

## CHAPTER 10

# THE BUDDHA'S CHIEF OPPONENTS AND SUPPORTERS

“As a solid rock is not shaken by the wind  
Even so the wise are not ruffled by praise or blame.”

— Dhṛp v. 81

**T**he Buddha worked disinterestedly for the weal of mankind, making no distinction between the rich and the poor, the high and the low. His followers and supporters were drawn both from the highest and lowest rungs of the social ladder. So spontaneous was the love and so profound was the veneration of the people, that kings and nobles, millionaires and paupers, pious folk and courtesans, men and women of all ranks, vied with one another to be of service to him and make his noble mission a success. The wealthy spent lavishly to erect suitable monasteries for him, while the poor, full of faith, demonstrated their piety in their humble way. With perfect equanimity he accepted the gifts of the rich and the poor, but showed no partiality to any. Nevertheless, he showed more compassion to the poor and the lowly. Like a bee that extracts honey from a flower without hurting it, he lived amongst his followers and supporters without causing the slightest inconvenience to any. Offerings of diverse kinds were showered on him, and he accepted them all with perfect non-attachment.

Though absolutely pure in motive and perfectly selfless in his service to humanity, yet in preaching and spreading his teaching, the Buddha had to contend against strong opposition. He was severely criticised, roundly abused, insulted and ruthlessly attacked, as no other religious teacher had been. His chief opponents were ordinary teachers of rival sects and followers of heretical schools whose traditional teachings and superstitious rites and ceremonies he justly criticised. His greatest personal enemy, who made a vain attempt to kill him, was his own brother-in-law and an erstwhile disciple—Devadatta.

### *The Buddha and Devadatta*

Devadatta was the son of King Suppabuddha and Pamitā, an aunt of the Buddha. Yasodharā was his sister. He was thus a cousin and brother-in-

law of the Buddha. He entered the order in the early part of the Buddha's ministry together with Ānanda and other Sākya princes. He could not attain any of the stages of sainthood, but was distinguished for worldly psychic powers (*pothujjanika-iddhi*). One of his chief supporters was King Ajātasattu who built a monastery for him.

During the early part of his career he led such an exemplary life that even Venerable Sāriputta went about Rājagaha extolling him. Later, overcome by worldly gain and honour, and growing jealous of the Buddha, Devadatta became so radically changed in his character that he proved to be the greatest personal enemy of the Buddha. Simultaneous with the arising of ill will in his heart towards the Buddha his psychic powers automatically ceased.

Despite his evil ways and corrupt life, he had a large following and many admirers, and some even preferred him to Venerable Sāriputta.

On one occasion he approached the Buddha and requested him to hand over the leadership of the Sangha to him as the Buddha was advanced in age. The Buddha straightaway refused, saying: "Not even to Sāriputta or Moggallāna would I hand over the Sangha. Would I then hand it over to thee?" He was enraged at this refusal and vowed vengeance. To safeguard and maintain the dignity of the Sangha the Buddha caused a proclamation to be made that Devadatta alone was responsible for anything done by him in the name of the Buddha, the Dhamma, or the Sangha.

Devadatta, therefore, conspired with King Ajātasattu to kill the Buddha. He advised Ajātasattu to kill his father and usurp the throne, while he himself decided to kill the Buddha and lead the Sangha.

Ungrateful Ajātasattu succeeded in killing his devout father, and Devadatta hired bowmen to murder the Buddha but, contrary to his expectations, all the hirelings became the Buddha's followers. Foiled in his attempt, he himself resolved to kill the Buddha. When the Buddha was walking on the slopes of Gijjhakūṭa, he climbed the Peak and mercilessly hurled a rock at the Buddha. Fortunately it struck another piece of rock and a splinter slightly wounded the Buddha's foot, causing the blood to flow. Jivaka the physician attended him and cured him.

Devadatta made another unsuccessful attempt to kill the Buddha by dispatching the elephant Nālāgiri, after infuriating him with liquor, against the Teacher. When the ferocious elephant approached the Buddha the Venerable Ānanda stepped forward to sacrifice his life for the sake of his master, but the Buddha subdued the beast by his loving kindness (*mettā*).

