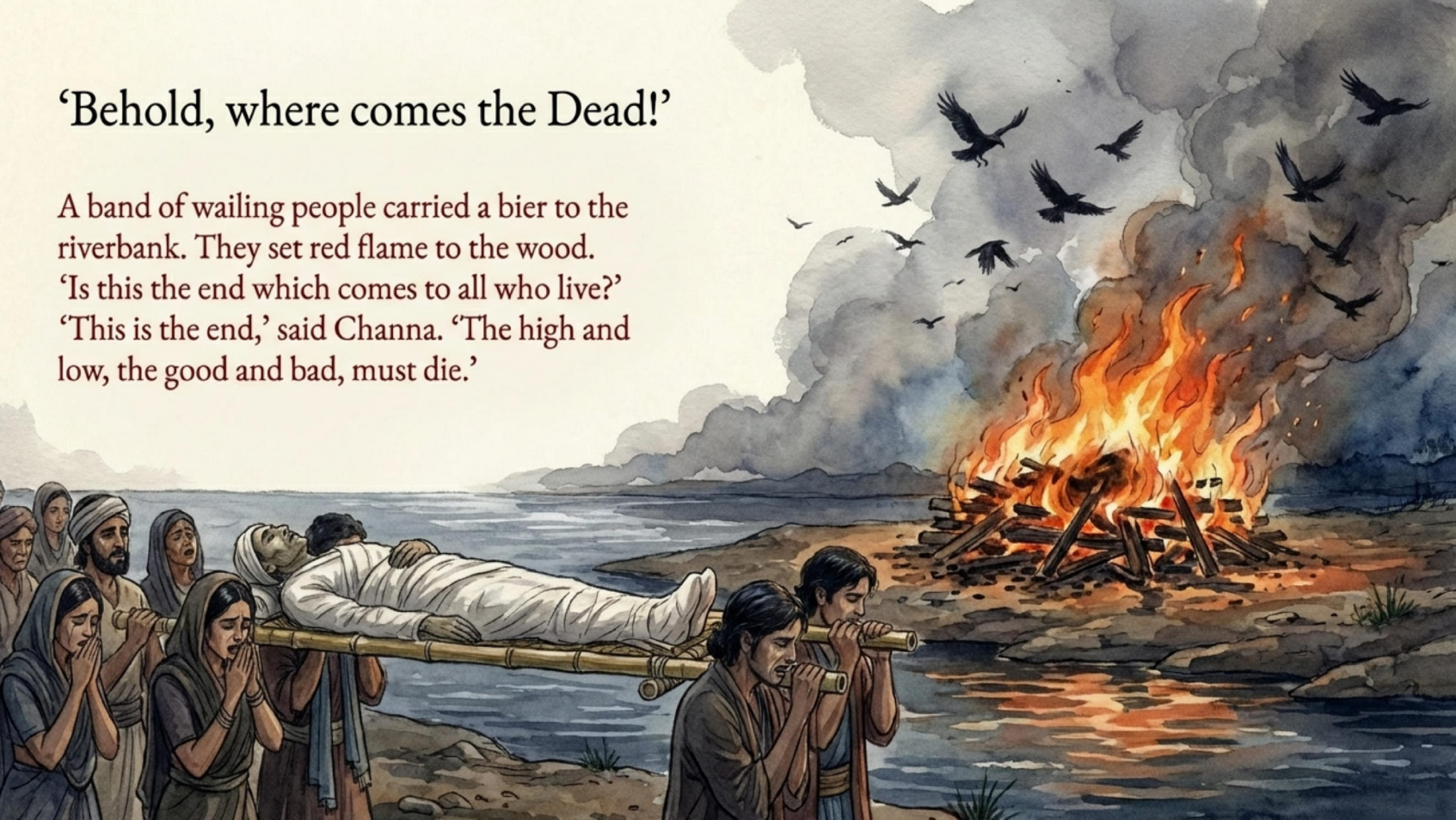
“And are there others?”

“Griefs, wounds, sickness, and fevers befall all flesh,” Channa replied. “Like the sly snake, they come unseen.”



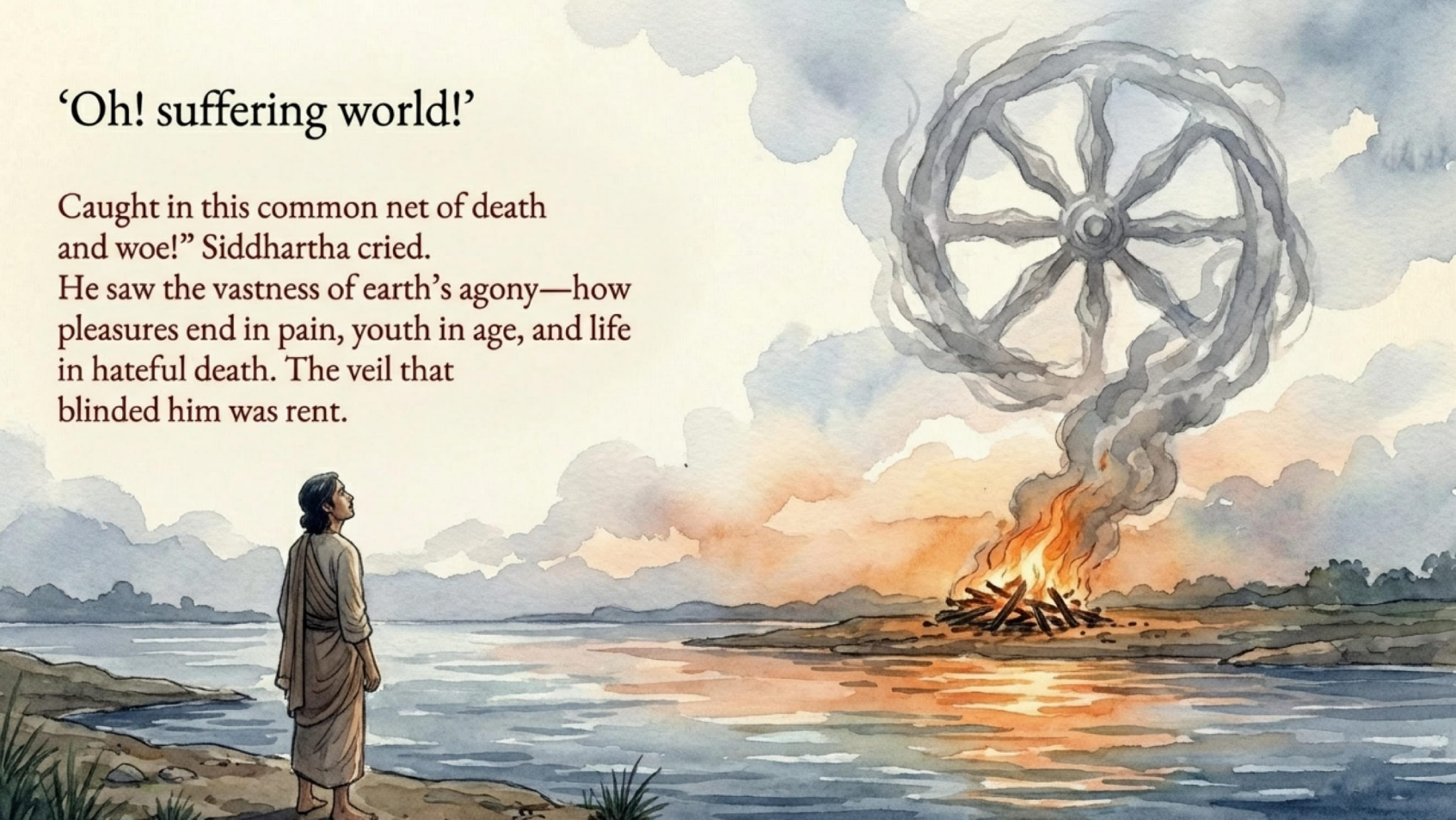
‘Behold, where comes the Dead!’

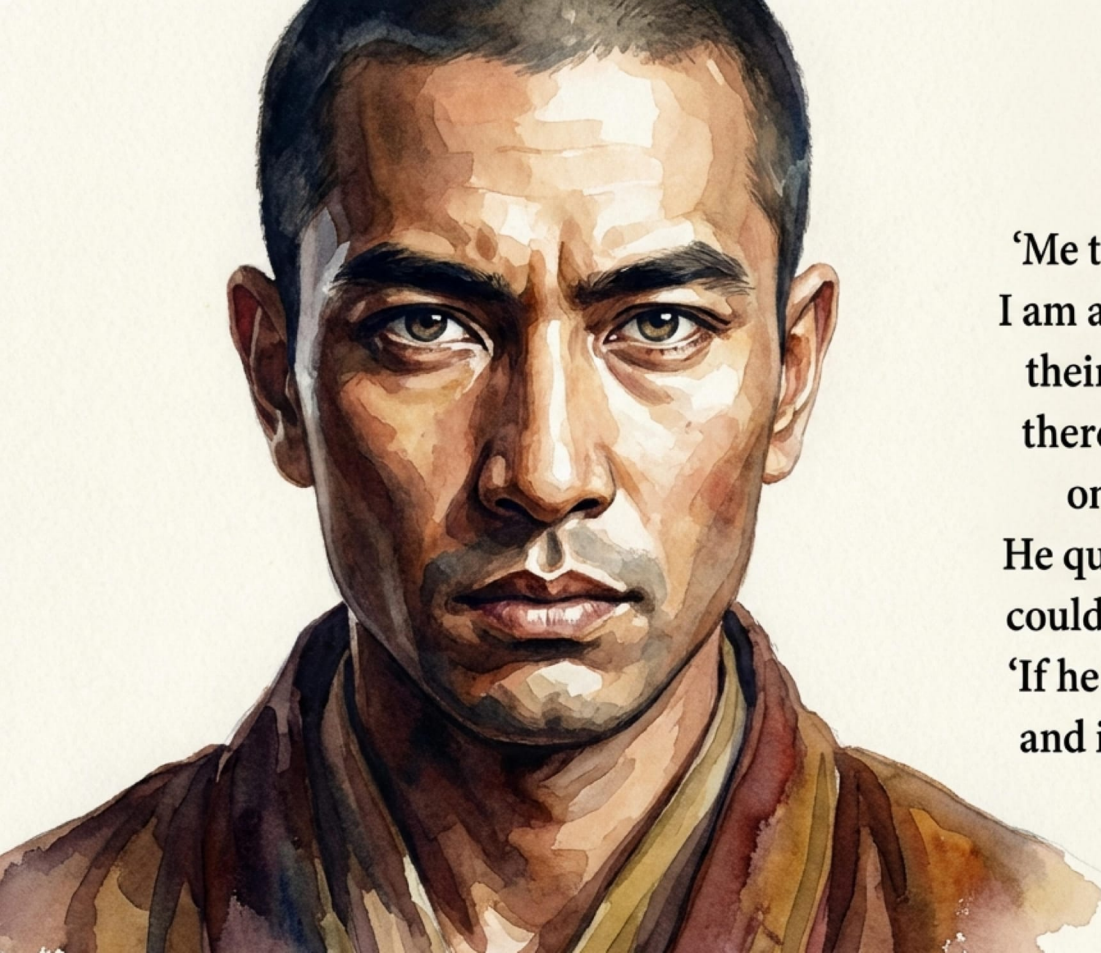
A band of wailing people carried a bier to the riverbank. They set red flame to the wood.
‘Is this the end which comes to all who live?’
‘This is the end,’ said Channa. ‘The high and low, the good and bad, must die.’



‘Oh! suffering world!’

