

The Lights of the Dispensation: The Story of Arahāt Saṅghamittā and Mahinda

A chronicle of the Moriyan lineage, where the violence of conquest yields to the peace of the Dhamma. This is the story of how King Asoka's children became the true heirs of the Buddha.





The Romance at Vedisa

While serving as vice-sovereign in Avanti, Prince Asoka lodged at the house of the merchant Deva. Captivated by daughter's auspicious marks and amiability, he took her as his wife. In Ujjenī, she gave birth to a handsome son, Mahinda, and a daughter, Saṅghamittā.

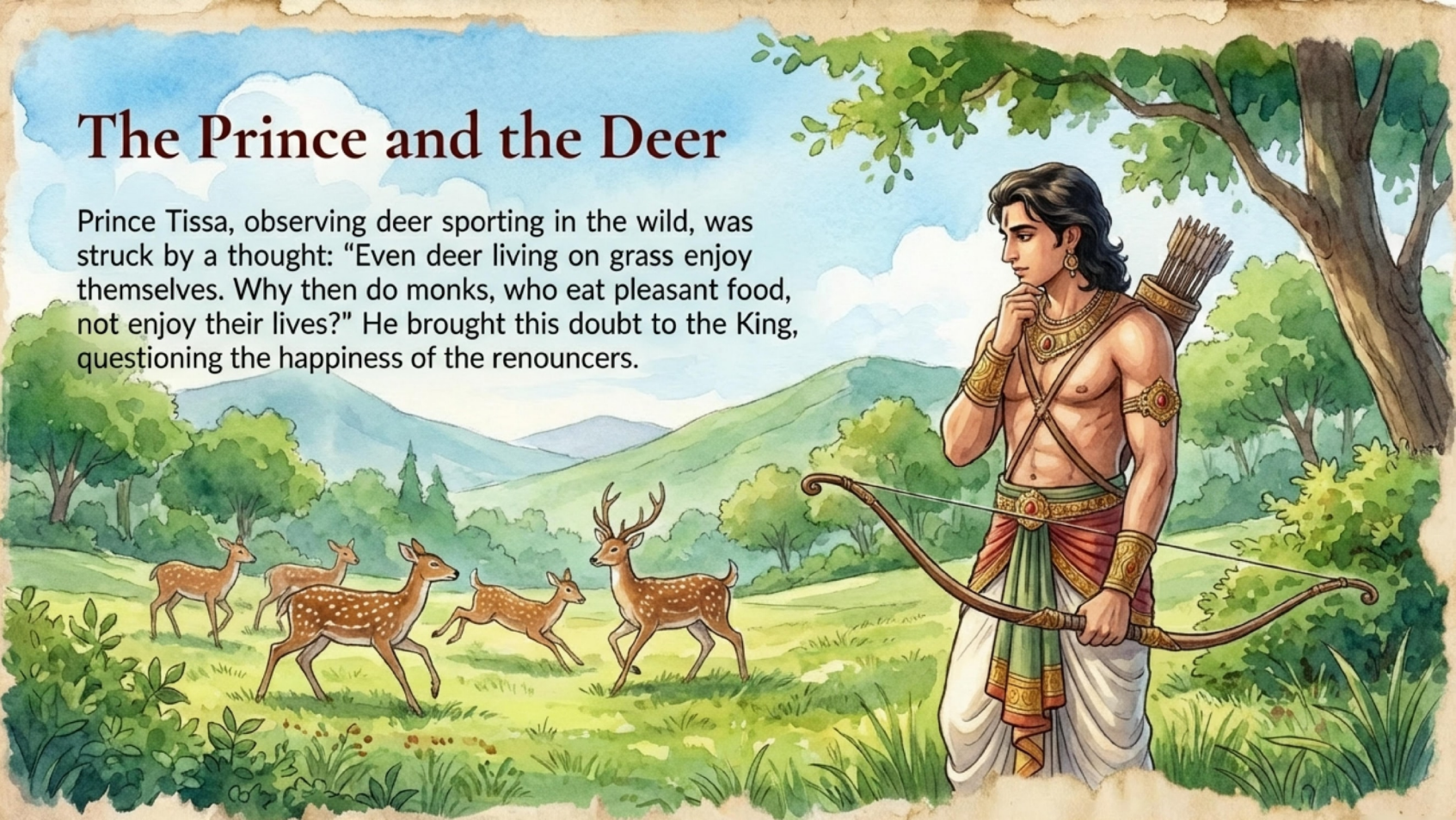


The Price of the Throne

Upon King Bindusāra's death, Asoka returned to Pāṭaliputta. After performing funeral duties, he secured his rule through blood, ordering the murder of ninety-nine half-brothers. He raised the royal canopy over himself, known then not as "Righteous Asoka," but as "Violent Asoka."

The Prince and the Deer

Prince Tissa, observing deer sporting in the wild, was struck by a thought: "Even deer living on grass enjoy themselves. Why then do monks, who eat pleasant food, not enjoy their lives?" He brought this doubt to the King, questioning the happiness of the renouncers.



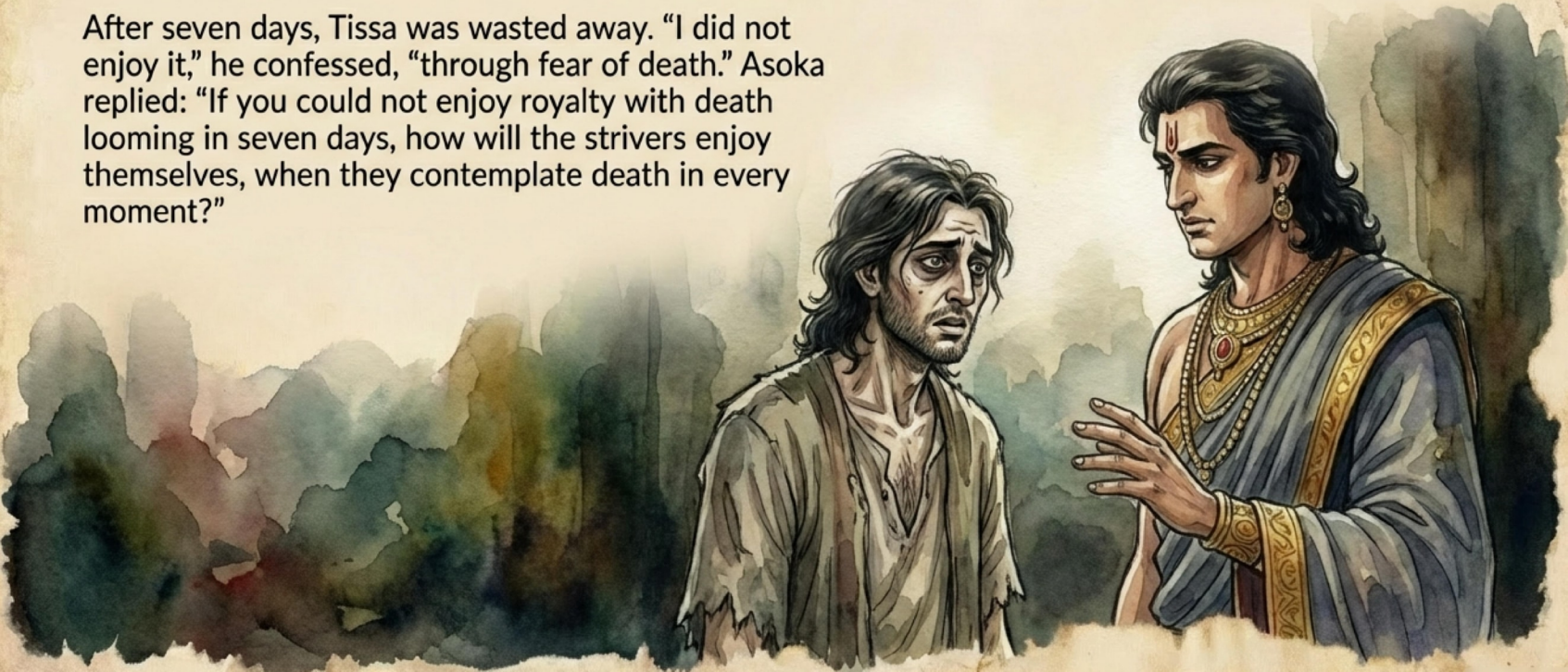


The Sovereign for Seven Days

To teach him, Asoka granted Tissa sovereignty for seven days, with a deadly condition: "Experience sovereignty for seven days, young man; after that, I will kill you." With the fate of the ninety-nine brothers in mind, the threat was absolute.

"The Lesson of Fear"

After seven days, Tissa was wasted away. "I did not enjoy it," he confessed, "through fear of death." Asoka replied: "If you could not enjoy royalty with death looming in seven days, how will the strivers enjoy themselves, when they contemplate death in every moment?"



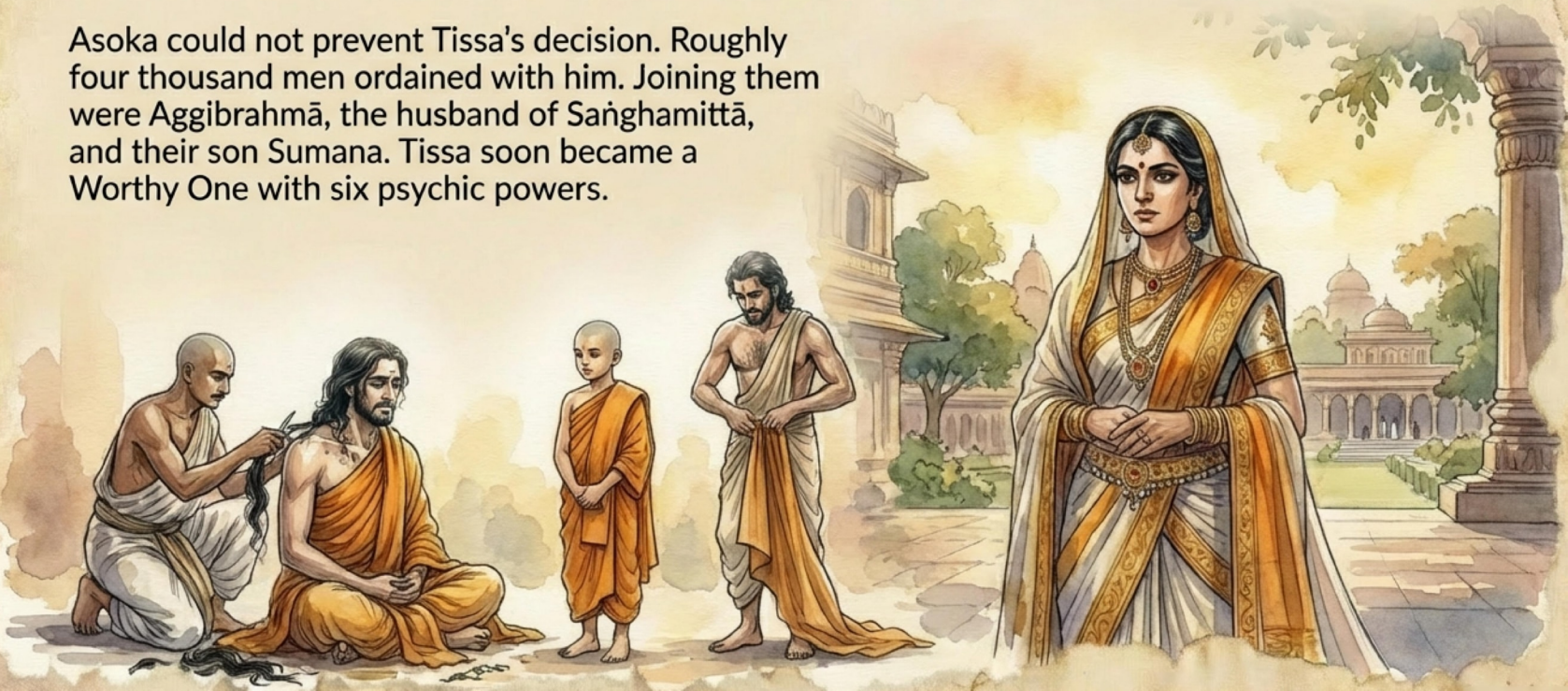


The Flight of the Elder

Tissa later saw the pollutant-free Elder Mahādhammarakkhita. To instill faith, the Elder rose into the sky, hung his robes in the air, and stood on the water. Seeing this psychic power, Tissa resolved: "Today itself I will go forth!"