By this last wicked act Devadatta became extremely unpopular, and public opinion was so much against him that the king was compelled to withdraw his patronage. Devadatta fell into disrepute and all his favours decreased.

He now decided to live by deceit. His fertile brain devised another seemingly peaceful plan.

With the help of equally evil-minded bhikkhus such as Kokālika, he thought of causing a schism in the order. He requested the Buddha to enforce the following five rules among the bhikkhus:

- i) That monks should dwell all their lives in the forest.
- ii) That they should live on alms begged.
- iii) That they should wear *paṃsukūla* robes (i.e., robes made from rags collected from the dust-heap and cemeteries.)
- iv) That they should live at the foot of a tree.
- v) That they should not eat fish or flesh throughout life.

This he did, knowing fully well that the Buddha would not assent thereto. He desired to make Buddha's refusal a pretext for disparaging the Buddha, and thereby winning the support of the ignorant masses.

When this request was made the compassionate and tolerant Buddha declared that his disciples were free to adopt these rules or not, but he would not make them compulsory for all.

Devadatta made this refusal a cause for a schism in the order. He appealed to the bhikkhus, saying: "Brethren, whose words are the nobler, the words of the Tathāgata or the words which I myself have uttered? Whoever desires release from suffering, let him come with me."

Newly ordained monks, who were not conversant with the Dhamma, apparently approved of his demands and went over to him. Accompanied by them, he went to Gayāsīsa. But Venerable Sāriputta and Moggallāna, on the advice of the Buddha, went there and succeeded in winning them back after explaining the Dhamma to them.

Thereafter evil days fell upon Devadatta. He fell grievously ill, and before his death he sincerely repented and desired to see the Buddha. But his bad kamma interfered and he had to die a miserable death without seeing the Buddha. However, he sought refuge in the Buddha at the last moment.

Although he suffers in a woeful state for his heinous crimes, yet as a result of the holy life he led during the early part of his career, it is stated that he would become a *paccekabuddha* named Atthissara in the distant future.

### *Anāthapiṇḍika*

The chief supporter of the Buddha was Anāthapiṇḍika the millionaire. Amongst his lay-followers he was regarded as the foremost alms-giver (*dāyaka*).

The original name of Anāthapiṇḍika, which means the "Feeder of the Helpless," was Sudatta. Owing to his unparalleled generosity he was latterly known by his new name. His birthplace was Sāvattihī.

One day he visited his brother-in-law in Rājagaha to transact some business. His brother-in-law did not come forward as usual to welcome him but Sudatta found him in the back yard making preparations for a feast. On inquiry, to his indescribable joy, he understood that those arrangements were being made to entertain the Buddha on the following day. The utterance of the mere word "Buddha" roused his interest and he longed to see him. As he was told that the Buddha was living in the Sītavana forest in the neighbourhood and that he could see him on the following morning, he went to bed. However his desire to visit the Buddha was so intense that he had a sleepless night and he arose at an unusual hour in the morning to start out for the Sītavana. It appears that, owing to his great faith in the Buddha, a light emanated from his body. As he proceeded to the spot he passed through a cemetery. It was pitch-dark and a fear arose in him. He thought of turning back. Then Sīvaka, a Yakkha, himself invisible, encouraged him, saying:

"A hundred elephants and horses too,  
Ay, and a hundred chariots drawn by mules,  
A hundred thousand maidens, in their ears  
Bejewelled rings: all are not worth  
The sixteenth fraction of a single stride.  
Advance, O citizen, go forward thou!  
Advance for thee is better than retreat."<sup>147</sup>

His fear vanished and faith in the Buddha arose in its place. Light appeared again, and he courageously sped forward. Nevertheless, all this happened a second time and yet a third time.

Ultimately he reached Sītavana where the Buddha was pacing up and down in the open air anticipating his visit. The Buddha addressed him by his family name, Sudatta, and called him to his presence.

Anāthapiṇḍika was pleased to hear the Buddha address him thus and respectfully inquired whether the Buddha rested happily.