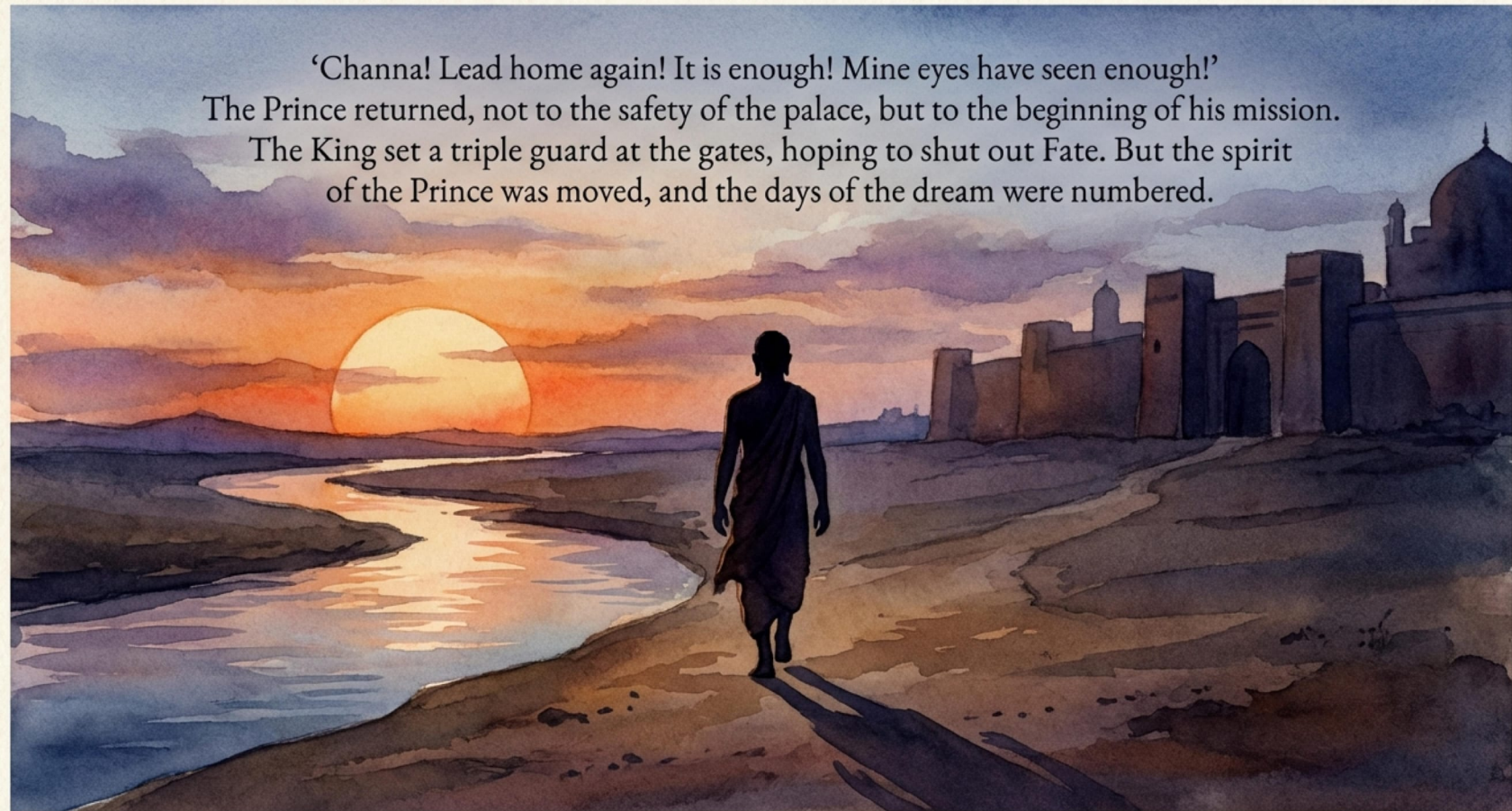
Caught in this common net of death and woe!” Siddhartha cried. He saw the vastness of earth’s agony—how pleasures end in pain, youth in age, and life in hateful death. The veil that blinded him was rent.





‘Me too this lure hath cheated.
I am as all these men who cry upon
their gods and are not heard. Yet
there must be aid! I would not let
one cry whom I could save!’
He questioned how a powerful God
could leave the world so miserable.
‘If he is all-powerful, he is not good;
and if not powerful, he is not God.’

‘Channa! Lead home again! It is enough! Mine eyes have seen enough!’
The Prince returned, not to the safety of the palace, but to the beginning of his mission.
The King set a triple guard at the gates, hoping to shut out Fate. But the spirit
of the Prince was moved, and the days of the dream were numbered.





The Light of Asia

Book the Fourth: The Great Departure

Softly the Indian night sinks on the plains. It is the full moon of Chaitra Shud. The breeze is sweet with mangoes and Asoka buds, and the palace sleeps under the watch of the silver moon. Only the jackals prow!; the world waits.



The Golden Cage

Within the Vishramvan, the moon glitters through fretted lattices, lighting walls of cut pearl-shell and floors of marble. Lamps of chased silver swing from the alabaster roof, casting tender lights and shades over the sleeping court.

Here sleeps the Prince's chosen company, unaware of the world beyond these jewelled walls.

The Illusion of Permanence

They lie in careless grace, limbs part hidden, hair bound with gold and jasmine. One holds a half-eaten rose; another strings a necklace of agate and coral, the final turquoise bead unthreaded in her sleep.

Lulled into pleasant dreams, they wait for dawn to make daylight beautiful, unaware that their Lord is waking.



The Wife's Nightmare

Yasodhara wakes in terror, haunted by three visions: a white bull breaking its stall, a royal banner replaced by a jewelled scroll of strange wisdom, and her marriage bed sinking into the earth.

"My ankle-rings fall off, my golden bangles part... What may such visions mean except I die, or—worse—thou shouldst forsake me?"



“A Greater Love”

Siddhartha comforts her, knowing his departure is the only way to save her from the suffering she fears. He loves her, but he hears the woeful cry of the world calling him.

“I loved and love Yasodhara...
But if my soul yearns sore for
souls unknown, judge how my
high-winged thoughts must
hover here.”





The Universal Call

Yasodhara sleeps. Siddhartha turns to the window. The moon shines by the Crab; the stars stand ranged in silver order, whispering the time has come.

This is the night! Choose thou the way of greatness or the way of good. To reign a King of kings, or wander lone, crownless and homeless, that the world be helped.

The Sorrow of the World



He hears the woeful cry of life. He sees that all—from the gnat to the god—are bound upon the wheel of change. There is no refuge in prayer, for the gods themselves are weak.

If one might save man from his curse, the whole wide world should share the lightened horror of this ignorance. He leaves to find the spark, as ancestors found fire in flint.

The Silent Farewell

He bends a farewell of fond eyes upon his sleeping wife and child. He longs to hold them, but knows that to touch them is to wake them, and to wake them is to fail.

"For never lie I there again! I lay aside my youth, my throne, my joys... and thine arms, sweet Queen! Harder to put aside than all the rest!"





Farewell to the Illusion

He passes the sleeping court—Gunga and Gotami. He sees them not as objects of pleasure, but as transient lives waiting for the axe-stroke of time.

“When the rose dies where are gone its scent and splendour? ... Press heavy, Night! Upon their down-dropped lids, that no tear stay me.”

The Summons

In the gloom of the outer court,
Siddhartha wakes his charioteer.
“Channa, awake! and bring out
Kantaka!”

Channa argues: “Wilt thou ride hence and
let the rich world slip out of thy grasp to hold
a beggar’s bowl?” The Prince answers:
“The kingdom that I crave is more than many
realms . . . Bring me forth Kantaka!”



The Supernatural Escape



*"Be fire and air, my horse! For this night
take I horse to find the truth."*

Kantaka springs forth, his armed hooves
sparkling on the stones. But the earth
remains silent. Spirits pluck red *mohra*-flowers
to strew thick under his tread, and Yakshas
lay magic cloths to muffle the ringing bit.

The Opening of the Gates

The massive gates, which require a hundred men to move and roar like thunder, roll back silently. A wind drowsier than the fields of sleep has lulled the captains and soldiers into a deep slumber.

Siddhartha passes free from the palace into the night.



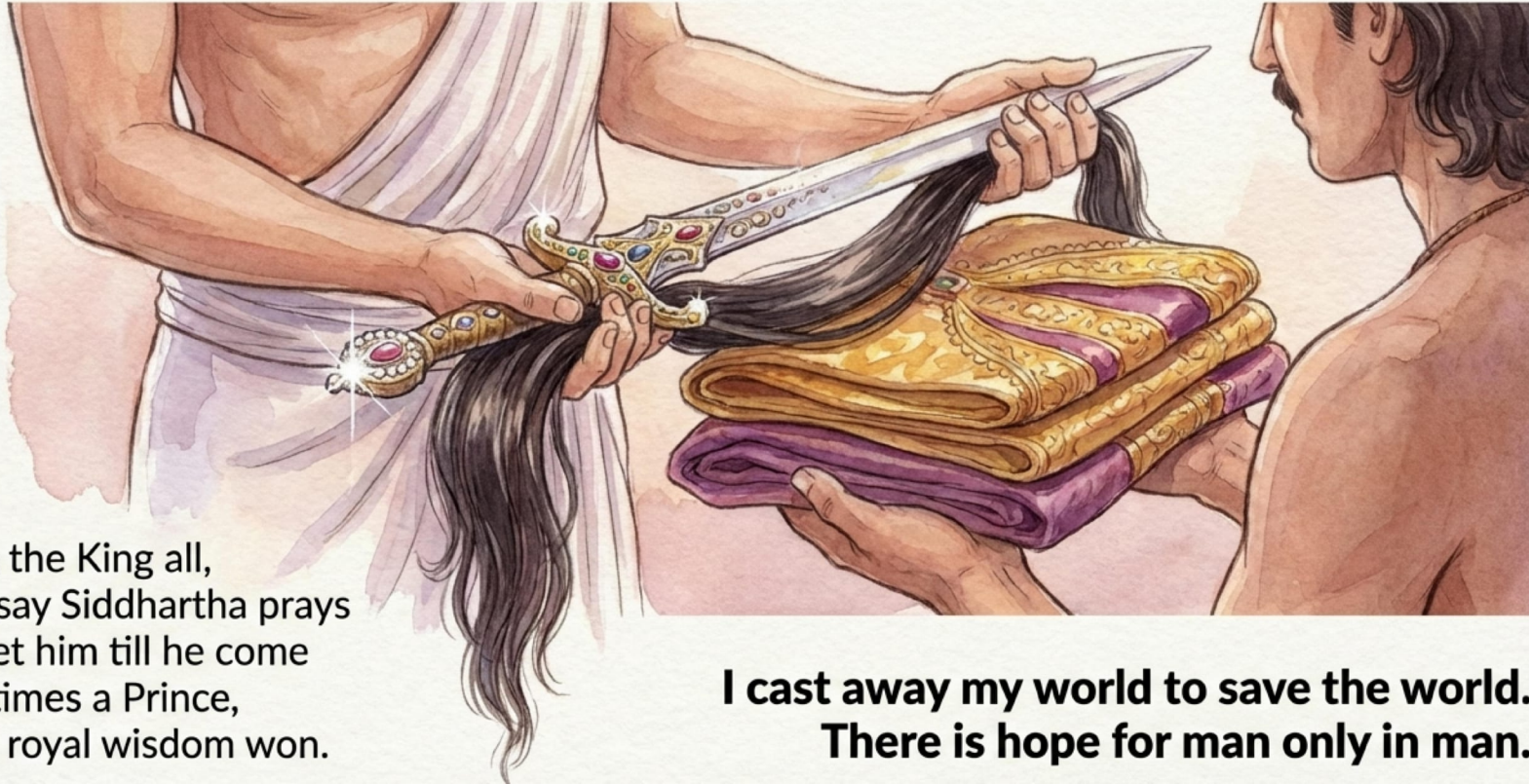
The Morning Star

Dawn breaks over the stream Anoma.
The journey of the Prince ends; the
journey of the Seeker begins.

“He kissed White Kantaka betwixt
the ears, and spake full sweet to
Channa: “This which thou hast done
shall bring thee good ... Be sure I love
thee always for thy love.””



The Great Renunciation



Give the King all,
and say Siddhartha prays
forget him till he come
ten times a Prince,
with royal wisdom won.

**I cast away my world to save the world.
There is hope for man only in man.**

The Light of Asia

Book the Fifth

Round Rajagriha, five fair hills guard King Bimbisara's sylvan town. Here, Baibhāra is green with lemon-grass; shadowy Tapovan mirrors black rocks; and eastward rises Ratnagiri, the Hill of Gems.

A winding track, paved with footworn slabs, leads past milk-white veins of rock and flats of jungle-flowers. Tread softly here. The shoulder of the mountain overhangs a cave canopied by wild figs—a spot more dear and hallowed than any on this spacious earth.



Here Lord Buddha sat
the scorching summers through,
and the driving rains.

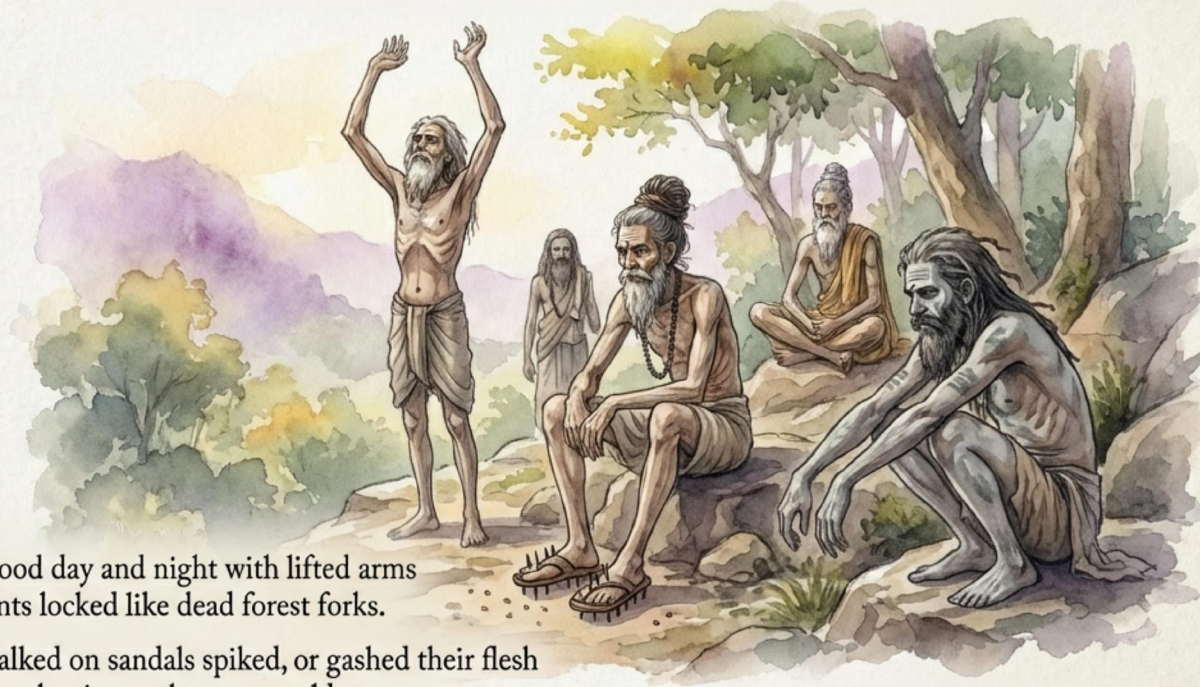
Wearing the yellow robe,
eating the scanty meal
of the beggar, he subdued
that fair body born for bliss
with fast and search intense.