The Departure of the Kin

Asoka could not prevent Tissa's decision. Roughly four thousand men ordained with him. Joining them were Aggibrahmā, the husband of Saṅghamittā, and their son Sumana. Tissa soon became a Worthy One with six psychic powers.



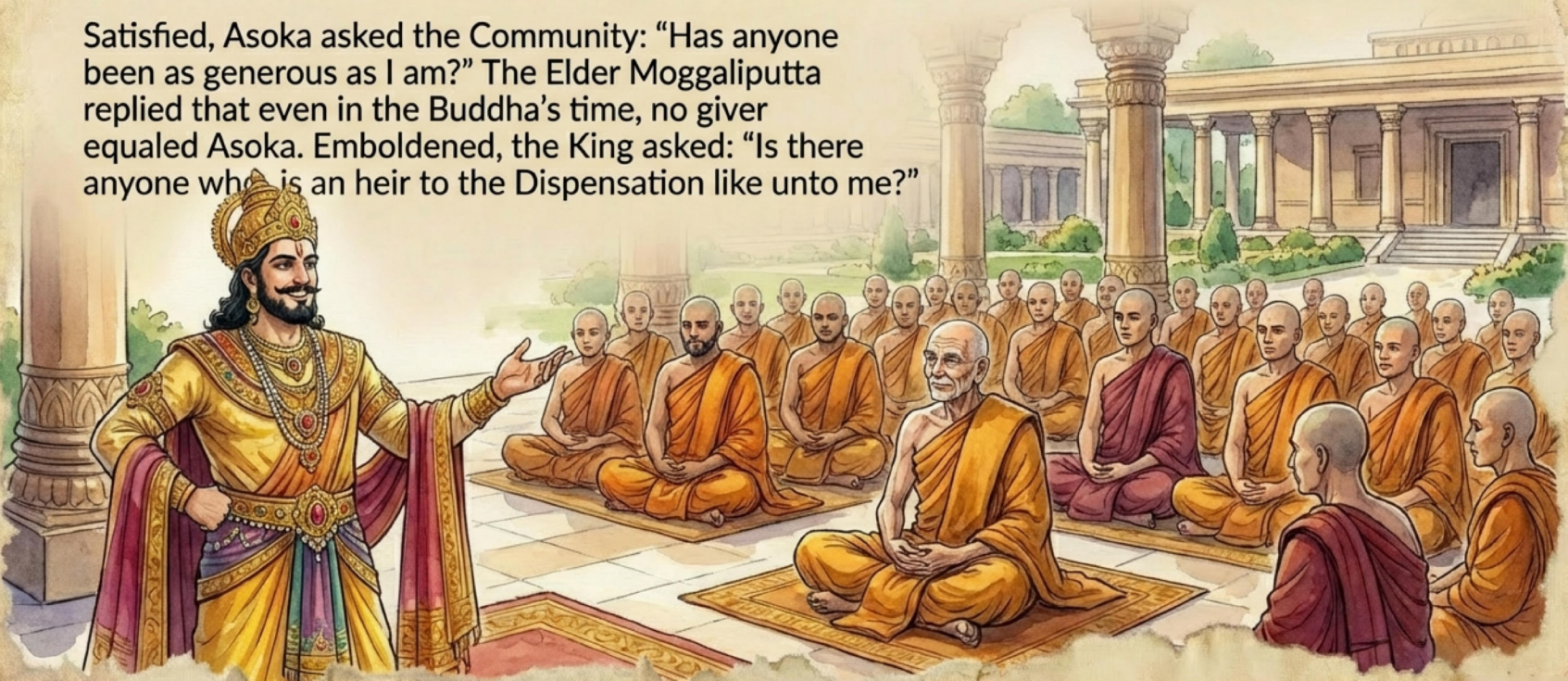
The 84,000 Monasteries

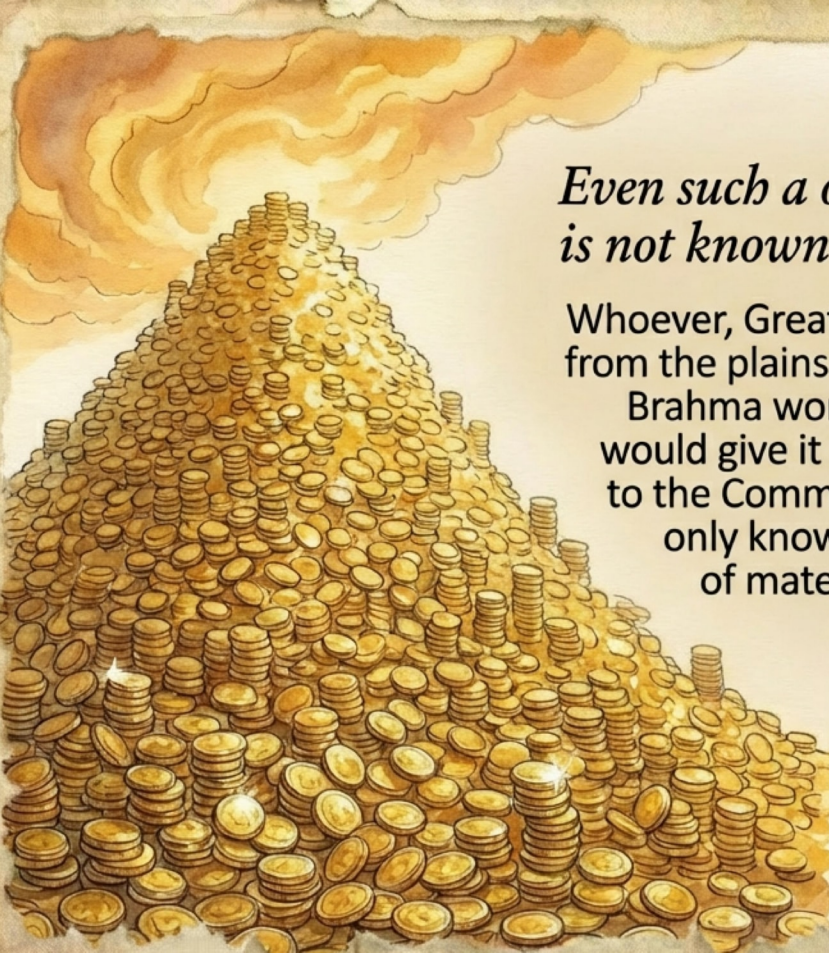
Asoka ordered the construction of 84,000 monasteries across the cities, completed in three years. Through the miracle of 'Opening the World,' the King beheld the entire island illuminated by his offerings and the festivals held in every direction.



The King's Question

Satisfied, Asoka asked the Community: "Has anyone been as generous as I am?" The Elder Moggaliputta replied that even in the Buddha's time, no giver equaled Asoka. Emboldened, the King asked: "Is there anyone who is an heir to the Dispensation like unto me?"





*Even such a one, who is greatly generous,
is not known as an heir in the Dispensation.*

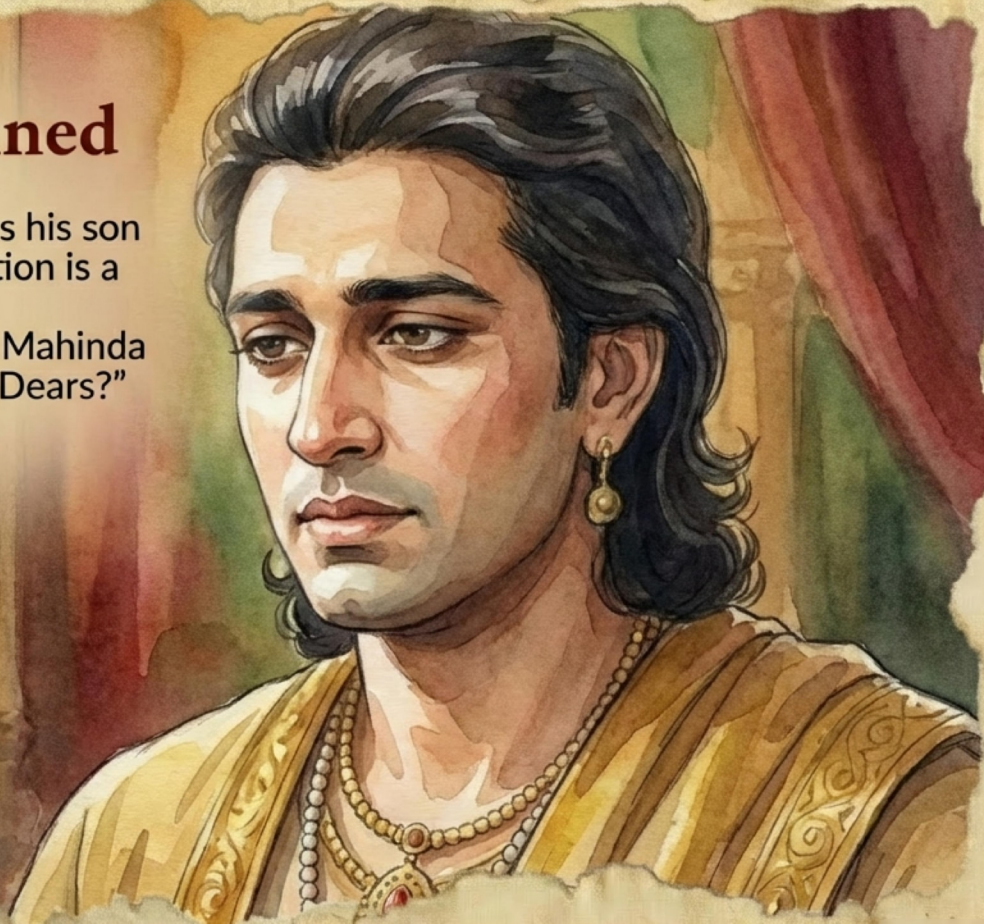
Whoever, Great King, having amassed a heap of wealth
from the plains of the earth up to the tip of the
Brahma worlds and
would give it all as a great donation
to the Community of monks is still
only known as a supporter
of material requisites.