The Buddha replied:

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147. Saṃutta Nikāya, Part 1, p. 272

“Surely at all times happily doth rest  
 The arahant in whom all fire’s extinct.  
 Who cleaves not to sensuous desires,  
 Cool all his being, rid of all the germs  
 That bring new life, all cumbrances cut out,  
 Subdued the pain and pining of the heart,  
 Calm and serene he rests happily  
 For in his mind he hath attained to peace.”<sup>148</sup>

Hearing the Dhamma, he became a *sotāpanna* (stream-winner), and invited the Buddha to spend the rainy season at Sāvattthī. The Buddha accepted the invitation suggesting that Buddhas take pleasure in solitude. Anāthapiṇḍika, returning to Sāvattthī, bought the park belonging to Prince Jeta at a price determined by covering, so the story goes, the whole site with gold coins, and erected the famous Jetavana Monastery at a great cost. Here the Buddha spent nineteen rainy seasons. This monastery where the Buddha spent the major part of his life was the place where he delivered many of his sermons.

Several discourses which were of particular interest to laymen were delivered to Anāthapiṇḍika, although he refrained from asking any question of the Buddha, lest he should weary him.

Once the Buddha discoursing on generosity reminded Anāthapiṇḍika that alms given to the order of monks together with the Buddha is very meritorious; but more meritorious than such alms is the building of a monastery for the use of the order; more meritorious than such monasteries is seeking refuge in the Buddha, the Dhamma, and the Sangha; more meritorious than seeking refuge in the Buddha, the Dhamma, and the Sangha is the observance of the five precepts; more meritorious than such observance is meditation on loving kindness (*mettā*) for a moment; and most meritorious of all is the development of insight as to the fleeting nature of things (*vipassanā*).<sup>149</sup>

It is evident from this discourse that generosity is the first stage on the way of Buddhist life. More important than generosity is the observance of at least the five rules of regulated behaviour which tend to the disciplining of words and deeds. Still more important and more beneficial is the cultivation of such ennobling virtues like loving kindness which lead to self-development. Most important and most beneficial of all self-discipline is the sincere effort to understand things as they truly are.

148. Samyutta Nikāya, Part 1, p. 273

149. See *Gradual Sayings*, vol. iv, pp. 264–265

Commenting on the four kinds of bliss a layman may enjoy, the Buddha declared:

There are these four kinds of bliss to be won by the householder who enjoys the pleasures of sense from time to time and when occasion offers—the bliss of ownership (*atthi-sukha*), the bliss of wealth (*bhoga-sukha*), the bliss of debtlessness (*anaṇa-sukha*), and the bliss of blamelessness (*anavajja-sukha*).<sup>150</sup>

What is the bliss of ownership?

Herein a clansman has wealth acquired by energetic striving, amassed by strength of arm, won by sweat, lawful, and lawfully gotten. At the thought, wealth is mine, acquired by energetic striving, lawfully gotten, bliss comes to him, satisfaction comes to him. This is called the bliss of ownership.

What is the bliss of wealth?

Herein a clansman by means of wealth acquired by energetic striving, both enjoys his wealth and does meritorious deeds therewith. At the thought, by means of wealth acquired, I both enjoy my wealth and do meritorious deeds, bliss comes to him, satisfaction comes to him. This is called the bliss of wealth.

What is the bliss of debtlessness?

Herein a clansman owes no debt, great or small, to anyone. At the thought, I owe no debt, great or small, to anyone, bliss comes to him, satisfaction comes to him. This is called the bliss of debtlessness.

What is the bliss of blamelessness?

Herein the ariyan disciple is blessed with blameless action of body, blameless action of speech, blameless action of mind. At the thought, I am blessed with blameless action of body, speech and mind, bliss comes to him, satisfaction comes to him. This is called the bliss of blamelessness.

(The Buddha continued:)

“Winning the bliss of debtlessness a man  
May then recall the bliss of really having.  
When he enjoys the bliss of wealth, he sees  
’Tis such by wisdom. When he sees he knows.  
Thus is he wise indeed in both respects.  
But these have not one-sixteenth of the bliss  
(That cometh to a man) of blamelessness.”

On another occasion when the Buddha visited the house of Anāthapiṇḍika, he heard an unusual uproar inside the house and inquired what it was.

150. *Gradual Sayings*, vol. ii, pp. 77–78. *Aṅuttara Nikāya*, vol. ii, pp. 67–68.

