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Siddhartha

Eine indische Dichtung

Hermann Hesse

1922

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Hermann Hesse

Translated from the German by Ether Library

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An Indian Poem

Original title · *Siddhartha. Eine indische Dichtung*

Hermann Hesse (1877–1962)

Translated from the German by Ether Library

First published in 1922 by S. Fischer Verlag, Berlin.

A Note on the Translation

This is a complete translation of Hermann Hesse's *Siddhartha. Eine indische Dichtung*, made directly from the German. No earlier English version was used as its basis. The source is a public-domain transcription of the first edition, published by S. Fischer in Berlin in 1922.

Hesse called the book a *Dichtung*, the German word for a work of imaginative literature, and a word that keeps something of “poetry” in it. He did not call it a novel or a tale. We keep his claim in the subtitle, *An Indian Poem*, although the poem is written in prose: a prose of long, chanting sentences, of words and phrases that return like a refrain. Those returns are the music of the book, so they have been kept, and a phrase that comes back is rendered the same way each time it comes back. Where Hesse's sentence is long, ours is long.

The book has two parts, each with Hesse's dedication, and twelve chapters with his titles. Each of the 524 paragraphs of the original appears here as one paragraph, including the six lines of the verses Siddhartha makes for Kamala.

A few words needed a decision. The priest is a *Brahmin*, and the absolute is *Brahman*, as English can tell them apart. Gotama is called by his followers *the Exalted One* (*der Erhabene*) and *the Perfected One* (*der Vollendete*). The wandering ascetics keep their name, *Samanas*. Hesse coined *Kindermenschen* for the people of the world who live by their wishes and cares; we have written *the child people*, which is as odd in English as the coinage is in German, rather than “childlike people,” which would explain it away. *Sansara* and *Nirwana* appear in their English forms, *Samsara* and *Nirvana*.

In chapter VII, “Samsara,” the transcription repeats a fragment of one sentence inside the sentence before it; we have restored the passage by its sense. The Korean edition of this book in our series made the same restoration.

Names keep their Indian form as Hesse wrote them (Gotama, Govinda, Kamaswami, Vasudeva). Spelling and punctuation are American. There are no

translator's notes.

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Part One

Dedicated to Romain Rolland, revered friend

The Brahmin's Son

In the shade of the house, in the sun of the riverbank by the boats, in the shade of the sal forest, in the shade of the fig tree, Siddhartha grew up, the handsome son of the Brahmin, the young falcon, together with Govinda, his friend, the Brahmin's son. The sun browned his fair shoulders on the riverbank, at bathing, at the holy ablutions, at the holy sacrifices. Shade flowed into his black eyes in the mango grove, at the boys' games, at his mother's singing, at the holy sacrifices, at the teachings of his father, the scholar, at the conversation of the wise. For a long time now Siddhartha had taken part in the conversation of the wise, had practiced debate with Govinda, had practiced with Govinda the art of contemplation, the service of meditation. Already he knew how to speak the Om soundlessly, the word of words, to speak it soundlessly into himself with the in-breath, to speak it soundlessly out of himself with the out-breath, with his soul gathered, his brow surrounded by the radiance of the clear-thinking mind. Already he knew how to be aware of Atman in the depths of his being, indestructible, one with the universe.

Joy leapt in his father's heart over the son, the quick learner, the one who thirsted for knowledge; he saw a great sage and priest growing up in him, a prince among the Brahmins.

Delight leapt in his mother's breast when she saw him, when she saw him walk, when she saw him sit down and rise, Siddhartha, the strong, the handsome, who walked on slender legs and greeted her with perfect grace of manner.

Love stirred in the hearts of the young daughters of the Brahmins when Siddhartha walked through the lanes of the town, with his luminous brow, with his kingly eye, with his narrow hips.

But more than all of them Govinda loved him, his friend, the Brahmin's son. He loved Siddhartha's eye and his gracious voice, he loved his walk and the perfect grace of his movements, he loved everything Siddhartha did and said, and most of all he loved his mind, his high, fiery thoughts, his ardent will, his high calling. Govinda knew: this one will not become a common Brahmin, not a lazy official of the sacrifice, not a greedy dealer in magic spells, not a vain, empty orator, not a wicked, deceitful priest, and not a good, stupid sheep in the herd of the many either. No, and he too, Govinda, did not want to become one of those, a Brahmin like ten thousand others. He wanted to follow Siddhartha, the beloved, the splendid one. And if Siddhartha ever became a god, if he ever entered among the radiant ones, then Govinda wanted to follow him, as his friend, as his companion, as his servant, as his spear bearer, his shadow.

So everyone loved Siddhartha. To everyone he gave joy, to everyone he was a delight.

But he, Siddhartha, gave himself no joy, he was no delight to himself. Walking the rosy paths of the fig garden, sitting in the bluish shade of the grove of contemplation, washing his limbs in the daily bath of atonement, sacrificing in the deep-shaded mango wood, perfect in the grace of his gestures, loved by all, the joy of all, he still carried no joy in his heart. Dreams came to him, and restless thoughts, flowing from the water of the river, sparkling from the stars of the night, melting from the rays of the sun; dreams came to him and a restlessness of the soul, rising in smoke from the sacrifices, breathed from the verses of the Rig Veda, trickling from the teachings of the old Brahmins.

Siddhartha had begun to nurse discontent in himself. He had begun to feel that the love of his father, and the love of his mother, and the love of his friend Govinda too, would not make him happy always and for all time, would not quiet him, not sate him, not be enough for him. He had begun to suspect that his venerable father and his other teachers, that the wise Brahmins had already shared with him the most and the best of their wisdom, that they had already poured their fullness into his waiting vessel, and the vessel was not full, the mind was not satisfied, the soul was not calm, the heart not stilled. The ablutions were good, but they were water; they did not wash away sin, they did not heal the mind's thirst, they did not ease the heart's anguish. Excellent were the sacrifices and the invocation of the gods—but was that everything? Did the sacrifices bring happiness? And what about the gods? Was it really Prajapati who had created the world? Was it not Atman, He, the Only One, the All-One? Were the gods not forms, created like you and me, subject to time, perishable? Was it good, then, was it right, was it a meaningful and supreme act, to sacrifice to the gods? To whom else was one to sacrifice, to whom else was one to offer worship, but to Him, the Only One, Atman? And where was Atman to be found, where did He dwell, where did His eternal heart beat, where else but in one's own self, in the innermost, in the indestructible, which each person carried within? But where, where was this self, this innermost, this ultimate? It was not flesh and bone, it was not thought nor consciousness, so the wisest taught. Where, where then was it? To press through to that place, to the self, to me, to Atman—was there another way worth seeking? Ah, and no one showed this way, no one knew it, not his father, not the teachers and sages, not the holy songs of sacrifice! They knew everything, the Brahmins and their holy books, they knew everything, they had concerned themselves with everything and with more than everything, the creation of the world, the ori-

gin of speech, of food, of breathing in, of breathing out, the ordering of the senses, the deeds of the gods—they knew an endless amount—but was it worth anything to know all this if one did not know the One and Only, the most important thing, the only important thing?

Certainly, many verses of the holy books, especially in the Upanishads of the Sama Veda, spoke of this innermost and ultimate, glorious verses. “Your soul is the whole world,” was written there, and it was written that a man in sleep, in deep sleep, enters into his innermost and dwells in Atman. Wonderful wisdom stood in these verses; all the knowledge of the wisest stood gathered here in magic words, pure as honey gathered by bees. No, the enormous store of insight that lay here, gathered and preserved by countless generations of wise Brahmins, was not to be held in low regard.—But where were the Brahmins, where the priests, where the sages or penitents who had succeeded not merely in knowing this deepest knowledge but in living it? Where was the knowing one who could conjure that being-at-home in Atman out of sleep and into waking, into life, into every step, into word and deed? Siddhartha knew many venerable Brahmins, his father above all, the pure one, the scholar, the most venerable. His father was to be admired, quiet and noble was his bearing, pure his life, wise his word; fine and noble thoughts dwelt behind his brow—but he too, who knew so much, did he live in bliss, did he have peace, was he not also merely a seeker, a thirsting one? Did he not have to drink again and again at holy springs, a thirsting man, at the sacrifice, at the books, at the disputations of the Brahmins? Why did he, the blameless one, have to wash away sin every day, strive every day for purification, every day anew? Was Atman not within him, then, did the primal spring not flow in his own heart? That was what one had to find, the primal spring in one’s own self; that was what one

had to make one's own! Everything else was seeking, was detour, was going astray.

Such were Siddhartha's thoughts, this was his thirst, this his suffering.

Often he recited to himself the words of a Chandogya Upanishad: "Truly, the name of Brahman is Satyam—verily, whoever knows this enters the heavenly world every day." Often it seemed near, the heavenly world, but never had he reached it entirely, never quenched the final thirst. And of all the wise and wisest men he knew and whose instruction he enjoyed, of all of them there was not one who had reached it entirely, the heavenly world, who had entirely quenched it, the eternal thirst.

"Govinda," Siddhartha said to his friend, "Govinda, my dear, come with me under the banyan tree; let us give ourselves to meditation."

They went to the banyan tree, they sat down, Siddhartha here, Govinda twenty paces farther on. As he sat down, ready to speak the Om, Siddhartha murmured the verse over to himself:

Om is the bow, the arrow is the soul,
Brahman is the arrow's target,
That one should hit unswervingly.

When the usual time of the meditation exercise had passed, Govinda rose. Evening had come; it was time to perform the ablution of the evening hour. He called Siddhartha's name. Siddhartha did not answer. Siddhartha sat absorbed, his eyes fixed rigidly on a very distant goal, the tip of his tongue showing a little between his teeth; he seemed not to breathe. So he sat, wrapped in meditation, thinking Om, his soul sent out as an arrow toward Brahman.

Once Samanas had passed through Siddhartha's town, wandering ascetics, three gaunt, burnt-out men, neither old nor young, with dusty and bloody shoulders, almost naked, scorched by the

sun, surrounded by solitude, strangers and enemies to the world, aliens and lean jackals in the kingdom of men. Behind them blew hot a scent of silent passion, of destructive service, of merciless self-emptying.

In the evening, after the hour of contemplation, Siddhartha said to Govinda: "Early tomorrow morning, my friend, Siddhartha will go to the Samanas. He will become a Samana."

Govinda turned pale when he heard the words and read the decision in his friend's unmoving face, undeflectable as the arrow shot from the bow. At once, at the first glance, Govinda knew: now it begins, now Siddhartha goes his own way, now his destiny begins to sprout, and with his, mine. And he turned as pale as a dry banana skin.

"O Siddhartha," he cried, "will your father allow it?"

Siddhartha looked over like someone waking. Swift as an arrow he read Govinda's soul, read the fear, read the resignation.

"O Govinda," he said softly, "let us not waste words. Tomorrow at daybreak I will begin the life of the Samanas. Speak of it no more."

Siddhartha entered the room where his father sat on a mat of bast, and stepped behind his father and stood there until his father felt that someone was standing behind him. The Brahmin spoke: "Is that you, Siddhartha? Then say what you have come to say."

Siddhartha spoke: "With your permission, my father. I have come to tell you that I long to leave your house tomorrow and go to the ascetics. To become a Samana is my longing. May my father not oppose it."

The Brahmin was silent, and was silent so long that the stars in the small window wandered and changed their figure before the silence in the room came to an end. Mute and motionless, his arms crossed, stood the son; mute and motionless on the mat sat the father, and the stars moved across the sky. Then the father spoke:

“It does not befit a Brahmin to speak violent and angry words. But displeasure stirs my heart. I do not wish to hear this request from your mouth a second time.”

Slowly the Brahmin rose; Siddhartha stood mute with his arms crossed.

“What are you waiting for?” asked the father.

Siddhartha spoke: “You know.”

Displeased, the father left the room; displeased, he sought his bed and lay down.

After an hour, since no sleep came to his eyes, the Brahmin got up, paced back and forth, went out of the house. Through the small window of the room he looked in, and there he saw Siddhartha standing, his arms crossed, unmoved from his place. His light-colored upper garment shimmered pale. With unrest in his heart, the father returned to his bed.

After an hour, since no sleep came to his eyes, the Brahmin got up again, paced back and forth, went out in front of the house, saw that the moon had risen. Through the window of the room he looked in; there stood Siddhartha, unmoved from his place, his arms crossed, the moonlight gleaming on his bare shins. With worry in his heart, the father sought his bed.

And he came again after an hour, and came again after two hours, looked through the small window, saw Siddhartha standing, in the moonlight, in the starlight, in the darkness. And came again from hour to hour, silently, looked into the room, saw him standing unmoved, filled his heart with anger, filled his heart with unrest, filled his heart with dread, filled it with sorrow.

And in the last hour of the night, before the day began, he returned, stepped into the room, saw the young man standing, who seemed to him tall and like a stranger.

“Siddhartha,” he said, “what are you waiting for?”

“You know.”

“Will you always stand like this and wait, until it is day, until it is noon, until it is evening?”

“I will stand and wait.”

“You will grow tired, Siddhartha.”

“I will grow tired.”

“You will fall asleep, Siddhartha.”

“I will not fall asleep.”

“You will die, Siddhartha.”

“I will die.”

“And you would rather die than obey your father?”

“Siddhartha has always obeyed his father.”

“So you will give up your plan?”

“Siddhartha will do what his father tells him.”

The first glimmer of day fell into the room. The Brahmin saw that Siddhartha’s knees were trembling slightly. In Siddhartha’s face he saw no trembling; the eyes looked far away. Then the father knew that Siddhartha was already no longer with him, no longer at home, that he had already left him.

The father touched Siddhartha’s shoulder.

“You will,” he said, “go into the forest and be a Samana. If you have found bliss in the forest, then come and teach me bliss. If you find disappointment, then come back and let us once more sacrifice to the gods together. Now go and kiss your mother, tell her where you are going. But for me it is time to go to the river and perform the first ablution.”

He took his hand from his son’s shoulder and went out. Siddhartha swayed to one side when he tried to walk. He mastered his limbs, bowed to his father, and went to his mother to do as his father had said.

As he slowly left the still silent town in the first light of day on stiffened legs, a shadow that had been crouching there rose by the last hut and joined the pilgrim—Govinda.

“You have come,” said Siddhartha, and smiled.

“I have come,” said Govinda.

With the Samanas

On the evening of that day they caught up with the ascetics, the gaunt Samanas, and offered them their companionship and obedience. They were accepted.

Siddhartha gave his garment to a poor Brahmin on the road. He wore nothing now but the loincloth and the earth-colored, unsewn wrap. He ate only once a day, and never anything cooked. He fasted fifteen days. He fasted twenty-eight days. The flesh dwindled from his thighs and cheeks. Hot dreams flickered from his enlarged eyes; on his withering fingers the nails grew long, and on his chin the dry, shaggy beard. His gaze turned icy when he met women; his mouth twitched with contempt when he passed through a town of finely dressed people. He saw merchants trading, princes going to the hunt, mourners weeping over their dead, whores offering themselves, physicians laboring over the sick, priests fixing the day for sowing, lovers loving, mothers nursing their children—and none of it was worth a glance of his eye, everything lied, everything stank, everything stank of lies, everything feigned meaning and happiness and beauty, and everything was unacknowledged decay. The world tasted bitter. Life was torment.

A goal stood before Siddhartha, a single one: to become empty, empty of thirst, empty of wishing, empty of dreams, empty of joy and sorrow. To die away from himself, to be a self no longer, to find rest with an emptied heart, to stand open to the miracle in self-emptied thought: that was his goal. When all self was overcome and dead, when every craving and every urge in the heart

was silent, then the ultimate had to awaken, the innermost of being, which is no longer self, the great secret.

Silently Siddhartha stood in the vertical blaze of the sun, glowing with pain, glowing with thirst, and stood until he felt neither pain nor thirst any longer. Silently he stood in the rainy season; the water dripped from his hair over freezing shoulders, over freezing hips and legs, and the penitent stood until shoulders and legs no longer froze, until they were silent, until they were still. Silently he crouched in the thorny brush; blood dripped from the burning skin, pus from the sores, and Siddhartha remained rigid, remained motionless, until no more blood flowed, until nothing stung any longer, until nothing burned any longer.

Siddhartha sat upright and learned to save his breath, learned to make do with little breath, learned to stop his breath. He learned, beginning with the breath, to calm his heartbeat, learned to reduce the beats of his heart until they were few and almost none.

Instructed by the eldest of the Samanas, Siddhartha practiced self-emptying, practiced meditation, according to new Samana rules. A heron flew over the bamboo forest—and Siddhartha took the heron into his soul, flew over forest and mountains, was heron, ate fish, hungered heron hunger, spoke heron croaking, died heron death. A dead jackal lay on the sandy bank, and Siddhartha's soul slipped into the carcass, was dead jackal, lay on the shore, bloated, stank, rotted, was torn apart by hyenas, was flayed by vultures, became a skeleton, became dust, blew out over the fields. And Siddhartha's soul returned, had died, had rotted, had turned to dust, had tasted the dull intoxication of the cycle, waited in new thirst like a hunter for the gap where escape from the cycle might be, where the end of causes, where an eternity without suffering might begin. He killed his senses, he killed his memory, he slipped out of his self into a thousand strange forms, was animal, was car-

rion, was stone, was wood, was water, and each time found himself awakening again, the sun shining or the moon, was self again, swung in the cycle, felt thirst, overcame the thirst, felt new thirst.

Siddhartha learned much with the Samanas; he learned to walk many ways leading away from the self. He walked the way of self-emptying through pain, through the voluntary suffering and overcoming of pain, of hunger, of thirst, of weariness. He walked the way of self-emptying through meditation, through thinking the mind empty of all images. These and other ways he learned to walk; a thousand times he left his self, for hours and days he lingered in the not-self. But though the ways led away from the self, their end always led back to the self. Though Siddhartha fled the self a thousand times, lingered in nothingness, lingered in the animal, in the stone, the return was unavoidable, inescapable the hour when he found himself again, in sunshine or in moonlight, in shade or in rain, and was once more self and Siddhartha, and once more felt the torment of the cycle laid upon him.

Beside him lived Govinda, his shadow, walked the same ways, submitted to the same efforts. They seldom spoke of anything to each other beyond what the service and the exercises required. Sometimes the two of them went through the villages to beg food for themselves and their teachers.

“What do you think, Govinda,” Siddhartha said once on such a begging round, “what do you think, have we got any farther? Have we reached any goals?”

Govinda answered: “We have learned, and we are still learning. You will be a great Samana, Siddhartha. You have learned every exercise quickly; the old Samanas have often admired you. One day you will be a holy man, O Siddhartha.”

Siddhartha spoke: “It does not seem so to me, my friend. What I have learned with the Samanas up to this day, O Govinda, I could have learned more quickly and more simply. In any tavern in a

whores' quarter, my friend, among the carters and the dice players, I could have learned it."

Govinda spoke: "Siddhartha is making fun of me. How could you have learned meditation, how could you have learned to hold your breath, how could you have learned insensibility to hunger and pain there among those wretches?"

And Siddhartha said quietly, as though he were speaking to himself: "What is meditation? What is leaving the body? What is fasting? What is holding the breath? It is flight from the self, it is a brief escape from the torment of being a self, it is a brief numbing against the pain and the senselessness of life. The same flight, the same brief numbing, the ox driver finds at the inn when he drinks a few bowls of rice wine or fermented coconut milk. Then he no longer feels his self, then he no longer feels the pains of life, then he finds a brief numbing. Dozing over his bowl of rice wine, he finds the same thing Siddhartha and Govinda find when after long exercises they slip out of their bodies and linger in the not-self. That is how it is, O Govinda."

Govinda spoke: "So you say, O friend, and yet you know that Siddhartha is no ox driver and a Samana no drunkard. The drinker does find numbing, he does find brief flight and rest, but he comes back from the delusion and finds everything as it was; he has not grown wiser, has not gathered insight, has not climbed any steps higher."

And Siddhartha said with a smile: "I do not know; I have never been a drinker. But that I, Siddhartha, find only a brief numbing in my exercises and meditations, and am as far from wisdom, from deliverance, as I was as a child in my mother's womb, that I know, O Govinda, that I know."

And once again, another time, as Siddhartha was leaving the forest with Govinda to beg some food in the village for their brothers and teachers, Siddhartha began to speak and said: "Well now,

O Govinda, are we on the right way, do you think? Are we coming nearer to knowledge, do you think? Are we coming nearer to deliverance? Or are we perhaps going in a circle—we who thought we were escaping the cycle?”