The True Heir Defined

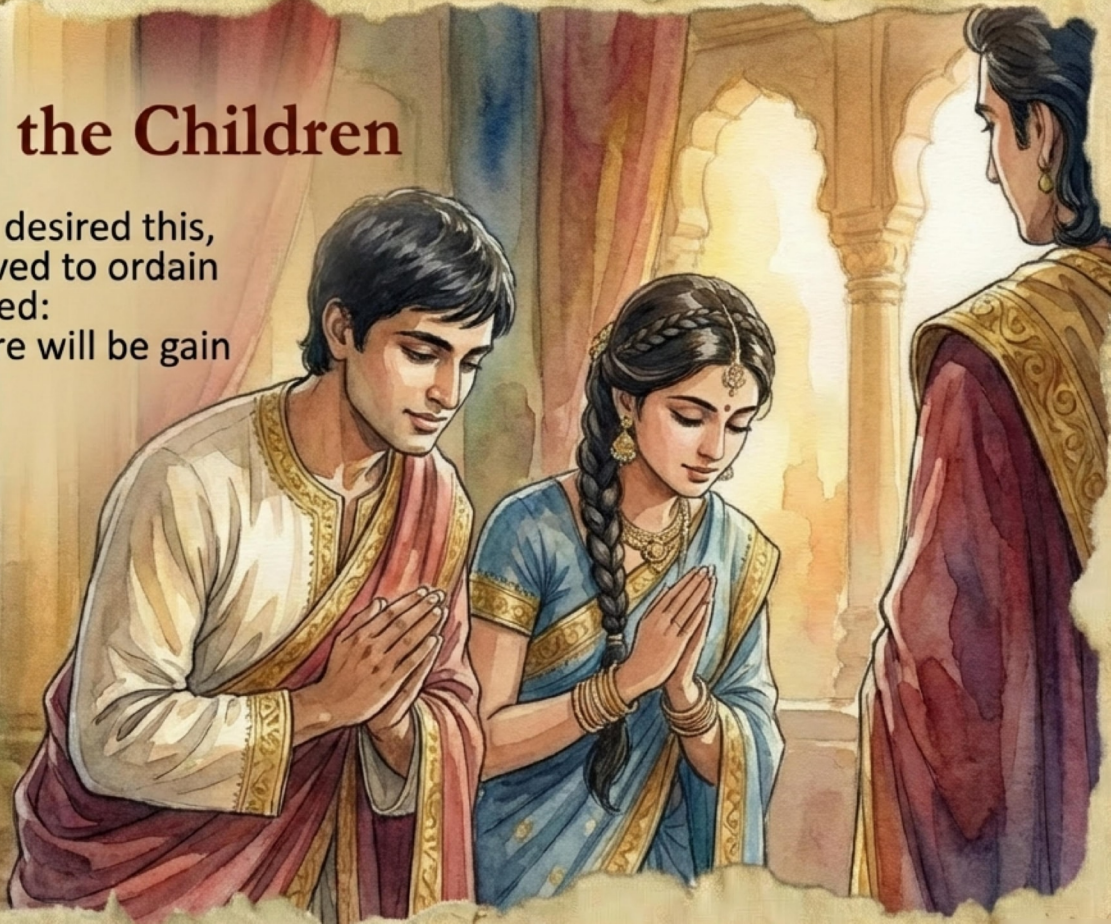
The Elder continued: "But he who lets his son or daughter go forth in the Dispensation is a true supporter... a true heir."

Asoka, desiring this status, turned to Mahinda and Saṅghamittā: "Will you go forth, Dears?"



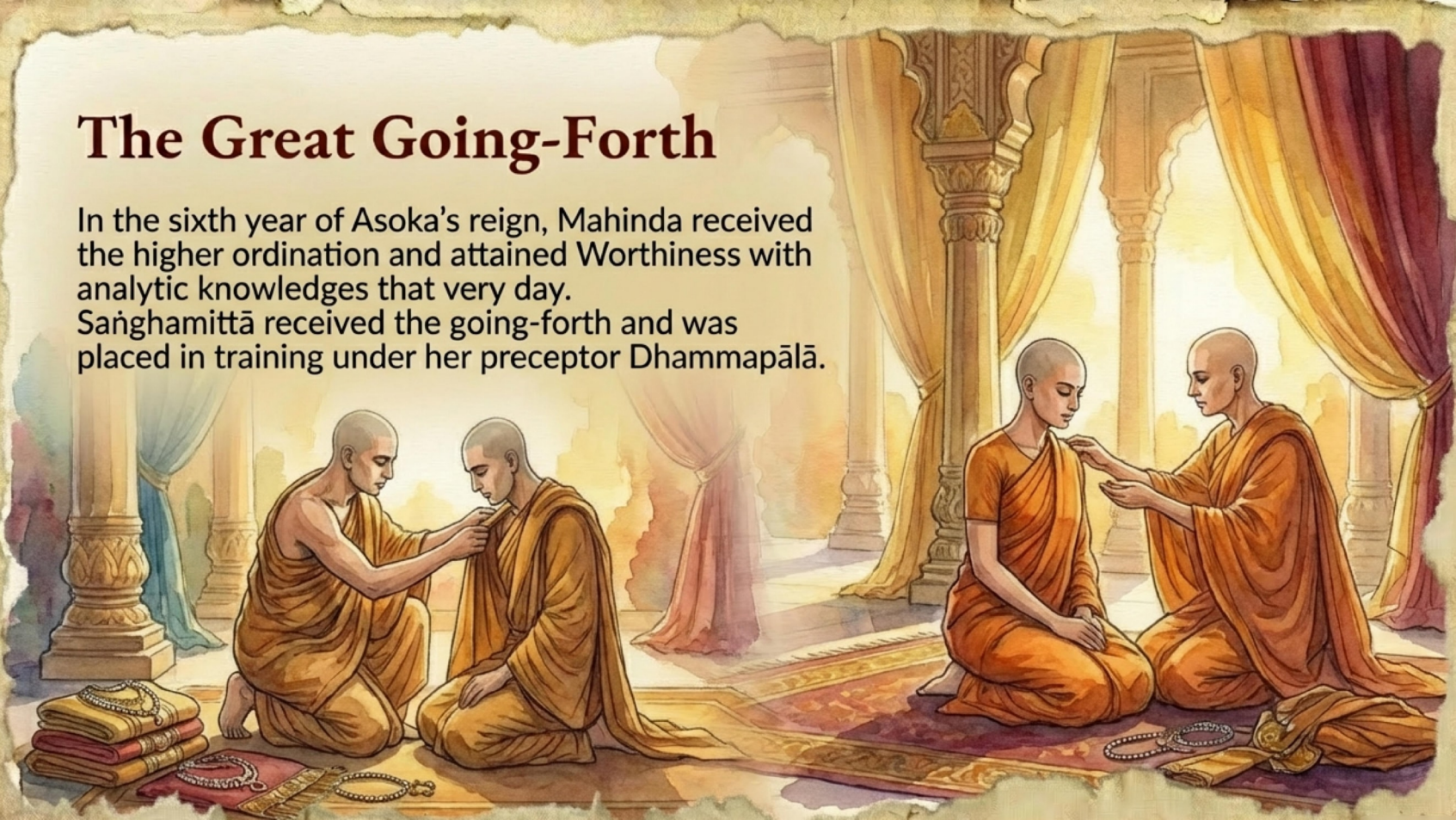
The Consent of the Children

Mahinda, who had naturally desired this, and Saṅghamittā, who resolved to ordain when her husband left, replied:
“Today we will go forth. There will be gain for us and for you.”



The Great Going-Forth

In the sixth year of Asoka's reign, Mahinda received the higher ordination and attained Worthiness with analytic knowledges that very day. Saṅghamittā received the going-forth and was placed in training under her preceptor Dhammapālā.





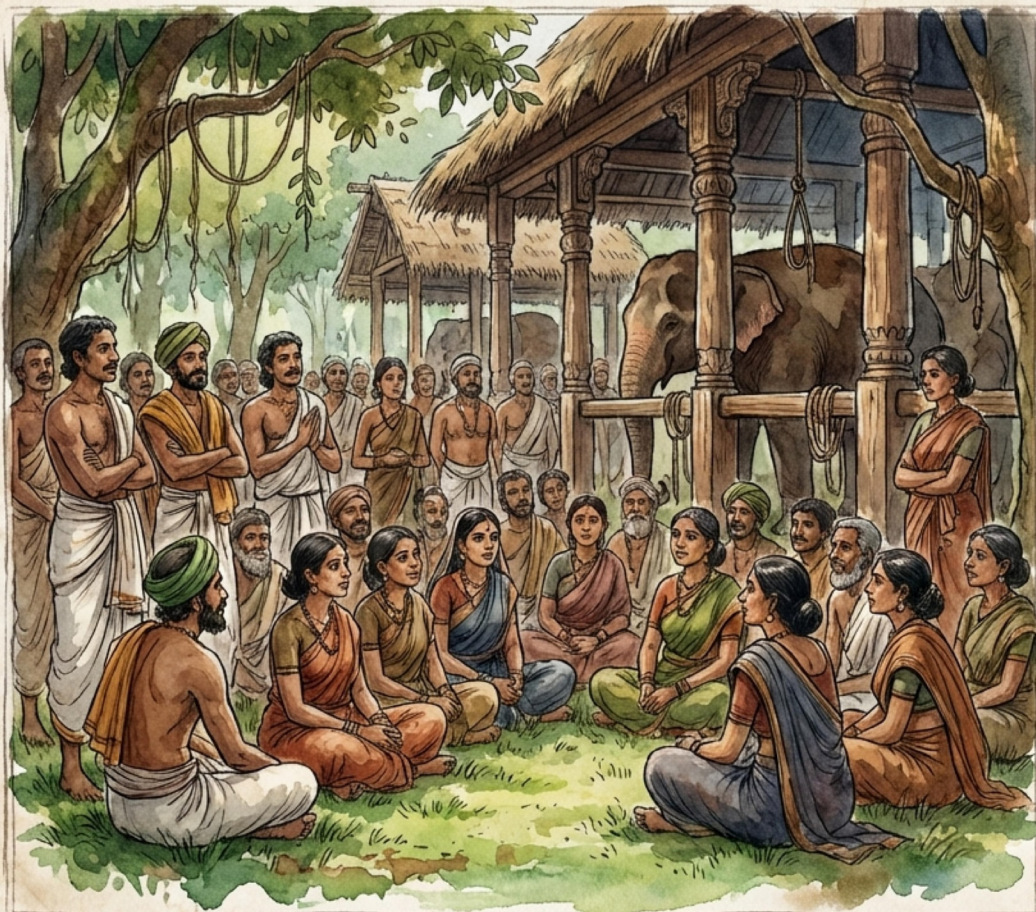
The Sun and The Moon

Mahinda, master of the Three Baskets, became the Sun of the Dispensation. Saṅghamittā, having destroyed all pollutants, became the Moon. Together, the brother and sister stood as the true Lights of the Awakened One's Dispensation, and the helpers of the Island of Laṅkā.

