THE STORY OF THE BUDDHA

EDITH HOLLAND

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Foreword

Before the days of books, records of historical events were handed down by word of mouth. It was therefore but natural that, as time passed and a story came to be often repeated, many details should gradually have been added to the original narrative. Thus in all histories of very early times we find fact and legend mingled together. So it is with the story I am about to tell you. When the narrative of the Buddha's life was told again and again, in countries far removed from the scenes where the events had taken place, tales of wonders and miracles were added to the first simple story. Many of these legends, which are very beautiful, were intended to be understood as allegories, and stories told in this way have always been favourites with Eastern people.

You will see that it is sometimes difficult to distinguish the facts from the legends which were added in later years. But, after all, why should we trouble ourselves about these things? We know that the events of chief importance in the Buddha's beautiful life are historical facts, and that is all that really matters.

Chapter I
The East and the West

I am going to tell you the story of the life of a very great man. He was not great as the world usually regards greatness, being neither a conqueror nor a hero in any worldly sense—in fact, for many years of his life, he was a beggar. Buddha is, the name by which he is generally known; but before I begin my story I must tell you something of the lands where he lived and taught—in the great mysterious East, which is so different in every way from the part of the world we live in.

The most remarkable feature of our modern Western world is Change. Think what changes have taken place in the last hundred years. Railways and motor-cars have been brought into use, wonderful inventions have been made in machinery, wonderful discoveries in science; electricity has been made use of for lighting our houses and towns, and many other purposes. If our grandfathers could see our Western world as we see it, they would hardly recognize it.

The people of the East have no wish for such changes, and where they have not been disturbed by Western ideas their manners and customs have remained the same during hundreds of years. If one of the Patriarchs of whom we read in the Bible were to visit the scenes in which he once dwelt, he would find a familiar world, and the common things of everyday life would be much as he remembered them. He would see the oxen treading out the corn, and the women carrying their pitchers to the well as they used to do more than two thousand years ago. Even in appearance the people would be little changed, for there are no new fashions in the East, and the same graceful draperies when were worn in the days of the Patriarchs are to be seen at the present day.

The hurry and rush of our lives is also in strange contrast to the passive and dreamy "life of the East. In the West most people are busy, and anxious to get through as much as they can in the day; if they are

not working, they are very busy amusing themselves, and few sit still to think—they would consider this a waste of time. But in the East no one hurries himself who is not obliged, and little value is attached to time or punctuality.

The West then, is the new world of Action and Progress, the East the old world of Thought. One cannot say that either is right or either wrong. Different races of mankind possess different qualities, and try to improve the world in the direction that seems to them of the greatest importance. Thus the Greeks have taught us what true Beauty is, and left us models of beauty which have never been surpassed. The nations of the West have been foremost in science and all mechanical arts, and to them we owe most of the comforts and conveniences of everyday life. But it is to the East that we must look for the spiritual thought out of which have grown the religions which have most deeply influenced the world. It was there that all the great teachers of mankind arose—Moses, Buddha, Mohammed the Prophet of Arabia; and we must not forget that it was to an Eastern people, amid Eastern surroundings, that Christ's message was first delivered. All deep thought on spiritual matters has had its beginning in the East, and the world could better spare all the improvements or modern civilization than the wisdom of the East. It would not really matter if you had to take a pitcher to the well to fetch water, instead of turning on the hot and cold water taps; but it would matter a great deal if you had never heard of a life beyond this earthly life, and of the Kingdom of Righteousness.

The aims, then, of the East and the West have been altogether different. Who can tell which has chosen the better part?

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The very name of the East has a sound of enchantment and mystery, and your first visit to an Eastern country is like opening a new book of strange and beautiful fairy stories, in which everything is quite unlike the common experiences of everyday life. The gorgeous colours, glowing yet more brightly under the sapphire sky, the gay-plumaged birds,

the wondrous fruits and blossoms, and the many new and strange sights make you feel as if you were living in a land of dreams.

You must not, however, picture the East as nothing but a fairyland of delight—there is sadness there, as there is everywhere, if we look beneath the surface. In civilized countries sad and horrible sights are hidden from us as much as possible, and those of us who happen to be fortunate and lead pleasant lives scarcely know of the misery that is in the world. But in the East things go their own way, and Nature's laws are enforced without interference. "The whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together"—we are often reminded of this by the sad sights that meet our eyes in an Eastern city. There you may see the beggars lying, like Lazarus, with their sores exposed to the scorching rays of the sun, asking alms of the passers-by; and the steps of a mosque or other large building will often be crowded with the maimed and the blind. Perhaps a man with a covering over his head may, as he passes by, reveal the face of a leper as white as snow. And in wandering through the rice-fields you may see a dying bullock surrounded by a flock of vultures, which approach as near as they dare, awaiting the coming feast.