Govinda spoke: “We have learned much, Siddhartha; much remains to be learned. We are not going in a circle, we are going upward; the circle is a spiral; we have already climbed many a step.”

Siddhartha answered: “How old, would you say, is our eldest Samana, our venerable teacher?”

Govinda spoke: “Our eldest may be sixty years old, perhaps.”

And Siddhartha: “He has lived to be sixty and has not reached Nirvana. He will turn seventy and eighty, and you and I, we will grow just as old and will practice, and will fast, and will meditate. But Nirvana we will not reach, not he, not we. O Govinda, I believe that of all the Samanas there are, perhaps not one, not one will reach Nirvana. We find comforts, we find numbings, we learn skills with which we deceive ourselves. But the essential thing, the way of ways, we do not find.”

“I wish,” said Govinda, “you would not speak such frightening words, Siddhartha! How could it be that among so many learned men, among so many Brahmins, among so many stern and venerable Samanas, among so many seeking, so many ardently devoted, so many holy men, not one should find the way of ways?”

But Siddhartha said in a voice that held as much sadness as mockery, in a quiet, a somewhat sad, a somewhat mocking voice: “Soon, Govinda, your friend will leave this path of the Samanas, which he has walked with you so long. I suffer thirst, O Govinda, and on this long Samana road my thirst has not grown one bit smaller. I have always thirsted for knowledge, I have always been full of questions. I have questioned the Brahmins, year after year, and I have questioned the holy Vedas, year after year, and I have

questioned the devout Samanas, year after year. Perhaps, O Govinda, it would have been just as good, just as sensible and just as wholesome, if I had questioned the hornbill or the chimpanzee. I have needed a long time, and I am not finished yet, to learn this, O Govinda: that one can learn nothing! There is, I believe, in fact no such thing as what we call 'learning.' There is, O my friend, only one knowledge; it is everywhere, it is Atman, it is in me and in you and in every being. And so I am beginning to believe that this knowledge has no worse enemy than wanting to know, than learning."

At that Govinda stopped on the road, raised his hands, and spoke: "Siddhartha, I wish you would not frighten your friend with such talk! Truly, your words wake fear in my heart. And only think: what would become of the holiness of prayer, what would become of the dignity of the Brahmin caste, what of the holiness of the Samanas, if it were as you say, if there were no learning?! What, O Siddhartha, what would become then of all that is holy on earth, all that is precious, all that is venerable?!"

And Govinda murmured a verse to himself, a verse from an Upanishad:

He who, pondering, his spirit purified, sinks himself in Atman,
Inexpressible in words is the bliss of his heart.

But Siddhartha was silent. He thought about the words Govinda had said to him, and thought the words through to their end.

Yes, he thought, standing with his head bowed, what would remain of all that seemed holy to us? What remains? What holds true? And he shook his head.

Once, when the two young men had lived nearly three years with the Samanas and shared their exercises, news reached them by many ways and byways, a rumor, a legend: someone had appeared, called Gotama, the Exalted One, the Buddha, who had

overcome the suffering of the world in himself and brought the wheel of rebirths to a standstill. He was traveling through the land teaching, surrounded by disciples, without possessions, without home, without wife, in the yellow cloak of an ascetic, but with a serene brow, a blessed one, and Brahmins and princes bowed before him and became his pupils.

This legend, this rumor, this tale rang out, rose like a fragrance, here and there; in the towns the Brahmins spoke of it, in the forest the Samanas; again and again the name of Gotama, the Buddha, reached the young men's ears, in good and in ill, in praise and in abuse.

As when plague reigns in a country, and word goes around that here or there is a man, a sage, a knowing one, whose word and breath are enough to heal anyone stricken by the pestilence, and as this word then runs through the land and everyone speaks of it, many believe, many doubt, but many set out at once to seek the sage, the helper: so that legend ran through the land, that fragrant legend of Gotama, the Buddha, the sage of the Sakya clan. The highest knowledge was his, so the believers said; he remembered his former lives, he had reached Nirvana and would never return into the cycle, would never again sink into the dark stream of forms. Many glorious and incredible things were reported of him: he had worked miracles, had overcome the devil, had spoken with the gods. But his enemies and the unbelievers said that this Gotama was a vain seducer, that he spent his days in luxury, scorned the sacrifices, was without learning, and knew neither exercise nor mortification.

Sweet sounded the legend of the Buddha; magic breathed from these reports. The world was sick, after all; life was hard to bear—and behold, here a spring seemed to leap up, here a messenger's call seemed to sound, comforting, gentle, full of noble promises. Wherever the rumor of the Buddha rang out, everywhere in the

lands of India the young men listened, felt longing, felt hope, and among the Brahmins' sons of the towns and villages every pilgrim and stranger was welcome if he brought news of him, the Exalted One, the Sakyamuni.

The legend had made its way to the Samanas in the forest too, to Siddhartha too, to Govinda too, slowly, in drops, each drop heavy with hope, each drop heavy with doubt. They spoke little of it, for the eldest of the Samanas was no friend of this legend. He had heard that this so-called Buddha had formerly been an ascetic and lived in the forest, but had then turned back to luxury and worldly pleasure, and he thought nothing of this Gotama.

"O Siddhartha," Govinda said once to his friend. "Today I was in the village, and a Brahmin invited me into his house, and in his house was a Brahmin's son from Magadha who has seen the Buddha with his own eyes and has heard him teach. Truly, my breath ached in my chest then, and I thought to myself: If only I too, if only we two, Siddhartha and I, might live to see the hour when we hear the teaching from the mouth of that Perfected One! Tell me, friend, shall we not go there too and listen to the teaching from the mouth of the Buddha?"

Siddhartha spoke: "I had always thought, O Govinda, that Govinda would stay with the Samanas; I had always believed it was his goal to reach sixty and seventy years of age and go on and on practicing the arts and exercises that adorn a Samana. But see, I knew Govinda too little; I knew little of his heart. So now, dearest friend, you want to strike out on a new path and go where the Buddha proclaims his teaching."

Govinda spoke: "You are pleased to mock. Mock all you like, Siddhartha! But has not a longing, a desire to hear this teaching, awakened in you too? And did you not tell me once that you would not walk the way of the Samanas much longer?"

Then Siddhartha laughed, in his own way, the tone of his voice taking on a shadow of sadness and a shadow of mockery, and said: "Well, Govinda, you have spoken well, you have remembered rightly. May you also remember the other thing you heard from me: that I have grown distrustful and weary of teaching and learning, and that my faith is small in words that come to us from teachers. But very well, my dear, I am ready to hear that teaching—though in my heart I believe that we have already tasted the best fruit of that teaching."

Govinda spoke: "Your readiness gladdens my heart. But tell me, how could that be possible? How could Gotama's teaching have opened its best fruit to us before we have even heard it?"

Siddhartha spoke: "Let us enjoy this fruit and wait for the rest, O Govinda! But this fruit, which we already owe to Gotama, consists in his calling us away from the Samanas! Whether he has anything else and better to give us, O friend, let us wait for that with a calm heart."

On that same day Siddhartha made known to the eldest of the Samanas his decision to leave him. He made it known to the eldest with the courtesy and modesty that befit the younger man and the pupil. But the Samana flew into a rage because the two young men wanted to leave him, and he spoke loudly and used coarse abuse.

Govinda was startled and embarrassed, but Siddhartha put his mouth to Govinda's ear and whispered to him: "Now I will show the old man that I have learned something from him."

Placing himself close before the Samana, with his soul gathered, he caught the old man's gaze with his own, held it spellbound, struck him dumb, deprived him of will, subjected him to his own will, commanded him to do soundlessly what he required of him. The old man fell silent, his eye grew fixed, his will was paralyzed, his arms hung down; powerless, he had succumbed to Siddhartha's spell. Siddhartha's thoughts took possession of the Samana; he had

to carry out what they commanded. And so the old man bowed several times, made gestures of blessing, stammered a pious wish for their journey. And the young men returned the bows with thanks, returned the wish, and went on their way with a greeting.

On the way Govinda said: "O Siddhartha, you learned more with the Samanas than I knew. It is hard, it is very hard, to cast a spell on an old Samana. Truly, if you had stayed there, you would soon have learned to walk on water."

"I have no wish to walk on water," said Siddhartha. "Let old Samanas content themselves with such arts!"

Gotama

In the town of Savathi every child knew the name of the exalted Buddha, and every house was ready to fill the alms bowl of Gotama's disciples, who begged in silence. Near the town lay Gotama's favorite place to stay, the grove of Jetavana, which the rich merchant Anathapindika, a devoted worshiper of the Exalted One, had given to him and his followers as a gift.

All the stories and answers the two young ascetics received in their search for Gotama's dwelling place had pointed toward this region. And when they arrived in Savathi, food was offered to them at the very first house before whose door they stopped to beg, and they accepted the food, and Siddhartha asked the woman who handed them the food:

"Gladly, charitable one, gladly would we learn where the Buddha is staying, the most venerable one, for we are two Samanas from the forest and have come to see him, the Perfected One, and to hear the teaching from his mouth."

The woman spoke: "Truly, you have stopped at the right place, you Samanas from the forest. Know that the Exalted One is staying in Jetavana, in the garden of Anathapindika. There, pilgrims, you may spend the night, for there is room enough there for the countless people who stream in to hear the teaching from his mouth."

Govinda rejoiced at this, and full of joy he cried: "Well then, so we have reached our goal and our road is at an end! But tell us, mother of pilgrims, do you know him, the Buddha, have you seen him with your own eyes?"

The woman spoke: "Many times I have seen him, the Exalted One. On many days I have seen him walk through the lanes, silent, in his yellow cloak, seen him hold out his alms bowl silently at the doors of the houses, seen him carry the filled bowl away."

Govinda listened, enchanted, and wanted to ask and hear much more. But Siddhartha urged him to go on. They said their thanks and went and hardly needed to ask the way, for not a few pilgrims, and monks from Gotama's community as well, were on their way to Jetavana. And when they arrived there in the night, there was a constant coming and calling and talking of people who sought shelter and were given it. The two Samanas, used to life in the forest, quickly and silently found a place to sleep and rested there until morning.

At sunrise they saw with astonishment what a great crowd, believers and the curious, had spent the night here. On all the paths of the glorious grove walked monks in yellow robes; under the trees they sat here and there, sunk in contemplation—or in spiritual conversation; the shady gardens looked like a town, full of people, swarming like bees. Most of the monks went out with their alms bowls to collect food in the town for the midday meal, the only meal of the day. The Buddha himself, the Enlightened One, also made the begging round in the morning.

Siddhartha saw him, and he recognized him at once, as though a god had pointed him out. He saw him, a simple man in a yellow robe, carrying the alms bowl in his hand, walking quietly along.

"Look here!" Siddhartha said softly to Govinda. "This one here is the Buddha."

Govinda looked attentively at the monk in the yellow robe, who seemed in no way different from the hundreds of other monks. And soon Govinda too recognized: This is he. And they followed him and watched him.

The Buddha went his way modestly and sunk in thought; his quiet face was neither cheerful nor sad; it seemed to smile softly inward. With a hidden smile, quiet, calm, not unlike a healthy child, the Buddha walked, wore his robe and set down his feet just as all his monks did, according to precise rule. But his face and his step, his quietly lowered gaze, his quietly hanging hand, and even every finger of his quietly hanging hand spoke peace, spoke perfection, did not seek, did not imitate, breathed gently in an unwithering calm, in an unwithering light, an untouchable peace.

So Gotama walked toward the town to collect alms, and the two Samanas recognized him solely by the perfection of his calm, by the stillness of his form, in which no seeking, no willing, no imitating, no striving could be seen, only light and peace.

“Today we shall hear the teaching from his mouth,” said Govinda.

Siddhartha did not answer. He was not very curious about the teaching; he did not believe it would teach him anything new, for he, like Govinda, had heard the content of this Buddha’s teaching again and again, though only in reports at second and third hand. But he looked attentively at Gotama’s head, at his shoulders, at his feet, at his quietly hanging hand, and it seemed to him that every joint of every finger of this hand was teaching; it spoke, breathed, exhaled, shone truth. This man, this Buddha, was truthful down to the gesture of his last finger. This man was holy. Never had Siddhartha revered a person so, never had he loved a person as he loved this one.

The two followed the Buddha as far as the town and returned in silence, for they themselves intended to abstain from food that day. They saw Gotama return, saw him take his meal in the circle of his disciples—what he ate would not have filled a bird—and saw him withdraw into the shade of the mango trees.

But in the evening, when the heat abated and everything in the camp came to life and gathered, they heard the Buddha teach. They heard his voice, and it too was perfect, was of perfect calm, was full of peace. Gotama taught the teaching of suffering, of the origin of suffering, of the way to the ending of suffering. Calmly and clearly his quiet speech flowed. Life was suffering, the world was full of suffering, but deliverance from suffering had been found: whoever walked the way of the Buddha found deliverance. In a gentle yet firm voice the Exalted One spoke, taught the four main tenets, taught the eightfold path; patiently he went the accustomed way of teaching, of examples, of repetitions; bright and quiet his voice hovered over the listeners, like a light, like a starry sky.

When the Buddha—night had already fallen—ended his discourse, a number of pilgrims stepped forward and asked to be received into the community, took refuge in the teaching. And Gotama received them, saying: “You have heard the teaching well, it has been well proclaimed. Come forward, then, and walk in holiness, to make an end of all suffering.”

Behold, then Govinda too stepped forward, the shy one, and spoke: “I too take my refuge in the Exalted One and in his teaching,” and asked to be received among the disciples, and was received.

Right after that, when the Buddha had withdrawn for the night’s rest, Govinda turned to Siddhartha and spoke eagerly: “Siddhartha, it is not my place to reproach you. We have both heard the Exalted One, we have both heard the teaching. Govinda has heard the teaching, he has taken refuge in it. But you, honored friend, do you not want to walk the path of deliverance too? Will you hesitate, will you wait still longer?”

Siddhartha woke as if from sleep when he heard Govinda’s words. For a long time he looked into Govinda’s face. Then he

spoke softly, in a voice without mockery: "Govinda, my friend, now you have taken the step, now you have chosen the way. Always, O Govinda, you have been my friend; always you have walked one step behind me. Often I have thought: Will Govinda not for once take a step alone, without me, out of his own soul? See, now you have become a man and choose your way yourself. May you walk it to the end, O my friend! May you find deliverance!"

Govinda, who did not yet fully understand, repeated his question with a note of impatience: "Speak, I beg you, my dear! Tell me, since it cannot be otherwise, that you too, my learned friend, will take your refuge in the exalted Buddha!"

Siddhartha laid his hand on Govinda's shoulder: "You did not hear my blessing, O Govinda. I repeat it: May you walk this way to the end! May you find deliverance!"

At that moment Govinda realized that his friend had left him, and he began to weep.

"Siddhartha!" he cried plaintively.

Siddhartha spoke kindly to him: "Do not forget, Govinda, that you now belong to the Buddha's Samanas! You have renounced home and parents, renounced your origins and property, renounced your own will, renounced friendship. So the teaching wills it, so the Exalted One wills it. So you yourself have willed it. Tomorrow, O Govinda, I will leave you."

For a long time the friends walked in the woods; for a long time they lay and could not find sleep. And again and again Govinda pressed his friend to tell him why he would not take refuge in Gotama's teaching, what fault he found in this teaching. But each time Siddhartha turned him away and said: "Be content, Govinda! The teaching of the Exalted One is very good; how could I find a fault in it?"

Very early in the morning a follower of the Buddha, one of his oldest monks, went through the garden and called to him all those

who as novices had taken refuge in the teaching, to clothe them in the yellow robe and instruct them in the first teachings and duties of their state. Then Govinda tore himself away, embraced the friend of his youth once more, and joined the procession of novices.

But Siddhartha walked through the grove, lost in thought.

Then Gotama, the Exalted One, met him, and when Siddhartha greeted him with reverence and the Buddha's gaze was so full of kindness and stillness, the young man took courage and asked the Venerable One for permission to speak to him. Silently the Exalted One nodded his consent.

Siddhartha spoke: "Yesterday, O Exalted One, I was granted the privilege of hearing your wonderful teaching. I came from far away with my friend to hear the teaching. And now my friend will stay with your people; he has taken refuge in you. But I am setting out on my pilgrimage anew."

"As you please," the Venerable One said courteously.

"My speech is too bold," Siddhartha went on, "but I would not like to leave the Exalted One without having told him my thoughts in sincerity. Will the Venerable One grant me a hearing a moment longer?"

Silently the Buddha nodded his consent.

Siddhartha spoke: "One thing, O most Venerable One, I have admired in your teaching above all. Everything in your teaching is perfectly clear, is proved; as a perfect chain, a chain never and nowhere broken, you show the world as an eternal chain, joined of causes and effects. Never has this been seen so clearly, never presented so irrefutably; truly, the heart of every Brahmin must beat higher in his body when, through your teaching, he beholds the world as a perfect whole, without a gap, clear as crystal, not dependent on chance, not dependent on gods. Whether it is good or evil, whether life in it is suffering or joy, may be left open; it may

be that this is not essential—but the unity of the world, the connectedness of all that happens, the enclosing of all things great and small by the same stream, by the same law of causes, of becoming and dying, this shines brightly from your exalted teaching, O Perfected One. But now, according to that same teaching of yours, this unity and consistency of all things is nevertheless broken in one place; through a small gap something strange flows into this world of unity, something new, something that was not there before and that cannot be shown and cannot be proved: that is your teaching of the overcoming of the world, of deliverance. But with this small gap, with this small breach, the whole eternal and unified law of the world is broken and undone again. Forgive me for voicing this objection.”

Gotama had listened to him quietly, unmoved. Now he spoke, the Perfected One, in his kind, his courteous and clear voice: “You have heard the teaching, O Brahmin’s son, and it is well for you that you have thought about it so deeply. You have found a gap in it, a flaw. May you go on thinking about it. But let me warn you, you who are so eager for knowledge, against the thicket of opinions and against the quarrel over words. Opinions are of no importance; they may be beautiful or ugly, clever or foolish; anyone can cling to them or reject them. But the teaching you have heard from me is not an opinion, and its goal is not to explain the world to those eager for knowledge. Its goal is something else; its goal is deliverance from suffering. That is what Gotama teaches, nothing else.”

“Do not be angry with me, O Exalted One,” said the young man. “I did not speak to you so in order to seek a quarrel with you, a quarrel over words. You are truly right: opinions matter little. But let me say this one thing more: I have not doubted you for a moment. I have not doubted for a moment that you are Buddha, that you have reached the goal, the highest goal, toward which so

many thousands of Brahmins and Brahmins' sons are on their way. You have found deliverance from death. It came to you out of your own seeking, on your own way, through thoughts, through meditation, through insight, through enlightenment. It did not come to you through teaching! And—this is my thought, O Exalted One—no one attains deliverance through teaching! To no one, O Venerable One, will you be able to convey and tell in words and through teaching what happened to you in the hour of your enlightenment! The teaching of the enlightened Buddha contains much; it teaches many to live righteously, to avoid evil. But one thing this teaching, so clear, so venerable, does not contain: it does not contain the secret of what the Exalted One himself experienced, he alone among the hundreds of thousands. This is what I thought and understood when I heard the teaching. This is why I am continuing my wandering—not to seek another, a better teaching, for I know there is none, but to leave all teachings and all teachers and to reach my goal alone, or die. But often, O Exalted One, I will think of this day and of this hour when my eyes saw a holy man.”

The Buddha's eyes looked quietly at the ground; quietly, in perfect equanimity, his inscrutable face shone.

“May your thoughts,” the Venerable One spoke slowly, “not be errors! May you reach the goal! But tell me: have you seen the crowd of my Samanas, my many brothers, who have taken refuge in the teaching? And do you believe, Samana from afar, do you believe that it would be better for all of them to leave the teaching and return to the life of the world and its pleasures?”

“Such a thought is far from me,” cried Siddhartha. “May they all stay with the teaching, may they reach their goal! It is not my place to judge another's life. Only for myself, for myself alone, must I judge, must I choose, must I refuse. Deliverance from the self is what we Samanas seek, O Exalted One. If I were one of your disciples now, O Venerable One, I fear it might happen to me that

my self would come to rest and be delivered only in appearance, only deceptively, but that in truth it would live on and grow great, for then I would have made the teaching, would have made my discipleship, my love for you, the community of the monks, into my self!"

With a half smile, with an unshaken brightness and friendliness, Gotama looked the stranger in the eye and dismissed him with a barely visible gesture.

"You are clever, O Samana," the Venerable One spoke.

"You know how to speak cleverly, my friend. Beware of too much cleverness!"