The Establishment of the Great Cloud Monastery

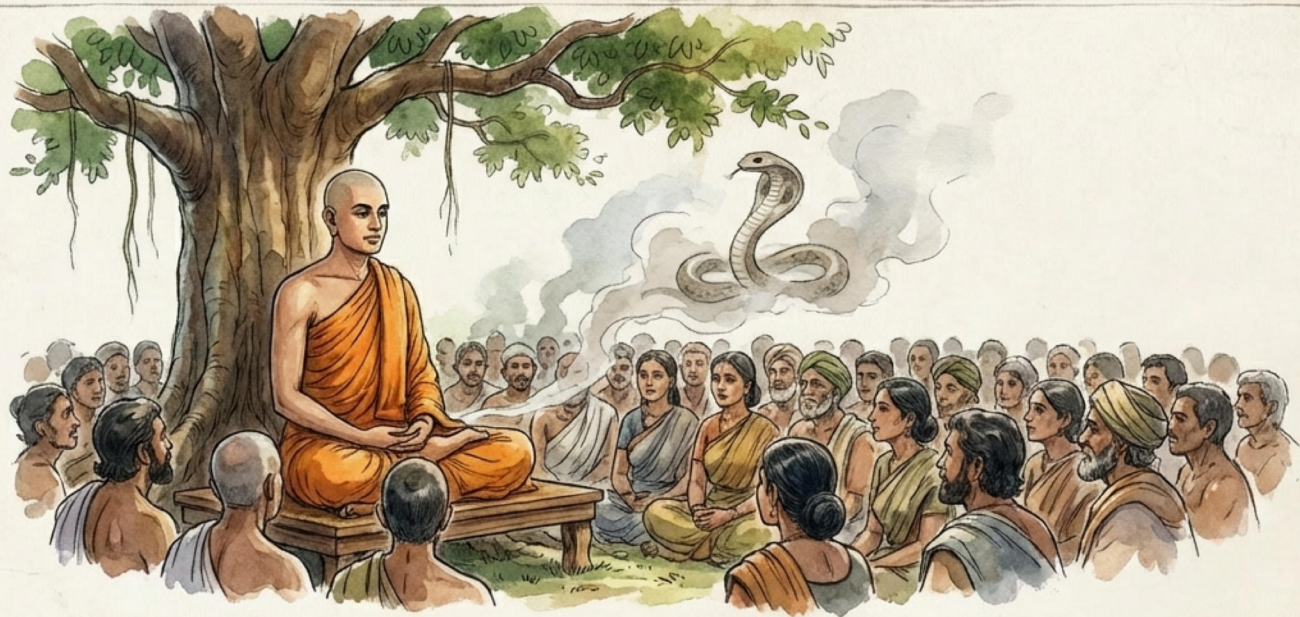
A Chronicle of Arahāt Mahinda, King Devānampiyatissa,
and the First Seeds of the Dhamma in Lāṅkā.





The Gathering at Joy Grove

The mission of Arahāt Mahinda had begun. Having converted King Devānampiyatissa, the word spread quickly. The elephant stall was crowded, and the people assembled in the cool, grassy Joy Grove outside the southern gate to prepare seats for the Elders.



The First Path

The Elder, skilled in Dhamma, related the Simile of the Poisonous Snake. On that day, one thousand breathing beings entered into the first Path and Fruit (Stream-Entry). On the second day, two and a half thousand more penetrated the Dhamma.

The Noble Women

Many women from the great families filled the garden. The Elder taught the Discourse on the Fools and the Wise. Upon hearing the distinction between deeds of the foolish and the wise, one thousand women entered the first Path.



The Departure

As evening set in, the Elders prepared to depart, saying, "We go to the mountain." Seeing them leave, the people informed the King, who quickly intercepted the monks to plead his case.





The King's Plea

The **Lord of the Planet** pleaded,
“Venerable Sir, it is far from here
to the mountain in the evening.
Live comfortably right here in the
Joy Wood.”

Mahinda replied, “It is unsuitable,
being too near to the city.”

The Great Cloud Grove

The King proposed the **Great Cloud Grove**: “It is neither too near nor too far, delightful, endowed with shade and water.” The Elders agreed to turn back. On the banks of the Kadamba river, the ‘Turning Shrine’ was built to mark the spot.



The Morning Question

In the morning, the King asked if they had slept well. Mahinda replied, **“The garden is comfortable for strivers.”**

Citing the precedent of the Buddha receiving the Bamboo Grove Monastery, Mahinda confirmed the site was suitable for the Community.





Queen Anulā's Attainment

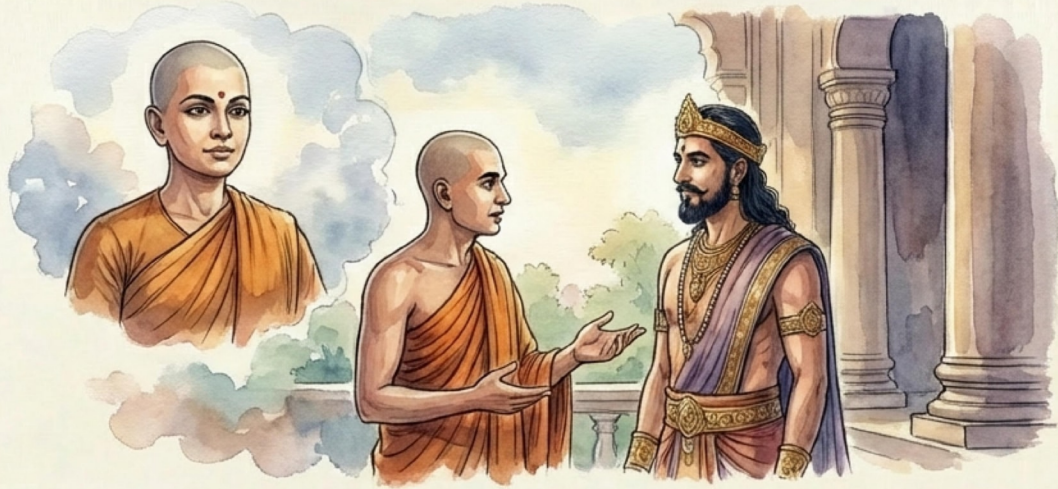
Queen Anulā and five hundred women came to worship. After listening to the Dhamma with faithful minds, they entered the second Path and Fruit (Once-Returners).



The Request for Going-Forth

Queen Anulā expressed her desire: “Today itself we will go forth, if it is your wish, Lord of the Earth.”

The King relayed this request to Mahinda: “Please give them the going-forth.”



The Constraint & The Solution

Mahinda explained: “It is not suitable, Great King, for us to give the going-forth to women. But in Pāṭaliputta is my younger sister, the nun Saṅghamittā. She is famous and very learned. Send a message to our father, King Asoka, saying: Let her come.”



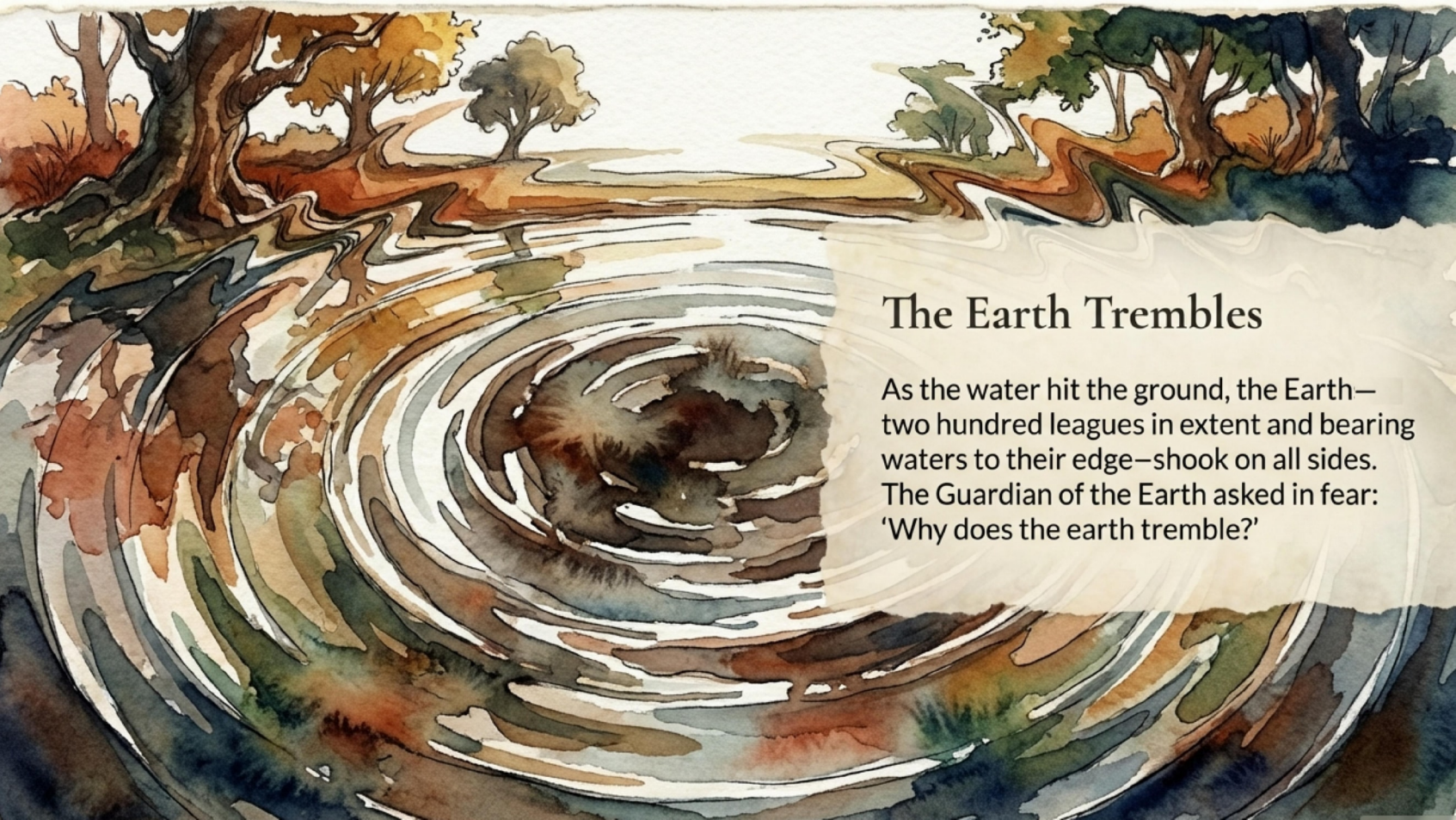
The Bodhi Tree Mandate

“Bring the southern branch from the Great Bodhi Tree of the Lord of Ascetics... as the Bodhi Trees of the three self-made Buddhas were planted by the Kings, so today the Bodhi Tree of the famous Gotama, which has a resplendent halo, should be planted, Lord of the Earth.”