So motionless he mused,
the timid quail led her brood
between his feet.
He noted not the blazing sun
nor the throb of drums
in the busy town below.

He sat wrapped in the keen
unravelling of the threads
of thought.



Midway on Ratnagiri, a gaunt and mournful band dwelt apart.
These Yogis hold the body foe to soul, a beast to be tamed with bitter pain.



Some stood day and night with lifted arms
until joints locked like dead forest forks.

Some walked on sandals spiked, or gashed their flesh
with flints, hoping such woes would purge
sin's dross and wing the soul for glorious spheres.

Stronger to suffer than Hell is to harm.

“Much-suffering sir,” the Prince asked.
“Wherefore add ye ills to life which is so evil?”
The Sage replied: “Pain purchases the larger joys.”



“Yon cloud,” the Prince replied, “rose from the sea.
It falls in rain, flows to the river, and returns to the sea.
If ye buy heaven with blood in hell’s hard market,
when the bargain is through, the toil begins again.
Will ye, for love of soul, dismantle this fair house of the body,
whose windows give us light to find the better road?”

“Oh, flowerets of the field!” Siddhartha said. “Who turn your tender faces to the sun—none of ye miss perfect living, none of ye despoil your happy beauty.”

“The palms rise eager to drink the wind; the parrots and doves dwell merry in the trees.”

“Only man, who slays himself, deems to strain for better by foregoing needs. Wisdom, nursed on blood, comes forth in self-tormentings.”



While the Master spake, the dust of
pattering feet blew down.
Herdsman drove a flock of goats and
sheep—a sacrifice for King Bimbisara.



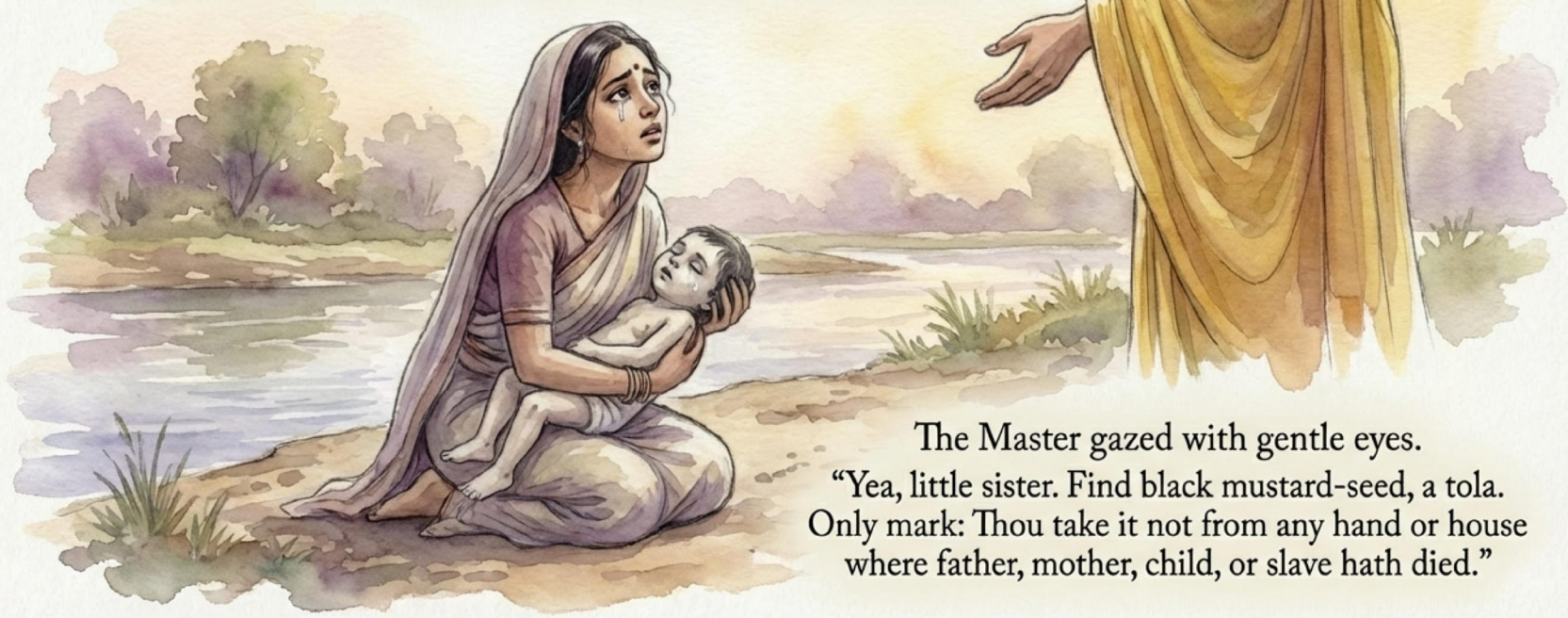
A lame lamb toiled behind, bleeding. Full tenderly,
the Bodhisatta took the limping creature upon his neck.

“Poor woolly mother, be at peace!
Whither thou goest I will bear thy care.

’Twere all as good to ease one beast of grief as sit and
watch the sorrows of the world in yonder caverns.”

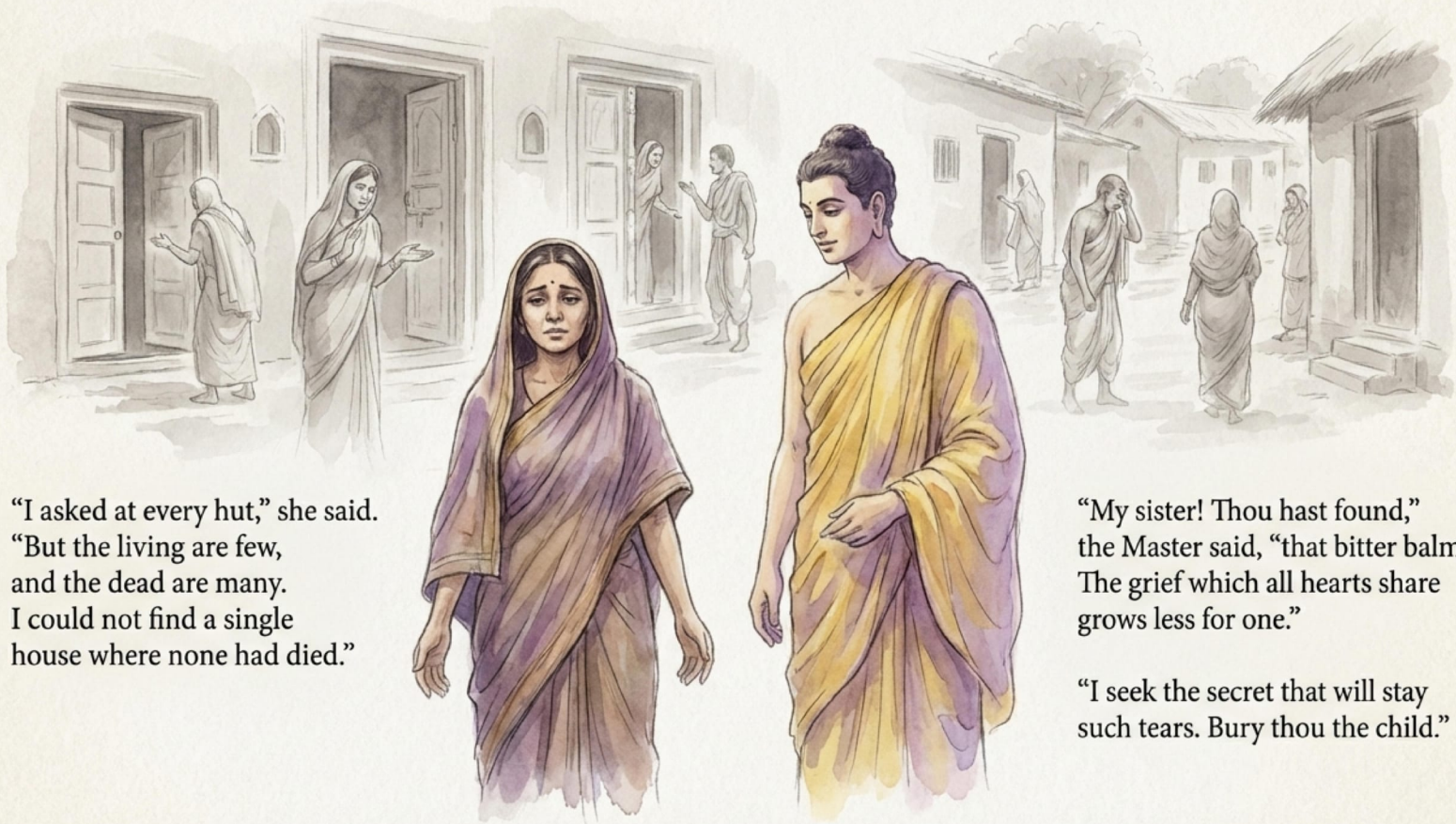
A woman saluted him, bending low.

“Lord! My child played with a snake, and now he is pale and still. They say you are a holy man. Pray tell me what medicines might bring the light back to his eyes?”



The Master gazed with gentle eyes.

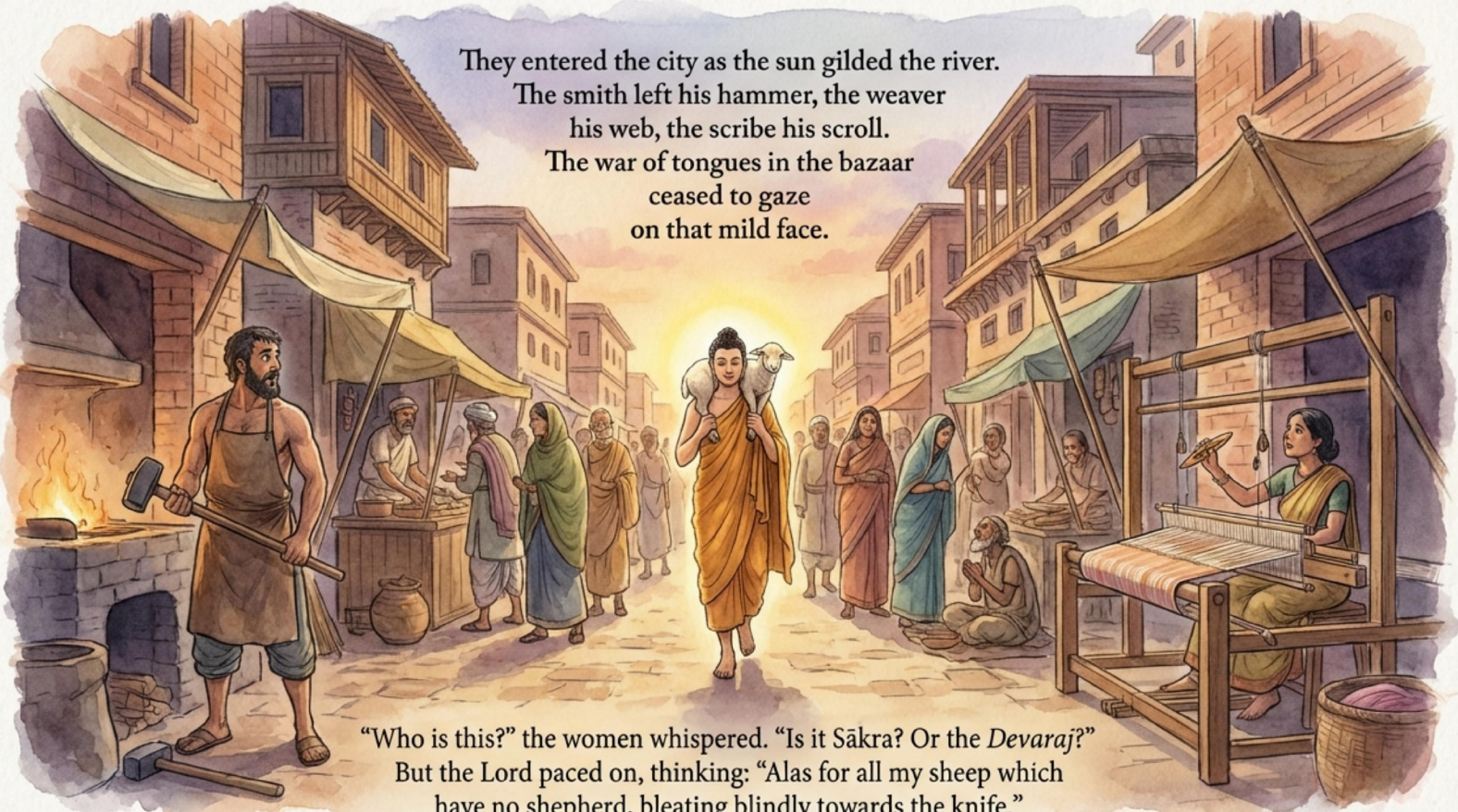
“Yea, little sister. Find black mustard-seed, a tola. Only mark: Thou take it not from any hand or house where father, mother, child, or slave hath died.”