Thus the people of the East become familiar with suffering and disease; they have more patience and resignation than we have, and are less in fear of death. The sadness of life is accepted as a thing which must be. We notice this in many ways. Music is a language which expresses the thoughts and feelings of a people. In Europe the tunes and songs which become popular are mostly of a joyful nature, but the music of the East is usually sad and pathetic, though often very beautiful. A plaintive little tune, covering a range of about three notes, will be repeated again and again in endless monotony.

"But though the fact that life is, on the whole, sad lies at the root of their beliefs, Eastern people are quite capable of enjoying the pleasures that come to them. They are in many ways very simple-minded people, and enjoy simple pleasures almost like children. They live in closer touch with Nature than it is possible for us to do. Modern civilization has tended to make our lives artificial, and we spend the greater part of our time in houses, going out at stated intervals for exercise or amuse-

ment. Except the few of us who have studied the subject, we know little of the habits of birds and animals, and are apt to look on Nature as something entirely apart from man. But in the East it is different; the people have no need to study Nature in books, as their daily lives are bound up with her, and they live on familiar terms with the birds and animals. Thus in the plains of India you will see little naked boys taking the water-buffalo out to graze on the outskirts of the jungle, and the great beasts will follow the children submissively and understand their ways, though it is often not safe for the stranger from Europe to approach them.

The religions of India are very old indeed, and were practised many hundreds of years before the age of Christianity. Formerly Europeans knew very little about these ancient religions, and were inclined to consider all people professing other creeds than their own as heathens and idolaters. It is only in modern times that scholars have learnt the ancient languages, and so have been able to understand the sacred books of the Hindus, Buddhists, and others. During the nineteenth century many translations were made of these old writings, and through them we learn that God had not forgotten these people, nor left them in utter darkness. Though they never had the opportunity of coming to a full knowledge of God, enough light was given them to enable them to lead noble lives and to guide them into the paths of truth and self-denial.

Chapter II
The Kingdom of the Sakyas

The people of India have always been religious; their religion is very real to them, and has a great influence over their lives. The prevailing religion of India is Hinduism, or, as if is often—called, Brahminism. This religion has existed, with various changes, since the earliest times of which we have any record. It seems to have had its beginnings in the worship of the powers of Nature, or rather of the beings who were supposed to control those powers. Thus there was Indra, the god of the air or sky; Rudra, the god of the storm, whose arrows, in the form of lightning, struck down men and beasts. There was a god of fire, of the sun, of the wind, and all these gods or spirits were believed to hear the prayers of men and to accept their sacrifices. In course of time new gods were imagined, or new names were given to the old gods.

By degrees the people of India awoke to the belief in a supreme God, far above these gods of Nature. They gave him the name of Brahma, and believed him to be the creator of the world and of gods and men—the source of life, in whom all beings have their beginning and their end. The Indian people have long believed in what is called the transmigration of souls, which means the rebirth of the soul in another body. Thus they think that when a man dies his soul will enter the body of some other being about to be born into the world. The good or bad actions of a man determine the conditions of his next life—if his deeds have been good, he will be born again to enjoy a happier state, but if evil, he will be born to sorrow and misery, either as a man or an animal. The Hindus believe that most of the misfortunes we suffer are punishments for sins committed in a former life. They have a great sympathy with animals, feeling that they too possess souls like their own, striving to arrive at a state of perfection. But a man must live countless lives before

his soul can be perfected and fit for union with Brahma, to whom in the end all life must return, even as the moisture which rises from the sea and falls over the land as rain will find its way into the rivers and so return to the ocean. When the soul has been perfected it will no more be born into the world to suffer the miseries of mortal life, but will attain everlasting peace. It is this deliverance, this union with Brahma, which is looked forward to by all devout Hindus.

Though the people worshipped many gods, there were from very early times thoughtful men, or philosophers, who believed that all the lesser gods were but symbols of the great creator Brahma. These holy men gave up all worldly occupations and went to live in the great forests where they could be undisturbed, to think of the mysteries of life, death, and the world beyond the grave. They believed that if they subdued their bodies by fasting, their minds would become enlightened, and better able to grasp the great truths they sought to find. The people deeply respected these holy men because of their wisdom and knowledge; even kings bowed down to them, and asked their advice on important matters.

