



The Life of the Buddha



© The Clear Vision Trust 2001 Buddhism KS2

The Parinirvana

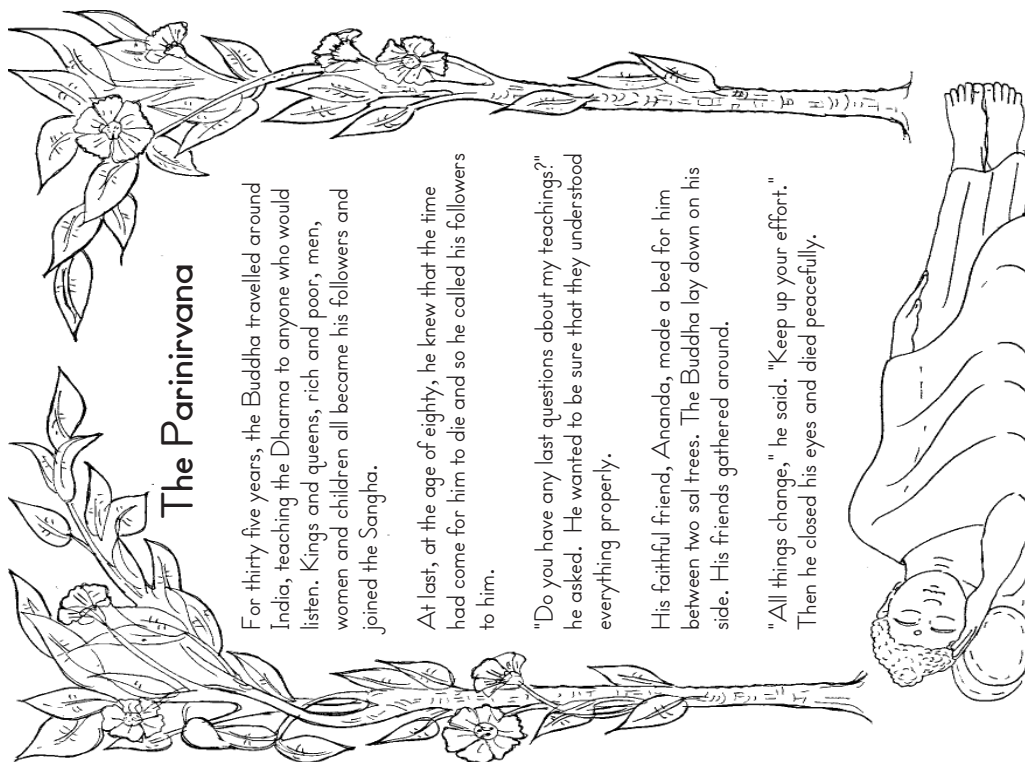
For thirty five years, the Buddha travelled around India, teaching the Dharma to anyone who would listen. Kings and queens, rich and poor, men, women and children all became his followers and joined the Sangha.

At last, at the age of eighty, he knew that the time had come for him to die and so he called his followers to him.

"Do you have any last questions about my teachings?" he asked. He wanted to be sure that they understood everything properly.

His faithful friend, Ananda, made a bed for him between two sal trees. The Buddha lay down on his side. His friends gathered around.

"All things change," he said. "Keep up your effort." Then he closed his eyes and died peacefully.





A Prince is Born

A long time ago, in India, a Prince called Siddhartha was born. A wise old man came to see the baby. He wanted to tell his fortune. "This little one will be a great king one day, or will leave home and become a great holy man," he said, holding the baby in his arms.

The king was upset. "He will be a king," he said. "I shall see to that!" and he called his chief servant. "The Prince is to have everything he wants," he said. "Make sure he sees nothing to upset him or make him unhappy."

From that day on, only young and beautiful people were allowed in the palace. The young Prince was brought up to be a king. He learned to shoot with a bow and arrow, to ride a horse and to hunt. He was taught all the things a future king would need to know.