“I asked at every hut,” she said.
“But the living are few,
and the dead are many.
I could not find a single
house where none had died.”

“My sister! Thou hast found,”
the Master said, “that bitter balm.
The grief which all hearts share
grows less for one.”

“I seek the secret that will stay
such tears. Bury thou the child.”



They entered the city as the sun gilded the river.
The smith left his hammer, the weaver
his web, the scribe his scroll.
The war of tongues in the bazaar
ceased to gaze
on that mild face.

"Who is this?" the women whispered. "Is it Sākra? Or the *Devaraj*?"
But the Lord paced on, thinking: "Alas for all my sheep which
have no shepherd, bleating blindly towards the knife."

The King's Hall of Offering

The King stood in his hall.

Brahmans muttered
mantras,
feeding the fire with
ghee and spices.

A slow, thick,
scarlet streamlet
smoked and ran.



A spotted goat lay bound
with *munja* grass,
its throat stretched.

A priest murmured,
*'This, dread gods,
cometh as the crown.
Let the King's sins be
laid upon this goat,
and let the fire
consume them.'*

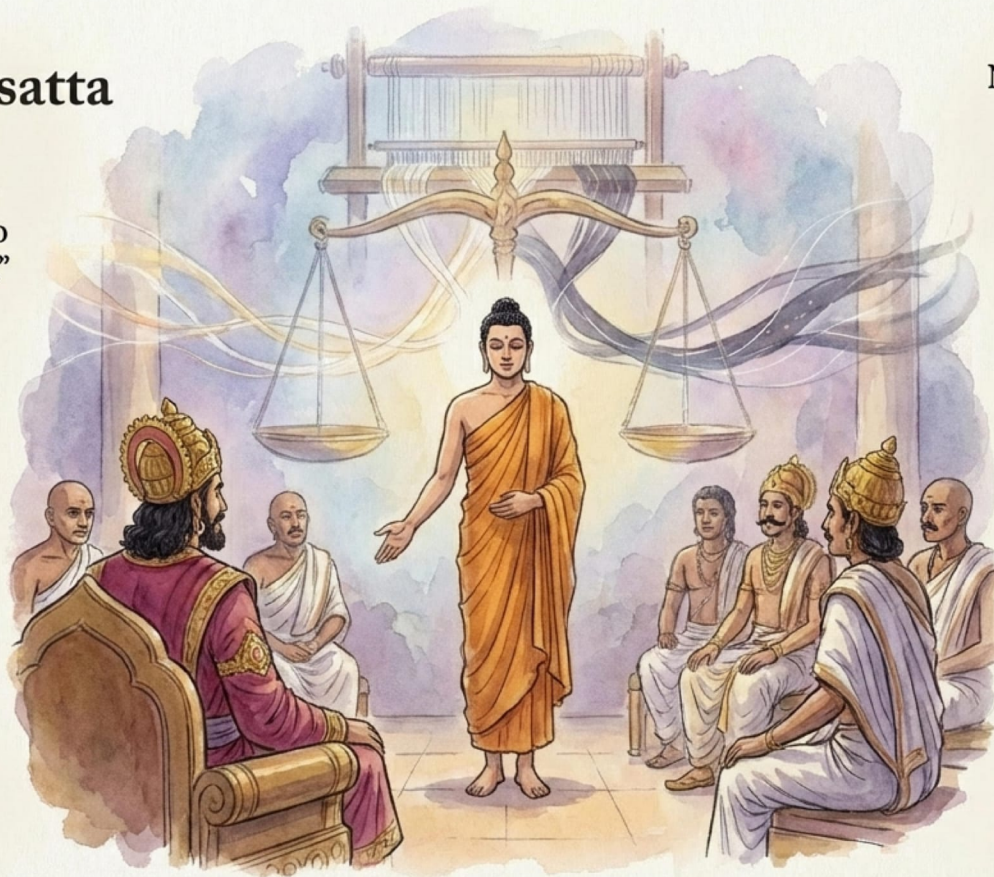


“Let him not strike, great King!”

“Buddha softly loosed the victim’s bonds, none staying him, so great his presence was. Then he spake of life, which all can take but none can give. Life, which all creatures love and strive to keep, wonderful, dear, and pleasant unto each, even to the meanest.”

The Bodhisatta

“Man, who prays for
mercy, is merciless to
those who trust him.”



Nor shall one wash his
spirit clean by blood.

Each stands alone,
reckoning with the
fixed arithmetic
of the universe,
which meteth
good for good and
ill for ill.

Measure for
measure—watchful,
aware, implacable,
unmoved.
Making all
futures fruits of
all the pasts.

In an ancient age, I spied a starving tigress, her dugs milkless, ready to eat her own cubs.
I thought: 'If I feed her, who shall lose but I?'



I hurled myself to earth, that willing victim. The great cat's burning breath mixed with the last sigh of fearless love. How can love lose doing of its kind, even to the uttermost?

The priests drew down
their garments over
hands crimsoned with
slaughter.

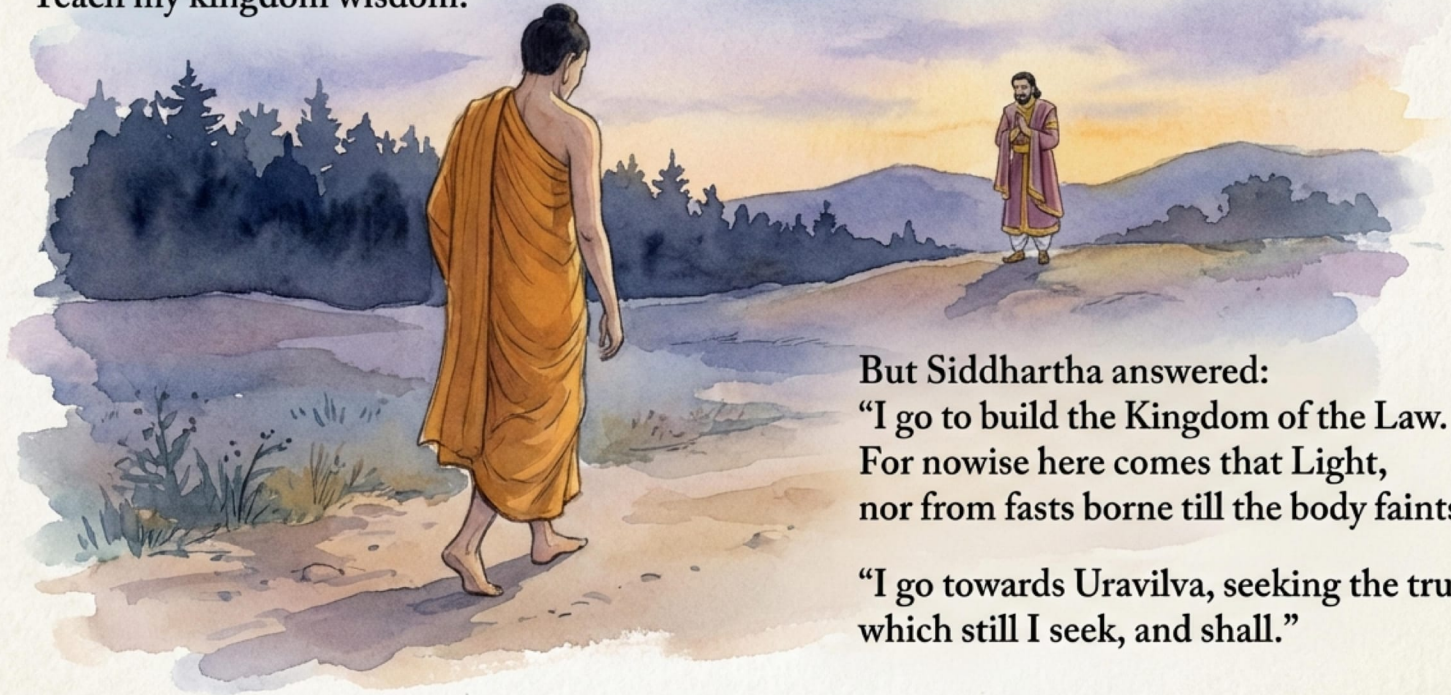
The King bowed.
The might of
gentleness
conquered them.



A decree passed
through the land,
graved on rock
and column:

“Henceforth none
shall spill the
blood of life,
seeing that
knowledge grows,
and life is one,
and mercy cometh
to the merciful.”

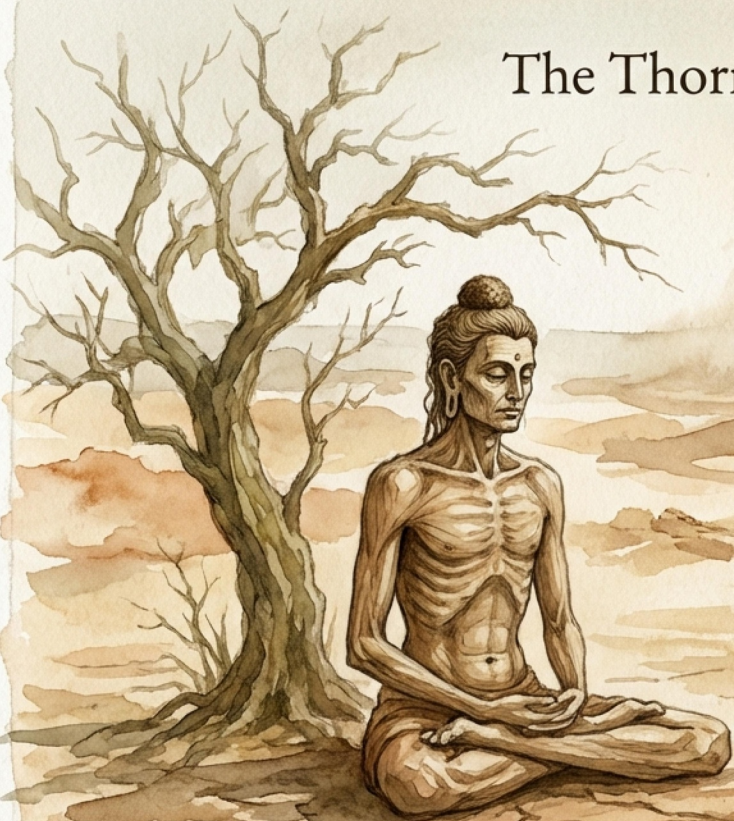
King Bimbisara prayed:
"Sojourn with me!
Teach my kingdom wisdom."



But Siddhartha answered:
"I go to build the Kingdom of the Law.
For nowise here comes that Light,
nor from fasts borne till the body faints."

"I go towards Uravilva, seeking the truth;
which still I seek, and shall."

The Thorny Waste of Uruvela



North-west of the Thousand Gardens, by the river Phalgu, the Prince lived in sylvan solitudes. Moon after moon he sat, forgetting food, until his grace faded. His body, worn by stress of soul, lost the thirty-two marks of the Buddha, becoming as dry as a withered leaf.

The Collapse

The limit of endurance is reached. The o'erwrought Prince falls in a deadly swoon, breathless and spent. A shepherd boy, seeing the 'lines of nameless pain,' weaves a bower of boughs to shade the sacred face from the beating sun. Life hangs by a thread.



Universal Kinship

The boy fears his touch will defile the holy man, saying, 'I am a Sudra, and my touch defiles!' But the World-honoured one speaks:



*Pity and need make all flesh kin. There is no caste in blood,
which runneth of one hue. Give me to drink, my brother.*

The Parable of the String

A band of dancers passes, singing to the sitar. The lyrics strike the Prince with the force of revelation. The Prince realizes he has strained the string of life too much.