The Buddha walked away, and his gaze and his half smile remained engraved forever in Siddhartha's memory.

I have never yet seen a person look and smile, sit and walk like that, he thought; truly, I too wish I could look and smile, sit and walk like that, so free, so venerable, so hidden, so open, so child-like and mysterious. Truly, only a person who has pressed through into the innermost of his self looks and walks like that. Well, I too will seek to press through into the innermost of my self.

I have seen a man, thought Siddhartha, one single man, before whom I had to lower my eyes. Before no other will I lower my eyes again, before no other. No teaching will tempt me any longer, since this man's teaching has not tempted me.

The Buddha has robbed me, thought Siddhartha, he has robbed me, and he has given me still more. He has robbed me of my friend, of the one who believed in me and now believes in him, who was my shadow and is now Gotama's shadow. But he has given me Siddhartha, myself.

Awakening

When Siddhartha left the grove where the Buddha, the Perfected One, remained behind, where Govinda remained behind, he felt that in this grove his life until now also remained behind him and parted from him. As he walked slowly along, he pondered this feeling, which filled him entirely. He pondered deeply; as through deep water he let himself sink to the bottom of this feeling, down to where the causes rest, for to recognize causes, so it seemed to him, that is what thinking is, and through that alone do feelings become knowledge and are not lost, but become real and begin to radiate what is in them.

Walking slowly along, Siddhartha pondered. He saw that he was no longer a youth but had become a man. He saw that something had left him, as a snake is left by its old skin, that something was no longer present in him that had accompanied him all through his youth and been part of him: the wish to have teachers and to hear teachings. The last teacher who had appeared on his way, even him, the highest and wisest teacher, the holiest, the Buddha, he had left, had had to part from him, had not been able to accept his teaching.

More slowly the thinker walked on and asked himself: "But what is it, then, that you wanted to learn from teachings and from teachers, and that they, who taught you much, still could not teach you?" And he found: "It was the self whose meaning and nature I wanted to learn. It was the self I wanted to get free of, wanted to overcome. But I could not overcome it; I could only deceive it, could only flee from it, only hide from it. Truly, nothing in the

world has occupied my thoughts as much as this self of mine, this riddle that I live, that I am one and separated and set apart from all others, that I am Siddhartha! And there is nothing in the world I know less about than myself, than Siddhartha!”

The thinker walking slowly along stopped, seized by this thought, and at once another thought sprang out of it, a new thought, which ran: “That I know nothing of myself, that Siddhartha has remained so strange and unknown to me, comes from one cause, a single one: I was afraid of myself, I was in flight from myself! Atman I sought, Brahman I sought; I was willing to cut my self to pieces and peel it apart in order to find in its unknown innermost the kernel of all the husks, Atman, life, the divine, the ultimate. But I myself was lost to me in the process.”

Siddhartha opened his eyes and looked around; a smile filled his face, and a deep feeling of awakening from long dreams streamed through him down to his toes. And at once he walked on again, walked quickly, like a man who knows what he has to do.

“Oh,” he thought, drawing a deep breath of relief, “now I will not let Siddhartha slip away from me again! No longer will I begin my thinking and my life with Atman and with the suffering of the world. I will no longer kill myself and cut myself to pieces to find a secret behind the ruins. Neither the Yoga Veda shall teach me any longer, nor the Atharva Veda, nor the ascetics, nor any teaching at all. From myself I will learn, I will be my own pupil, I will come to know myself, the secret that is Siddhartha.”

He looked around as if he were seeing the world for the first time. Beautiful was the world, many-colored was the world, strange and mysterious was the world! Here was blue, here was yellow, here was green; sky flowed, and river; forest stood rigid, and mountain; all beautiful, all mysterious and magical, and in the midst of it he, Siddhartha, the awakening one, on the way to himself. All this, all this yellow and blue, river and forest, entered

Siddhartha for the first time through the eye; it was no longer the magic of Mara, no longer the veil of Maya, no longer the senseless and accidental multiplicity of the world of appearances, contemptible to the deep-thinking Brahmin who scorns multiplicity, who seeks unity. Blue was blue, river was river, and even if the One and Divine lived hidden in the blue and the river in Siddhartha, it was still the very way and meaning of the divine to be yellow here, blue here, sky there, forest there, and Siddhartha here. Meaning and essence were not somewhere behind things; they were in them, in everything.

“How deaf and dull I have been!” thought the man walking quickly along. “When someone reads a text whose meaning he wants to find, he does not scorn the signs and letters and call them illusion, chance, and worthless husk; he reads them, he studies and loves them, letter by letter. But I, who wanted to read the book of the world and the book of my own being, I scorned the signs and letters for the sake of a meaning I had presumed in advance; I called the world of appearances illusion, called my eye and my tongue accidental and worthless appearances. No, that is over; I have awakened, I have in fact awakened and been born only today.”

As Siddhartha thought this thought, he stopped once more, suddenly, as if a snake lay before him on the path.

For suddenly this too had become clear to him: he, who was in fact like one awakened or newborn, had to begin his life anew and completely from the beginning. When he had left the grove of Jetavana that same morning, the grove of that Exalted One, already awakening, already on the way to himself, it had been his intention, and had seemed natural and a matter of course to him, that after his years as an ascetic he would return home and to his father. But now, only at this moment, as he stopped as if a snake lay on his path, he awoke to this insight too: “I am no longer who I

was, after all; I am no longer an ascetic, I am no longer a priest, I am no longer a Brahmin. What then am I to do at home with my father? Study? Sacrifice? Practice meditation? All that is over, after all; all that no longer lies on my way.”

Motionless, Siddhartha stood still, and for a moment and a breath his heart froze; he felt it freeze inside his chest like a small animal, a bird or a hare, as he saw how alone he was. For years he had been without a home and had not felt it. Now he felt it. Always, even in the remotest meditation, he had been his father’s son, had been a Brahmin, of high caste, a man of the spirit. Now he was only Siddhartha, the awakened one, nothing else. He drew a deep breath, and for a moment he froze and shuddered. No one was as alone as he. There was no nobleman who did not belong to the nobles, no craftsman who did not belong to the craftsmen and find refuge with them, share their life, speak their language. No Brahmin who was not counted among the Brahmins and did not live with them, no ascetic who did not find his refuge in the order of the Samanas, and even the most forlorn hermit in the forest was not one and alone; he too was surrounded by belonging, he too belonged to an order that was home to him. Govinda had become a monk, and a thousand monks were his brothers, wore his robe, believed his faith, spoke his language. But he, Siddhartha, where did he belong? Whose life would he share? Whose language would he speak?

Out of this moment, when the world melted away from him all around, when he stood alone like a star in the sky, out of this moment of coldness and despondency Siddhartha rose up, more of a self than before, more firmly knit. He felt: this had been the last shudder of awakening, the last spasm of birth. And at once he strode out again, began to walk quickly and impatiently, no longer homeward, no longer to his father, no longer back.

Part Two

Dedicated to Wilhelm Gundert, my cousin in Japan

Kamala

Siddhartha learned something new at every step of his way, for the world was transformed and his heart was enchanted. He saw the sun rise over the wooded mountains and set over the distant palm-lined shore. At night he saw the stars ordered in the sky, and the crescent moon floating like a boat in the blue. He saw trees, stars, animals, clouds, rainbows, rocks, herbs, flowers, brook and river, the glint of dew in the morning bushes, distant high mountains blue and pale; birds sang, and bees, wind blew silver in the rice field. All this, thousandfold and many-colored, had always been there; the sun and moon had always shone, rivers had always rushed and bees hummed, but in earlier times all this had been nothing for Siddhartha but a fleeting and deceptive veil before his eyes, regarded with distrust, destined to be penetrated and destroyed by thought, since it was not essence, since essence lay beyond the visible. But now his liberated eye stayed on this side; it saw and recognized the visible, sought a home in this world, did not seek essence, aimed at no beyond. Beautiful was the world when one looked at it like this, so without seeking, so simply, so like a child. Beautiful were moon and stars, beautiful were brook and bank, forest and rock, goat and gold beetle, flower and butterfly. Beautiful and lovely it was to walk through the world like this, so childlike, so awake, so open to what was near, so without distrust. The sun burned differently on his head, the shade of the forest cooled differently, brook and cistern tasted different, pumpkin and banana tasted different. Short were the days, short the nights; every hour fled swiftly away like a sail on the sea, and under the

sail a ship full of treasures, full of joys. Siddhartha saw a troop of monkeys moving through the high vault of the forest, high in the branches, and heard their wild, greedy song. Siddhartha saw a ram pursue a ewe and mate with her. In a reedy lake he saw the pike hunting in its evening hunger; ahead of it the young fish shot out of the water in shoals, fearful, fluttering, and flashing; strength and passion breathed urgently from the hasty whirlpools the impetuous hunter drew through the water.

All this had always been, and he had not seen it; he had not been part of it. Now he was part of it; he belonged to it. Light and shadow ran through his eye, star and moon ran through his heart.

On the way Siddhartha also remembered everything he had experienced in the garden of Jetavana, the teaching he had heard there, the divine Buddha, the parting from Govinda, the conversation with the Exalted One. He remembered his own words again, the words he had spoken to the Exalted One, every word, and with astonishment he became aware that he had said things there that at the time he had not yet really known. What he had said to Gotama, that his, the Buddha's, treasure and secret was not the teaching but the inexpressible and unteachable thing he had once experienced in the hour of his enlightenment—this was the very thing he was now setting out to experience, was now beginning to experience. Now he had to experience himself. He had known for a long time, to be sure, that his self was Atman, of the same eternal essence as Brahman. But he had never really found this self, because he had tried to catch it in the net of thought. Though the body was certainly not the self, nor the play of the senses, neither was thinking, nor the intellect, nor learned wisdom, nor the learned art of drawing conclusions and spinning new thoughts out of thoughts already thought. No, this world of thought was also still on this side, and it led to no goal if one killed the accidental self of the senses but fattened the accidental self of thoughts and

learning instead. Both, thoughts and senses alike, were pretty things; the ultimate meaning lay hidden behind both; both were to be listened to, both to be played with, neither to be scorned nor overvalued; from both the secret voices of the innermost were to be overheard. He wanted to strive for nothing except what the voice commanded him to strive for, to linger over nothing except where the voice advised it. Why had Gotama once, in the hour of hours, sat down under the bo tree, where enlightenment struck him? He had heard a voice, a voice in his own heart, which commanded him to seek rest under this tree, and he had not preferred mortification, sacrifice, bathing, or prayer, nor eating nor drinking, nor sleep nor dream; he had obeyed the voice. To obey like that, not an outer command, only the voice, to be ready like that, that was good, that was necessary; nothing else was necessary.

In the night, as he slept in the straw hut of a ferryman by the river, Siddhartha had a dream: Govinda stood before him in the yellow robe of an ascetic. Govinda looked sad; sadly he asked: Why did you leave me? Then he embraced Govinda, wrapped his arms around him, and as he drew him to his breast and kissed him, it was no longer Govinda but a woman, and from the woman's robe a full breast swelled, at which Siddhartha lay and drank; sweet and strong tasted the milk of this breast. It tasted of woman and man, of sun and forest, of animal and flower, of every fruit, of every pleasure. It made him drunk and unconscious.—When Siddhartha woke, the pale river shimmered through the door of the hut, and in the forest an owl's dark call sounded, deep and melodious.

When the day began, Siddhartha asked his host, the ferryman, to take him across the river. The ferryman took him across the river on his bamboo raft; the broad water shimmered reddish in the morning light.

“This is a beautiful river,” he said to his companion.

“Yes,” said the ferryman, “a very beautiful river; I love it more than anything. I have often listened to it, often looked into its eyes, and I have always learned from it. One can learn a great deal from a river.”

“I thank you, my benefactor,” said Siddhartha as he stepped onto the other bank. “I have no gift to give you for your hospitality, my dear, and no fare to pay. I am a man without a home, a Brahmin’s son and a Samana.”

“I saw that well enough,” said the ferryman, “and I expected no fare from you, and no gift. You will give me the gift another time.”

“Do you think so?” said Siddhartha merrily.

“Certainly. This too I have learned from the river: everything comes back! You too, Samana, will come back. Now farewell! May your friendship be my fare. May you remember me when you sacrifice to the gods.”

Smiling, they parted. Smiling, Siddhartha took pleasure in the friendship and friendliness of the ferryman. “He is like Govinda,” he thought, smiling; “everyone I meet on my way is like Govinda. All are grateful, though they themselves would have a claim to thanks. All are submissive, all like to be friends, like to obey, think little. People are children.”

Around midday he came through a village. In front of the mud huts children were rolling about in the lane, playing with pumpkin seeds and shells, shouting and scuffling, but they all fled shyly from the unfamiliar Samana. At the end of the village the road led through a brook, and at the edge of the brook a young woman knelt washing clothes. When Siddhartha greeted her, she raised her head and looked up at him with a smile, so that he saw the white of her eyes flash. He called a blessing over to her, as is customary among travelers, and asked how much farther it was to the big town. Then she stood up and came over to him; her moist mouth gleamed beautifully in her young face. She exchanged teas-

ing words with him, asked whether he had eaten yet, and whether it was true that the Samanas slept alone in the forest at night and were not allowed to have women with them. As she spoke she placed her left foot on his right and made a movement such as a woman makes when she invites a man to that kind of love pleasure which the manuals call "climbing the tree." Siddhartha felt his blood grow warm, and since his dream came back to him at that moment, he bent down a little to the woman and kissed the brown tip of her breast with his lips. Looking up, he saw her face smiling, full of desire, and her narrowed eyes pleading with longing.

Siddhartha too felt longing and the spring of sex stirring; but since he had never yet touched a woman, he hesitated for a moment, while his hands were already ready to reach for her. And at that moment he heard, with a shudder, the voice of his inner self, and the voice said no. Then all the magic left the young woman's smiling face; he saw nothing more than the moist gaze of a female animal in heat. He stroked her cheek kindly, turned away from her, and vanished lightly into the bamboo thicket before the disappointed woman's eyes.

On that day, before evening, he reached a large town, and he was glad, for he longed for people. He had lived in the forests for a long time, and the ferryman's straw hut in which he had slept that night had been the first roof over his head in a long time.

Outside the town, by a beautiful fenced grove, the wanderer met a small train of servants, men and women, loaded with baskets. In their midst, in an ornamented sedan chair carried by four men, sat a woman on red cushions under a colorful canopy, the mistress. Siddhartha stopped at the entrance to the pleasure grove and watched the procession, saw the servants, the maids, the baskets, saw the sedan chair, and saw in the sedan chair the lady. Under black hair piled high he saw a very fair, very delicate, very clever face, a bright red mouth like a freshly opened fig, eyebrows

groomed and painted in high arches, dark eyes clever and watchful, a fair, tall neck rising from a green and gold upper garment, resting fair hands, long and slender, with broad gold bracelets above the wrists.

Siddhartha saw how beautiful she was, and his heart laughed. He bowed deeply as the sedan chair came near, and straightening up again he looked into the fair, lovely face, read for a moment in the clever, high-arched eyes, breathed a waft of a fragrance he did not know. Smiling, the beautiful woman nodded, for a moment, and vanished into the grove, and behind her the servants.

So I enter this town, thought Siddhartha, under a lovely sign. He felt drawn to go into the grove at once, but he thought better of it, and only now did he become aware of how the servants and maids at the entrance had looked at him, how contemptuously, how distrustfully, how dismissively.

I am still a Samana, he thought, still an ascetic and beggar. I cannot stay like this; I cannot go into the grove like this. And he laughed.

He asked the next person who came along the road about the grove and the name of this woman, and learned that this was the grove of Kamala, the famous courtesan, and that besides the grove she owned a house in the town.

Then he entered the town. He had a goal now.

Pursuing his goal, he let the town swallow him up, drifted in the current of the lanes, stood still in squares, rested on the stone steps by the river. Toward evening he made friends with a barber's assistant whom he had seen working in the shade of an archway, whom he found again praying in a temple of Vishnu, and to whom he told stories of Vishnu and Lakshmi. He slept the night by the boats on the river, and early in the morning, before the first customers came into the shop, he had the barber's assistant shave his

beard and cut his hair, comb his hair and anoint it with fine oil. Then he went to bathe in the river.

When the beautiful Kamala approached her grove in her sedan chair late in the afternoon, Siddhartha stood at the entrance, bowed, and received the courtesan's greeting. But he beckoned to the servant who walked last in the train and asked him to tell his mistress that a young Brahmin wished to speak with her. After a while the servant came back, asked the one who was waiting to follow him, led him silently into a pavilion where Kamala lay on a couch, and left him alone with her.

"Weren't you standing out there yesterday and greeting me?" asked Kamala.

"Yes, I saw you yesterday and greeted you."

"But didn't you have a beard yesterday, and long hair, and dust in your hair?"

"You observed well; you saw everything. You saw Siddhartha, the Brahmin's son, who left his home to become a Samana and was a Samana for three years. But now I have left that path and have come to this town, and the first person I met, even before I entered the town, was you. I have come to you to say this, O Kamala! You are the first woman to whom Siddhartha speaks without lowered eyes. Never again will I lower my eyes when a beautiful woman meets me."

Kamala smiled and played with her fan of peacock feathers. And asked: "And Siddhartha has come to me only to tell me this?"

"To tell you this, and to thank you for being so beautiful. And if it does not displease you, Kamala, I would like to ask you to be my friend and teacher, for I know nothing yet of the art in which you are a master."

At that Kamala laughed aloud.

"It has never happened to me, friend, that a Samana from the forest came to me and wanted to learn from me! It has never hap-

pened to me that a Samana with long hair and in an old torn loin-cloth came to me! Many young men come to me, and there are Brahmins' sons among them too, but they come in fine clothes, they come in fine shoes, they have perfume in their hair and money in their purses. That, Samana, is what the young men who come to me are like."

Siddhartha spoke: "Already I am beginning to learn from you. I learned something yesterday as well. I have already shed my beard, I have combed my hair, I have oil in my hair. Little is still lacking, excellent one: fine clothes, fine shoes, money in my purse. Know that Siddhartha has set himself harder things than such trifles, and has achieved them. How should I not achieve what I set myself yesterday: to be your friend and to learn the joys of love from you! You will find me quick to learn, Kamala; I have learned harder things than what you are to teach me. And so: Siddhartha is not good enough for you as he is, with oil in his hair but without clothes, without shoes, without money?"

Laughing, Kamala cried: "No, my good man, he is not good enough yet. He must have clothes, pretty clothes, and shoes, pretty shoes, and plenty of money in his purse, and gifts for Kamala. Do you know now, Samana from the forest? Have you taken it in?"

"I have taken it in," cried Siddhartha. "How should I not take in what comes from such a mouth! Your mouth is like a freshly opened fig, Kamala. My mouth too is red and fresh; it will suit yours, you will see.—But tell me, beautiful Kamala, are you not at all afraid of the Samana from the forest, who has come to learn love?"

"Why should I be afraid of a Samana, a stupid Samana from the forest, who comes from the jackals and does not even know yet what women are?"

"Oh, he is strong, the Samana, and he fears nothing. He could force you, pretty girl. He could carry you off. He could hurt you."

"No, Samana, I am not afraid of that. Has any Samana or Brahmin ever been afraid that someone might come and seize him and rob him of his learning, and his piety, and his depth of mind? No, for they belong to him, and he gives of them only what he wants to give and to whom he wants to give it. That is how it is, exactly so with Kamala too, and with the joys of love. Beautiful and red is Kamala's mouth, but try to kiss it against Kamala's will, and you will not get one drop of sweetness from it, though it knows how to give so much that is sweet! You are quick to learn, Siddhartha, so learn this too: love can be begged, bought, received as a gift, found in the street, but it cannot be stolen. You have thought up the wrong way there. No, it would be a pity if a handsome young man like you went about it so wrongly."

Siddhartha bowed with a smile. "It would be a pity, Kamala, how right you are! It would be a very great pity. No, not one drop of sweetness from your mouth shall be lost to me, nor to you from mine! So it is settled: Siddhartha will come back when he has what he still lacks: clothes, shoes, money. But tell me, lovely Kamala, can you not give me one small piece of advice?"

"Advice? Why not? Who would not gladly give advice to a poor, ignorant Samana who comes from the jackals in the forest?"

"Dear Kamala, then advise me: where should I go to find those three things most quickly?"

"Friend, many would like to know that. You must do what you have learned and have yourself paid for it with money, and clothes, and shoes. There is no other way for a poor man to come by money. What can you do?"

"I can think. I can wait. I can fast."

"Nothing else?"

“Nothing. Yes, I can also make poems. Will you give me a kiss for a poem?”