Teaching the Truth

The Buddha walked the long journey to Sarnath to look for his five friends. He found them in a deer park. They were sitting under a tree. They could see at once that he looked different. As he talked to them they listened carefully.

One by one, they too became free. They understood; they became Enlightened. "The whole world needs to hear the Truth," said the Buddha, so he and his followers set out to teach the Dharma to anyone who would listen.

The Buddha had not forgotten his family, however. One day, he decided to visit them. What a day that was! His wife Yasodhara, his son Rahula, and even his father the King, became his followers.

"Now I understand," said the King.



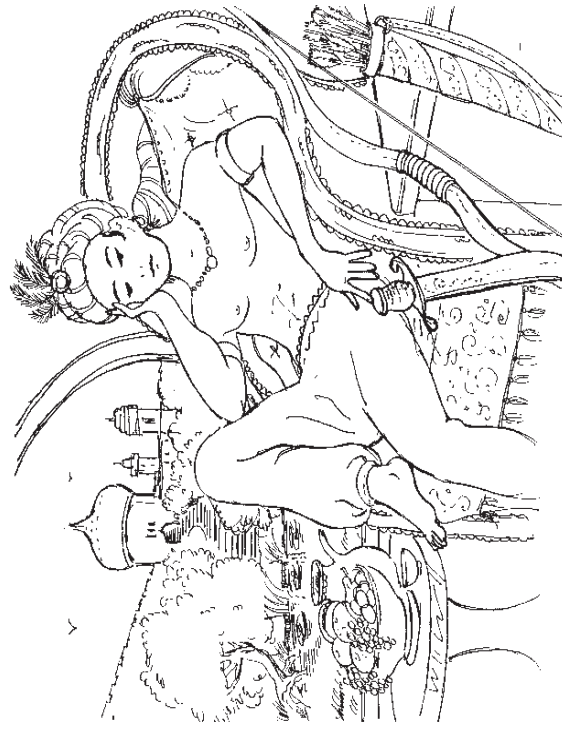


The Young Prince

As time passed, Siddhartha grew up. He married the beautiful Princess Yashodhara and they had a son called Rahula. The King was delighted; his plan was working.

"How happy Siddhartha is here in the palace with his beautiful princess and his baby son," he thought. "He has his own parks and swimming pools and everything he could wish for. He will never want to leave. One day he will be a great king."

But prince Siddhartha wasn't happy at all. "I don't want to be shut up in the palace all day. I need to go out and see the world for myself," he said.





The Four Sights

One day, Prince Siddhartha went out into the city with Chanda, his chariot driver. Soon, they met an old man leaning on a stick and walking very slowly. His hair and teeth were falling out.

Siddhartha was puzzled. "What's that?" he asked.
"Old age," said Chanda. "Everyone grows old."
This sight upset the prince.

The next day, they went out again. This time he saw someone lying groaning in the street.

"What's happened?" he asked.
"Sickness," said Chanda. "Everyone gets ill sometime in their life."
Siddhartha was shocked. He had never before seen anyone who was ill.