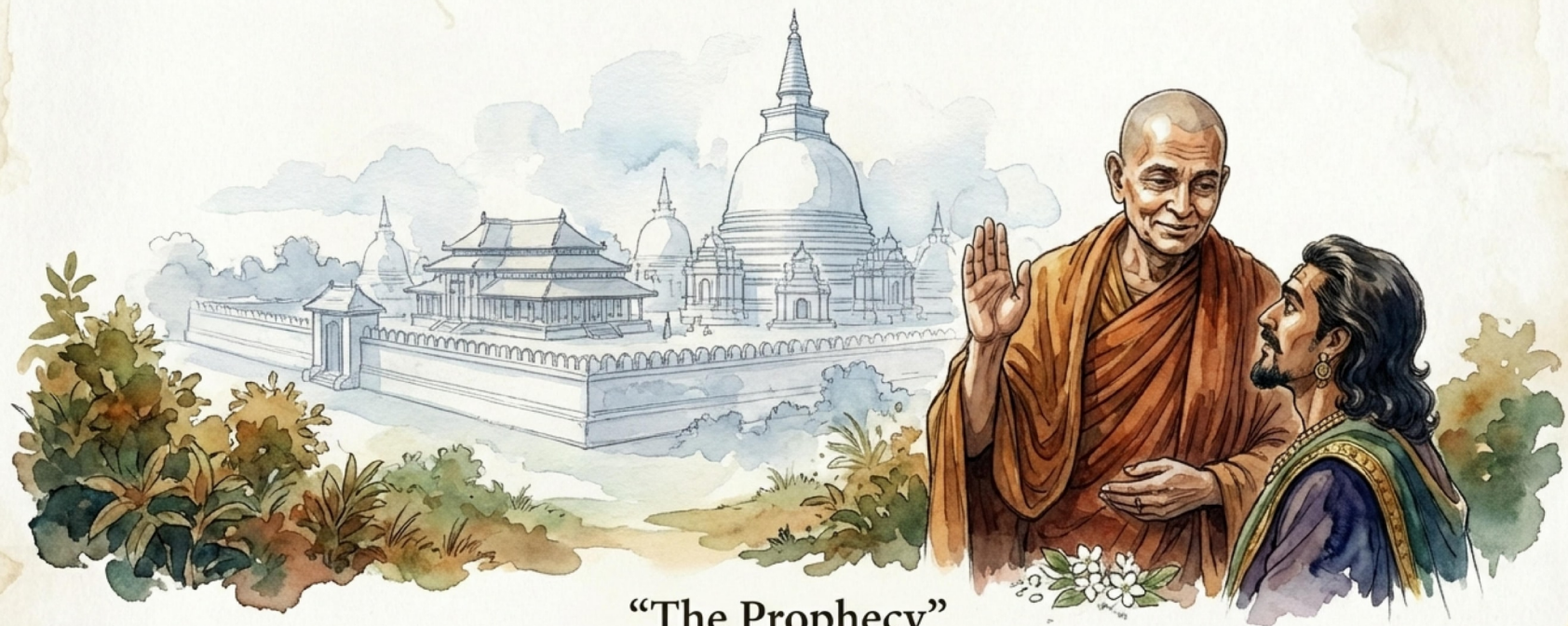
“The Donation of Water”

Saying ‘Well said!’, the King took the noble water-jug. ‘I give this Great Cloud Grove to the Community,’ he declared, and sprinkled water over the right hand of the Elder Mahinda.



The Earth Trembles

As the water hit the ground, the Earth—two hundred leagues in extent and bearing waters to their edge—shook on all sides. The Guardian of the Earth asked in fear: 'Why does the earth tremble?'

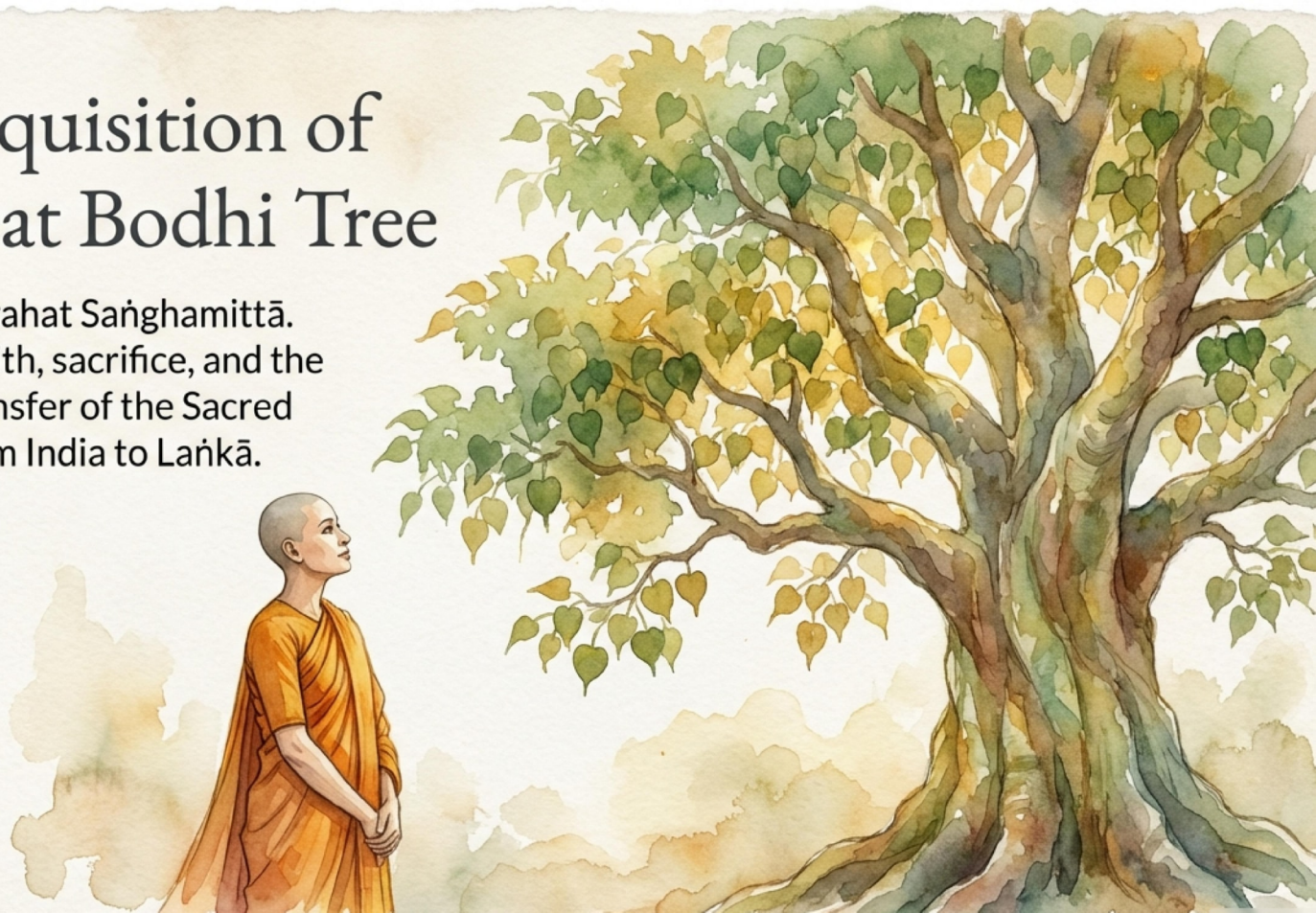


“The Prophecy”

‘Do not be afraid, Great King. The Dispensation of the One of Ten Powers will be established here. The first monastic dwelling place will be in this place.’ Hearing this, the King had great faith and offered jasmine flowers to the Elder.

The Acquisition of the Great Bodhi Tree

The Story of Arahāt Saṅghamittā.
A journey of faith, sacrifice, and the
miraculous transfer of the Sacred
Bodhi Tree from India to Laṅkā.

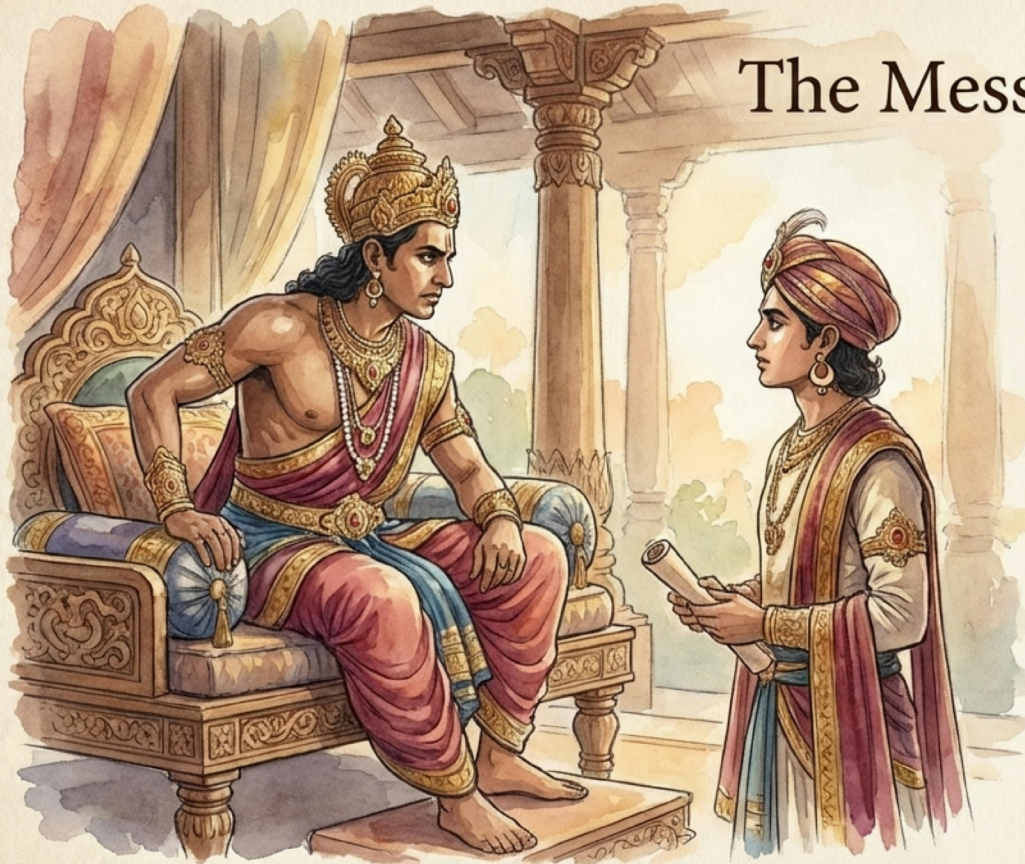


The Longing in Laṅkā

In the island of Laṅkā,
Queen Anulā and a thousand
women yearned for the
spiritual life.
They undertook the ten
precepts, donned yellow
robes, and lived with
restraint in the
'Lay-Women's Monastery.'

They waited eagerly for the
arrival of the Elder Nun
Saṅghamittā to grant them
the going-forth (ordination).





The Messenger's Covenant

King Devānampiyatissa sought to fulfill the Queen's wish. He summoned his nephew, the minister Aritṭha, to travel to King Asoka in India.

Aritṭha accepted the difficult journey with one condition: "I will be able, God-King, to bring these two from there if, after returning here, I am allowed to go forth."

The King agreed: "You may go, Dear."