“I will, if I like your poem. What is it called, then?”

Siddhartha, after reflecting for a moment, spoke these verses:

Into her shady grove stepped the beautiful Kamala,

At the grove’s entrance stood the brown Samana.

Deeply, as he beheld the lotus blossom,

He bowed, and smiling Kamala thanked him.

Lovelier, thought the young man, than offering to gods,

Lovelier is it to offer to beautiful Kamala.

Kamala clapped her hands loudly, so that the golden bracelets rang.

“Your verses are beautiful, brown Samana, and truly, I lose nothing if I give you a kiss for them.”

She drew him to her with her eyes; he bent his face down to hers and laid his mouth on the mouth that was like a freshly opened fig. Kamala kissed him for a long time, and with deep astonishment Siddhartha felt how she taught him, how wise she was, how she mastered him, pushed him away, lured him, and how behind this first kiss stood a long, a well-ordered, well-tested series of kisses, each different from the other, which still awaited him. Breathing deeply, he stood still, and at that moment he was like a child, astonished at the abundance of knowledge and of things worth learning that opened before his eyes.

“Your verses are very beautiful,” cried Kamala. “If I were rich, I would give you gold pieces for them. But it will be hard for you to earn as much money with verses as you need. For you need a lot of money if you want to be Kamala’s friend.”

“How you can kiss, Kamala!” stammered Siddhartha.

“Yes, that I can do, and that is why I lack no clothes, shoes, bracelets, and all beautiful things. But what will become of you? Can you do nothing but think, fast, make poems?”

"I also know the sacrificial songs," said Siddhartha, "but I no longer want to sing them. I also know magic spells, but I no longer want to speak them. I have read the scriptures—"

"Stop," Kamala interrupted him. "You can read? And write?"

"Certainly I can. Some people can."

"Most cannot. I cannot either. It is very good that you can read and write, very good. You will still find a use for the magic spells too."

At that moment a maid came running and whispered a message in her mistress's ear.

"I have a visitor," cried Kamala. "Hurry and disappear, Siddhartha; no one must see you here, remember that! Tomorrow I will see you again."

But she ordered the maid to give the pious Brahmin a white upper garment. Without knowing what was happening to him, Siddhartha found himself pulled away by the maid, brought by roundabout paths to a garden house, presented with an upper garment, led into the bushes, and urgently told to get himself out of the grove at once without being seen.

Contentedly he did as he was told. Used to the forest, he made his way soundlessly out of the grove and over the hedge. Contentedly he returned to the town, carrying the rolled-up garment under his arm. At an inn where travelers stopped, he stood at the door, silently begged for food, silently accepted a piece of rice cake. Perhaps as soon as tomorrow, he thought, I will no longer ask anyone for food.

Pride suddenly flared up in him. He was no longer a Samana; it no longer became him to beg. He gave the rice cake to a dog and went without food.

"Simple is the life one leads here in the world," thought Siddhartha. "It has no difficulties. Everything was hard, toilsome, and in the end hopeless when I was still a Samana. Now everything

is easy, easy as the lessons in kissing Kamala gives me. I need clothes and money, nothing else; those are small, near goals; they do not disturb one's sleep."

He had long since found out where Kamala's house in the town was; he presented himself there the next day.

"It is going well," she called out to him. "You are expected at Kamaswami's; he is the richest merchant in this town. If he likes you, he will take you into his service. Be clever, brown Samana. I have had others tell him about you. Be friendly toward him; he is very powerful. But do not be too modest! I do not want you to become his servant; you are to become his equal, or I will not be satisfied with you. Kamaswami is beginning to grow old and comfortable. If he likes you, he will entrust you with a great deal."

Siddhartha thanked her and laughed, and when she learned that he had eaten nothing yesterday or today, she had bread and fruit brought and served him.

"You have been lucky," she said as they parted; "one door after another opens for you. How does that come about? Do you have a charm?"

Siddhartha said: "Yesterday I told you that I knew how to think, to wait, and to fast, but you thought that was of no use. But it is of use for many things, Kamala; you will see. You will see that the stupid Samanas in the forest learn and can do many pretty things that you people cannot do. The day before yesterday I was still a shaggy beggar, yesterday I had already kissed Kamala, and soon I will be a merchant and have money and all those things you set store by."

"Well, yes," she admitted. "But how would you fare without me? What would you be if Kamala did not help you?"

"Dear Kamala," said Siddhartha, drawing himself up to his full height, "when I came to you in your grove, I took the first step. It was my resolve to learn love from this most beautiful of women.

From the moment I made that resolve, I also knew that I would carry it out. I knew that you would help me; at your first glance at the entrance of the grove I knew it already.”

“But what if I had not wanted to?”

“You did want to. Look, Kamala: when you throw a stone into the water, it hurries by the quickest way to the bottom of the water. That is how it is when Siddhartha has a goal, a resolve. Siddhartha does nothing; he waits, he thinks, he fasts, but he passes through the things of the world like the stone through the water, without doing anything, without stirring; he is drawn, he lets himself fall. His goal draws him to itself, for he lets nothing into his soul that might resist the goal. That is what Siddhartha learned with the Samanas. It is what fools call magic, and they think it is brought about by demons. Nothing is brought about by demons; there are no demons. Anyone can work magic, anyone can reach his goals, if he can think, if he can wait, if he can fast.”

Kamala listened to him. She loved his voice; she loved the look in his eyes.

“Perhaps it is as you say, friend,” she said softly. “But perhaps it is also that Siddhartha is a handsome man, that his look pleases women, and that this is why good fortune comes to meet him.”

With a kiss Siddhartha took his leave. “May it be so, my teacher. May my look always please you, may good fortune always come to me from you!”

Among the Child People

Siddhartha went to the merchant Kamaswami; he was directed to a rich house; servants led him over precious carpets into a room, where he waited for the master of the house.

Kamaswami came in, a quick, supple man with hair turning heavily gray, with very clever, cautious eyes, with a greedy mouth. Host and guest greeted each other in friendly fashion.

"I have been told," the merchant began, "that you are a Brahmin, a scholar, but that you are seeking service with a merchant. Have you fallen into need, Brahmin, that you are seeking service?"

"No," said Siddhartha, "I have not fallen into need, and I have never been in need. Know that I come from the Samanas, with whom I lived for a long time."

"If you come from the Samanas, how could you not be in need? Are the Samanas not entirely without possessions?"

"I am without possessions," said Siddhartha, "if that is what you mean. Certainly I am without possessions. But I am so of my own free will, and so I am not in need."

"But what do you intend to live on, if you have no possessions?"

"I have never yet thought about that, sir. I have been without possessions for more than three years and have never once thought about what I should live on."

"So you have lived on the possessions of others."

"Presumably that is so. The merchant, too, lives on the goods of others, after all."

"Well said. But he does not take what belongs to others for nothing; he gives them his wares in return."

“So it does indeed seem to be. Everyone takes, everyone gives; such is life.”

“But allow me: if you have no possessions, what do you intend to give?”

“Everyone gives what he has. The warrior gives strength, the merchant gives wares, the teacher teaching, the farmer rice, the fisherman fish.”

“Very good. And what is it, then, that you have to give? What is it that you have learned, that you can do?”

“I can think. I can wait. I can fast.”

“That is all?”

“I believe that is all!”

“And what use is it? Fasting, for example—what is it good for?”

“It is very good, sir. When a man has nothing to eat, fasting is the very cleverest thing he can do. If, for example, Siddhartha had not learned to fast, he would have to take some kind of service this very day, whether with you or wherever it might be, for hunger would force him to. But as it is, Siddhartha can wait calmly; he knows no impatience, he knows no emergency; he can let hunger besiege him for a long time and laugh at it. That, sir, is what fasting is good for.”

“You are right, Samana. Wait a moment.”

Kamaswami went out and came back with a scroll, which he handed to his guest, asking: “Can you read this?”

Siddhartha looked at the scroll, on which a contract of sale was written down, and began to read its contents aloud.

“Excellent,” said Kamaswami. “And will you write something for me on this sheet?”

He gave him a sheet and a stylus, and Siddhartha wrote and gave the sheet back.

Kamaswami read: “Writing is good, thinking is better. Cleverness is good, patience is better.”

“You write admirably,” the merchant said in praise. “We shall have many things to talk over together. For today I ask you to be my guest and take up lodging in this house.”

Siddhartha thanked him and accepted, and now lived in the merchant's house. Clothes were brought to him, and shoes, and a servant prepared his bath every day. Twice a day an abundant meal was served, but Siddhartha ate only once a day, and he neither ate meat nor drank wine. Kamaswami told him about his trade, showed him goods and storerooms, showed him accounts. Siddhartha came to know many new things; he listened much and spoke little. And mindful of Kamala's words, he never subordinated himself to the merchant; he made him treat him as an equal, indeed as more than an equal. Kamaswami conducted his business with care and often with passion, but Siddhartha regarded all this as a game whose rules he took pains to learn exactly, but whose substance did not touch his heart.

He had not been long in Kamaswami's house before he was already taking part in his host's trade. But every day, at the hour she named, he visited the beautiful Kamala, in handsome clothes, in fine shoes, and soon he was bringing her gifts as well. Much did her red, clever mouth teach him. Much did her tender, supple hand teach him. He was still a boy in love, inclined to plunge blindly and insatiably into pleasure as into a bottomless pit, and she taught him from the ground up the lesson that one cannot take pleasure without giving pleasure, and that every gesture, every caress, every touch, every glance, every smallest place on the body has its secret, and to awaken it brings happiness to the one who knows how. She taught him that lovers, after a celebration of love, must not part from each other without each admiring the other, without being as much conquered as having conquered, so that neither of them is left with surfeit and desolation and the bad feeling of having misused or been misused. He spent wonder-

ful hours with the beautiful and clever artist, became her pupil, her lover, her friend. Here with Kamala lay the worth and meaning of his present life, not in Kamaswami's trade.

The merchant entrusted him with the writing of important letters and contracts, and grew used to consulting him on all important matters. He soon saw that Siddhartha understood little about rice and wool, about shipping and trade, but that he had a lucky hand, and that Siddhartha surpassed him, the merchant, in calm and equanimity, and in the art of listening and of seeing into other people. "This Brahmin," he said to a friend, "is no real merchant and will never become one; his soul is never passionately in his business. But he has the secret of those people to whom success comes of itself, whether it is a good star he was born under, or magic, or something he learned with the Samanas. He always seems only to be playing with business; it never wholly enters into him, it never masters him; he never fears failure, a loss never troubles him."

The friend advised the merchant: "Give him a third of the profit from the business he conducts for you, but let him also bear the same share of the loss when there is a loss. That will make him more zealous."

Kamaswami followed the advice. But Siddhartha cared little about it. If profit came to him, he accepted it with equanimity; if loss came to him, he laughed and said: "Well, look at that, so this one went badly!"

It did indeed seem as though business were a matter of indifference to him. Once he traveled to a village to buy up a large rice harvest there. But when he arrived, the rice had already been sold to another trader. Nevertheless Siddhartha stayed on in that village for a good many days, entertained the farmers, gave their children copper coins, joined in celebrating a wedding, and came back from the journey extremely contented. Kamaswami

reproached him for not turning back at once, for having wasted time and money. Siddhartha answered: "Stop scolding, dear friend! Nothing has ever yet been achieved by scolding. If there has been a loss, let me bear the loss. I am very contented with this journey. I have come to know all sorts of people, a Brahmin has become my friend, children have ridden on my knees, farmers have shown me their fields, no one took me for a trader."

"That is all very pretty," cried Kamaswami crossly, "but you are in fact a trader, I should think! Or did you travel only for your pleasure?"

"Certainly," laughed Siddhartha, "certainly I traveled for my pleasure. What else for? I have come to know people and regions, I have enjoyed kindness and trust, I have found friendship. Look, my dear, if I had been Kamaswami, then as soon as I saw my purchase thwarted, I would have traveled straight back full of annoyance and in a hurry, and time and money would indeed have been lost. But as it is, I have had good days, have learned, have enjoyed joy, have harmed neither myself nor others through annoyance and haste. And if I ever go there again, perhaps to buy a later harvest, or for whatever purpose it may be, friendly people will receive me in a friendly and cheerful way, and I will praise myself for not having shown haste and ill humor that time. So let it be, friend, and do not harm yourself by scolding! When the day comes when you see: this Siddhartha is doing me harm, then say one word, and Siddhartha will go his way. But until then let us be satisfied with each other."

In vain, too, were the merchant's attempts to convince Siddhartha that he was eating his, Kamaswami's, bread. Siddhartha ate his own bread; or rather, they both ate the bread of others, the bread of all. Siddhartha never had an ear for Kamaswami's worries, and Kamaswami had many worries. If a deal was under way that was threatened with failure, if a shipment of goods seemed lost, if

a debtor seemed unable to pay, Kamaswami could never convince his associate that it was useful to waste words of grief or anger, to have furrows on one's brow, to sleep badly. When Kamaswami once reproached him that he had learned everything he knew from him, he gave this answer: "Do not try to make a fool of me with such jokes! From you I have learned how much a basket of fish costs and how much interest one can demand for money lent. Those are your sciences. I did not learn to think from you, dear Kamaswami; you would do better to try to learn it from me."

Indeed his soul was not in the trade. Business was good for bringing him money for Kamala, and it brought in far more than he needed. Beyond that, Siddhartha's interest and curiosity were only with people, whose dealings, crafts, worries, amusements, and follies had formerly been as strange and far from him as the moon. However easily he succeeded in talking with everyone, living with everyone, learning from everyone, he was nevertheless keenly aware that there was something that separated him from them, and this separating thing was the Samana in him. He saw people living along in a childlike or animal way, which he loved and at the same time also despised. He saw them toil, saw them suffer and turn gray over things that seemed to him wholly unworthy of such a price, over money, over small pleasures, over small honors; he saw them scold and insult one another, he saw them wail over pains at which a Samana smiles, and suffer from deprivations a Samana does not feel.

He was open to everything these people brought him. Welcome to him was the trader who offered him linen for sale, welcome the debtor who sought a loan, welcome the beggar who told him for an hour the story of his poverty and who was not half as poor as any Samana. He treated the rich foreign merchant no differently from the servant who shaved him and the street vendor by whom he let himself be cheated of small change when he bought

bananas. When Kamaswami came to him to complain of his worries or to reproach him over some deal, he listened curiously and cheerfully, wondered at him, tried to understand him, let him be a little in the right, just as much as seemed indispensable to him, and turned away from him to the next person who wanted him. And many came to him, many to trade with him, many to cheat him, many to sound him out, many to appeal to his pity, many to hear his advice. He gave advice, he pitied, he gave gifts, he let himself be cheated a little, and this whole game, and the passion with which all people played this game, occupied his thoughts just as much as the gods and Brahman had once occupied them.

At times he sensed, deep in his breast, a dying, quiet voice that quietly admonished, quietly lamented, so that he barely heard it. Then for an hour he would become aware that he was leading a strange life, that he was doing nothing but things that were merely a game, that he was cheerful, to be sure, and sometimes felt joy, but that real life was nevertheless flowing past him and not touching him. As a ball player plays with his balls, so he played with his business, with the people around him, watched them, found his amusement in them; with his heart, with the source of his being, he was not in it. The source ran somewhere, as if far away from him, ran and ran invisibly, had nothing more to do with his life. And a few times he was frightened by such thoughts and wished that it might be granted to him, too, to take part in all the childlike doings of the day with passion and with his heart, to live really, to act really, to enjoy and to live really, instead of only standing to one side like this as a spectator. But again and again he came back to the beautiful Kamala, learned the art of love, practiced the cult of pleasure, in which more than anywhere else giving and taking become one, chatted with her, learned from her, gave her advice, received advice. She understood him better than Govinda had once understood him; she was more like him.

Once he said to her: "You are like me; you are different from most people. You are Kamala, nothing else, and within you there is a stillness and refuge into which you can go at any hour and be at home with yourself, just as I can. Few people have that, and yet all could have it."

"Not all people are clever," said Kamala.

"No," said Siddhartha, "that is not what it depends on. Kamaswami is just as clever as I am and yet has no refuge in himself. Others have it who in understanding are little children. Most people, Kamala, are like a falling leaf that blows and turns through the air, and sways, and tumbles to the ground. But others, a few, are like stars; they go a fixed course, no wind reaches them; they have their law and their course within themselves. Among all the scholars and Samanas, of whom I knew many, there was one of this kind, a perfect one; I can never forget him. It is that Gotama, the Exalted One, the proclaimer of that teaching. A thousand disciples hear his teaching every day, follow his precepts every hour, but they are all falling leaves; they do not have teaching and law within themselves."

Kamala looked at him with a smile. "Again you are talking about him," she said; "again you are having Samana thoughts."

Siddhartha was silent, and they played the game of love, one of the thirty or forty different games Kamala knew. Her body was pliant as a jaguar's, and as a hunter's bow; whoever had learned love from her was versed in many pleasures, many secrets. For a long time she played with Siddhartha, lured him, pushed him away, forced him, held him in her embrace, rejoiced in his mastery, until he was conquered and rested exhausted at her side.

The courtesan bent over him, looked long into his face, into his eyes, which had grown tired.

"You are the best lover," she said thoughtfully, "that I have seen. You are stronger than others, more pliant, more willing. You have

learned my art well, Siddhartha. Someday, when I am older, I want to have a child by you. And yet, my dear, you have remained a Samana; and yet you do not love me, you love no one. Isn't that so?"

"It may well be so," said Siddhartha wearily. "I am like you. You do not love either—how else could you practice love as an art? People of our kind perhaps cannot love. The child people can; that is their secret."

Samsara

For a long time Siddhartha had lived the life of the world and its pleasures without belonging to it. His senses, which he had killed in the hot Samana years, had awakened again; he had tasted wealth, tasted lust, tasted power; yet for a long time he had still remained a Samana in his heart, and Kamala, the clever one, had seen this rightly. It was still the art of thinking, of waiting, of fasting that guided his life; the people of the world, the child people, had still remained strangers to him, as he was a stranger to them.

The years ran on; wrapped in well-being, Siddhartha hardly felt them dwindling. He had become rich; he had long owned a house of his own and servants of his own, and a garden outside the town by the river. People liked him; they came to him when they needed money or advice; but no one was close to him except Kamala.

That high, bright wakefulness which he had once experienced at the height of his youth, in the days after Gotama's sermon, after the parting from Govinda, that tense expectation, that proud standing alone without teachings and without teachers, that supple readiness to hear the divine voice in his own heart, had gradually become a memory, had been transient; far off and faint the holy spring murmured, which had once been near, which had once murmured within himself. Much, it is true, that he had learned from the Samanas, that he had learned from Gotama, that he had learned from his father, the Brahmin, had remained in him for a long time: moderate living, joy in thinking, hours of meditation, secret knowledge of the self, of the eternal I that is neither body nor consciousness. Some of it had remained in him, but one thing

after another had sunk down and become covered with dust. As the potter's wheel, once set in motion, goes on turning for a long time and only slowly tires and comes to rest, so in Siddhartha's soul the wheel of asceticism, the wheel of thinking, the wheel of discernment had gone on turning for a long time, was turning still, but it turned slowly and hesitantly and was close to a standstill. Slowly, as moisture seeps into the dying stump of a tree, slowly fills it and makes it rot, the world and sloth had seeped into Siddhartha's soul; slowly it filled his soul, made it heavy, made it tired, lulled it to sleep. In return his senses had come alive; they had learned much, experienced much.

Siddhartha had learned to trade, to wield power over people, to amuse himself with women; he had learned to wear beautiful clothes, to command servants, to bathe in scented waters. He had learned to eat delicately and carefully prepared dishes, fish too, meat and fowl too, spices and sweets, and to drink the wine that makes one sluggish and forgetful. He had learned to play at dice and on the chessboard, to watch dancing girls, to have himself carried in a sedan chair, to sleep on a soft bed. But he had still felt himself different from the others and superior to them; he had always watched them with a little mockery, with a little mocking contempt, with that very contempt a Samana always feels for people of the world. When Kamaswami was ailing, when he was annoyed, when he felt insulted, when he was plagued by his merchant's worries, Siddhartha had always looked on with mockery. Only slowly and imperceptibly, as the harvest seasons and rainy seasons went by, had his mockery grown more tired, had his superiority grown quieter. Only slowly, amid his growing riches, had Siddhartha himself taken on something of the ways of the child people, something of their childishness and of their anxiety. And yet he envied them, envied them all the more the more like them he became. He envied them the one thing he lacked and they

had: the importance they were able to attach to their lives, the passion of their joys and fears, the anxious but sweet happiness of their eternal state of being in love. With themselves, with women, with their children, with honor or money, with plans or hopes, these people were always in love. But he did not learn this from them, precisely this, this child's joy and child's folly; he learned from them precisely the unpleasant things he himself despised. It happened more and more often that after an evening in company he lay in bed late in the morning and felt dull and tired. It happened that he grew annoyed and impatient when Kamaswami bored him with his worries. It happened that he laughed too loudly when he lost at dice. His face was still cleverer and more spiritual than others', but it seldom laughed, and one after another it took on those features so often found in the faces of rich people, those features of discontent, of sickliness, of ill humor, of sloth, of lovelessness. Slowly the soul sickness of the rich took hold of him.