In olden days India was not under one ruler, but was divided into many small states. The rulers of these states were called rajas, or kings, but their kingdoms were sometimes very small. If you look at the map of India, you will better realize where the events I am going to tell you about took place. And first you must find the great river Ganges, for it was in the fertile lands bordering this river on either side that the hero of our story passed many years of his life, and wandered from place to place teaching his doctrines. What is now the province of Oudh was in those days the powerful kingdom of Kosala, and the province of Behar, which lies eastward of Oudh, was once the kingdom of Magadha. You will hear a good deal about these two kingdoms in the course of our story.

Across the north-east corner of Oudh flows the river Rapti; to the east of this river there is a long strip of fertile and well-watered land, where there are many rice-fields, fine forests, and groves of mango and tamarind. In the days of our story this land was an independent little state, not quite so large as Yorkshire. It was bounded on the east by the river Rohini, which flows into the Rapti near the present city of

The Prophecy of the Wise Men
Sidney Stanley

Gorakhpur; to the north rose the dark mountains of Nepal, and beyond these the snowy peaks of the Himalaya. The inhabitants of this land were known as Sakyas, and on the banks of the Rohini stood their capital—Kapilavatthu. Eastern names are always rather hard to remember, and, as this is an important one, which must not be forgotten, I will tell you the story of the founding of the city, and you will then understand the meaning of its name, as well as that of the tribe who possessed this land.

Long, long ago, so far back in the dim mist of bygone ages that it is impossible even to guess at the date, there was a certain King who had five sons. He reigned over a country called Potala. He had promised the Queen that he would make his youngest son heir to the throne, and when this boy grew up the four elder sons were banished. Accompanied by their sisters and a great number of attendants, they left their royal home, to seek their fortunes elsewhere. Turning their steps northward, they travelled many weary days, until at last they came to a rich and fertile land, where rivers flowed and thick forests grew, and in the far distance the white summits of the Himalaya stood up against the deep blue of the sky.

Near a pleasant river the brothers stayed their wanderings, built themselves huts of leaves, and provided their food by hunting the wild beasts in the neighbouring jungles. Now, on the banks of this river lived a hermit, a holy man, who had retired from the world to spend his days in pious meditation. Kapila, as the hermit was named, gave the brothers much wise advice, and in the end persuaded them to build a city. He marked out the boundaries with golden sand mixed with water, and when the building was finished the city was named Kapilavatthu. The word 'vatthu' means 'soil' and as the hermit Kapila had given the land on which the city stood it was called the Soil of Kapila, or Kapilavatthu.

Some time after this, the King of Potala, inquiring as to what had become of his four sons, was told the story of their adventure. When he heard how they had wandered into a strange land and founded a city of their own, he was filled with wonder at their boldness, and called them daring youths. And from that day the King's sons, and their descendants after them, were known as the Sakyas, which means 'the Daring'

or 'Enterprising.' Thus was founded the kingdom of the Sakyas, and the old stories relate that many hundred kings succeeded these adventurous youths, and ruled the land from Kapilavatthu. In the course of time a second city, named Koli, was built on the other side of the river Rohini.

Between five and six hundred years before the birth of Christ, King Suddhodana reigned over the Sakya land. He was a descendant of one of the four brothers whose story I have just told you. King Suddhodana marreid the two daughters of the King Of Koli, who was related to him. The names of the King's wives were Maya and Pajapati. Up to the time of which we are writing neither of them had any children, and it was a great grief to the King that he had no son to succeed him.

Now it happened that Queen Maya had four dreams, in which there appeared many signs and wonders, and in the last of her dreams she saw a great multitude of people who bowed down to her. As dreams were considered of importance in foretelling events, the King sent for sixty-four wise men, who were invited to the palace to explain the meaning of the Queen's dreams. A feast was prepared, and rice and honey served in gold and silver dishes; costly presents of cattle and silken robes were made to the wise men, for they were held in great honour. When they had discussed the meaning of the dreams, they told the Queen to rejoice, for she would have a son who would have on him the thirty-two marks of a great man. But there was a choice between two different kinds of greatness. "If," said the wise men, "he stays in his royal home, he will become a mighty ruler such as only appears in the world once in ten thousand years—his conquests shall extend to the far corners, of the earth, and all nations shall bow down to him. But if," the wise men continued, "he chooses to renounce the world, to leave his home and go into homelessness, shaving his head and putting on the clothes of a beggar then, then he will become a great saint—an enlightened one."