A Miraculous Crossing

Ariṭṭha departed from the port of Jambukola on the second day of the bright fortnight in Assayuja (October). Through the power of the Elder's determination, the journey was miraculous. The ship crossed the ocean and arrived at Pāṭaliputta, the delightful City of Flowers, on the very day of departure.

The Double Request

Aritṭha delivered the message to King Dhammāsoka:
“Your son Mahinda, God-King, sent me. Queen Anulā, desiring the going-forth, lives constantly restrained. Please send the Elder Nun Saṅghamittā and a branch from the south side of the Great Bodhi Tree.”

The request was twofold: the spiritual lineage of the nuns and and the physical lineage of the Buddha’s awakening.





The Call to Duty

Aritṭha then approached the Elder Nun: “Noble Sister, your brother Mahinda sent me. Queen Anulā and a thousand women are waiting. Please go and give them the going-forth.”

Hearing this, Saṅghamittā immediately went to her father. She understood that many ‘daughters of good families’ were waiting for her. Her duty was clear.



A Father's Grief

King Asoka was heartbroken. Having already sent his son Mahinda and grandson Sumana to Laṅkā, he could not bear to lose his daughter too.

“My son and grandson having left us... I am as though with my hands cut off. Not seeing you also, Dear, how will I put aside my grief? Enough, Dear, if you were to go today, you also will not return.”

Weighing the Word of the Wise

Saṅghamittā replied with resolve:
“My brother’s word has importance
for me, King... further, many are
waiting for the going-forth, which I
also desire to give.”

Recognizing the spiritual weight of
the request, Asoka finally consented.
“If you desire to go, take a branch of
the Supreme Bodhi Tree and go,
Noble Sister.”





Preparing the Sacred Branch

On the first day of the bright half of Kattikā, Asoka placed a branch of the Great Bodhi Tree to the east of the root of a lovely Sāla tree.

He worshipped it day by day. This was no ordinary tree; it was the symbol of Enlightenment itself, destined for the 'Copper Dust Island' of Laṅkā.

Life Springs Forth

On the seventeenth day, a miracle occurred. New shoots started taking hold and arose on the trunk of the delightful Bodhi Tree.

Seeing this, the Lord of the World (Asoka) was filled with faith. He raised his ten fingers in reverential salutation to his head.





Consecrated with Sovereignty

Overwhelmed by the miracle, Asoka declared: "I give it sovereignty over the whole of the Rose-Apple Island."

The King consecrated the Great Bodhi Tree with absolute sovereignty, elevating it from a plant to a monarch of the spiritual realm.

The Witness from the Sky

Meanwhile, the novice Sumana, sent by Mahinda to collect relics, flew through the sky and arrived in Pāṭaliputta on the Full-Moon day.

He witnessed the festivities. The Great Bodhi Tree was surrounded by offerings, guards, and the King's council, all dwelling near the sacred roots.

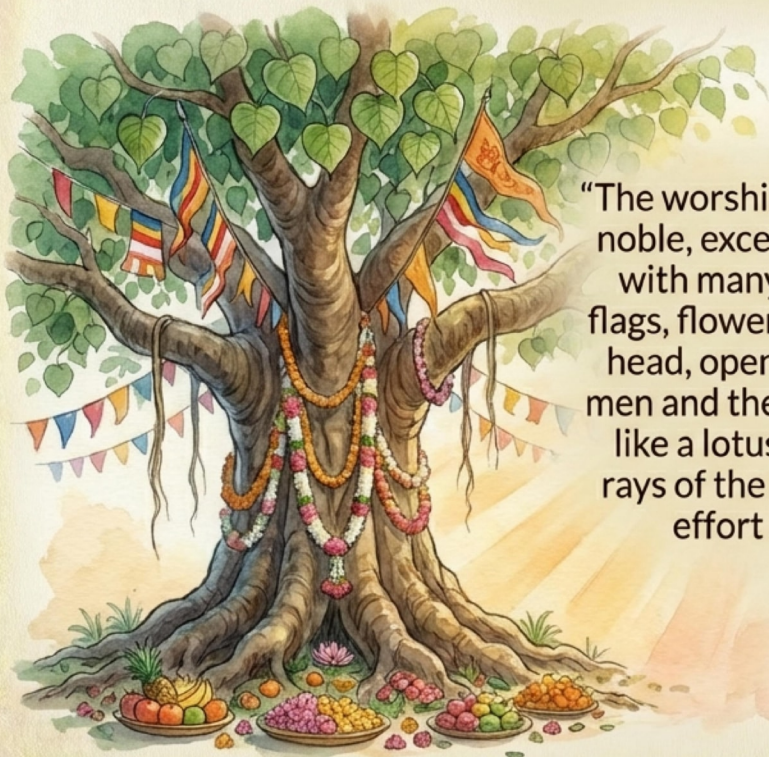




Devotion of the Court

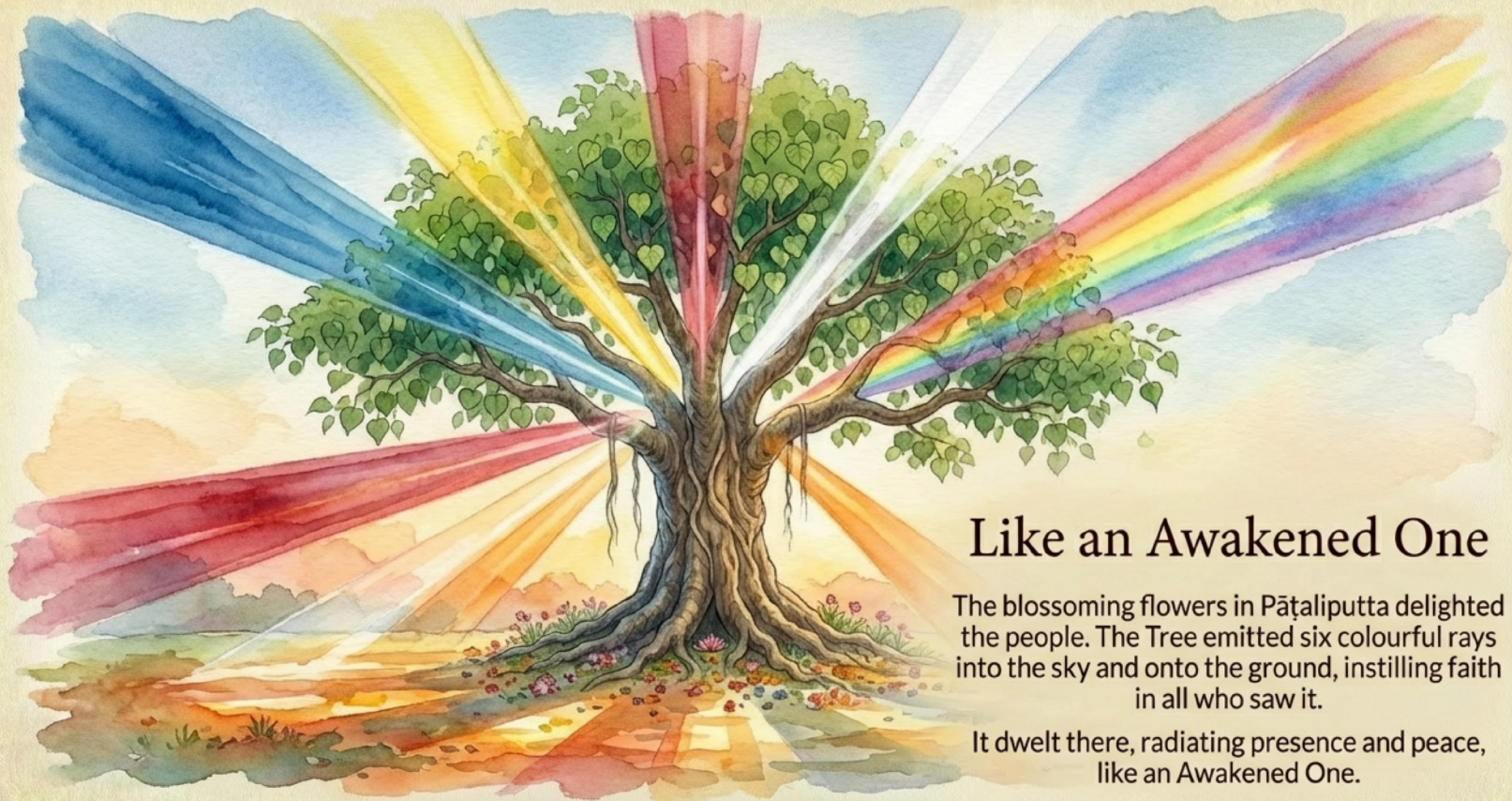
All the women of the royal harem, with the Elder Nun Saṅghamittā at their head, went out from the city. Together with the King, they dwelt near the Great Bodhi Tree, worshipping it with all sorts of offerings, immersed in devotion.

A Blossom of Faith



"The worship of the beautiful, noble, excellent Bodhi Tree, with many and extensive flags, flowers and fruits at its head, opened the minds of men and the protective gods, like a lotus opened by the rays of the sun without any effort on its part."





Like an Awakened One

The blossoming flowers in Pāṭaliputta delighted the people. The Tree emitted six colourful rays into the sky and onto the ground, instilling faith in all who saw it.

It dwelt there, radiating presence and peace, like an Awakened One.

The Journey of the Great Wisdom Tree



A chronicle of the sacred procession of the Bodhi Tree and Arahat Saṅghamittā from the court of Emperor Asoka to the shores of Laṅkā.

THE GUARDIANS OF THE ENLIGHTENMENT TREE

To ensure the safety of the Enlightenment Tree, the Emperor appointed a retinue of guardians. Eight members from royal families, eight from brāhmaṇa families, and eight from merchants' families were chosen.

Alongside them stood cow-herders, sparrow weavers, potters, and hyena families. This assembly, sprinkled with consecrated water, prepared to escort the tree through the Viñjhā forest to the port of Tāmalitti.



The Departure from Tāmalitti

On the bright half of the month of Maggasira, Asoka descended into the ocean until the water reached his neck. With profound reverence, he placed the tree upon the ship. Turning to his minister Mahāriṭṭha, he declared, "I have consecrated this Great Bodhi Tree three times with sovereignty over the whole Rose-Apple Isle. King Devānampiyatissa, should worship it with equal sovereignty."





“The Lament of the Emperor”

As the ship departed, the grieving Emperor uttered this lament:

“Alas, the Bodhi Tree of the virtuous one, the One of Ten Powers! While it is still emitting a net of twenty coloured rays we have gladly given it up.”

Miracles on the Ocean

As the vessel moved away from the multitude, the turbulent ocean grew calm for a league around.

Miracles manifested in the deep: five-coloured lotuses blossomed from the waves on all sides, and manifold instruments played in the firmament, filling the air with celestial music.





The Dragon and the Eagle

The Nāgas, desiring to seize the holy object, used magic to encircle the ship. But the Great Elder Saṅghamittā, wielding psychic power, assumed the terrifying form of a Supanna. Trembling before her splendour, the Great Snakes bowed and begged: "Do not be angry, Noble Sister. We have come only to worship."