“Lord, it is Sujātā, my daughter-in-law, who lives with us. She is rich and has been brought here from a wealthy family. She pays no heed to her mother-in-law, nor to her father-in-law, nor to her husband; neither does she venerate, honour, reverence nor respect the Exalted One,” replied Anāthapiṇḍika.

The Buddha called her to his presence and preached an illuminative discourse on seven kinds of wives that exist even in modern society as it was in the days of old.

“Whoso is wicked in mind, ill-disposed, pitiless, fond of other (men) neglecting husband, a prostitute, bent on harassing—such a one is called “a troublesome wife.”

Whoso wishes to squander whatever profits, though little, that the husband gains whether by crafts, trade, or plough—such a one is called “a thievish wife.”

Whoso is not inclined to do anything, lazy, gluttonous, harsh, cruel, fond of bad speech, lives domineering the industrious—such a one is called “a lordly wife.”

Whoso is ever kind and compassionate, protects her husband like a mother her son, guards the accumulated wealth of her husband—such a one is called “a motherly wife.”

Whoso is respectful towards her husband just as a younger sister towards her elder brother, modest, lives in accordance with her husband’s wishes—such a one is called “a sisterly wife.”

Whoso rejoices at the sight of her husband even as a friend on seeing a companion who has come after a long time, is of noble birth, virtuous and chaste—such a one is called “a friendly wife.”

Whoso, when threatened with harm and punishment, is not angry but calm, endures all things of her husband with no wicked heart, free from hatred, lives in accordance with her husband’s wishes—such a one is called “a handmaid wife.”<sup>151</sup>

The Buddha describing the characteristics of the seven kinds of wives remarked that of them the troublesome wife (*vadhaka-bhariyā*), the thievish wife (*cora-bhariyā*), and the lordly wife (*ayya-bhariyā*), are bad and undesirable ones, while the motherly wife (*mātu-bhariyā*), sisterly wife (*bhagini-bhariyā*), friendly wife (*sakhī-bhariyā*), and handmaid wife (*dāsi-bhariyā*), are good and praiseworthy ones.

“These, Sujātā, are the seven kinds of wives a man may have: and which of them are you?”

“Lord, let the Exalted One think of me as a handmaid wife (*dāsi-bhariyā*) from this day forth.”

151. *Gradual Sayings*, vol. iv, pp. 56–58. *Aṅguttara Nikāya*, vol. iv, pp. 92–93.

Anāthapiṇḍika used to visit the Buddha daily and, finding that people were disappointed in the absence of the Buddha, wished to know from the Venerable Ānanda whether there was a possibility for the devout followers to pay their respects when the Buddha was on his preaching tours. This matter was reported to the Buddha with the result that the Ānanda-bodhi tree,<sup>152</sup> which stands to this day, was planted at the entrance to the monastery.

*Puññalakkhaṇā*, a very virtuous lady, was his wife. Mahā Subhaddā, Cūṭa Subhaddā, and Sumanā were his three devout daughters. The elder two had attained stream-entry (*sotāpatti*), while the youngest was a once-returner (*sakadāgāī*). His only son Kāla, who was at first irreligious, later became a stream-enterer (*sotāpanna*) by the skilfulness of the father.

Anāthapiṇḍika breathed his last after hearing a profound discourse from Venerable Sāriputta.<sup>153</sup> As he was about to die he sent a messenger to inform the Buddha that he was seriously ill, that he paid his homage to him and to request the Venerable Sāriputta to have compassion on him and visit him in his house. As invited, the Venerable Sāriputta, accompanied by Venerable Ānanda, proceeded to his house and inquired about his health. He replied that he was suffering from an acute pain and that he saw no signs of progress.

The Venerable Sāriputta then preached a profound discourse. Tears came to his eyes at the close of the sermon. Venerable Ānanda seeing him in tears asked him whether he was sinking. Anāthapiṇḍika answered: "Not at all, Venerable Sir. Though I have long attended on the Master and his disciples, never did I hear such a discourse."

"Such profound discourses are not taught to the white-robed laymen as they cannot comprehend their meaning but are reserved for advanced disciples," replied Venerable Sāriputta.