*The string o'erstretched breaks, and the music flies;
The string o'erslack is dumb, and music dies;
Tune us the sitar neither low nor high.*



Sujata's Vow

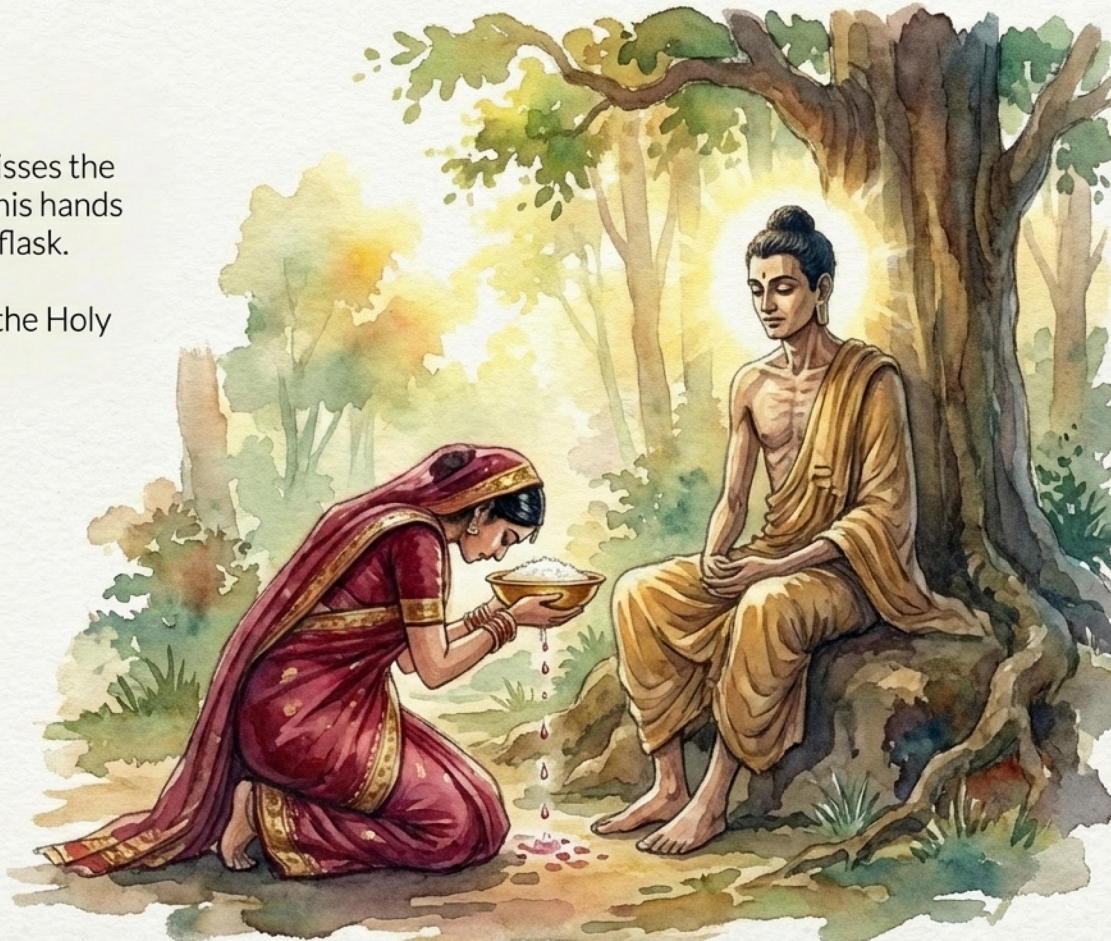
In the village of Senani lives Sujata, loveliest of the dark-eyed daughters of the plain. Having vowed an offering to the Wood-God for the birth of her son, she now approaches the grove. She carries a golden bowl of 'plenteous, delicate' food—milk-rice boiled with sandalwood and fine spice.



The Mistaken God

Thinking him divine, Sujata bows and kisses the earth. She pours the snowy curds into his hands and drops attar of roses from a crystal flask.

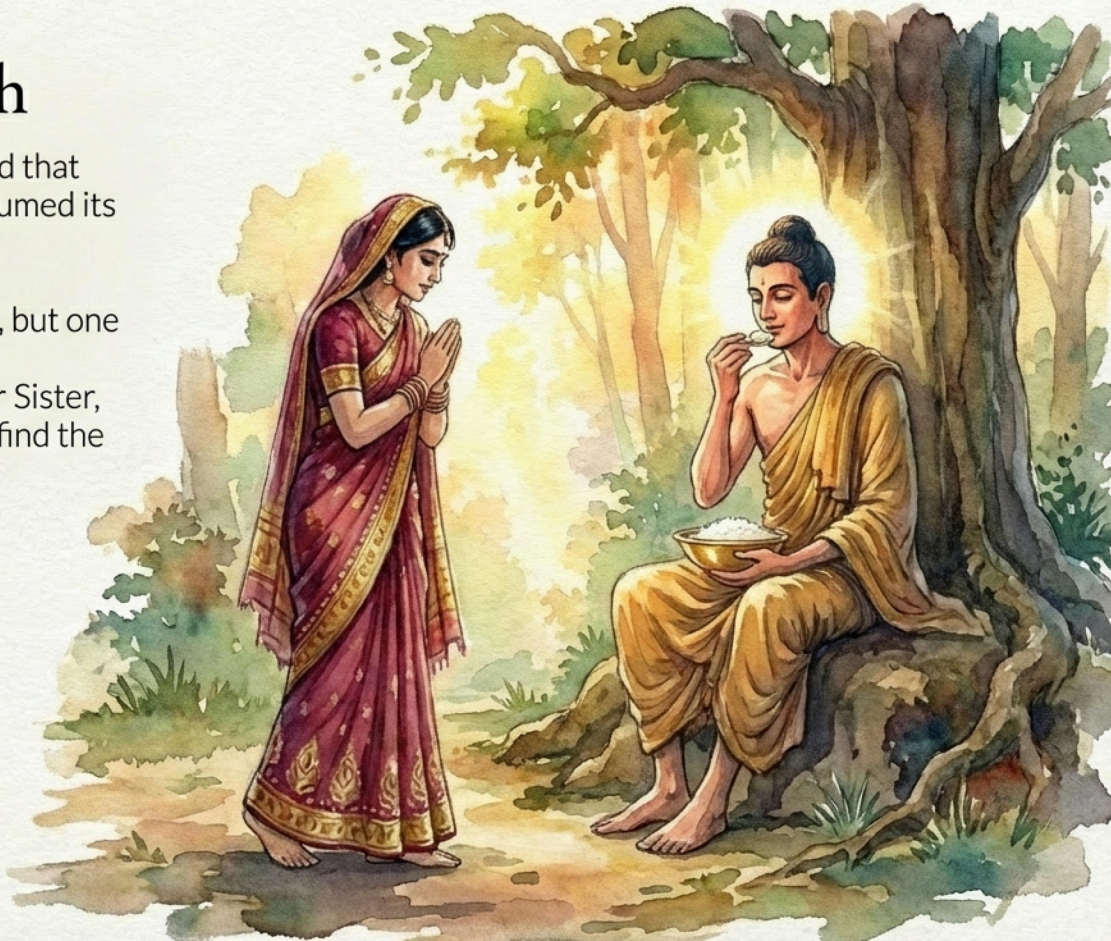
“Art thou indeed the God? Would that the Holy One accept these poor gifts.”



The Gift of Strength

So wondrous was the virtue of the food that strength and life returned; his spirit plumed its wings anew.

“Thou hast helped me who am no God, but one thy Brother... seeking that light which somewhere shines. This pure food, fair Sister, hath restored the strength needed to find the Truth.”



The Approach to the Tree

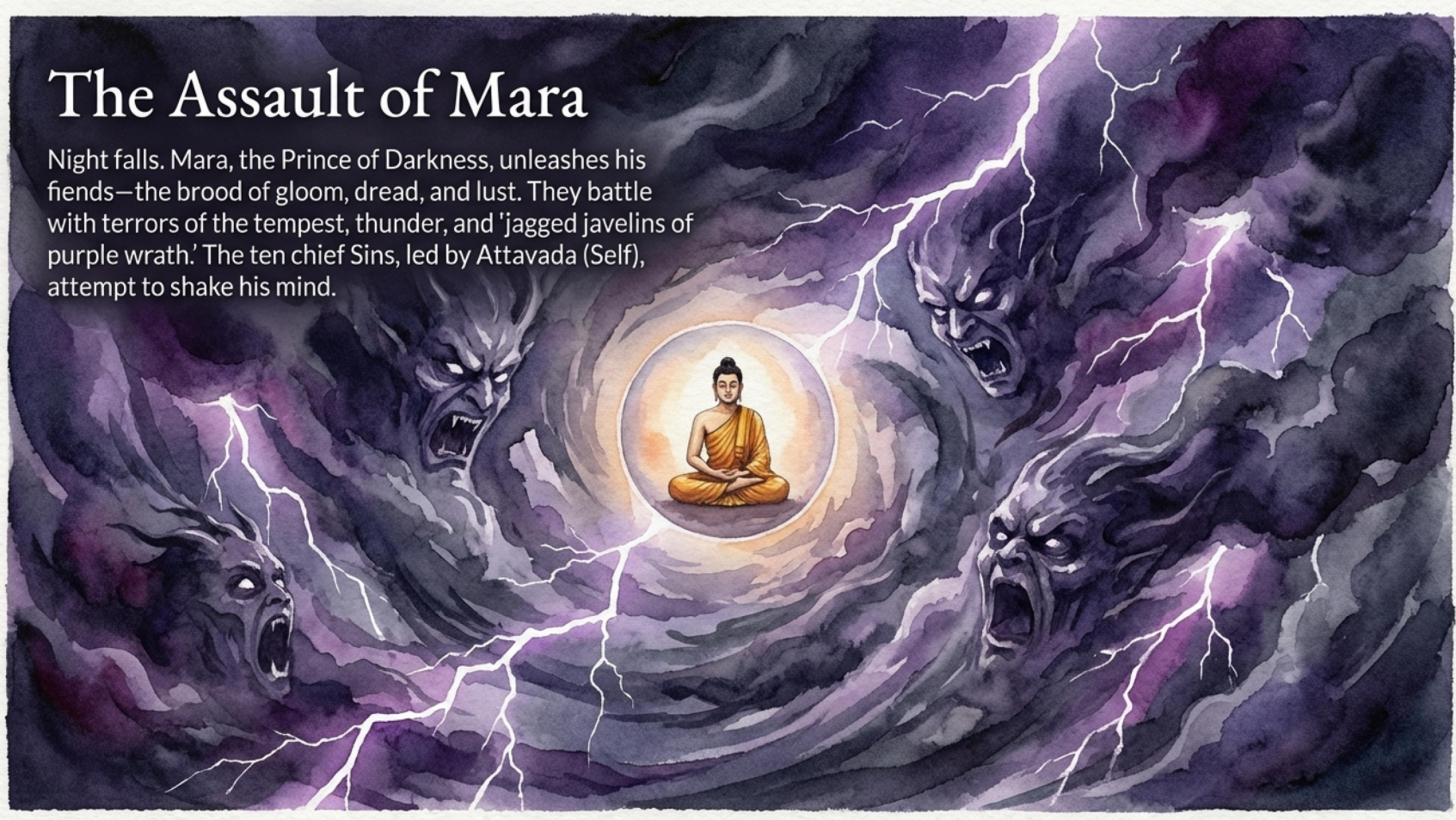
He wends unto the Tree of Wisdom. The conscious earth worships with a sudden flush of flowers. Voices of earth and air join in one song:

“King and high Conqueror!
thine hour is come.”



The Assault of Mara

Night falls. Mara, the Prince of Darkness, unleashes his fiends—the brood of gloom, dread, and lust. They battle with terrors of the tempest, thunder, and 'jagged javelins of purple wrath.' The ten chief Sins, led by Attavada (Self), attempt to shake his mind.



The Temptation

Mara changes tactics from fear to desire.
A shape, fairest and stateliest, comes forth
wearing the guise of sweet Yasodhara.