In due time a son was born to Queen Maya, and great were the rejoicings in all the land of the Sakyas. The legends tell of many signs and miracles that took place at the time of the child's birth. All nature seemed to rejoice—springs of water burst from the dry ground, cool breezes gently stirred of the forests, and a great light illumined the whole

earth. The world of spirits rejoiced, and the *devas*, or angels, made offerings of flowers to the-new-born babe.

On a mountain in Himalaya dwelt a holy man. Hearing of the birth of the child, he came to see him, and, taking him in his arms, prophesied that he would become a Buddha, or Enlightened One; "but," said the old man sadly, "I shall not live to see that come to I pass." And King Suddhodana, hearing of the babe's future greatness, bowed himself down before him.

Seven days after the birth of her son, Queen Maya died, but her sister Pajapati, the King's other wife, took care of the child as if he had been her own, and became a second mother to him. The Prince was named Siddhattha, and grew up in his father's house beloved of all.

Chapter III
The Youth of Siddhattha

You will notice that the hero of our story is called by the various names of Buddha, Siddhattha, and Gotama. Siddhattha was the name given to the Prince by his parents, like our Christian names, and Gotama was his family name. It is curious that it should still be the family name, of the chiefs of the Indian village which stands on the old site of Kapilavatthu. The meaning of Buddha is 'the Enlightened' or 'Awakened,' so it is not properly a name, but a title, which was given Gotama when he had gained the highest knowledge and become a teacher of mankind. He is often called Gotama the Buddha. There were many other titles which his followers gave their master—that of Sakyamuni, 'the Wise Man of the Sakyas,' is commonly used by the Chinese Buddhists at the present day. He was also called Sakya-sinha, 'the Lion of the Sakya Tribe,' Jina, 'the Conqueror,' Bhagavat, 'the Blessed One,' and various other titles. But in speaking of the time when the Prince lived in his father's house, as the heir to his throne, we will call him Siddhattha.

King Suddhodana was devoted to his little son, who, while still in his nurse's arms, had won the affections of all who came near him by his beauty and gentle ways. But as the King looked on the child the prophecies of the wise men came to his mind, and filled him with anxiety. "If he stays in his home, he will become a great monarch, but if he goes away into homelessness, he will become a Buddha, a teacher of mankind." And the King longed to keep his son near him, and to see him crowned with earthly greatness. He determined to surround him with every luxury, that he might rest contented in his home, and gave orders that no sad or dreadful sight was ever to come before the Prince's eyes. No one deformed or ugly was allowed to come near the palace; the young Prince was tended by beautiful and attractive nurses and waited on by a

large number of servants ready to attend to any wish he might express.

The Sakya land was a rich and fertile country; broad rivers, flowing down from the Himalaya range, watered the many rice-fields which covered the low-lying ground between the dense forests. Agriculture was the chief occupation of the Sakya people, and, as rice was their staple food, the rice crops were as important to them as are the wheat harvests to the nations of Europe and America. King Suddhodana himself owned many acres of cultivated land. It may interest you to know that the name 'Suddhodana' means 'pure rice.' This may sound a strange name to our ears, but it is really much the same as the English name 'Wheatcroft,' which must, in the first place, have been given to a man who possessed a wheat-field.

Every year there was a ploughing festival, which the King and all the Sakya lords attended. The city of Kapilavatthu was decked with flags and garlands of flowers, and there was a general air of holiday-making as the gaily dressed crowds made their way through the city gates to the place chosen for the festival. A thousand ploughs stood ready, and to each plough was yoked a pair of oxen. The King himself, as well as his ministers, took part in the ploughing. The King's plough was ornamented with gold, and the horns of his oxen were tipped with gold; the ministers' ploughs were ornamented with silver.

When Prince Siddhattha was still a young child he was taken to the ploughing festival. Probably the King was so proud of his beautiful son that he wished all the people to see him, and hail him as their future king. The royal procession left the palace in great state. It is easy to imagine the gay scene—the narrow streets crowded with men, chariots, and horses, as well as elephants, and filled with all the noise and bustle of an Eastern town. Drums were beaten to announce the procession and warn the people to clear the way, as the King passed by surrounded by his ministers, his robes glistening with gold and jewels.

On arriving at the ploughing fields the King ordered the little Prince's couch to be spread in the shade of a lofty jambu-tree, a little removed from the crowd. A rich canopy was placed over the couch, which was shaded by curtains.