But Anāthapiṇḍika begged Venerable Sāriputta to expound such intricate Dhamma to the laity as well for there would be some who could understand.

Not long before the departure of these two great disciples Anāthapiṇḍika passed away and was immediately reborn in Tusita heaven.

At night Deva Anāthapiṇḍika, illuminating the whole Jeta Grove, came up to the Buddha, saluted him, and extolling the virtues of Venerable Sāriputta, expressed his pleasure on seeing the Buddha and his disciples residing in his monastery, and said:

152. See page 79.

153. Majjhima Nikāya iii, 262; *Further Dialogues of the Buddha*, vol. ii, pp. 302–305.

“Goodwill and wisdom, mind by method trained,  
The highest conduct on good morals based,  
This maketh mortals pure, not rank nor wealth.”<sup>154</sup>

### **Visākhā**

Visākhā was the devout and generous daughter of millionaire Dhanañ-jaya. Her mother was Sumanā Devi, and her beloved grandfather was millionaire Meṇḍaka.

When she was only seven years old, the Buddha happened to visit her birth place, Bhaddiya, in the kingdom of Anga. Her grandfather, hearing of Buddha’s visit, said to her: “Dear girl, this is a happy day for you and a happy day for me. Summon the five hundred maidens who are your attendants, mount five hundred chariots, and accompanied by your five hundred slave-maidens, go forth to welcome the Buddha.”

Readily she agreed and, as advised, went up to the Buddha, saluted him and sat respectfully at one side. The Buddha was pleased with her refined manners and he preached the Dhamma to her and others. Though young in age, she was comparatively far advanced from a moral standpoint. As such, immediately after hearing the Dhamma, she attained the first stage of sainthood (*sotāpatti*) despite her early age.

Books state that even in the prime of her youth she possessed masculine strength and was gifted with all womanly charms.<sup>155</sup> Her hair was like a peacock’s tail and when loosened it reached the hem of her skirt and then the ends of the hair curled and turned upwards. Her lips were of a bright red colour and were smooth and soft to the touch. Her teeth were white and were evenly set without interstices and shone like a row of diamonds. Her skin, without the use of any cosmetic, was as smooth as a blue lotus-wreath and was of a golden colour. She retained her youthful appearance although she bore several children.

Endowed with these five kinds of feminine beauty—hair, flesh, bone, skin and youth—young Visākhā excelled both in worldly wisdom and spiritual insight.

When she was about fifteen or sixteen years old, on a certain festival day, she went on foot with her retinue in a holiday spirit to the river to bathe. Suddenly there arose an unexpected shower, and all but young Visākhā ungraciously ran as fast as they could and entered a hall where there were some brahmins who had come in search of a suitable maiden possessed of the five kinds of beauty for their young master. Cultured

154. Saṃyutta Nikāya, Part i, p. 80.

155. *Kesa-kalyāṇa*, *maṃsa-kalyāṇa*, *aṭṭhi-kalyāṇa*, *chavi-kalyāṇa* and *vaya-kalyāṇa*.

Visākhā, without any particular haste, gracefully proceeded at her usual gait and entered the hall with garments and ornaments all wet. The inquisitive brahmins criticised her for not quickening up her pace as others had done and thus escaping being drenched in the rain.

Talented Visākhā rose to the occasion and gave an extempore discourse on deportment according to her view. She said that she could have run even faster but she refrained from doing so purposely. Then she explained that it was not becoming for a King, adorned with all jewels, to gird up his loins and run in the palace-court. Likewise it is not becoming for a fully caparisoned state elephant to run; it should move about with the natural grace of an elephant. Monks also incur criticism when they run about like ordinary laymen. Likewise it is not a dignified spectacle to see a woman running about like a man.

Brahmins were pleased with her instructive talk and thought that she was an ideal wife for their master. Accordingly, arrangements were made to give her in marriage to their master, Puññavaddhana, himself the son of a millionaire named Migāra, who was not a follower of the Buddha.