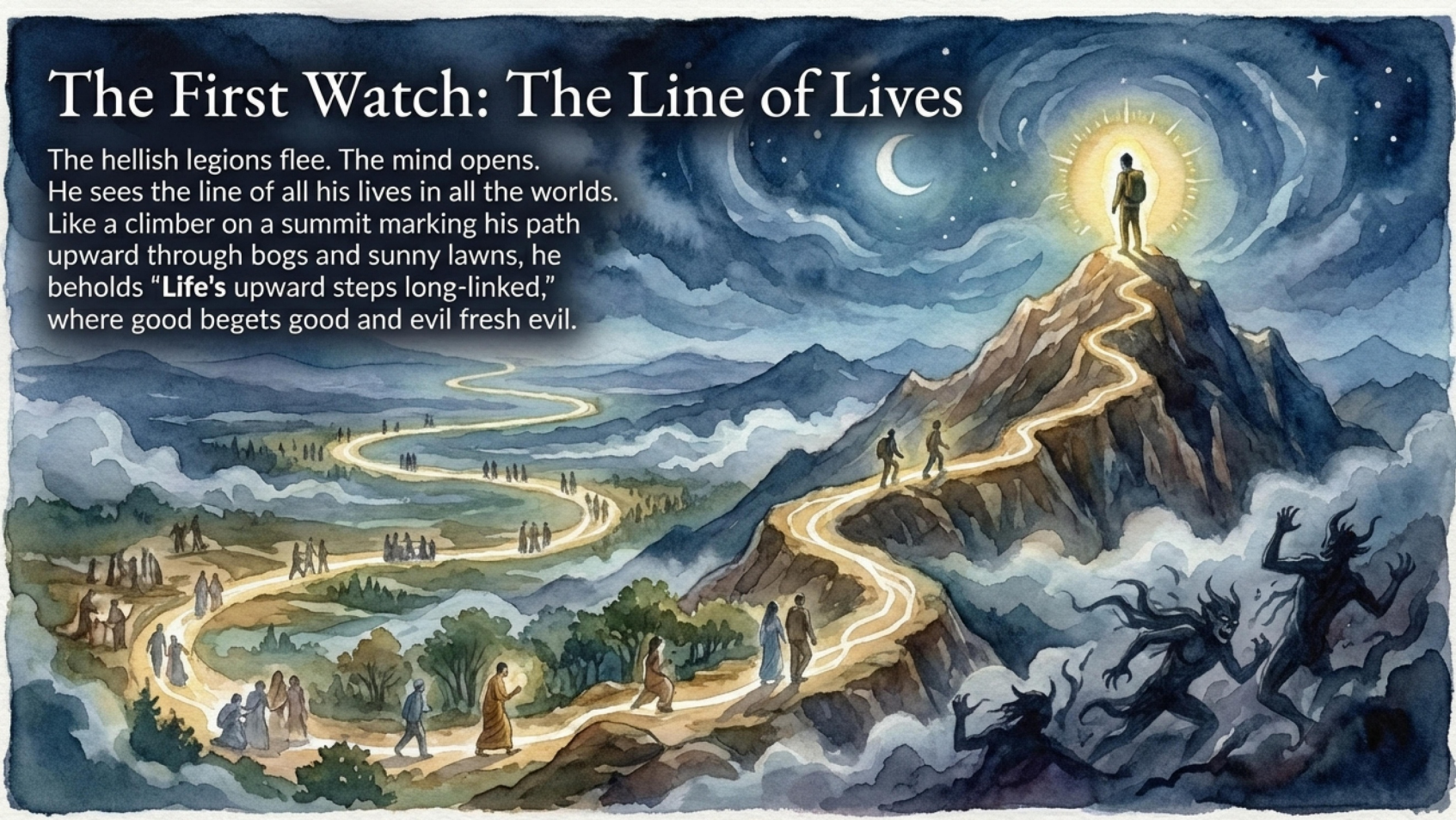
"My Prince! I die for lack of thee...
Am I not she thou lovedst?"

The Prince replies:
"Fair and false Shadow!
Melt to thy void again!"



The First Watch: The Line of Lives

The hellish legions flee. The mind opens.
He sees the line of all his lives in all the worlds.
Like a climber on a summit marking his path
upward through bogs and sunny lawns, he
beholds "**Life's** upward steps long-linked,"
where good begets good and evil fresh evil.



The Middle Watch: Cosmic Vision

He attains cosmic insight. He sees system on system, the 'silver islands of a sapphire sea,' moving in restless tides of change. He perceives the Law of Karma—the Power which builds and unbuilds, ruling all things according to virtue, beauty, and use.



The Fourth Watch: The Truths

The secret of Sorrow is opened:
The Noble Truths. He sees how *Avidya*
(Delusion) breeds *Sankhara* (Tendency),
leading to Name and Form, ending in
Trishna (Craving).

"Who is wise tears from his soul this
Trishna... and life glides to nameless quiet,
nameless joy."



The Dawn of Buddhahood

The Dawn springs with Buddh's victory!
The 'Herald-star' fades as brighter bars of
rosy gleam shoot across the grey. The
Light turns the tears of Night to joyous
joyous gems. Far and near, an unknown
peace spreads; the slayer hides his knife,
and the dying smile.



The Victory Verse

Many a house of life hath held
me—seeking ever him who wrought
these prisons of the senses...

But now, Thou builder of this
tabernacle—thou! I know thee!

Broken thy house is,
and the ridge-pole split!
Safe pass I thence—deliverance to obtain.



The Return to Kapilavastu

Based on Book the Seventh of *The Light of Asia*.

The story of a father's grief, a wife's devotion,
and the King who met a Beggar.





Seven Years of Silence

Sorrow dwelt with King Suddhodana,
lacking the speech and presence of his son.

Sorrow sat with sweet Yasodhara,
widowed of her living Lord.

The garden streams, once mirrors for their
clinging hands, now reflected only her wan
lids and tears.



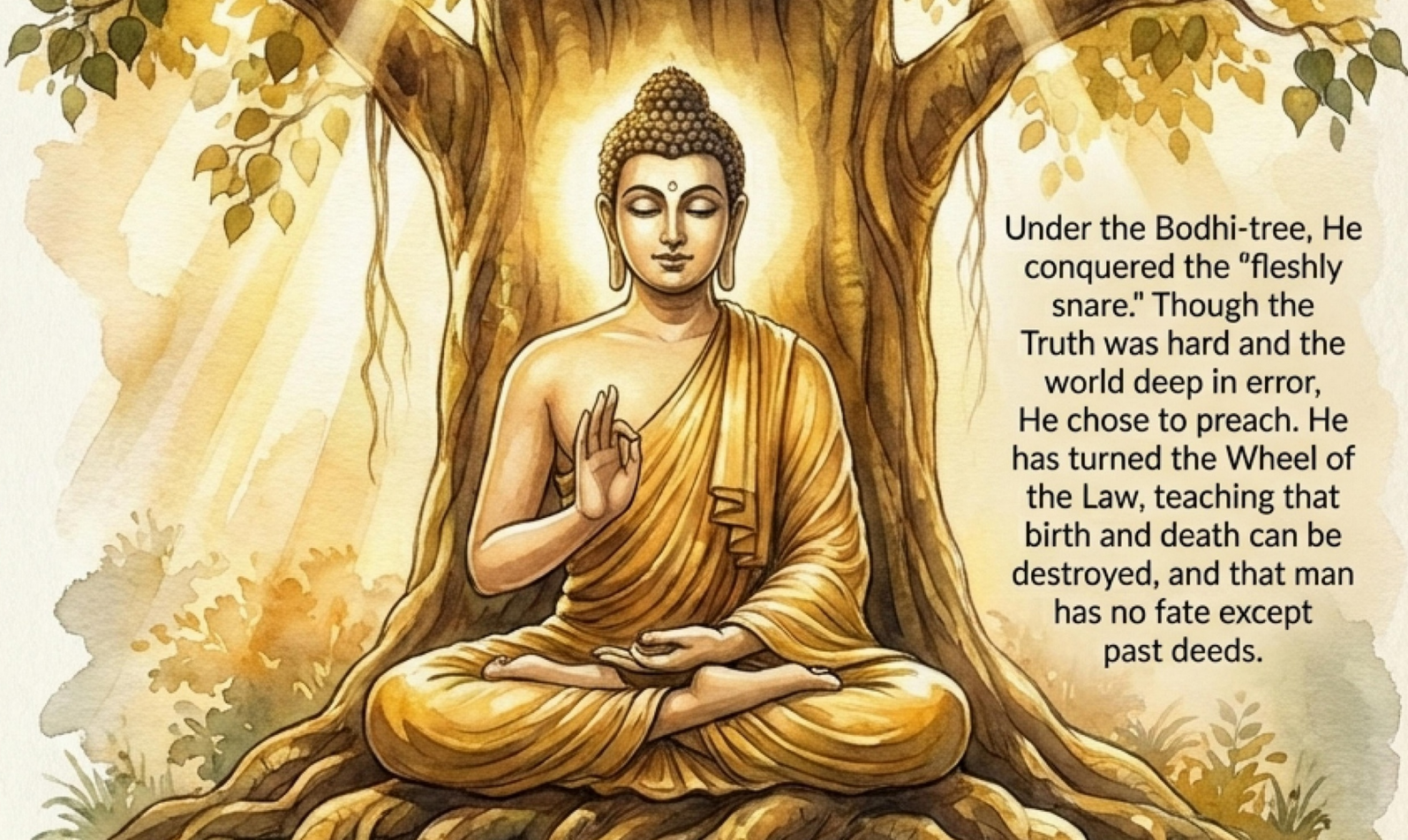
Tidings from the South

Merchants from Hastinpūr brought
treasures of far-off peoples, but they
brought that which beggared all gold:
News.

They had seen Him face to face—not
as a Prince lost, but as a
World-Honoured Teacher found.

“He journeyeth hither,” they said.





Under the Bodhi-tree, He
conquered the "fleshly
snare." Though the
Truth was hard and the
world deep in error,
He chose to preach. He
has turned the Wheel of
the Law, teaching that
birth and death can be
destroyed, and that man
has no fate except
past deeds.

The Forgotten Mission

Nine times the King sent well-mounted lords to say:
"Come to thy Throne."

But each messenger, entering the Bamboo Garden,
hung heart-caught upon the Master's speech.

Like bees drowning in nectar, they forgot the King
and the quest, taking the yellow robe instead.





The Faithful Friend

Suddhodana sent Udayi, the Prince's playmate of old.

Plucking wool from the grove to seal his hearing against the enchanting Law, Udayi survived the "lofty peril" of the place.

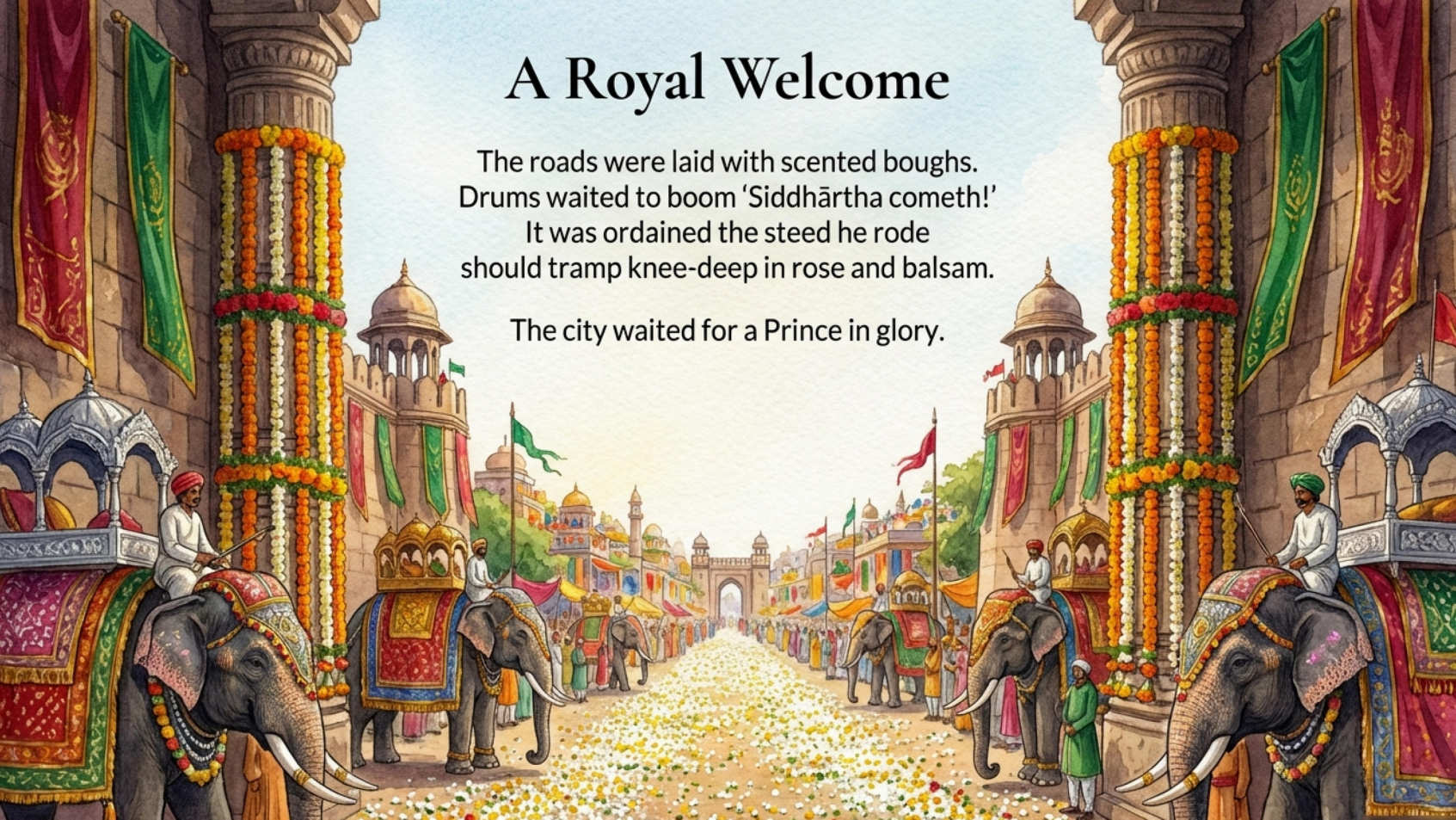
He delivered the message:

"It is my duty as it was my will," the Lord replied.
"I take the way forthwith."