Like a veil, like a thin mist, weariness settled over Siddhartha, slowly, a little thicker every day, a little murkier every month, a little heavier every year. As a new garment grows old with time, with time loses its beautiful color, gets stains, gets creases, is frayed at the hems and here and there begins to show worn, threadbare places, so Siddhartha's new life, which he had begun after his parting from Govinda, had grown old; so it lost color and luster as the years ran by; so creases and stains gathered on it; and hidden at the bottom, already peering out here and there in ugliness, disappointment and disgust lay waiting. Siddhartha did not notice. He noticed only that the bright and sure voice of his inner self, which had once awakened in him and had guided him again and again in his radiant times, had fallen silent.

The world had caught him, pleasure, covetousness, sloth, and finally even the vice he had always most despised and mocked as the most foolish: greed. Property too, possessions and wealth, had

finally caught him; they were no longer a game and a trinket to him; they had become a chain and a burden. By a strange and cunning way Siddhartha had fallen into this last and most contemptible dependence: through dice. For from the time when he had ceased in his heart to be a Samana, Siddhartha began to play the game for money and valuables, which he had once joined in, smiling and offhand, as a custom of the child people, with growing fury and passion. He was a feared player; few dared to play against him, so high and brazen were his stakes. He played from the need of his heart; gambling away and squandering the wretched money gave him an angry joy; in no other way could he show his contempt for wealth, the merchants' idol, more clearly and more scornfully. So he played high and without mercy, hating himself, mocking himself, raked in thousands, threw away thousands, gambled away money, gambled away jewelry, gambled away a country house, won again, gambled away again. That fear, that terrible and oppressive fear he felt while throwing the dice, while trembling over high stakes, that fear he loved and sought again and again to renew, again and again to heighten, again and again to tickle higher, for in this feeling alone did he still feel something like happiness, something like intoxication, something like heightened life in the midst of his sated, lukewarm, insipid life.

And after every great loss he thought of new wealth, pursued trade more eagerly, forced his debtors more strictly to pay, for he wanted to go on playing, he wanted to go on squandering, to go on showing his contempt for wealth. Siddhartha lost his composure in the face of losses, he lost his patience with late payers, lost his good nature toward beggars, lost his pleasure in giving away money and lending it to those who asked. He who gambled away ten thousand on one throw and laughed at it became stricter and pettier in trade, sometimes dreamed of money at night! And as often as he awoke from this ugly enchantment, as often as he saw

his face in the mirror on the bedroom wall grown older and uglier, as often as shame and disgust overcame him, he fled further, fled into new gambling, fled into the numbing of lust, of wine, and from there back into the urge to pile up and acquire. In this senseless cycle he ran himself tired, ran himself old, ran himself sick.

Then once a dream warned him. He had spent the evening hours with Kamala, in her beautiful pleasure garden. They had sat under the trees, talking, and Kamala had spoken thoughtful words, words behind which a sadness and weariness lay hidden. She had asked him to tell her about Gotama, and could not hear enough of him, how pure his eye had been, how still and beautiful his mouth, how kind his smile, how peaceful his walk. For a long time he had had to tell her about the exalted Buddha, and Kamala had sighed and had said: "One day, perhaps soon, I too will follow this Buddha. I will give him my pleasure garden and take my refuge in his teaching." But after that she had aroused him and bound him to her in the game of love with painful ardor, with bites and with tears, as if she wanted to press the last sweet drop once more from this vain, transient pleasure. Never had it become so strangely clear to Siddhartha how closely lust is akin to death. Then he had lain at her side, and Kamala's face had been close to him, and under her eyes and beside the corners of her mouth he had read, more clearly than ever before, an anxious script, a script of fine lines, of faint furrows, a script that called to mind autumn and old age, just as Siddhartha himself, who was only in his forties, had already noticed gray hairs here and there among his black ones. Weariness was written on Kamala's beautiful face, the weariness of walking a long road that has no happy goal, weariness and the beginning of wilting, and a hidden anxiety, not yet spoken, perhaps not even known yet: fear of old age, fear of autumn, fear of having to die. Sighing, he had taken leave of her, his soul full of displeasure and full of hidden anxiety.

Then Siddhartha had spent the night in his house with dancing girls and wine, had played the superior man before his peers, which he no longer was, had drunk much wine and sought his bed late after midnight, tired and yet excited, close to weeping and despair, and had long sought sleep in vain, his heart full of a misery he thought he could no longer bear, full of a disgust with which he felt himself saturated as with the lukewarm, repulsive taste of the wine, the too sweet, dreary music, the too soft smiles of the dancing girls, the too sweet scent of their hair and breasts. But more than by anything else he was disgusted by himself, by his scented hair, by the smell of wine on his mouth, by the slack weariness and listlessness of his skin. As when someone who has eaten or drunk far too much vomits it up again in torment and is still glad of the relief, so the sleepless man wished he could rid himself, in an enormous surge of disgust, of these pleasures, these habits, this whole senseless life, and of himself. Only at the light of morning and the waking of the first bustle in the street in front of his town house had he dozed off, had found for a few moments a half stupor, a hint of sleep. In those moments he had a dream:

Kamala kept a small, rare songbird in a golden cage. He dreamed of this bird. He dreamed: this bird, which always sang in the morning hour, had fallen silent, and as he noticed this, he stepped up to the cage and looked in; there the little bird was dead and lay stiff on the floor. He took it out, weighed it in his hand for a moment, and then threw it away, out into the lane, and at the same moment he was terribly frightened, and his heart ached, as if with this dead bird he had thrown away from himself all that was of value and all that was good.

Starting up out of this dream, he felt himself enveloped in deep sadness. Worthless, so it seemed to him, worthless and senseless was the way he had led his life; nothing living, nothing in any way

precious or worth keeping had remained in his hands. He stood alone and empty, like a shipwrecked man on the shore.

Gloomily Siddhartha went to a pleasure garden that belonged to him, locked the gate, sat down under a mango tree, felt death in his heart and horror in his breast, sat and sensed how something in him was dying, wilting, coming to an end. Gradually he collected his thoughts, and in his mind he walked once more the whole way of his life, from the first days he could remember. When had he ever experienced happiness, felt true bliss? Oh yes, several times he had experienced such a thing. In his boyhood years he had tasted it, when he had won praise from the Brahmins, when he had distinguished himself in reciting the holy verses, in disputation with the learned, as an assistant at the sacrifice. Then he had felt it in his heart: "A way lies before you, to which you are called; the gods are waiting for you." And again as a young man, when the ever higher-fleeing goal of all reflection had torn him out of the crowd of those striving like him and drawn him upward, when he wrestled in pain for the meaning of Brahman, when every piece of knowledge he attained only kindled new thirst in him, then again, in the midst of the thirst, in the midst of the pain, he had felt this same thing: "Onward! Onward! You are called!" He had heard this voice when he left his home and chose the life of a Samana, and again when he went away from the Samanas to that Perfected One, and away from him too into the unknown. How long it was since he had heard this voice, how long since he had reached any height; how flat and dreary his road had run, many long years, without a high goal, without thirst, without elevation, content with small pleasures and yet never satisfied! All these years, without knowing it himself, he had striven and longed to become a person like these many, like these children, and all the while his life had been far more wretched and poorer than theirs, for their goals were not his, nor their worries; this whole world of Kamaswami

people had only been a game to him, after all, a dance one watches, a comedy. Kamala alone had been dear to him, had been precious to him—but was she still? Did he still need her, or she him? Were they not playing a game without end? Was it necessary to live for that? No, it was not necessary! This game was called Samsara, a game for children, a game perhaps lovely to play, once, twice, ten times—but over and over and over again?

Then Siddhartha knew that the game was over, that he could play it no longer. A shudder ran over his body; inside him, so he felt, something had died.

That whole day he sat under the mango tree, thinking of his father, thinking of Govinda, thinking of Gotama. Had he had to leave them in order to become a Kamaswami? He was still sitting there when night had fallen. When he looked up and saw the stars, he thought: “Here I sit under my mango tree, in my pleasure garden.” He smiled a little—was it necessary, then, was it right, was it not a foolish game, that he owned a mango tree, that he owned a garden?

He was done with this too; this too died in him. He rose, took leave of the mango tree, took leave of the pleasure garden. Since he had gone without food all day, he felt a violent hunger, and thought of his house in the town, of his room and bed, of the table with its dishes. He smiled wearily, shook himself, and took leave of these things.

In that same hour of the night Siddhartha left his garden, left the town, and never came back. For a long time Kamaswami, who believed he had fallen into the hands of robbers, had a search made for him. Kamala had no search made for him. When she learned that Siddhartha had disappeared, she was not surprised. Had she not always expected it? Was he not a Samana, a man without a home, a pilgrim? And she had felt this most of all at their last meeting, and in the midst of the pain of her loss she was glad

that she had drawn him so close to her heart this last time, had felt herself so wholly possessed and pervaded by him once more.

When she received the first news of Siddhartha's disappearance, she went to the window where she kept a rare songbird captive in a golden cage. She opened the door of the cage, took out the bird, and let it fly. For a long time she gazed after it, the flying bird. From that day on she received no more visitors and kept her house closed. But after some time she became aware that she was pregnant from her last time with Siddhartha.

By the River

Siddhartha wandered in the forest, already far from the town, and knew nothing but this one thing: that he could not go back, that this life, as he had led it now for many years, was over and gone, tasted and sucked dry to the point of disgust. Dead was the song-bird he had dreamed of. Dead was the bird in his heart. He was deeply entangled in Samsara; he had soaked up disgust and death into himself from all sides, as a sponge soaks up water until it is full. He was full of surfeit, full of misery, full of death; there was nothing left in the world that could lure him, that could gladden him, that could comfort him.

He longed ardently to know nothing more of himself, to have rest, to be dead. If only a bolt of lightning would come and strike him dead! If only a tiger would come and devour him! If only there were a wine, a poison, that would bring him numbness, forgetting and sleep, and no more waking! Was there any filth left with which he had not soiled himself, any sin and folly he had not committed, any desolation of the soul he had not taken upon himself? Was it still possible to live? Was it possible, again and again and again, to draw breath, to let breath out, to feel hunger, to eat again, to sleep again, to lie with a woman again? Was this cycle not exhausted and closed for him?

Siddhartha came to the great river in the forest, the same river over which, long ago, when he was still a young man and coming from Gotama's town, a ferryman had taken him. By this river he stopped and stood hesitating on the bank. Weariness and hunger had weakened him, and why should he go on, anyway, where to,

toward what goal? No, there were no more goals; there was nothing left but the deep, painful longing to shake off this whole desolate dream, to spit out this stale wine, to make an end of this miserable and shameful life.

Over the riverbank a tree hung bent, a coconut palm; against its trunk Siddhartha leaned his shoulder, put his arm around the trunk, and looked down into the green water that flowed and flowed beneath him, looked down and found himself filled through and through with the wish to let go and go under in this water. A ghastly emptiness was mirrored back at him from the water, and the terrible emptiness in his soul answered it. Yes, he was at the end. There was nothing left for him but to snuff himself out, to smash the failed shape of his life, to throw it away, at the feet of jeering gods. This was the great vomiting he had longed for: death, the smashing of the form he hated! Let the fish devour him, this dog of a Siddhartha, this madman, this depraved and rotten body, this slack and abused soul! Let the fish and crocodiles devour him, let the demons tear him to pieces!

With a distorted face he stared into the water, saw his face mirrored there, and spat at it. In deep weariness he loosened his arm from the trunk of the tree and turned a little, to let himself fall straight down, to go under at last. He sank, with his eyes closed, toward death.

Then, from remote regions of his soul, from pasts of his wearied life, a sound quivered up. It was a word, a syllable, which he spoke to himself without thought in a slurring voice, the old first word and last word of all Brahmin prayers, the holy "Om," which means something like "the perfect" or "perfection." And at the moment the sound "Om" touched Siddhartha's ear, his slumbering spirit suddenly awoke and recognized the folly of what he was doing.

Siddhartha was deeply shaken. So this was how things stood with him; so lost was he, so astray and abandoned by all knowledge, that he had been able to seek death, that this wish, this child's wish, had been able to grow great in him: to find rest by snuffing out his body! What all the torment of these last times, all the disillusionment, all the despair had not brought about, this moment brought about, when the Om entered his consciousness: he recognized himself in his misery and in his error.

Om! he said to himself: Om! And he knew of Brahman again, knew of the indestructibility of life, knew again of all that is divine, which he had forgotten.

But this was only a moment, a flash. At the foot of the coconut palm Siddhartha sank down, struck down by weariness, murmuring Om, laid his head on the root of the tree, and sank into deep sleep.

Deep was his sleep and free of dreams; for a long time he had not known such a sleep. When he woke after many hours, it seemed to him that ten years had passed; he heard the soft flowing of the water, did not know where he was or who had brought him here, opened his eyes, saw with wonder trees and sky above him, and remembered where he was and how he had come here. But this took him a long while, and the past seemed to him covered as if by a veil, infinitely distant, infinitely far away, infinitely indifferent. He knew only that he had left his former life (in the first moment of reflection this former life seemed to him like a long-past, earlier incarnation, like an early pre-birth of his present self)—that he had left his former life, that full of disgust and misery he had even wanted to throw his life away, but that by a river, under a coconut palm, he had come to himself, the holy word Om on his lips, had then fallen asleep, and now, awake, was looking out at the world as a new man. Softly he spoke to himself the word Om, over which he had fallen asleep, and it seemed to him that his

whole long sleep had been nothing but a long, absorbed speaking of Om, a thinking of Om, a submerging and complete entering into Om, into the nameless, the perfected.

What a wonderful sleep this had been! Never had sleep so refreshed him, so renewed him, so rejuvenated him! Perhaps he had really died, had gone under and been reborn in a new form? But no, he knew himself, he knew his hand and his feet, knew the place where he lay, knew this self in his breast, this Siddhartha, the willful one, the strange one; but this Siddhartha was nevertheless transformed, was renewed, was remarkably well rested, remarkably awake, joyful and curious.

Siddhartha sat up; then he saw a person sitting opposite him, a stranger, a monk in a yellow robe with a shaved head, in the posture of reflection. He looked at the man, who had neither hair on his head nor beard, and he had not looked at him long before he recognized in this monk Govinda, the friend of his youth, Govinda, who had taken his refuge in the exalted Buddha. Govinda had aged, he too, but his face still bore the old features, spoke of zeal, of faithfulness, of seeking, of anxiousness. But when Govinda, feeling his gaze, opened his eyes and looked at him, Siddhartha saw that Govinda did not recognize him. Govinda was glad to find him awake; evidently he had been sitting here a long time waiting for him to wake, though he did not know him.

“I have been asleep,” said Siddhartha. “How did you come here?”

“You have been asleep,” answered Govinda. “It is not good to sleep in such places, where there are often snakes and the animals of the forest have their paths. I, O sir, am a disciple of the exalted Gotama, the Buddha, the Sakyamuni, and I was making a pilgrimage along this road with a number of our people when I saw you lying asleep in a place where it is dangerous to sleep. So I tried to wake you, O sir, and when I saw that your sleep was very deep, I stayed behind my companions and sat with you. And then, so it

seems, I fell asleep myself, I who wanted to guard your sleep. I have done my duty badly; weariness overcame me. But now that you are awake, let me go, so that I can catch up with my brothers.”

“I thank you, Samana, for watching over my sleep,” said Siddhartha. “You disciples of the Exalted One are kind. Now you may go.”

“I am going, sir. May the gentleman always fare well.”

“I thank you, Samana.”

Govinda made the sign of greeting and said: “Farewell.”

“Farewell, Govinda,” said Siddhartha.

The monk stood still.

“Permit me, sir, how do you know my name?”

Then Siddhartha smiled.

“I know you, O Govinda, from your father’s hut, and from the Brahmin school, and from the sacrifices, and from our going to the Samanas, and from that hour when you took your refuge in the Exalted One in the grove of Jetavana.”

“You are Siddhartha!” Govinda cried out. “Now I recognize you, and I no longer understand how I could not recognize you at once. Welcome, Siddhartha; great is my joy at seeing you again.”

“It gladdens me too to see you again. You have been the guardian of my sleep; again I thank you for it, though I would have needed no guardian. Where are you going, O friend?”

“I am going nowhere. We monks are always on the road, as long as it is not the rainy season; we always move from place to place, live by the rule, proclaim the teaching, accept alms, move on. It is always so. But you, Siddhartha, where are you going?”

Siddhartha spoke: “It is the same with me, friend, as with you. I am going nowhere. I am only on the road. I am on pilgrimage.”

Govinda spoke: “You say you are on pilgrimage, and I believe you. But forgive me, O Siddhartha, you do not look like a pilgrim. You wear the clothes of a rich man, you wear the shoes of a man of

rank, and your hair, which smells of scented water, is not the hair of a pilgrim, not the hair of a Samana."

"Yes, my dear, you have observed well; your sharp eye sees everything. But I did not say to you that I was a Samana. I said: I am on pilgrimage. And so it is: I am on pilgrimage."

"You are on pilgrimage," said Govinda. "But few go on pilgrimage in such clothes, few in such shoes, few with such hair. Never have I, who have been on pilgrimage for many years, met such a pilgrim."

"I believe you, my Govinda. But now, today, you have met just such a pilgrim, in such shoes, in such a garment. Remember, my dear: the world of forms is transient, transient, most transient are our garments, and the way we wear our hair, and our hair and bodies themselves. I wear the clothes of a rich man; you have seen rightly. I wear them because I have been a rich man, and I wear my hair like the people of the world and the voluptuaries, for I have been one of them."

"And now, Siddhartha, what are you now?"

"I do not know; I know it as little as you do. I am on the road. I was a rich man, and I am one no longer; and what I will be tomorrow, I do not know."

"You have lost your wealth?"

"I have lost it, or it has lost me. It has slipped away from me. The wheel of forms turns quickly, Govinda. Where is the Brahmin Siddhartha? Where is the Samana Siddhartha? Where is the rich man Siddhartha? The transient changes quickly, Govinda; you know that."

Govinda looked at the friend of his youth for a long time, doubt in his eyes. Then he greeted him as one greets people of rank, and went on his way.

With a smiling face Siddhartha watched him go; he loved him still, this faithful one, this anxious one. And how could he, at this

moment, in this glorious hour after his wonderful sleep, pervaded by Om, not have loved anyone and anything! That was precisely the enchantment that had taken place in him in his sleep and through the Om: that he loved everything, that he was full of glad love for everything he saw. And precisely this, so it seemed to him now, was what he had been so sick from before: that he had been able to love nothing and no one.

With a smiling face Siddhartha watched the departing monk. The sleep had strengthened him greatly, but hunger tormented him greatly, for he had now eaten nothing for two days, and the time was long past when he had been hardened against hunger. With grief, and yet also with laughter, he thought of that time. Back then, he remembered, he had boasted to Kamala of three things, had known three noble and invincible arts: fasting—waiting—thinking. This had been his possession, his power and strength, his firm staff; in the diligent, laborious years of his youth he had learned these three arts, nothing else. And now they had left him; not one of them was his any longer, not fasting, not waiting, not thinking. For the most wretched thing he had given them up, for the most transient, for sensual pleasure, for good living, for wealth! Strange indeed was the way it had gone with him. And now, so it seemed, now he had really become one of the child people.

Siddhartha thought about his situation. Thinking was hard for him; at bottom he had no desire to do it, but he forced himself.

Now, he thought, since all these most transient things have slipped away from me again, now I stand under the sun again as I once stood as a small child; nothing is mine, I know how to do nothing, I am capable of nothing, I have learned nothing. How strange this is! Now that I am no longer young, now that my hair is already half gray, now that my strength is failing, now I am starting again from the beginning and as a child! Again he had to smile. Yes,

his fate was strange! Things were going downhill with him, and now he stood in the world again empty and naked and stupid. But he could feel no grief about it; no, he even felt a great urge to laugh, to laugh at himself, to laugh at this strange, foolish world.