The marriage festival was conducted on an elaborate scale. On the wedding day, in addition to a large dowry and an exquisitely rich ornament, her wise father gave her the following admonitions:

1. Do not carry outside the indoor fire.<sup>156</sup>
2. Do not take inside the outdoor fire.
3. Give only to those that give.
4. Do not give to those that do not give.
5. Give both to those that give and do not give.
6. Sit happily.
7. Eat happily.
8. Sleep happily.
9. Tend the fire.
10. Honour the household divinities.

Their implied meaning is as follows:

1. The wife should not speak ill of her husband and parents-in-law to others. Neither should their shortcomings nor household quarrels be reported elsewhere.
2. A wife should not listen to the reports and stories of other households.

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156. Here fire signifies slandering.

3. Things should be lent to those who do return them.
4. No article should be lent to those who do not return them.
5. Poor kinsfolk and friends should be helped even if they do not repay.
6. A wife should sit in a becoming way. On seeing her parents-in-law or her husband, she should keep standing and not sit.
7. Before partaking of her meals, a wife should first see that her parents-in-law and husband are served. She should also see that her servants are well cared for.
8. Before sleep a wife should see that all doors are closed, furniture is safe, servants have performed their duties, and that parents-in-law have retired. As a rule a wife should rise early in the morning and, unless unwell, she should not sleep during the day.
9. Parents-in-law and husband should be regarded as fire. One should deal carefully with them as one would deal with fire.
10. Parents-in-law and husband should be regarded as divinities. It is noteworthy that the Buddha himself refers to parents-in-law as divinities (*sassudevā*).

On the day she arrived in Sāvattihī, the city of her husband, she was showered with various presents sent from people of all ranks according to their status and ability. But so kind and generous was she that she distributed them amongst the donors themselves with a kind message, and treated all the residents of the city as her own kinsfolk. By this noble gesture on the very first day she came to her husband's home, she became endeared to all the people of the city.

There is an incident in her life which reveals her dutiful kindness even towards animals. Hearing that her well-bred mare gave birth to a foal in the middle of the night, immediately she repaired to the stable with her female attendants bearing torches in their hands, and attended to all the mare's needs with the greatest care and attention.

As her father-in-law was a staunch follower of Nigaṇṭha Nātāputta, he invited a large number of naked ascetics to his house for alms. On their arrival Visākhā was requested to come and render homage to these so-called arahants. She was delighted to hear the word arahant and hurried to the hall only to see naked ascetics devoid of all modesty. The sight was too unbearable for a refined lady like Visākhā. She reproached her father-in-law and retired to her quarters without entertaining them. The naked ascetics took offence and found fault with the millionaire for having brought a female follower of the Ascetic Gotama to his house.

They asked him to expel her from the house immediately. The millionaire pacified them.

One day he sat on a costly seat and began to eat some sweet rice porridge from a golden bowl. At that moment a bhikkhu entered the house for alms. Visākhā was fanning her father-in-law and without informing him of his presence she moved aside so that he might see him. Although he saw him he continued eating as if he had not seen him.

Visākhā politely told the bhikkhu: "Pass on, Venerable Sir, my father-in-law is eating stale fare."

The ignorant millionaire, misconstruing her words, was so provoked that he ordered the bowl to be removed and Visākhā to be expelled from the house.

Visākhā was the favourite of all the inmates of the house, and so nobody dared to touch her.

But Visākhā, disciplined as she was, would not accept without protest such treatment even from her father-in-law. She politely said: "Father, this is no sufficient reason why I should leave your house. I was not brought here by you like a slave girl from some ford. Daughters, whose parents are alive, do not leave like this. It is for this very reason that my father, when I set out to come here, summoned eight clansmen and entrusted me to them, saying: 'If there be any fault in my daughter, investigate it.' Send word to them and let them investigate my guilt or innocence."

The millionaire agreed to her reasonable proposal and summoning them said: "At a time of festivity, while I was sitting and eating sweet milk rice-porridge from a golden bowl, this girl said that I was eating what was unclean. Convict her of this fault and expel her from the house."

Visākhā proved her innocence stating—"That is not precisely what I said. When a certain bhikkhu was standing at the door for alms, my father-in-law was eating sweet milk rice-porridge, ignoring him. Thinking to myself that my father without performing any good deed in this life, is only consuming the merits of past deeds, I told the bhikkhu: 'Pass on, Venerable Sir, my father-in-law is eating stale fare.' What fault of mine is there in this?"