While the King was away for the ploughing, the Prince's nurses, hearing the shouts and cheering of the crowd, ran out to enjoy the gay scene, meaning to return immediately; but so engrossed were they, as they watched the King and his nobles guiding their gold and silver ploughs, that they forgot all about the Prince. Suddenly noticing that the sun had travelled far to the west, the nurses hurried back, expecting to find the Prince's couch exposed to the fierce rays of an Indian sun. Great was their astonishment to see the deep shadow of the jambu-tree still sheltering the Prince, while the shadows of all the other trees had moved round with the sun. Looking inside the curtains, they found the young child sitting cross-legged, as an Indian holy man sits when he is meditating.

The attendants ran and told the King of the miracle which had taken place. When King Suddhodana arrived and saw the shadow of the tree, he marvelled greatly, and bowing down before his son did homage to him.

It is very natural that stories of miracles and wonders should be woven into the histories of the lives of great men. We must remember that at the time of which we are writing (that is, between five and six hundred years before Christ) there were no written records of events. All history was transmitted by word of mouth until long after the events had taken place; and, though the Indians have wonderful memories, it is only natural that, as time passed, legends should have been mixed with the true stories. We must take the old tales as we find them, with their historical facts often shining through a halo of glory, in the same way that the setting sun appears to us, through the mists of evening, to be clothed in robes of purple and gold. The Indian people have always believed in spirits and fairies; every tree is supposed to have its guardian spirit, and probably it was thought that the spirit of the jambu-tree would have protected the little Prince when he was left alone, and so the pretty legend of the shadow came to be invented.

When Prince Siddhattha was old enough to learn his lessons he was sent to a wise old man, who taught five hundred other Sakya children. But Siddhattha surpassed them all in knowledge; in arithmetic and in

all other branches of learning he seemed to know as much as his teacher. He also learnt to manage elephants, and one of his uncles taught him to shoot with a bow and arrow.

Siddhattha had a half-brother called Nanda, and a cousin called Devadatta, and probably the boys often played together in the lovely palace gardens which extended along the river-bank. Devadatta was a bad-tempered boy, and from the first showed an envious disposition. He could not bear that every one should think so much of his cousin Siddhattha, and throughout his life did everything he could to oppose him.

It happened that a large tree, standing on the banks of the Rohini, had been uprooted in a storm and had fallen across the river. The tree acted as a dam, and all the fields round Kapilavatthu were flooded, while the town of Koli, which stood some distance down stream, was very short of water. The tree was so heavy that the people could not get it out of the river, but Siddhattha, who was now a young man and renowned for his great strength, went down and removed it without any difficulty, though all the young Sakyas had tried in vain to do so. As the Prince was going through the royal gardens on his way to the river, a flock of wild geese passed overhead. Devadatta, seeing the geese, shot an arrow into their midst, and one of them fell, wounded, just in front of Siddhattha. He felt a tender compassion for the poor bird that lay bleeding at his feet; lifting it up he drew out the arrow and carefully bound up the wound. Presently a messenger, sent by Devadatta, arrived to claim the bird; but Siddhattha refused to give it up, saying that it belonged to him who had saved its life, not to him who had tried to kill it. This was the first quarrel between the cousins.

Now that Siddhattha had grown to manhood, the King decided that the time had come for his son to marry. He hoped that, by providing him with all the pleasures that this world can give, he would prevent the fulfilment of the prophecy that the Prince would leave his home and go into homelessness. Suddhodana had three beautiful palaces built for his son, suited to the three seasons, one for the heat of summer, one for the cold weather, and one for the rainy season. In India the climate

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THE Story OF THE Buddha

EDITH HOLLAND

The Story of The Buddha tells the legendary life of Siddhartha, founder of the Buddhist faith. He was born in Nepal in the 5th century B.C. as a prince. His father tried to protect him from sights of human suffering, but he eventually escaped palace life to embark on a spiritual quest. Siddhartha eschewed wealth and became a monk to contemplate the meaning of life. After becoming enlightened, Siddhartha is said to have traveled throughout India spreading his doctrines and founding monasteries.

"I am going to tell you the story of the life of a very great man. He was not great as the world usually regards greatness, being neither a conqueror nor a hero in any worldly sense—in fact, for many years of his life, he was a beggar. Buddha is, the name by which he is generally known; but before I begin my story I must tell you something of the lands where he lived and taught—in the great mysterious East, which is so different in every way from the part of the world we live in..."

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