“Things are going downhill with you!” he said to himself, and laughed at it, and as he said it, his eye fell on the river, and he saw the river too going downhill, always wandering downward, and singing and being merry as it went. That pleased him well; he smiled kindly at the river. Was this not the river in which he had wanted to drown himself, once, a hundred years ago, or had he dreamed it?

Strange indeed has my life been, he thought; it has taken strange detours. As a boy I had to do only with gods and sacrifices. As a youth I had to do only with asceticism, with thinking and meditation; I was in search of Brahman, I revered the eternal in Atman. But as a young man I followed the penitents, lived in the forest, suffered heat and frost, learned to hunger, taught my body to die. Wonderfully, then, insight came to meet me in the teaching of the great Buddha; I felt knowledge of the unity of the world circling in me like my own blood. But from the Buddha too, and from the great knowledge, I had to go away again. I went and learned the pleasure of love from Kamala, learned trade from Kamaswami, piled up money, squandered money, learned to love my stomach, learned to flatter my senses. Many years I had to spend in losing the spirit, in unlearning thinking again, in forgetting unity. Is it not as though, slowly and by great detours, I had turned from a man into a child, from a thinker into one of the child people? And yet this way has been very good, and yet the bird in my breast has not died. But what a way it was! I have had to go through so much stupidity, through so much vice, through so much error, through so much disgust and disappointment and misery, merely to become a child again and be able to begin anew. But it was right this way; my

heart says yes to it, my eyes laugh at it. I had to experience despair, I had to sink down to the most foolish of all thoughts, to the thought of suicide, in order to be able to experience grace, to hear Om again, to be able to sleep properly and wake properly again. I had to become a fool in order to find Atman in me again. I had to sin in order to be able to live again. Where else may my way lead me? It is foolish, this way; it goes in loops; perhaps it goes in a circle. Let it go as it will; I want to walk it.

Wonderfully he felt joy welling up in his breast.

Where, then, he asked his heart, where do you get this gladness? Does it come from this long, good sleep that has done me so much good? Or from the word Om that I spoke? Or from my having escaped, from my flight being accomplished, from my being free again at last and standing under the sky like a child? Oh, how good this having fled is, this having become free! How pure and beautiful the air is here, how good to breathe! There, in the place I ran away from, everything smelled of ointment, of spices, of wine, of excess, of sloth. How I hated this world of the rich, of the gluttons, of the gamblers! How I have hated myself for staying so long in this terrible world! How I have hated myself, have robbed myself, poisoned myself, tormented myself, have made myself old and wicked! No, never again will I imagine, as I once so liked to do, that Siddhartha is wise! But this I have done well, this pleases me, this I must praise: that there is now an end to that hatred of myself, to that foolish and dreary life! I praise you, Siddhartha; after so many years of folly you have once again had an idea, have done something, have heard the bird in your breast singing and have followed it!

So he praised himself, took joy in himself, listened curiously to his stomach, which was growling with hunger. A share of sorrow, a share of misery, he had now, so he felt, tasted to the full and spat out in these last times and days, eaten his way through it to

despair and to death. So it was good. He could have stayed with Kamaswami for a long time yet, earning money, squandering money, fattening his belly and letting his soul die of thirst; he could have lived for a long time yet in this soft, well-upholstered hell, had this not come: the moment of perfect desolation and despair, that extreme moment when he hung over the flowing water and was ready to destroy himself. That he had felt this despair, this deepest disgust, and that he had not succumbed to it, that the bird, the glad spring and voice in him, was still alive after all: over this he felt this joy, over this he laughed, over this his face beamed under his graying hair.

“It is good,” he thought, “to taste for oneself everything one needs to know. That worldly pleasure and riches are not good, I learned as a child. I have known it a long time; I have experienced it only now. And now I know it, know it not only with my memory, but with my eyes, with my heart, with my stomach. Happy am I that I know it!”

For a long time he pondered his transformation, listened to the bird as it sang for joy. Had this bird not died in him, had he not felt its death? No, something else in him had died, something that had long been longing to die. Was it not what he had once wanted to kill in his ardent years as a penitent? Was it not his self, his small, anxious, and proud self, with which he had fought for so many years, which had defeated him again and again, which was there again after every mortification, forbade joy, felt fear? Was it not this that had finally met its death today, here in the forest by this lovely river? Was it not because of this death that he was now like a child, so full of trust, so without fear, so full of joy?

Now Siddhartha also sensed why he had fought in vain with this self as a Brahmin, as a penitent. Too much knowledge had hindered him, too many holy verses, too many rules of sacrifice, too much mortification, too much doing and striving! He had been full

of arrogance, always the cleverest, always the most zealous, always a step ahead of everyone, always the knowing one and the spiritual one, always the priest or the sage. Into this priesthood, into this arrogance, into this spirituality his self had crept, sat fast there and grew, while he thought he was killing it with fasting and penance. Now he saw it, and saw that the secret voice had been right, that no teacher could ever have delivered him. That was why he had had to go into the world, had had to lose himself in pleasure and power, in women and money, had had to become a trader, a dice player, a drinker and a greedy man, until the priest and Samana in him was dead. That was why he had had to go on enduring these ugly years, enduring the disgust, the emptiness, the senselessness of a dreary and lost life, to the end, to bitter despair, until Siddhartha the voluptuary, Siddhartha the greedy man, could die too. He had died; a new Siddhartha had awakened from sleep. He too would grow old; he too would one day have to die; Siddhartha was transient, every form was transient. But today he was young, was a child, the new Siddhartha, and was full of joy.

These thoughts he thought, listened smiling to his stomach, listened gratefully to a humming bee. Cheerfully he looked into the flowing river; never had any water pleased him as much as this one; never had he heard the voice and the parable of the moving water so strongly and beautifully. It seemed to him that the river had something special to tell him, something he did not yet know, something that was still waiting for him. In this river Siddhartha had wanted to drown himself; in it the old, tired, despairing Siddhartha had drowned today. But the new Siddhartha felt a deep love for this flowing water, and resolved within himself not to leave it again so soon.

The Ferryman

I will stay by this river, thought Siddhartha; it is the same one I once crossed on my way to the child people; a friendly ferryman took me across then; I will go to him; from his hut my way once led me into a new life, which has now grown old and is dead—may my present way, my present new life, also take its start there!

Tenderly he looked into the flowing water, into the transparent green, into the crystal lines of its mysterious design. He saw bright pearls rising from the depths, quiet bubbles floating on the mirror of the surface, the blue of the sky pictured in it. With a thousand eyes the river looked at him, with green ones, with white ones, with crystal ones, with sky-blue ones. How he loved this water, how it delighted him, how grateful he was to it! In his heart he heard the voice speaking, which was newly awakened, and it said to him: Love this water! Stay by it! Learn from it! Oh yes, he wanted to learn from it, he wanted to listen to it. Whoever understood this water and its secrets, so it seemed to him, would understand much else besides, many secrets, all secrets.

But of the river's secrets he saw only one today, and it gripped his soul. He saw: this water ran and ran, ran on and on, and yet was always there, was always and at all times the same and yet new at every moment! Oh, whoever grasped this, understood this! He did not understand and grasp it; he only felt an intimation stirring, a distant memory, divine voices.

Siddhartha rose; the gnawing of hunger in his body was becoming unbearable. Absorbed, he wandered on, up the path along the

bank, against the current, listened to the current, listened to the growling hunger in his body.

When he reached the ferry, the boat was just lying ready, and the same ferryman who had once taken the young Samana across the river was standing in the boat; Siddhartha recognized him; he too had aged greatly.

“Will you take me across?” he asked.

The ferryman, astonished to see so distinguished a man walking alone and on foot, took him into the boat and pushed off.

“You have chosen a beautiful life for yourself,” said the passenger. “It must be beautiful to live by this water every day and to travel on it.”

Smiling, the oarsman swayed: “It is beautiful, sir; it is as you say. But is not every life, is not every work beautiful?”

“That may well be. But I envy you yours.”

“Ah, you would soon lose your taste for it. It is nothing for people in fine clothes.”

Siddhartha laughed. “Once already today I have been looked at because of my clothes, looked at with distrust. Ferryman, won’t you take these clothes, which are a burden to me, off my hands? For you must know that I have no money to pay you a fare.”

“The gentleman is joking,” laughed the ferryman.

“I am not joking, friend. Look, once before you took me across this water in your boat for nothing, for the gods’ sake. So do it today too, and take my clothes for it.”

“And does the gentleman mean to travel on without clothes?”

“Ah, what I would like best is not to travel on at all. What I would like best, ferryman, is for you to give me an old apron and keep me with you as your helper, or rather as your apprentice, for first I must learn to handle the boat.”

For a long time the ferryman looked at the stranger, searching.

“Now I recognize you,” he said at last. “Once you slept in my hut; it is long ago, more than twenty years ago, it may well be; and I took you across the river, and we parted like good friends. Weren’t you a Samana? I can no longer remember your name.”

“My name is Siddhartha, and I was a Samana when you saw me last.”

“Then be welcome, Siddhartha. My name is Vasudeva. You will, I hope, be my guest today too and sleep in my hut, and tell me where you come from and why your fine clothes are such a burden to you.”

They had reached the middle of the river, and Vasudeva leaned harder into the oar to make headway against the current. He worked calmly, his gaze on the bow of the boat, with powerful arms. Siddhartha sat and watched him, and remembered how once before, on that last day of his time as a Samana, love for this man had stirred in his heart. Gratefully he accepted Vasudeva’s invitation. When they landed at the bank, he helped him tie the boat to the stakes; then the ferryman asked him into the hut, offered him bread and water, and Siddhartha ate with relish, and ate with relish too of the mangoes Vasudeva offered him.

Afterward, toward sunset, they sat down on a tree trunk by the bank, and Siddhartha told the ferryman his origins and his life, as he had seen it before his eyes today, in that hour of despair. His telling lasted deep into the night.

Vasudeva listened with great attention. Listening, he took everything into himself, origins and childhood, all the learning, all the seeking, all the joy, all the distress. This was one of the greatest of the ferryman’s virtues: he knew how to listen as few people do. Though Vasudeva spoke not a word, the speaker felt how he let his words into himself, quietly, openly, waiting, how he lost none of them, awaited none with impatience, set neither praise nor blame beside them, only listened. Siddhartha felt what happiness it is to

confess oneself to such a listener, to sink into his heart one's own life, one's own seeking, one's own suffering.

But toward the end of Siddhartha's story, when he spoke of the tree by the river, and of his deep fall, of the holy Om, and of how after his sleep he had felt such love for the river, the ferryman listened with doubled attention, completely and wholly given over to it, with his eyes closed.

But when Siddhartha fell silent, and there had been a long stillness, Vasudeva said: "It is as I thought. The river has spoken to you. It is your friend too; it speaks to you too. That is good, that is very good. Stay with me, Siddhartha, my friend. I once had a wife; her bed was beside mine, but she died long ago; I have lived alone for a long time. Now live with me; there is room and food enough for both."

"I thank you," said Siddhartha, "I thank you and accept. And I thank you for this too, Vasudeva, that you have listened to me so well! Rare are the people who know how to listen. And I have met no one who knew it as you do. In this too I will learn from you."

"You will learn it," said Vasudeva, "but not from me. The river taught me to listen; you too will learn it from the river. It knows everything, the river; everything can be learned from it. Look, you have already learned this too from the water: that it is good to strive downward, to sink, to seek the depths. The rich and distinguished Siddhartha becomes a hired oarsman, the learned Brahmin Siddhartha becomes a ferryman: this too you have been told by the river. You will learn the other thing from it as well."

Siddhartha spoke, after a long pause: "What other thing, Vasudeva?"

Vasudeva rose. "It has grown late," he said; "let us go to sleep. I cannot tell you the other thing, O friend. You will learn it; perhaps you already know it. Look, I am not a learned man; I do not know how to speak, nor do I know how to think. I only know how to lis-

ten and to be devout; I have learned nothing else. If I could say it and teach it, I might be a wise man, but as it is, I am only a ferryman, and my task is to take people across this river. I have taken many across, thousands, and to all of them my river has been nothing but an obstacle on their journeys. They traveled for money and business, and to weddings, and on pilgrimages, and the river was in their way, and the ferryman was there to get them quickly over the obstacle. But for some among the thousands, a very few, four or five, the river has ceased to be an obstacle; they have heard its voice, they have listened to it, and the river has become holy to them, as it has become to me. Now let us go to rest, Siddhartha.”

Siddhartha stayed with the ferryman and learned to work the boat, and when there was nothing to do at the ferry, he worked with Vasudeva in the rice field, gathered wood, picked the fruit of the banana trees. He learned to make an oar, and learned to mend the boat, and to weave baskets, and was glad about everything he learned, and the days and months ran swiftly away. But more than Vasudeva could teach him, the river taught him. From it he learned unceasingly. Above all he learned from it to listen, to listen with a still heart, with a waiting, open soul, without passion, without wishing, without judgment, without opinion.

He lived in friendship beside Vasudeva, and now and then they exchanged words, few and long-considered words. Vasudeva was no friend of words; Siddhartha seldom succeeded in moving him to speak.

“Have you,” he asked him once, “have you too learned that secret from the river: that there is no time?”

Vasudeva’s face was suffused with a bright smile.

“Yes, Siddhartha,” he said. “This is what you mean, isn’t it: that the river is everywhere at once, at its source and at its mouth, at the waterfall, at the ferry, at the rapids, in the sea, in the moun-

tains, everywhere at once, and that for it there is only the present, not the shadow of the past, not the shadow of the future?”

“That is it,” said Siddhartha. “And when I had learned it, I looked at my life, and it too was a river, and the boy Siddhartha was separated from the man Siddhartha and from the old man Siddhartha only by shadows, not by anything real. Siddhartha’s former births, too, were no past, and his death and his return to Brahma no future. Nothing was, nothing will be; everything is, everything has being and presence.”

Siddhartha spoke with delight; this enlightenment had made him deeply happy. Oh, was not all suffering time, was not all self-tormenting and self-fearing time, was not everything hard, everything hostile in the world gone and overcome as soon as one had overcome time, as soon as one could think time away? He had spoken with delight, but Vasudeva only smiled at him radiantly and nodded his assent; silently he nodded, passed his hand over Siddhartha’s shoulder, turned back to his work.

And once again, when the river had swollen in the rainy season and was roaring mightily, Siddhartha said: “Isn’t it true, O friend, that the river has many voices, very many voices? Does it not have the voice of a king, and of a warrior, and of a bull, and of a night bird, and of a woman giving birth, and of a man sighing, and a thousand other voices besides?”

“It is so,” Vasudeva nodded; “all the voices of creatures are in its voice.”

“And do you know,” Siddhartha went on, “what word it speaks when you succeed in hearing all its ten thousand voices at once?”

Vasudeva’s face laughed with happiness; he bent toward Siddhartha and spoke the holy Om into his ear. And this was exactly what Siddhartha too had heard.

And as time went on, his smile grew more and more like the ferryman’s, grew almost as radiant, almost as suffused with happi-

ness, shining just as much from a thousand little wrinkles, just as childlike, just as old. Many travelers, when they saw the two ferry-men, took them for brothers. Often in the evening they sat together on the tree trunk by the bank, were silent, and both listened to the water, which for them was not water but the voice of life, the voice of what is, of what is eternally becoming. And it happened at times that both of them, listening to the river, thought of the same things, of a conversation from the day before yesterday, of one of their travelers whose face and fate occupied them, of death, of their childhood, and that both of them, at the same moment, when the river had said something good to them, looked at each other, both thinking exactly the same thing, both made happy by the same answer to the same question.

Something went out from the ferry and from the two ferrymen that many of the travelers sensed. It happened at times that a traveler, after looking into the face of one of the ferrymen, began to tell his life, told of sorrow, confessed evil, asked for comfort and advice. It happened at times that someone asked permission to spend an evening with them to listen to the river. It also happened that curious people came who had been told that two wise men lived at this ferry, or magicians, or holy men. The curious asked many questions, but they got no answers, and they found neither magicians nor wise men; they found only two friendly little old men who seemed to be mute and somewhat odd and simple-minded. And the curious laughed, and talked among themselves about how foolish and credulous the common people were to spread such empty rumors.

The years went by and no one counted them. Then one day monks came on pilgrimage, followers of Gotama, the Buddha, who asked to be taken across the river, and from them the ferrymen learned that they were hurrying back to their great teacher, for the news had spread that the Exalted One was mortally ill and

would soon die his last human death, to enter into deliverance. Not long afterward a new band of monks came on pilgrimage, and then another, and the monks as well as most of the other travelers and wanderers spoke of nothing but Gotama and his approaching death. And as people stream from everywhere and from all sides to a military campaign or to the coronation of a king, and gather in swarms like ants, so they streamed, as if drawn by a spell, to the place where the great Buddha was awaiting his death, where the tremendous thing was to happen and the great Perfected One of a world age was to enter into glory.

Siddhartha thought much in this time of the dying sage, the great teacher, whose voice had admonished nations and awakened hundreds of thousands, whose voice he too had once heard, whose holy face he too had once beheld with reverence. He thought of him kindly, saw his way to perfection before his eyes, and remembered with a smile the words he had once, as a young man, addressed to him, the Exalted One. They had been proud and precocious words, so it seemed to him; he remembered them with a smile. For a long time now he had known that he was no longer separated from Gotama, whose teaching he had nevertheless been unable to accept. No, no teaching could be accepted by one who truly sought, one who truly wanted to find. But he who has found could approve of any teaching, any at all, any way, any goal; nothing separated him any longer from all the thousands of others who lived in the eternal, who breathed the divine.

On one of these days, when so many were making the pilgrimage to the dying Buddha, Kamala too made the pilgrimage to him, once the most beautiful of courtesans. Long ago she had withdrawn from her former life, had given her garden to Gotama's monks, had taken her refuge in the teaching, was among the women friends and benefactors of the pilgrims. Together with the boy Siddhartha, her son, she had set out on the news of Gotama's

approaching death, in simple clothes, on foot. She was on her way along the river with her little son; but the boy soon grew tired, wanted to go back home, wanted to rest, wanted to eat, became defiant and tearful.

Kamala often had to rest with him; he was used to asserting his will against hers; she had to feed him, had to comfort him, had to scold him. He did not understand why he had had to set out with his mother on this toilsome and sad pilgrimage, to an unknown place, to a strange man who was holy and who was dying. Let him die; what did that matter to the boy?

The pilgrims were not far now from Vasudeva's ferry when little Siddhartha once again forced his mother to stop and rest. She herself, Kamala, was tired too, and while the boy chewed on a banana, she crouched down on the ground, closed her eyes a little, and rested. But suddenly she let out a wailing cry; the boy looked at her in fright and saw her face blanched with horror, and from under her dress a small black snake slipped away, by which Kamala had been bitten.

Now they both ran hurriedly along the road to reach people, and got as far as the neighborhood of the ferry; there Kamala collapsed and could go no farther. But the boy set up a pitiful wailing, kissing and hugging his mother in between, and she too joined in his loud cries for help, until the sounds reached the ear of Vasudeva, who was standing by the ferry. He came quickly, took the woman in his arms, carried her into the boat; the boy ran along; and soon they all arrived at the hut, where Siddhartha stood at the hearth, just lighting a fire. He looked up and saw first the face of the boy, which strangely reminded him of something, recalled something forgotten. Then he saw Kamala, whom he recognized at once, though she lay unconscious in the ferryman's arms, and now he knew that it was his own son whose face had so reminded him, and his heart stirred in his breast.

Kamala's wound was washed, but it was already black and her body swollen; a healing potion was poured into her mouth. Her consciousness returned; she lay on Siddhartha's bed in the hut, and bending over her stood Siddhartha, who had once loved her so much. It seemed to her a dream; smiling, she looked into her friend's face; only slowly did she grasp her situation, remember the bite, call anxiously for the boy.

"He is with you; do not worry," said Siddhartha.

Kamala looked into his eyes. She spoke with a heavy tongue, paralyzed by the poison. "You have grown old, my dear," she said; "you have turned gray. But you are like the young Samana who once came to me in the garden without clothes, with dusty feet. You are much more like him than you were back then, when you left me and Kamaswami. In your eyes you are like him, Siddhartha. Ah, I have grown old too, old—did you still know me?"

Siddhartha smiled: "I knew you at once, Kamala, my dear."

Kamala pointed to her boy and said: "Did you know him too? He is your son."