She was acquitted of the charge, and the father-in-law himself agreed she was not guilty.

But the spiteful millionaire charged her again for having gone behind the house with male and female attendants in the middle watch of the night.

When she explained that she actually did so in order to attend on a mare in travail, the clansmen remarked that their noble daughter had done an exemplary act, which even a slave-girl would not do. She was thus acquitted of the second charge too.

But the revengeful millionaire would not rest until she was found guilty. Next time he found fault with her for no wrong of hers. He said that before her departure from home her father gave her ten admonitions. For instance, he said to her: "The indoor fire is not to be taken out of doors. Is it really possible to live without giving fire even to our neighbours on both sides of us?" questioned the millionaire.

She availed herself of the opportunity to explain all the ten admonitions in detail to his entire satisfaction.

The millionaire was silenced and he had no other charges to make.

Having proved her innocence, self-respecting Visākhā now desired to leave the house as she was ordered to do so at first.

The millionaire's attitude towards Visākhā was completely changed, and he was compelled to seek pardon from his daughter-in-law for what he had uttered through ignorance.

Forbearing Visākhā, in accordance with her true Buddhist spirit, granted him pardon on condition that he would give complete freedom to her to carry on her religious activities as she desired. Her father-in-law readily agreed to this and granted her full freedom to perform her religious activities.

Now Visākhā lost no time in inviting the Buddha to the house for alms. The Buddha came and had his meal. After the meal was over the Buddha expounded a sermon. The millionaire sat behind a curtain and listened to the sermon. At the end of the discourse he became *sotāpanna* and acknowledged his boundless gratitude to his daughter-in-law for having initiated him into the true path of deliverance and emotionally remarked that he would hereafter regard Visākhā as his mother.

Later on when she bore a son she called him Migāra.

On the following day the Buddha visited her house, and on that occasion her mother-in-law heard the Dhamma and became a *sotāpanna* (Stream-winner).

By her tact, wisdom, and patience she gradually succeeded in converting her husband's household to a happy Buddhist home.

Daily Visākhā used to give alms to the Sangha at her own house. Both in the forenoon and afternoon she used to visit the monastery to minister to the needs of the Sangha and hear sermons from the Buddha. Suppiyā, another devout Buddhist lady, usually accompanied her during her visits.

Visākhā was so generous and so serviceable to the Sangha that once she approached the Buddha and asked for the following eight boons:

1. To give robes to the Sangha during the rainy season as long as she lived.
2. To provide alms for the bhikkhus coming to Sāvattihī.
3. To provide alms for those going out of Sāvattihī.
4. To give food for sick bhikkhus.
5. To give food for those who attend on the sick.
6. To give medicine for the sick bhikkhus.
7. To give rice-gruel for bhikkhus.
8. To give bathing garments for nuns.

The Buddha granted these boons to her.

One day Visākhā happened to visit the monastery, decked in her best garment, presented to her by her father as a dowry. But as she thought it was unseemly to see the Buddha so gaily decked, she made a bundle of it, gave it to the slave-girl and went to the Buddha, dressed in another garment given to her by her father-in-law. After the sermon she left the monastery accompanied by the slave-girl who forgot to take the bundle which was placed in her custody. Venerable Ānanda saw it and, as instructed by the Buddha, kept it in a safe place to be returned to the owner. Visākhā, on hearing that the bundle was inadvertently left by the maid, asked her to bring it back unless Venerable Ānanda had touched it. When what had happened was reported to Visākhā, she went to the Buddha and expressed her desire to do something beneficial with the money that would be realised by selling the garment. The Buddha advised her to erect a monastery at the east gate for the use of the Sangha. As no one had the means to buy the costly garment, she herself bought it back and erected a monastery at a great cost and named it Pub-bārāma. As invited by Visākhā, the Buddha and his disciples spent the Vassāna period in this new spacious monastery. Great was Visākhā's joy when the Buddha spent six rainy seasons there.

Books state that the kind Visākhā, instead of chastising the slave-girl for her apparent negligence, transferred to her a share of the merit acquired by erecting the monastery, because the slave-girl had given the occasion for this good deed.