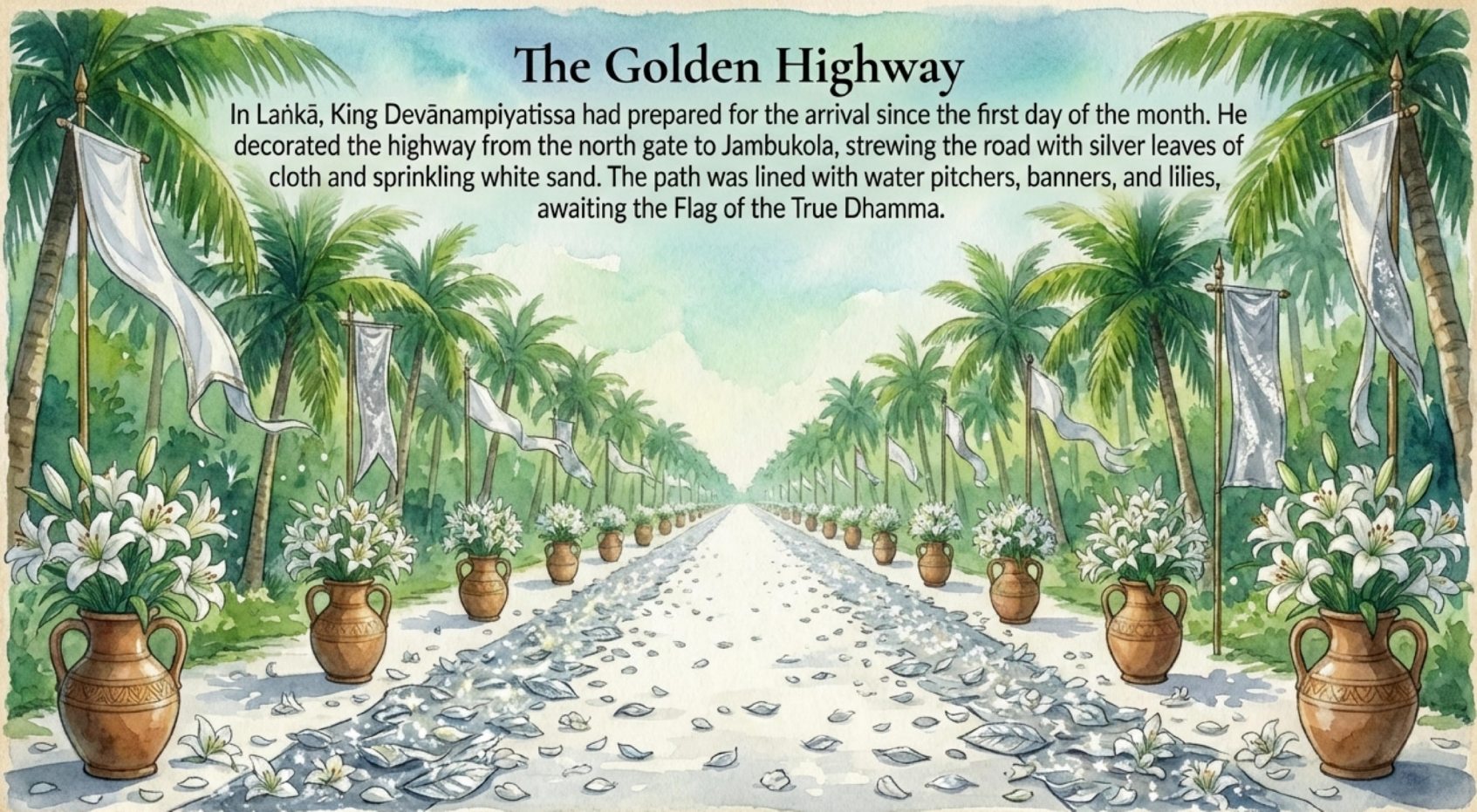
The Peace of the Deep

Granting their request, Saṅghamittā allowed the Nāgas to take the tree to their abode. For seven days, they worshipped it with sovereignty over the Nāga realm. Upon its return to the ship, the vessel completed its voyage, arriving at Jambukola in Laṅkā on that very same day.



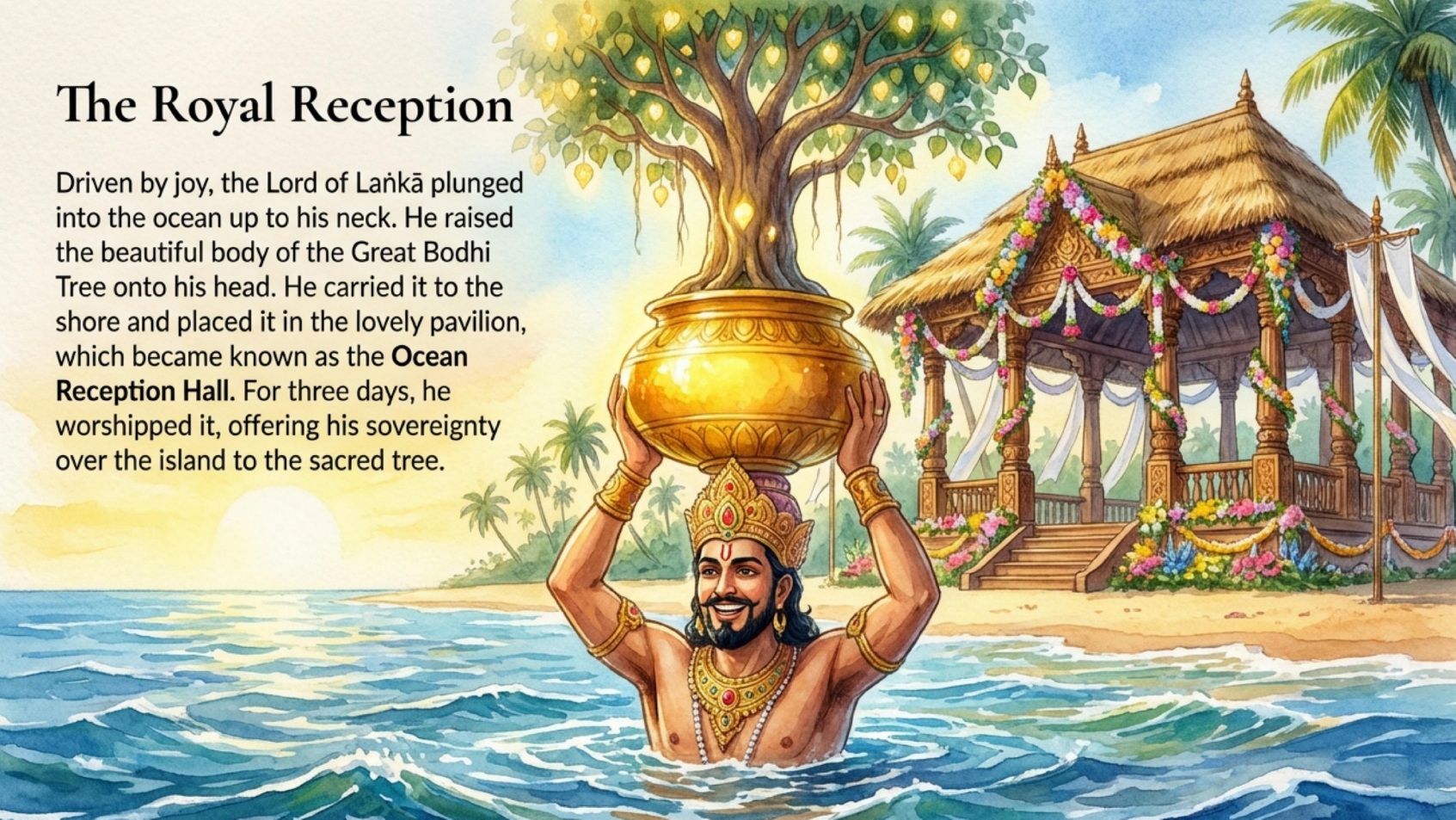
The Golden Highway

In Laṅkā, King Devānampiyatissa had prepared for the arrival since the first day of the month. He decorated the highway from the north gate to Jambukola, strewing the road with silver leaves of cloth and sprinkling white sand. The path was lined with water pitchers, banners, and lilies, awaiting the Flag of the True Dhamma.



The Royal Reception

Driven by joy, the Lord of Laṅkā plunged into the ocean up to his neck. He raised the beautiful body of the Great Bodhi Tree onto his head. He carried it to the shore and placed it in the lovely pavilion, which became known as the **Ocean Reception Hall**. For three days, he worshipped it, offering his sovereignty over the island to the sacred tree.





The First Ordination

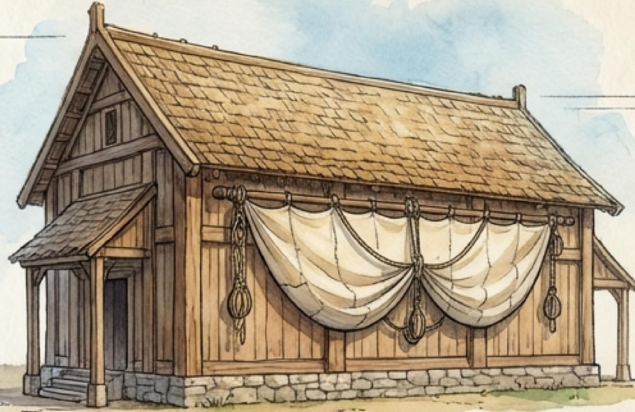
Near the Bodhi Tree, Queen Anulā and one thousand women—five hundred from the harem and five hundred others—received the going-forth.

Under the guidance of **Elder Saṅghamittā**, these women donned the yellow robes. Having developed **insight**, they soon attained the state of **Worthiness (Arahantship)**.

The Architecture of the Ship



Small Chapter House



Great Chapter House



Increasing Splendour House

The ship that carried the relic was not discarded. Its parts became the foundation for the first nunneries. These dwellings, built by the King, became the foremost palaces for the nuns.



The Elephant's Measure

The King's state elephant roamed freely to a cool mountain grotto near a Kadamba bush. Locals would feed it rice there, naming the spot "**Measure of Grain.**"

One day, the elephant refused to eat. The King consulted Mahinda, who revealed the elephant's desire: a stupa was to be built on that very spot.



Seeking Solitude

The Great Elder Saṅghamittā, skilled in dwellings, found her current abode too crowded. Seeking the welfare of the nuns and a place for deep meditation, she sought solitude.

She retreated to the lovely Shrine House near the elephant's grotto, a place that was comfortably secluded.



The New Monastery

King Devānampiyatissa, wise in understanding intentions, followed her. Realizing her wish for a quiet abode, he constructed a delightful nunnery near the Shrine House. Because it was built where the elephant had eaten, it became known as the 'Elephant's Measure' monastery. Here, the 'Good Friend' Saṅghamittā made her dwelling.



The Enduring Legacy

Thus, the Great Bodhi Tree was established in the Great Cloud Grove. Endowed with wonders, it has remained for a long time, benefiting the land of Laṅkā. The journey that began with an Emperor's tears concludes with an enduring legacy of faith that remains to this day.

The Complete Emancipation of the Elders

The Final Days of Arahat Mahinda and Arahat Saṅghamittā

A chronicle written for the faith and invigoration of good people.