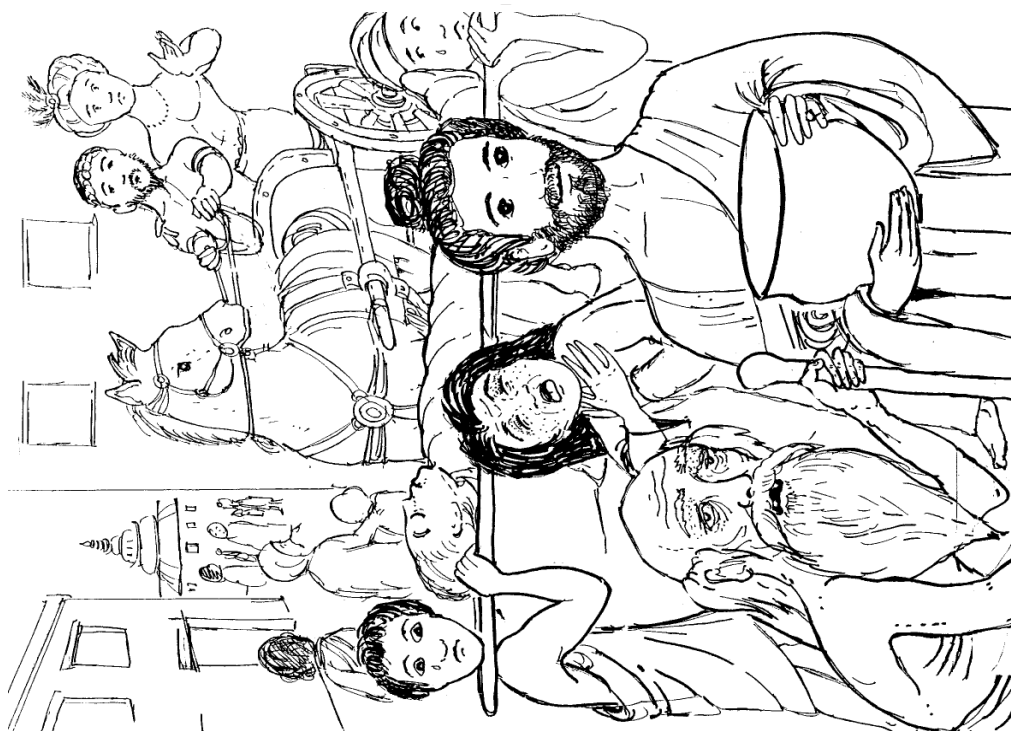
On the third day, he went out again and saw something even worse. He saw a funeral.

"Death has come," said Chanda. "Everyone has to die."
"That's terrible!" said Siddhartha. "Why is there so much suffering? What can I do?"

On the fourth day, they saw a man dressed in simple robes and carrying a bowl.

"There's a holy man," said Chanda. "That's all he owns."
"And yet he looks so peaceful and happy," said Siddhartha. "How strange!"





The Enlightenment

Siddhartha washed in the river and ate some food. Then he sat down to meditate in the shade of a tree. He felt much stronger.

"I will sit here until I have won," he said. "I will never give up, even if I have to stay here until my blood dries up."

He meditated all night. In the morning, just as the sun rose, he knew he had won.

"I have done it.
I am free from suffering.
I understand.
At last I am awake to the Truth.
Now I am a Buddha.
I am Enlightened."



Leaving Home

That very night, Siddhartha decided to leave the palace. He kissed his sleeping wife and child. "Goodbye," he whispered. "I must go and find an end to suffering for us all." Silently, Siddhartha and Chanda crept out of the palace gates and rode off into the night.

At last they came to a river at the edge of the forest. Siddhartha cut off his long hair and put on simple robes. He gave his rich clothes, jewels and horse to Chanda. "Please return to the palace with these. I am no longer your master the Prince, I am Siddhartha the wanderer. I now go forth to find the Truth."

Chanda watched sadly as Siddhartha crossed the river and went off alone into the dark forest.



The Wandering Holy Man

For six years, Siddhartha wandered in the jungle. He went to famous holy teachers. He learned all they had to teach him, but was still not satisfied. "I have still not learned the Truth," he thought.

Then he lived with five friends. They were ascetics. They thought that by living a hard and uncomfortable life they would find the Truth. Siddhartha became an ascetic, too.

He ate less and less food until he was living on only one grain of rice a day. He almost starved to death. "This isn't helping," he said. "I am still no nearer the Truth. A very rich life in the palace was not the way. A very hard and uncomfortable life is not the way. I will try a middle way."

His friends did not agree. Siddhartha ate some milk-rice that a woman gave him. When the five ascetics saw this they didn't like it.

"He's given up," they said, and they left him.