On various occasions several discourses were delivered to Visākhā by the Buddha. In one discourse the Buddha spoke on the observance of the eight precepts by laymen on *uposatha* days,<sup>157</sup> which observance prevails in almost all Buddhist countries in Asia up to this day.

Dealing with the eight qualities that make a woman seek birth in happy states, the Buddha said:

“Active, alert to cherish him always,  
Not to that man who brings her every joy  
She offers slight, nor will a good wife move  
To wrath her husband by some spiteful word;  
And she reveres all whom her lord doth honour  
For she is wise. Deft, nimble, up betimes,  
She minds his wealth amid his folk at work  
And sweetly orders all. A wife like this,  
Who with her husband’s wish and will complies  
Is born again where lovely devas dwell.<sup>158</sup>

In another discourse the Buddha referring to the eight qualities in a woman that tend to weal and happiness in this world and in the next spoke as follows:

“Herein, Visākhā, a woman is capable at her work, she manages the servants, in her ways she is lovely to her lord, she guards his wealth.

“Herein, Visākhā, a woman is accomplished in trustful confidence (*saddhā*), virtue (*sīla*), charity (*cāga*) and wisdom (*paññā*).”<sup>159</sup>

Being a lady of many parts, she played an important role in various activities connected with the *sāsana*.<sup>160</sup> At times she was deputed by the Buddha to settle disputes that arose amongst bhikkhunis. Some Vinaya rules were also laid down for bhikkhus owing to her intervention.

Owing to her magnanimity she was regarded as the chief benefactress of the *sāsana* and the greatest female supporter of the Buddha.

By her dignified conduct, graceful deportment, refined manners, courteous speech, obedience and reverence to elders, compassion to those who were less fortunate, kind hospitality, and religious zeal, she won the hearts of all who knew her.

Books state that she had the good fortune to be the happy mother of ten fortunate sons and ten fortunate daughters. She died at the ripe age of one hundred and twenty.

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157. Usually the 1st, 8th, 15th, and 23rd of the lunar month are regarded as the *uposatha* or holy days when lay followers observe the following eight precepts (*aṭṭhasīla*): abstinence from 1) killing, 2) stealing, 3) incelibacy, 4) lying, 5) liquor, 6) eating food after midday, 7) dancing, singing, music, unseemly shows, using garlands, perfumes, unguents, or ornaments, and 8) using high and luxurious seats.

Though, as a rule, they are sometimes observed on *uposatha* days, there is no objection to practising them on any convenient day—the object being to control deeds, words, and five senses.

158. *Gradual Sayings*, iv. pp. 178–179.

159. *Gradual Sayings*, iv. pp. 177–178.

160. *Sāsana* (dispensation) is the Pali term applied to the whole Buddhist church.

### *Jivaka the Fosterling*<sup>161</sup>

Jivaka was the celebrated physician of the Buddha.

Immediately after his birth he was placed in a casket and was cast away by his mother, a courtesan, on a dust heap by the road side.

Prince Abhaya, a son of King Bimbisāra, who happened to pass that way, saw the helpless infant surrounded by crows, and discovering that he was alive, caused him to be given to the care of the nurses.

As he was found alive he was named Jivaka. Being adopted by a prince, he was called Komārabhacca.

Growing up, he became a skilful physician and surgeon. Books state that he made two successful operations on a millionaire who was suffering from a severe headache.

He used to attend on the Buddha three times a day.

When the Buddha's foot was wounded by a splinter caused by the hurling of a rock by Devadatta, it was Jivaka who attended on him and healed him.<sup>162</sup>

Realising the manifold advantages of having a monastery close to his residence, he erected one in his mango park. After the consecration ceremony of this monastery, he became a stream-winner (*sotāpanna*).

Jivaka Sutta,<sup>163</sup> which deals with the question of eating flesh, was delivered by the Buddha to Jivaka.

It was Jivaka who induced King Ajātasattu to visit the Buddha after his parricide.

At his request the Buddha enjoined upon his disciples to take physical exercise such as sweeping etc.



161. This story is found in Vin. Mahavagga 8, 1. (Ed.)

162. See page 88.

163. Majjhima Nikāya, No. 55.