The Righteous Reign of King Uttiya

Following the passing of the former King, his younger brother Uttiya, born of King Muṭasiva, took the throne. He ruled righteously, maintaining the traditions of the land. It was during his reign that the great lights of the Dispensation would eventually flicker and fade.

The Light of Laṅkā Extinguishes

In the eighth victorious year of King Uttiya, during the Rains Retreat, the Elder Mahinda—who had propagated the supreme Dispensation and dwelt sixty years near the Cetiya mountain—attained Emancipation. On the eighth day of the month Assayuja, the passionless Elder who increased the light of the island passed away.



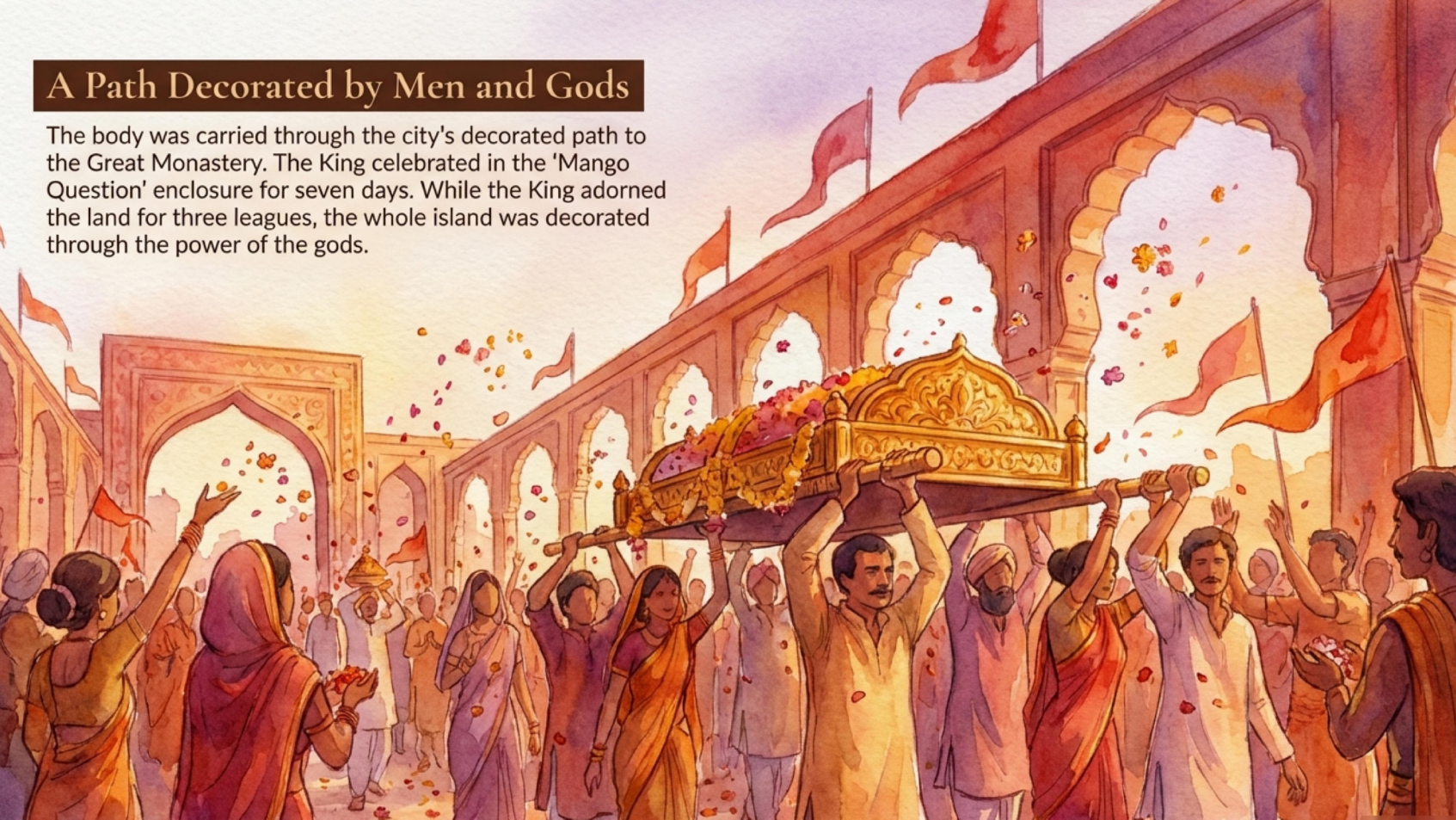
Struck by the Dart of Grief

Hearing the news, King Uttiya was affected by the dart of grief. He worshipped and lamented the Elder, placing the body in a golden casket sprinkled with perfumed oil. To honor the passionless Elder, it was agreed that his name be given to the eighth day of the month.



A Path Decorated by Men and Gods

The body was carried through the city's decorated path to the Great Monastery. The King celebrated in the 'Mango Question' enclosure for seven days. While the King adorned the land for three leagues, the whole island was decorated through the power of the gods.



The Seer's Courtyard

After the cremation, the King built a Shrine on that very spot, now called the Seer's Courtyard. He deposited half the relics on Cetiya mountain and the rest in monastic sanctuaries, making offerings day by day.





The Passing of the Great Nun

One year later, in the ninth year of King Uttiya—and fifty-nine years after her arrival—the Great Elder Saṅghamittā, the ‘Light of the World,’ passed away while residing in the Elephant’s Measure house. She had fulfilled all duties to the Dispensation with virtue and wisdom.

A King's Sorrow Returns

Upon hearing of her passing, King Uttiya was once again affected by the dart of grief. With a shower of tears, he went out with his assembly. Just as he did for Elder Mahinda, he made supreme offerings and paid respect to the Elder Nun for a week.





Resting in the Sight of the Bodhi Tree

Her body was led round the delightful city and placed on a bier near the Beautiful Hall. In sight of the Great Bodhi Tree, on the eastern side of the Sanctuary monastery—the specific place indicated by the Elder Nun herself—the cremation was carried out.

A Sanctuary for the Theri

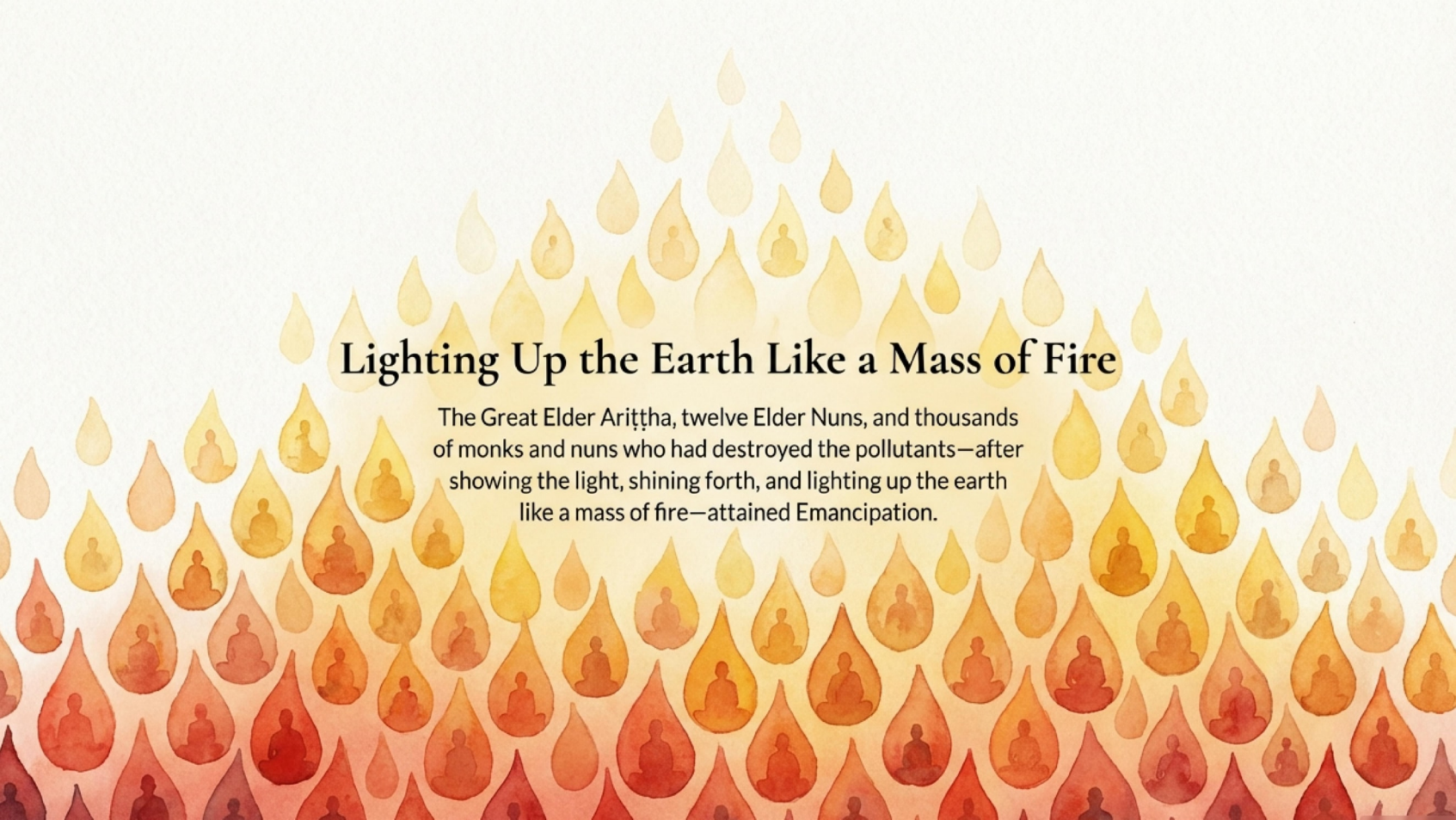
The Lord of the World, Uttiya, had a Sanctuary built at the cremation site. Taking her relics, he deposited them within and worshipped there day by day with all kinds of offerings.



The Five Who Were Without Pollutants

It was not only the leaders who departed. The five Great Elders—Ittiya, Uttiya, the Great Elder Bhaddasāla, the greatly intelligent Sambala, and Mahinda—all being free of pollutants, attained Emancipation.





Lighting Up the Earth Like a Mass of Fire

The Great Elder Ariṭṭha, twelve Elder Nuns, and thousands of monks and nuns who had destroyed the pollutants—after showing the light, shining forth, and lighting up the earth like a mass of fire—attained Emancipation.



The Whole World Heads for Destruction

King Uttiya reigned for ten years.
Oppressed by disease, he too attained
the state of impermanence. Just as the
saints pass, so is the whole impermanent
world heading for destruction.



The Unstoppable Truth

That man who, knowing that impermanence is very violent, strong and unstoppable, doesn't grow weary of coming to existence... because of the strength of his great delusion, is one who, though knowing the truth, forgets it.

For the Faith and Invigoration of Good People

Thus concludes the Twentieth Chapter in the Great Lineage:
The Complete Emancipation of the Elders. May this account
serve to strengthen faith and invigorate the practice of all
good people.