A Royal Welcome

The roads were laid with scented boughs.
Drums waited to boom 'Siddhārtha cometh!'
It was ordained the steed he rode
should tramp knee-deep in rose and balsam.

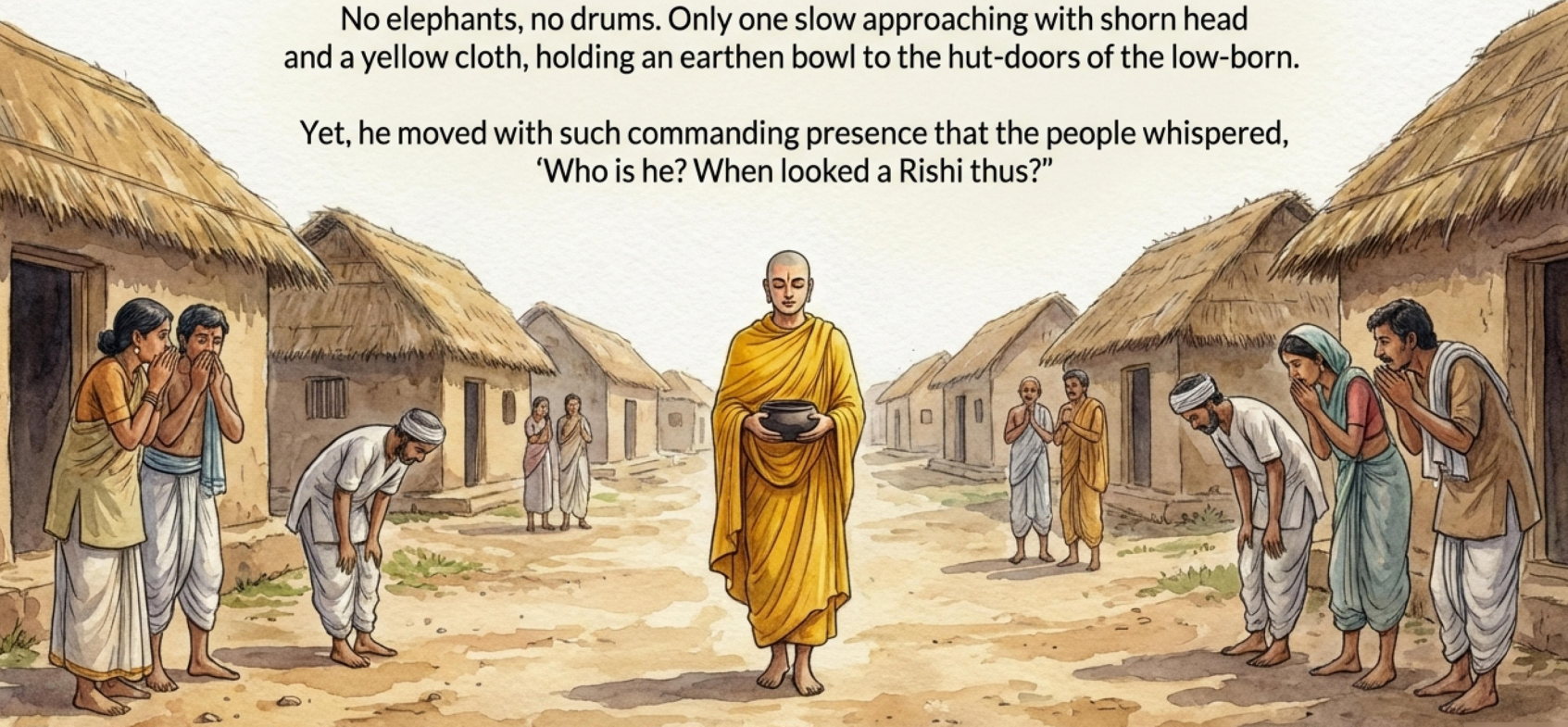
The city waited for a Prince in glory.



The Beggar Prince

No elephants, no drums. Only one slow approaching with shorn head and a yellow cloth, holding an earthen bowl to the hut-doors of the low-born.

Yet, he moved with such commanding presence that the people whispered, 'Who is he? When looked a Rishi thus?'



The Reunion

'Siddhārtha! Lord!' She fell upon his feet and lay.
When asked why he, vowed to quit all passion, suffered such
embrace, the Master said: 'The greater beareth with the lesser
love, so it may raise it unto easier heights.'





The Merchant and the Pearl

"In a past life, as a merchant, I gave my last great pearl to buy grain for thee when famine struck. I spent that pearl to save thy life. Now, I return with a pearl that cannot be spent—the Truth—won from a deeper wave. I left to find the cure for all sorrow."



The Father's Rage

"Hearing his son begged for 'orts' from base-borns, the King's love turned to wrath. He spurred his war-horse through the wondering streets. 'Ends it in this?' he cried. 'That great Siddhārtha steals into his realm wrapt in a clout, craving food of low-borns?'"



A Question of Lineage

"My son! Heir of a hundred thrones! Thou should'st have come with shining spears and tramp of horse. Why is this?"

"My Father," came the reply, "It is the custom of my race."

"Thy race," answered the King, "counteth Kings, but no deed like this."



“The Descent Invisible”

“Not of a mortal line I spake, but of the Buddhas who have been and who shall be. Of these am I, and what they did I do.
Even as a King meets his son in hermit-weeds, the helper of the Worlds bows with lowly love to pay his tender debts.”

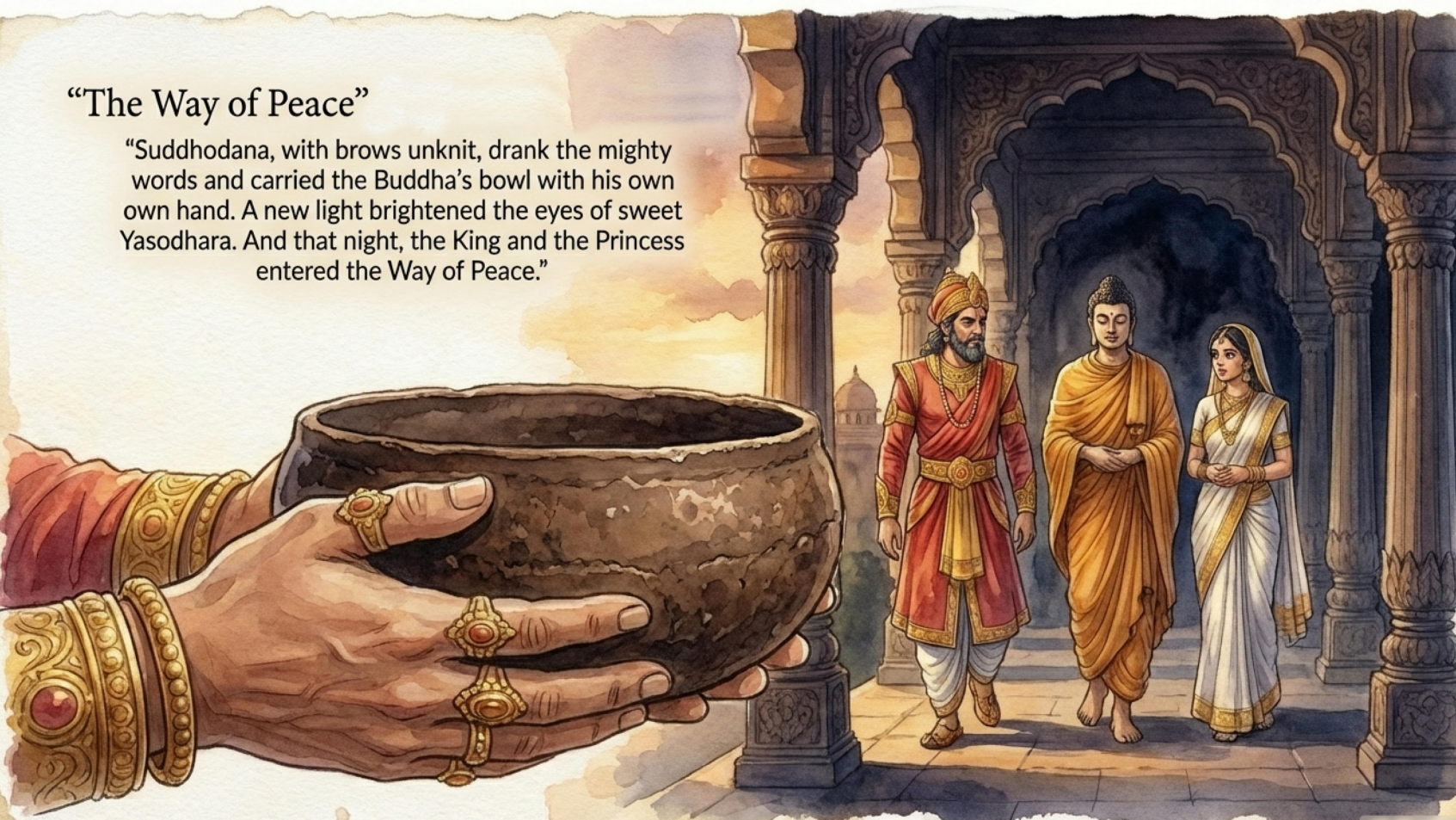
“The First-Fruits of the Treasure”

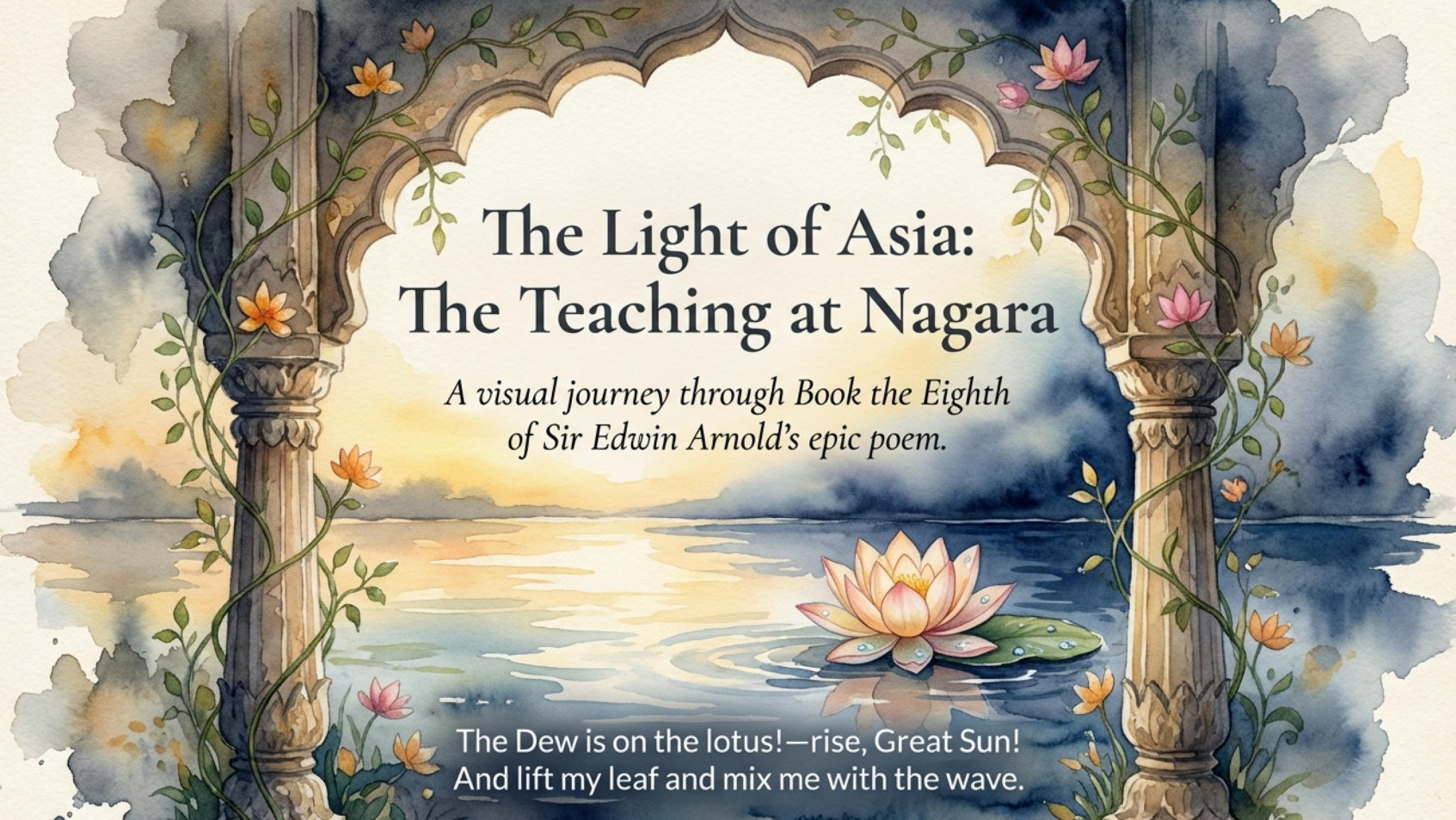
“He proffered the treasure he had won: The Four Noble Truths which hold all wisdom as shores shut the seas. The Eight Right Rules whereby monarch or slave may break from the wheels of life. “This is the path that leads to peace.”