Her eyes wandered and fell shut. The boy wept; Siddhartha took him on his knees, let him weep, stroked his hair, and at the sight of the child's face a Brahmin prayer came to his mind, which he had learned long ago when he himself was a little boy. Slowly, in a singing voice, he began to speak it; the words came flowing to him out of the past and his childhood. And under his singsong the boy grew calm, still sobbed now and then, and fell asleep. Siddhartha laid him on Vasudeva's bed. Vasudeva stood at the hearth cooking rice. Siddhartha cast him a glance, which he returned with a smile.

"She will die," Siddhartha said softly.

Vasudeva nodded; the firelight from the hearth ran over his friendly face.

Once more Kamala returned to consciousness. Pain distorted her face; Siddhartha's eye read the suffering on her mouth, on her pallid cheeks. Quietly he read it, attentively, waiting, absorbed in her suffering. Kamala felt it; her gaze sought his eye.

Looking at him, she said: "Now I see that your eyes have changed too. They have become quite different. By what, then, do I still know that you are Siddhartha? It is you, and it is not you."

Siddhartha did not speak; his eyes looked quietly into hers.

"You have reached it?" she asked. "You have found peace?"

He smiled and laid his hand on hers.

"I see it," she said, "I see it. I too will find peace."

"You have found it," Siddhartha said in a whisper.

Kamala looked steadily into his eyes. She thought of how she had wanted to make the pilgrimage to Gotama, to see the face of a Perfected One, to breathe his peace, and how instead of him she had now found this man, and how it was good, just as good as if she had seen the other. She wanted to tell him this, but her tongue no longer obeyed her will. Silently she looked at him, and he saw the life go out in her eyes. When the last pain filled her eye and broke it, when the last shudder ran over her limbs, his finger closed her lids.

For a long time he sat and looked at her face, gone to its rest. For a long time he gazed at her mouth, her old, tired mouth with the lips grown thin, and remembered that once, in the springtime of his years, he had likened this mouth to a freshly opened fig. For a long time he sat, read in the pale face, in the tired wrinkles, filled himself with the sight, saw his own face lying just so, just as white, just as extinguished, and at the same time saw his face and hers young, with the red lips, with the burning eye, and the feeling of presence and simultaneity pervaded him completely, the feeling of eternity. Deeply he felt, more deeply than ever before, in this hour, the indestructibility of every life, the eternity of every moment.

When he rose, Vasudeva had prepared rice for him. But Siddhartha did not eat. In the shed where their goat stood, the two old men made up a bed of straw, and Vasudeva lay down to sleep. But Siddhartha went outside and sat the night in front of the hut, listening to the river, washed around by the past, touched and embraced by all the times of his life at once. Now and then, though, he rose, went to the door of the hut, and listened to hear whether the boy was sleeping.

Early in the morning, even before the sun was visible, Vasudeva came out of the shed and stepped up to his friend.

“You have not slept,” he said.

“No, Vasudeva. I sat here; I listened to the river. It has told me much; it has filled me deeply with the healing thought, with the thought of unity.”

“You have known sorrow, Siddhartha, but I see that no sadness has come into your heart.”

“No, my dear, how should I be sad? I, who was rich and happy, have now become still richer and happier. My son has been given to me.”

“Your son is welcome to me too. But now, Siddhartha, let us get to work; there is much to do. Kamala has died on the same bed on which my wife once died. On the same hill, too, we will build Kamala’s funeral pyre, on which I once built my wife’s funeral pyre.”

While the boy was still asleep, they built the funeral pyre.

The Son

Shy and weeping, the boy had attended his mother's funeral; gloomy and shy, he had listened to Siddhartha, who greeted him as his son and welcomed him to stay with him in Vasudeva's hut. Pale, he sat for days by the hill of the dead, would not eat, closed off his gaze, closed off his heart, fought and struggled against his fate.

Siddhartha spared him and let him be; he respected his mourning. Siddhartha understood that his son did not know him, that he could not love him like a father. Slowly he also saw and understood that the eleven-year-old was a spoiled boy, a mother's child, raised in the habits of wealth, used to finer food, to a soft bed, used to giving orders to servants. Siddhartha understood that the mourning and spoiled boy could not suddenly and willingly be content among strangers and in poverty. He did not force him; he did many a chore for him, always picked out the best morsel for him. Slowly he hoped to win him, through friendly patience.

Rich and happy he had called himself when the boy came to him. But as time flowed on and the boy remained a stranger and gloomy, as he showed a proud and defiant heart, would do no work, showed the old men no respect, robbed Vasudeva's fruit trees, Siddhartha began to understand that with his son it was not happiness and peace that had come to him but sorrow and worry. But he loved him, and he preferred the sorrow and worry of love to the happiness and joy he had had without the boy. Since young Siddhartha had been in the hut, the old men had divided the work between them. Vasudeva had taken over the ferryman's office

alone again, and Siddhartha, in order to be with his son, the work in the hut and the field.

For a long time, for long months, Siddhartha waited for his son to understand him, to accept his love, perhaps to return it. For long months Vasudeva waited, watching, waited and was silent. One day, when young Siddhartha had again tormented his father badly with defiance and moods and had broken both of his rice bowls, Vasudeva took his friend aside in the evening and spoke with him.

“Forgive me,” he said, “I speak to you out of a friendly heart. I see that you are tormenting yourself, I see that you are grieving. Your son, my dear, is a worry to you, and he is a worry to me too. The young bird is used to another life, to another nest. He has not run away from wealth and the town out of disgust and surfeit, as you did; he has had to leave all that behind against his will. I asked the river, O friend; many times I have asked it. But the river laughs; it laughs at me, it laughs at you and me, and shakes with laughter at our folly. Water wants to go to water, youth wants to go to youth; your son is not in a place where he can thrive. You too ask the river; you too listen to it!”

Troubled, Siddhartha looked into his friendly face, in whose many wrinkles a constant serenity dwelt.

“Can I part with him?” he said softly, ashamed. “Give me more time, my dear! Look, I am fighting for him, I am wooing his heart; with love and with friendly patience I mean to win it. The river shall speak to him too one day; he too is called.”

Vasudeva’s smile bloomed more warmly. “Oh yes, he too is called; he too is of the eternal life. But do we know, you and I, what he is called to, to what way, to what deeds, to what sufferings? His suffering will not be small, for his heart is proud and hard; such people must suffer much, go astray much, do much wrong, load much sin upon themselves. Tell me, my dear: you are not bringing

up your son? You do not force him? Do not beat him? Do not punish him?”

“No, Vasudeva, I do none of that.”

“I knew it. You do not force him, do not beat him, do not command him, because you know that soft is stronger than hard, water stronger than rock, love stronger than force. Very good; I praise you for it. But is it not a mistake on your part to think that you do not force him, do not punish him? Do you not bind him in bonds with your love? Do you not shame him every day, and make it still harder for him, with your kindness and patience? Do you not force him, this arrogant and spoiled boy, to live in a hut with two old banana eaters, to whom even rice is a delicacy, whose thoughts cannot be his, whose hearts are old and quiet and keep a different pace from his? Is he not forced, is he not punished, by all this?”

Taken aback, Siddhartha looked at the ground. Softly he asked: “What do you think I should do?”

Vasudeva spoke: “Take him to the town, take him to his mother’s house; there will still be servants there; give him to them. And if there are none left, take him to a teacher, not for the sake of the teaching, but so that he will be among other boys, and girls, and in the world that is his own. Have you never thought of that?”

“You see into my heart,” Siddhartha said sadly. “I have often thought of it. But look, how can I give him, who has no gentle heart as it is, into this world? Will he not become dissolute, will he not lose himself in pleasure and power, will he not repeat all his father’s errors, will he not perhaps be lost altogether in Samsara?”

The ferryman’s smile shone out brightly; he touched Siddhartha’s arm tenderly and said: “Ask the river about that, friend! Hear it laugh about it! Do you really believe that you committed your follies in order to spare your son them? And can you protect your son from Samsara? How? Through teaching, through

prayer, through admonition? My dear, have you entirely forgotten that story, that instructive story of the Brahmin's son Siddhartha, which you once told me here in this very place? Who kept the Samana Siddhartha safe from Samsara, from sin, from greed, from folly? Could his father's piety, his teachers' admonitions, could his own knowledge, his own seeking keep him safe? What father, what teacher could protect him from living life himself, from soiling himself with life himself, from loading guilt upon himself, from drinking the bitter drink himself, from finding his way himself?

"Do you believe, my dear, that this way might perhaps be spared anyone? Your little son, perhaps, because you love him, because you would like to spare him sorrow and pain and disappointment? But even if you died ten times for him, you would not be able to take the smallest part of his fate from him by it."

Never before had Vasudeva spoken so many words. Siddhartha thanked him kindly, went troubled into the hut, and for a long time could not sleep. Vasudeva had told him nothing he had not already thought and known himself. But it was a knowledge he could not act on; stronger than the knowledge was his love for the boy, stronger his tenderness, his fear of losing him. Had he ever lost his heart so completely to anything, had he ever loved any person like this, so blindly, so sufferingly, so unsuccessfully, and yet so happily?

Siddhartha could not follow his friend's advice; he could not give up his son. He let the boy give him orders, he let him treat him with disrespect. He was silent and waited, began every day the mute struggle of kindness, the soundless war of patience. Vasudeva too was silent and waited, kindly, knowing, forbearing. In patience they were both masters.

Once, when the boy's face reminded him very much of Kamala, Siddhartha suddenly had to think of something Kamala had once said to him long ago, in the days of their youth. "You cannot love,"

she had said to him, and he had agreed with her and had compared himself to a star, but the child people to falling leaves, and yet he had also sensed a reproach in those words. In fact he had never been able to lose himself wholly and give himself to another person, to forget himself, to commit follies of love for another's sake; he had never been able to do that, and this, so it had seemed to him then, had been the great difference that separated him from the child people. But now, since his son had been there, now he too, Siddhartha, had become wholly one of the child people, suffering for a person's sake, loving a person, lost to a love, become a fool for love's sake. Now he too felt, late, once in his life, this strongest and strangest of passions, suffered from it, suffered miserably, and was nevertheless blissful, was nevertheless renewed in some way, richer by something.

He did sense that this love, this blind love for his son, was a passion, something very human, that it was Samsara, a turbid spring, a dark water. Yet at the same time, so he felt, it was not worthless; it was necessary; it came from his own being. This pleasure too wanted to be atoned for, these pains too wanted to be tasted, these follies too committed.

The son, meanwhile, let him commit his follies, let him woo him, let him humble himself every day before his moods. This father had nothing that delighted the boy and nothing the boy would have feared. He was a good man, this father, a good, kind, gentle man, perhaps a very devout man, perhaps a saint—none of these were qualities that could win the boy. This father, who kept him prisoner there in his wretched hut, bored him; he bored him, and that he answered every naughtiness with a smile, every insult with kindness, every malice with goodness, that was precisely the most hateful trick of this old sneak. The boy would much rather have been threatened by him, mistreated by him.

A day came when young Siddhartha's mood broke out and turned openly against his father. His father had given him a task; he had told him to gather brushwood. But the boy did not go out of the hut; he stood there defiant and furious, stamped on the ground, clenched his fists, and in a violent outburst screamed hatred and contempt into his father's face.

"Fetch your brushwood yourself!" he cried, foaming. "I am not your servant. I know you won't beat me; you don't dare; I know that you want to punish me constantly and make me small with your piety and your indulgence. You want me to become like you, just as pious, just as gentle, just as wise! But I, listen, I would rather become a highway robber and a murderer and go to hell, to spite you, than become like you! I hate you; you are not my father, even if you were my mother's lover ten times over!"

Rage and grief boiled over in him, foamed out at his father in a hundred wild and wicked words. Then the boy ran away and did not come back until late in the evening.

But the next morning he had vanished. Vanished too was a small basket woven of two-colored bast, in which the ferrymen kept the copper and silver coins they received as fares. Vanished too was the boat; Siddhartha saw it lying on the far bank. The boy had run away.

"I must follow him," said Siddhartha, who had been trembling with misery since the boy's abuse the day before. "A child cannot go through the forest alone. He will perish. We must build a raft, Vasudeva, to get across the water."

"We will build a raft," said Vasudeva, "to fetch back our boat, which the boy has made off with. But you should let him go, friend; he is no longer a child; he knows how to look after himself. He is seeking the way to the town, and he is right, do not forget that. He is doing what you yourself failed to do. He is taking care of himself, he is going his own course. Ah, Siddhartha, I see you suffering, but

you are suffering pains one would like to laugh at, pains you yourself will soon laugh at.”

Siddhartha did not answer. He was already holding the ax in his hands and began to make a raft of bamboo, and Vasudeva helped him tie the stems together with ropes of grass. Then they crossed over, were carried far downstream, pulled the raft upstream along the far bank.

“Why did you bring the ax along?” asked Siddhartha.

Vasudeva said: “It might be that the oar of our boat has been lost.”

But Siddhartha knew what his friend was thinking. He was thinking that the boy would have thrown the oar away or broken it, to take revenge and to keep them from pursuing him. And indeed there was no longer an oar in the boat. Vasudeva pointed to the bottom of the boat and looked at his friend with a smile, as if he wanted to say: “Don’t you see what your son wants to tell you? Don’t you see that he does not want to be followed?” But he did not say this in words. He set about making a new oar. But Siddhartha took his leave to search for the runaway. Vasudeva did not stop him.

When Siddhartha had been walking in the forest for a long time, the thought came to him that his searching was useless. Either, he thought, the boy was far ahead and had already reached the town, or, if he should still be on the way, he would keep himself hidden from him, his pursuer. As he thought further, he also found that he himself was not worried about his son, that in his innermost heart he knew the boy had neither perished nor was in any danger in the forest. Nevertheless he ran on without rest, no longer to save him, only out of longing, only to see him once more, perhaps. And he ran as far as the edge of the town.

When he reached the broad road near the town, he stopped, at the entrance to the beautiful pleasure garden that had once

belonged to Kamala, where he had once seen her for the first time, in her sedan chair. The past rose up in his soul; again he saw himself standing there, young, a bearded, naked Samana, his hair full of dust. For a long time Siddhartha stood and looked through the open gate into the garden; he saw monks in yellow robes walking under the beautiful trees.

For a long time he stood, reflecting, seeing images, listening to the story of his life. For a long time he stood, looked at the monks, saw instead of them the young Siddhartha, saw the young Kamala walking under the tall trees. He saw himself clearly, being entertained by Kamala, receiving her first kiss, looking back proudly and contemptuously on his Brahmin life, beginning his worldly life proudly and full of desire. He saw Kamaswami, saw the servants, the banquets, the dice players, the musicians, saw Kamala's song-bird in its cage, lived all this once more, breathed Samsara, was old and tired once more, felt the disgust once more, felt once more the wish to snuff himself out, was healed once more by the holy Om.

After he had stood by the gate of the garden for a long time, Siddhartha saw that the longing that had driven him to this place was foolish, that he could not help his son, that he must not cling to him. Deeply he felt in his heart his love for the runaway, like a wound, and felt at the same time that the wound had not been given him to dig about in it, that it must become a blossom and shine.

That the wound did not yet blossom at this hour, did not yet shine, made him sad. In place of the goal of his wish, which had drawn him here after his runaway son, there was now emptiness. Sadly he sat down, felt something in his heart dying, felt emptiness, saw no joy any longer, no goal. He sat absorbed and waited. This he had learned by the river, this one thing: to wait, to have patience, to listen. And he sat and listened, in the dust of the road,

listened to his heart as it beat tired and sad, waited for a voice. For many an hour he crouched there listening, no longer saw images, sank into the emptiness, let himself sink, without seeing a way. And when he felt the wound burn, he spoke the Om soundlessly, filled himself with Om. The monks in the garden saw him, and since he crouched there for many hours and the dust gathered on his gray hair, one of them came and laid two bananas down before him. The old man did not see him.

From this stupor a hand woke him, touching his shoulder. At once he recognized this touch, tender and shy, and came to himself. He rose and greeted Vasudeva, who had come after him. And as he looked into Vasudeva's friendly face, into the little wrinkles that seemed filled with nothing but smiles, into the cheerful eyes, he smiled too. Now he saw the bananas lying before him; he picked them up, gave one to the ferryman, ate the other himself. Then he went silently back into the forest with Vasudeva and returned home to the ferry. Neither spoke of what had happened that day, neither named the boy's name, neither spoke of his flight, neither spoke of the wound. In the hut Siddhartha lay down on his bed, and when after a while Vasudeva came to him to offer him a bowl of coconut milk, he found him already asleep.

Om

For a long time the wound went on burning. Siddhartha had to take many a traveler across the river who had a son or a daughter along, and he saw none of them without envying him, without thinking: "So many, so many thousands possess this loveliest happiness—why not I? Even wicked people, even thieves and robbers have children, and love them, and are loved by them, all but me." So simply, so without understanding he thought now; so like the child people had he become.

He looked at people differently now than before, less cleverly, less proudly, but more warmly, more curiously, more involved. When he took travelers of the ordinary kind across, child people, businessmen, warriors, womenfolk, these people did not seem foreign to him as they once had: he understood them, he understood and shared their life, which was guided not by thoughts and insights but solely by urges and wishes; he felt as they did. Though he was near perfection and bore his last wound, it still seemed to him that these child people were his brothers; their vanities, cravings, and absurdities lost their absurdity for him, became understandable, became lovable, became even worthy of reverence to him. The blind love of a mother for her child, the stupid, blind pride of a conceited father in his only little son, the blind, wild striving of a young, vain woman for jewelry and for the admiring eyes of men, all these urges, all these childish things, all these simple, foolish, but enormously strong, strongly living, strongly prevailing urges and cravings were no longer childish things for Siddhartha now; he saw people living for their sake, saw them

achieving infinite things for their sake, making journeys, waging wars, suffering infinitely, enduring infinitely, and he could love them for it; he saw life, the living, the indestructible, Brahman, in each of their passions, each of their deeds. Lovable and admirable were these people in their blind loyalty, their blind strength and tenacity. They lacked nothing; the knowing one and thinker had nothing over them but one single trifle, one single tiny little thing: consciousness, the conscious thought of the unity of all life. And at many an hour Siddhartha even doubted whether this knowledge, this thought, was to be valued so very highly, whether it might not perhaps also be a childish thing of the thinking people, the thinking child people. In everything else the people of the world were the equals of the sage, were often far superior to him, just as animals too, in their tenacious, unswerving doing of what is necessary, can at some moments seem superior to human beings.

Slowly there blossomed, slowly there ripened in Siddhartha the insight, the knowledge of what wisdom actually was, of what the goal of his long seeking was. It was nothing but a readiness of the soul, a capacity, a secret art of being able, at every moment, in the midst of life, to think the thought of unity, to feel unity and breathe it in. Slowly this blossomed in him, shone back at him from Vasudeva's old child's face: harmony, knowledge of the eternal perfection of the world, smiling, unity.

But the wound still burned; longingly and bitterly Siddhartha thought of his son, nursed his love and tenderness in his heart, let the pain gnaw at him, committed all the follies of love. This flame did not go out of itself.

And one day, when the wound was burning fiercely, Siddhartha crossed the river, driven by longing, got out, and was resolved to go to the town and look for his son. The river flowed gently and softly; it was the dry season; but its voice sounded strange: it was laughing! It was laughing clearly. The river laughed; it laughed

brightly and clearly at the old ferryman. Siddhartha stopped; he bent over the water to hear still better, and in the quietly moving water he saw his face mirrored, and in this mirrored face there was something that reminded him, something forgotten, and as he thought about it, he found it: this face resembled another, which he had once known and loved and also feared. It resembled the face of his father, the Brahmin. And he remembered how, long ago, as a young man, he had forced his father to let him go to the penitents, how he had taken leave of him, how he had gone and never come back. Had his father not suffered the same sorrow over him that he now suffered over his son? Had his father not died long ago, alone, without having seen his son again? Must he himself not expect this same fate? Was it not a comedy, a strange and stupid thing, this repetition, this running in a fateful circle?

The river laughed. Yes, so it was: everything came back that was not suffered and resolved to the end; the same sufferings were suffered over and over again. But Siddhartha got back into the boat and rowed back to the hut, thinking of his father, thinking of his son, laughed at by the river, at odds with himself, inclined to despair, and no less inclined to laugh aloud with it at himself and the whole world. Ah, the wound did not yet blossom; his heart still struggled against fate; serenity and victory did not yet shine from his sorrow. Yet he felt hope, and when he had returned to the hut, he felt an invincible longing to open himself to Vasudeva, to show him everything, to tell everything to him, the master of listening.

Vasudeva sat in the hut weaving a basket. He no longer went out with the ferryboat; his eyes were beginning to grow weak, and not only his eyes, his arms and hands too. Unchanged and flourishing were only the joy and the cheerful goodwill of his face.