“The Way of Peace”

“Suddhodana, with brows unknit, drank the mighty words and carried the Buddha’s bowl with his own own hand. A new light brightened the eyes of sweet Yasodhara. And that night, the King and the Princess entered the Way of Peace.”





The Light of Asia: The Teaching at Nagara

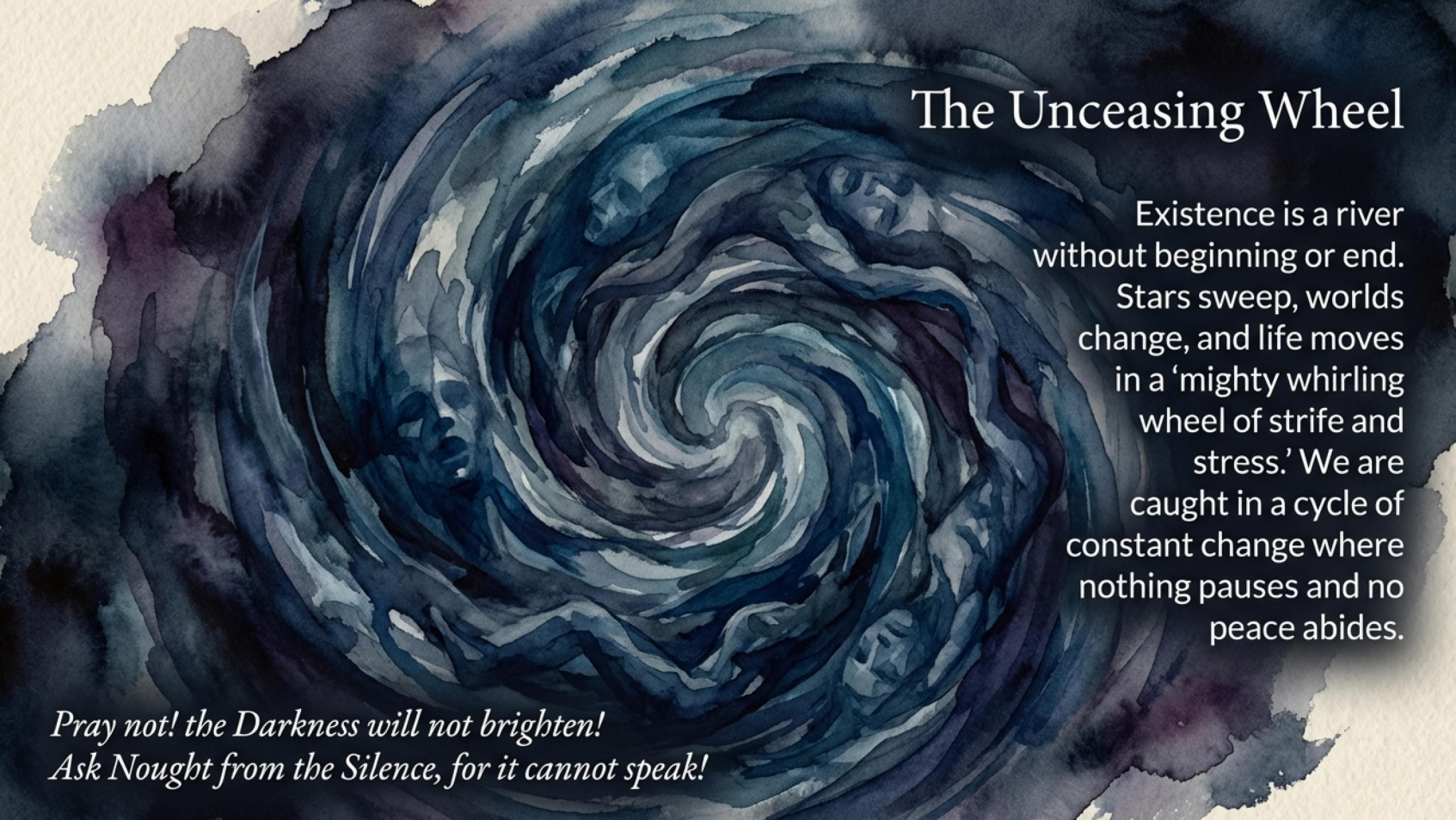
*A visual journey through Book the Eighth
of Sir Edwin Arnold's epic poem.*

The Dew is on the lotus!—rise, Great Sun!
And lift my leaf and mix me with the wave.

The Garden by the River

At the city of Nagara, as the sun sets in an eve of gold and blue, the Buddha reunites with his father and family to deliver the Law. Kings, court chiefs, and the "calm brethren in the yellow garb" gather. Even the animals—tigers, wolves, and doves—sense the "vast embracing love" and break their ancient bond of fear to listen.





The Unceasing Wheel

Existence is a river
without beginning or end.
Stars sweep, worlds
change, and life moves
in a 'mighty whirling
wheel of strife and
stress.' We are
caught in a cycle of
constant change where
nothing pauses and no
peace abides.

*Pray not! the Darkness will not brighten!
Ask Nought from the Silence, for it cannot speak!*

We Are Our Own Makers



*"Each man his prison makes...
What hath been bringeth what shall be."*

No god or devil controls our fate. Deliverance must be sought within. Present joy or pain is the fruit of past actions.

If you sow sesamum, you reap sesamum. If you sow corn, you reap corn. We are the reapers of the things we sowed in past births.

The First Truth: Sorrow

Life, despite its fleeting pleasures, is bound by suffering (Dukkha).

'Ache of the birth,
ache of the helpless
days... ache of the
chill grey years.'

Pleasures are merely
'birds which light and fly.'

Even love ends in the
separation of death, and
the 'vultures pick the
joints of chief and King.'





The Second Truth: The Cause is Desire

Suffering springs from *Trishna* (thirst/craving). It is the fierce clinging to the 'false Self' and the shadows of the material world. This thirst drugs the soul, causing it to chase new deceits and be reborn again into the struggle.

*So grow the strifes and lusts
which make earth's war...
So spread the birān-weed
with its evil root.*

The Third Truth: The Ceasing of Self

To conquer love of self and
lust of life is to end the strife.

When the 'lie and lust of self'
are purged, the old sad count
is clear.

Sorrow ends because the fuel
that powered the cycle of
rebirth is gone.

*How should lamps flicker
when their oil is spent?*





The Fourth Truth: The Foundation

The Noble Eightfold Path is the road to peace. It is open to all—
'plain for all feet to tread.'

The First Steps:

1. Right Doctrine: Walk in fear of Dharma and heed of Karma.
2. Right Purpose: Goodwill to all; let unkindness die.
3. Right Discourse: Govern the lips; speech should be tranquil and fair.
4. Right Behaviour: Let every act help a merit grow.

Ascent to the Sunlit Snows

The higher roadways are for those who
have 'done with earthly things.'

The Higher Steps:

5. Right Purity: Cleansing the spirit.
6. Right Thought: Intellectual mastery.
7. Right Mindfulness: 'Right Loneliness';
leaving the nest.
8. Right Rapture: Breaking the bonds of
sense.

*The firm soul hastes,
the feeble tarries. All
Will reach the sunlit snows.*



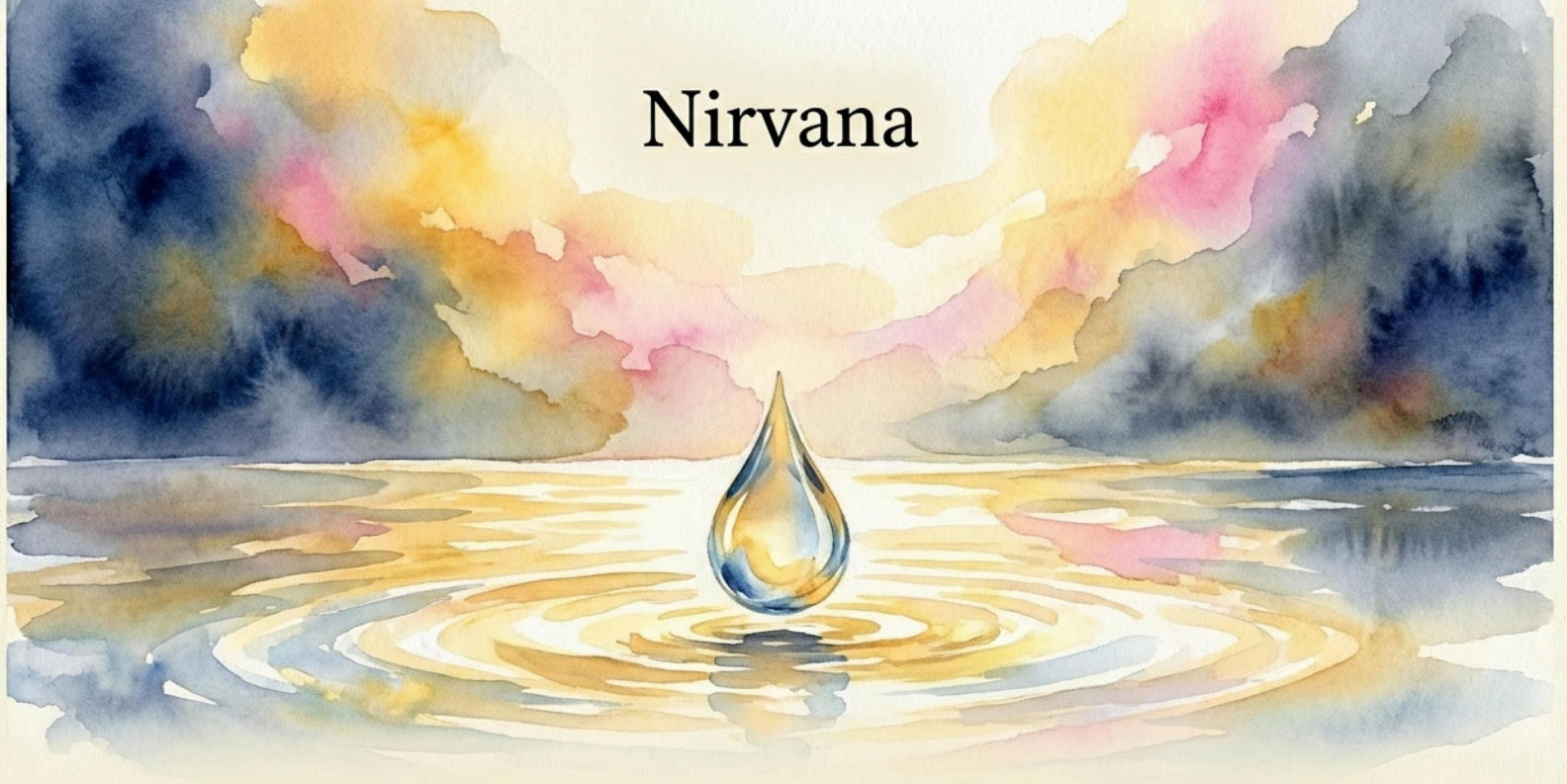


The Four Stages of Progress

The battle against the “Ten Sins” that lie in dust along the path.

1. **Stream-Enterer:** Knows the Truths.
2. **Second Stage:** Free from doubts; will live but one more life.
3. **Third Stage:** Purged of Hatred and Lust; loves all things in perfect peace.
4. **The Holy Ones (Buddhs):** All sins—including Self-Praise, Error, and Pride—are slain. The “Universe grows I.”

Nirvana



It is not annihilation, but the end of separation. It is 'lifeless, timeless bliss.'
If any teach Nirvāṇa is to cease, Say unto such they lie. 'The Dewdrop slips into the shining sea!'
The paradox of being one with Life, yet ceasing to 'be' in a limited form.

The Five Rules of Righteousness

Practical rules for living, more valuable than gems:

1. **Kill not:** For Pity's sake.
2. **Give freely:** Take nothing by greed or force.
3. **Bear not false witness:** Truth is inward purity.
4. **Shun drugs/drinks:** Clear minds need no soma juice.
5. **Touch not thy neighbour's wife:** Avoid unlawful sins of the flesh.



The Householder's Way

For those with “feet too weak to tread the higher road,” there is still a path of merit.

The Six Quarters: Instead of scattering rice to the sky, offer love to:

- Parents (East)
- Teachers (South)
- Wife/Children (West)
- Friends (North)
- Humblest things (Beneath), and Saints/Angels (Above)

Living pure, charitable, and reverent lives creates a “rich harvest” for the next life.



The Order of the Yellow Robe

The foundation of the Sangha—those who “soar with scorn from life’s low vale.”

Monastic Rules:

- **Possessions:** Three cloths (yellow, stitched), a girdle, alms-bowl, and strainer.
- **Discipline:** The Ten Observances, the Three Doors (Body, Speech, Mind), and the Four Meditations.
- **Mission:** To live free from snares of wealth and help the world.



The Refuge

The King bows, asking to be the 'lowest and least.'
Yasodhara asks for the 'Treasure of the Kingdom' for her son Rahula.
From that night, the Light of Asia spread.



**Om mani padme hum, the Sunrise comes!
The Dewdrop slips into the shining sea!**