Siddhartha sat down beside the old man; slowly he began to speak. What they had never spoken of he now told him: of his walk to the town that time, of the burning wound, of his envy at the

sight of happy fathers, of his knowledge of the folly of such wishes, of his vain struggle against them. He reported everything; he could say everything, even the most painful; everything could be said, everything shown, he could tell it all. He showed his wound, told also of his flight today, how he had crossed the water, a childish runaway, resolved to walk to the town, how the river had laughed.

While he spoke, spoke for a long time, while Vasudeva listened with a quiet face, Siddhartha felt this listening of Vasudeva's more strongly than he had ever felt it; he sensed how his pains, his anxieties flowed over to him, how his secret hope flowed over and came back to him from the other side. To show his wound to this listener was the same as bathing it in the river until it grew cool and became one with the river. While he was still speaking, still confessing and admitting, Siddhartha felt more and more that this was no longer Vasudeva, no longer a human being listening to him, that this motionless listener was taking his confession into himself as a tree takes in the rain, that this motionless one was the river itself, was God himself, was the eternal itself. And as Siddhartha stopped thinking of himself and his wound, this recognition of Vasudeva's changed being took possession of him, and the more he felt it and entered into it, the less strange it became, the more he saw that everything was in order and natural, that Vasudeva had been like this for a long time, almost always, that only he himself had not fully recognized it, indeed that he himself was hardly different from him any longer. He felt that he now saw old Vasudeva as the people see the gods, and that this could not last; in his heart he began to take leave of Vasudeva. And all the while he went on speaking.

When he had finished speaking, Vasudeva turned his friendly gaze, grown somewhat weak, upon him, did not speak, silently radiated love and serenity toward him, understanding and knowl-

edge. He took Siddhartha's hand, led him to the seat on the bank, sat down with him, smiled at the river.

"You have heard it laugh," he said. "But you have not heard everything. Let us listen; you will hear more."

They listened. Softly sounded the many-voiced song of the river. Siddhartha looked into the water, and in the moving water images appeared to him: his father appeared, lonely, mourning for his son; he himself appeared, lonely, he too bound by the bonds of longing to his distant son; his son appeared, he too lonely, the boy, storming greedily along the burning course of his young wishes, each directed toward his goal, each possessed by the goal, each suffering. The river sang with a voice of suffering; longingly it sang, longingly it flowed toward its goal; plaintive sounded its voice.

"Do you hear?" asked Vasudeva's mute gaze. Siddhartha nodded.

"Listen better!" whispered Vasudeva.

Siddhartha made an effort to listen better. The image of his father, his own image, the image of his son flowed into one another; Kamala's image too appeared and dissolved, and the image of Govinda, and other images, and they flowed over into one another, all became the river, all strove as river toward the goal, longing, desiring, suffering, and the river's voice sounded full of longing, full of burning woe, full of unquenchable desire. The river strove toward the goal; Siddhartha saw it hurrying, the river made of him and his own and of all the people he had ever seen; all the waves and waters hurried, suffering, toward goals, many goals, the waterfall, the lake, the rapids, the sea, and all the goals were reached, and each was followed by a new one, and the water turned to vapor and rose into the sky, turned to rain and poured down from the sky, became spring, became brook, became river, strove anew, flowed anew. But the longing voice had changed. It

still sounded, full of suffering, seeking, but other voices joined it, voices of joy and of sorrow, good and evil voices, laughing and mourning ones, a hundred voices, a thousand voices.

Siddhartha listened. He was now all listener, wholly absorbed in listening, wholly empty, wholly taking in; he felt that he had now learned listening to the end. Often before he had heard all this, these many voices in the river; today it sounded new. Already he could no longer tell the many voices apart, not the glad from the weeping, not the childlike from the manly; they all belonged together, the lament of longing and the laughter of the knowing one, the cry of anger and the groaning of the dying, everything was one, everything was woven and knotted into everything else, entwined a thousandfold. And all of it together, all the voices, all the goals, all the yearning, all the sufferings, all the pleasure, all good and evil, all of it together was the world. All of it together was the river of what happens, was the music of life. And when Siddhartha listened attentively to this river, to this thousand-voiced song, when he listened neither to the sorrow nor to the laughter, when he did not bind his soul to any one voice and enter into it with his self, but heard them all, heard the whole, the unity, then the great song of the thousand voices consisted of a single word, which was Om: perfection.

“Do you hear,” Vasudeva’s gaze asked again.

Brightly shone Vasudeva’s smile; it hovered radiant over all the wrinkles of his old face, as the Om hovered over all the voices of the river. Brightly shone his smile as he looked at his friend, and brightly now the same smile shone out on Siddhartha’s face too. His wound blossomed, his sorrow shone, his self had flowed into the unity.

In this hour Siddhartha stopped fighting with fate, stopped suffering. On his face blossomed the serenity of knowledge, which no will opposes any longer, which knows perfection, which is in

accord with the river of what happens, with the stream of life, full of compassion, full of fellow joy, given over to the flowing, belonging to the unity.

When Vasudeva rose from the seat on the bank, when he looked into Siddhartha's eyes and saw the serenity of knowledge shining in them, he touched Siddhartha's shoulder lightly with his hand, in his careful and tender way, and said: "I have waited for this hour, my dear. Now that it has come, let me go. I have waited a long time for this hour; I have been Vasudeva the ferryman a long time. Now it is enough. Farewell, hut; farewell, river; farewell, Siddhartha!"

Siddhartha bowed deeply before the one taking his leave.

"I knew it," he said softly. "You will go into the forests?"

"I am going into the forests, I am going into the unity," said Vasudeva, radiant.

Radiant he went away; Siddhartha watched him go. With deep joy, with deep solemnity he watched him go, saw his steps full of peace, saw his head full of luster, saw his form full of light.

Govinda

Once, during a period of rest, Govinda was staying with other monks in the pleasure grove that the courtesan Kamala had given to Gotama's disciples. He heard talk of an old ferryman who lived by the river a day's journey from the grove and whom many took for a wise man. When Govinda went on his way, he chose the road to the ferry, eager to see this ferryman. For though he had lived by the rule all his life, and was also regarded with reverence by the younger monks for his age and his modesty, the restlessness and the seeking had not been extinguished in his heart.

He came to the river; he asked the old man to take him across, and when they got out of the boat on the other side, he said to the old man: "You do much good to us monks and pilgrims; you have already taken many of us across. Are you too not a seeker after the right path, ferryman?"

Siddhartha spoke, smiling out of his old eyes: "Do you call yourself a seeker, O venerable one, though you are already far on in years and wear the robe of Gotama's monks?"

"I am old, it is true," said Govinda, "but I have not stopped seeking. I will never stop seeking; that seems to be my destiny. You too, it seems to me, have sought. Will you tell me a word, honored sir?"

Siddhartha spoke: "What could I have to tell you, venerable one? Perhaps that you seek too much? That for all your seeking you do not come to finding?"

"How so?" asked Govinda.

"When someone seeks," said Siddhartha, "it easily happens that his eye sees only the thing he is seeking, that he is unable to find

anything, to let anything into himself, because he always thinks only of what he is seeking, because he has a goal, because he is possessed by the goal. Seeking means having a goal. But finding means being free, standing open, having no goal. You, venerable one, are perhaps indeed a seeker, for in striving after your goal you do not see many things that stand right before your eyes."

"I do not yet quite understand," Govinda begged, "what do you mean by that?"

Siddhartha spoke: "Once, O venerable one, many years ago, you were already at this river once, and found a sleeper by the river, and sat down beside him to watch over his sleep. But you did not recognize the sleeper, O Govinda."

Astonished, like someone under a spell, the monk looked into the ferryman's eyes.

"Are you Siddhartha?" he asked in a timid voice. "I would not have recognized you this time either! I greet you warmly, Siddhartha; warmly I rejoice to see you once more! You have changed greatly, friend.—And so now you have become a ferryman?"

Siddhartha laughed kindly. "A ferryman, yes. Some people, Govinda, have to change a great deal, have to wear all kinds of garments; I am one of them, my dear. Be welcome, Govinda, and stay the night in my hut."

Govinda stayed the night in the hut and slept on the bed that had once been Vasudeva's bed. He put many questions to the friend of his youth; Siddhartha had to tell him much about his life.

When it was time the next morning to start the day's journey, Govinda said, not without hesitation, these words: "Before I go on my way, Siddhartha, permit me one more question. Do you have a teaching? Do you have a faith, or a knowledge, that you follow, that helps you to live and to do right?"

Siddhartha spoke: "You know, my dear, that even as a young man, back when we lived with the penitents in the forest, I came to distrust teachings and teachers and to turn my back on them. I have held to that. Nevertheless I have had many teachers since then. A beautiful courtesan was my teacher for a long time, and a rich merchant was my teacher, and some dice players. Once a wandering disciple of the Buddha was my teacher too; he sat beside me when I had fallen asleep in the forest, on his pilgrimage. From him too I have learned; to him too I am grateful, very grateful. But most of all I have learned here from this river, and from my predecessor, the ferryman Vasudeva. He was a very simple man, Vasudeva; he was no thinker, but he knew what is necessary as well as Gotama did; he was a perfect man, a saint."

Govinda said: "You still love a little mockery, O Siddhartha, it seems to me. I believe you, and I know that you have not followed any teacher. But have you yourself not found, if not a teaching, then certain thoughts, certain insights, which are your own and which help you to live? If you would tell me something of these, you would gladden my heart."

Siddhartha spoke: "I have had thoughts, yes, and insights, now and again. Sometimes, for an hour or for a day, I have felt knowledge in me, as one feels life in one's heart. There were a number of thoughts, but it would be hard for me to convey them to you. Look, my Govinda, this is one of my thoughts that I have found: wisdom cannot be conveyed. Wisdom that a wise man tries to convey always sounds like foolishness."

"Are you joking?" asked Govinda.

"I am not joking. I am telling you what I have found. Knowledge can be conveyed, but not wisdom. One can find it, one can live it, one can be borne by it, one can work wonders with it, but one cannot say it and teach it. That is what I sometimes sensed even as a youth, what drove me away from the teachers. I have found a

thought, Govinda, which you will again take for a joke or for foolishness, but which is my best thought. It is this: of every truth the opposite is just as true! That is to say: a truth can only be spoken and wrapped in words when it is one-sided. Everything that can be thought with thoughts and said with words is one-sided, all one-sided, all half, all lacking wholeness, roundness, unity. When the exalted Gotama spoke of the world in his teaching, he had to divide it into Samsara and Nirvana, into illusion and truth, into suffering and deliverance. One cannot do otherwise; there is no other way for someone who wants to teach. But the world itself, what is around us and within us, is never one-sided. Never is a person, or a deed, wholly Samsara or wholly Nirvana; never is a person wholly holy or wholly sinful. It does seem so, because we are subject to the illusion that time is something real. Time is not real, Govinda; I have experienced this again and again. And if time is not real, then the span that seems to lie between the world and eternity, between suffering and bliss, between evil and good, is also an illusion.”

“How is that?” asked Govinda anxiously.

“Listen well, my dear, listen well! The sinner that I am and that you are is a sinner, but he will one day be Brahma again, he will one day reach Nirvana, will be Buddha—and now see: this ‘one day’ is illusion, is only a figure of speech! The sinner is not on the way to Buddhahood, he is not in the course of a development, though our thinking does not know how to picture things any other way. No, in the sinner, now and today, the future Buddha already is; his future is all already there; you are to revere in him, in yourself, in everyone, the Buddha who is becoming, the possible, the hidden Buddha. The world, friend Govinda, is not imperfect, or on a slow path toward perfection: no, it is perfect in every moment; all sin already carries grace within it, all little children already have the old man in them, all infants death, all the dying eternal life. It is not

possible for any person to see of another how far along his way he is; in the robber and the dice player the Buddha is waiting; in the Brahmin the robber is waiting. In deep meditation there is the possibility of putting time out of existence, of seeing all life that was, is, and will be as simultaneous, and there everything is good, everything perfect, everything is Brahman. That is why what is seems good to me; death seems good to me as well as life, sin as well as holiness, cleverness as well as folly; everything must be as it is; everything needs only my consent, only my willingness, my loving agreement, and then it is good for me, can only further me, can never harm me. I have learned in my body and in my soul that I needed sin very much; I needed lust, the striving for possessions, vanity, and needed the most shameful despair, in order to learn to give up resisting, in order to learn to love the world, in order no longer to compare it with some world I wished for, imagined, some kind of perfection I had thought up, but to leave it as it is and to love it and to be glad to belong to it.—These, O Govinda, are some of the thoughts that have come into my mind.”

Siddhartha bent down, picked up a stone from the ground, and weighed it in his hand.

“This here,” he said, playing with it, “is a stone, and in a certain time it will perhaps be soil, and from soil it will become plant, or animal or human being. In the past I would have said: This stone is merely a stone; it is worthless; it belongs to the world of Maya; but because in the cycle of transformations it can perhaps also become human being and spirit, I grant it value too. So I might have thought in the past. But today I think: this stone is stone, it is also animal, it is also God, it is also Buddha; I revere and love it not because it might one day become this or that, but because it has long been and always is everything—and precisely this, that it is stone, that it appears to me now and today as stone, precisely for this I love it, and see worth and meaning in every one of its veins

and hollows, in the yellow, in the gray, in the hardness, in the sound it gives when I tap it, in the dryness or dampness of its surface. There are stones that feel like oil or like soap, and others like leaves, others like sand, and each is special and prays the Om in its own way; each is Brahman, but at the same time and just as much it is stone, is oily or juicy, and precisely that pleases me and seems wonderful to me and worthy of worship.—But let me say no more about it. Words do not do the secret meaning any good; everything always becomes a little different at once when one speaks it aloud, a little falsified, a little foolish—yes, and this too is very good and pleases me very much; I am very much in agreement with this too, that what is one person's treasure and wisdom always sounds like foolishness to another.”

Govinda listened in silence.

“Why did you tell me that about the stone?” he asked hesitantly after a pause.

“It was without intention. Or perhaps what I meant was that I love just this stone, and the river, and all these things we look at and can learn from. I can love a stone, Govinda, and a tree too, or a piece of bark. Those are things, and things can be loved. But words I cannot love. That is why teachings are nothing for me; they have no hardness, no softness, no colors, no edges, no smell, no taste; they have nothing but words. Perhaps this is what keeps you from finding peace; perhaps it is the many words. For deliverance and virtue too, Samsara and Nirvana too, are mere words, Govinda. There is no thing that would be Nirvana; there is only the word Nirvana.”

Govinda spoke: “Nirvana is not just a word, friend. It is a thought.”

Siddhartha went on: “A thought, it may be so. I must confess to you, my dear: I do not distinguish much between thoughts and words. To be frank, I do not think much of thoughts either. I think

more of things. Here on this ferryboat, for example, a man was my predecessor and teacher, a holy man, who for many years simply believed in the river, in nothing else. He had noticed that the river's voice spoke to him; he learned from it; it brought him up and taught him; the river seemed to him a god; for many years he did not know that every wind, every cloud, every bird, every beetle is just as divine and knows just as much and can teach just as much as the revered river. But when this holy man went into the forests, he knew everything, knew more than you and I, without teachers, without books, only because he had believed in the river."

Govinda said: "But is what you call 'things' something real, then, something with essence? Is it not only the deception of Maya, only image and appearance? Your stone, your tree, your river—are they realities?"

"This too," said Siddhartha, "does not trouble me much. Whether things are appearance or not, then I too am appearance, after all, and so they are always my equals. That is what makes them so dear and worthy of reverence to me: they are my equals. That is why I can love them. And this now is a teaching you will laugh at: love, O Govinda, seems to me the main thing of all. To see through the world, to explain it, to despise it, may be the business of great thinkers. But my only concern is to be able to love the world, not to despise it, not to hate it and myself, to be able to look at it and myself and all beings with love and admiration and reverence."

"This I understand," said Govinda. "But this very thing he, the Exalted One, recognized as deception. He commands benevolence, forbearance, compassion, tolerance, but not love; he forbade us to bind our hearts in love to earthly things."

"I know," said Siddhartha; his smile shone golden. "I know, Govinda. And look, here we are in the middle of the thicket of opinions, in the quarrel over words. For I cannot deny that my

words about love stand in contradiction, in apparent contradiction, to Gotama's words. That is exactly why I distrust words so much, for I know this contradiction is an illusion. I know that I am at one with Gotama. How could He not know love, He who recognized all human existence in its transience, in its nothingness, and nevertheless loved people so much that he spent a long, laborious life solely on helping them, on teaching them! With him too, with your great teacher too, the thing is dearer to me than the words, his deeds and life more important than his speech, the gesture of his hand more important than his opinions. Not in his speaking, not in his thinking do I see his greatness, only in his deeds, in his life."

For a long time the two old men were silent. Then Govinda spoke, bowing to take his leave: "I thank you, Siddhartha, for telling me something of your thoughts. Some of them are strange thoughts; not all of them have become clear to me at once. Be that as it may, I thank you, and I wish you peaceful days."

(But secretly he thought to himself: This Siddhartha is a strange person; he speaks strange thoughts; his teaching sounds foolish. The pure teaching of the Exalted One sounds different, clearer, purer, more understandable; there is nothing strange, foolish, or ridiculous in it. But Siddhartha's hands and feet, his eyes, his brow, his breathing, his smile, his greeting, his walk seem to me different from his thoughts. Never again since our exalted Gotama entered Nirvana, never again have I met a person of whom I felt: this is a holy man. Only him, this Siddhartha, have I found to be so. Though his teaching may be strange, though his words may sound foolish, his gaze and his hand, his skin and his hair, everything about him radiates a purity, radiates a calm, radiates a serenity and gentleness and holiness that I have seen in no other person since the last death of our exalted teacher.)

As Govinda thought this, and there was a conflict in his heart, he bowed once more toward Siddhartha, drawn by love. Deeply he bowed before the one sitting there so calmly.

“Siddhartha,” he said, “we have become old men. It is unlikely that either of us will see the other again in this form. I see, beloved friend, that you have found peace. I confess that I have not found it. Tell me one more word, honored friend; give me something to take with me that I can grasp, that I can understand! Give me something to take on my way. It is often hard, my way, often dark, Siddhartha.”

Siddhartha was silent and looked at him with the same quiet smile as ever. Govinda stared into his face, with fear, with longing; suffering and eternal seeking were written in his gaze, eternal not-finding.

Siddhartha saw it, and smiled.

“Bend down to me!” he whispered softly in Govinda’s ear. “Bend down close to me! So, still closer! Very close! Kiss me on the forehead, Govinda!”

But while Govinda, astonished and yet drawn by great love and intimation, obeyed his words, bent close to him and touched his forehead with his lips, something wonderful happened to him. While his thoughts still lingered over Siddhartha’s strange words, while he was still striving in vain and with reluctance to think time away, to imagine Nirvana and Samsara as one, while even a certain contempt for his friend’s words was struggling in him with an enormous love and reverence, this happened to him:

He no longer saw the face of his friend Siddhartha; instead he saw other faces, many, a long row, a flowing river of faces, of hundreds, of thousands, which all came and passed away, and yet all seemed to be there at once, which all continually changed and renewed themselves, and which were yet all Siddhartha. He saw the face of a fish, a carp, with its mouth opened in infinite pain, a

dying fish, with breaking eyes—he saw the face of a newborn child, red and full of wrinkles, screwed up to cry—he saw the face of a murderer, saw him plunge a knife into a person's body—he saw, in the same second, this criminal kneeling in bonds and his head being struck off by the executioner with one blow of the sword—he saw the bodies of men and women naked in the positions and struggles of frenzied love—he saw corpses stretched out, still, cold, empty—he saw the heads of animals, of boars, of crocodiles, of elephants, of bulls, of birds—he saw gods, saw Krishna, saw Agni—he saw all these figures and faces in a thousand relations to one another, each helping the other, loving it, hating it, destroying it, giving birth to it anew; each was a will to die, a passionately painful confession of transience, and yet none died; each only transformed itself, was always born anew, always received a new face, without any time having passed between one face and the other—and all these figures and faces rested, flowed, generated themselves, floated along and streamed into one another, and over them all was continually drawn something thin, without substance, yet existing, like thin glass or ice, like a transparent skin, a shell or mold or mask of water, and this mask smiled, and this mask was Siddhartha's smiling face, which he, Govinda, was touching with his lips at this very same moment. And, so Govinda saw, this smile of the mask, this smile of unity above the flowing forms, this smile of simultaneity above the thousand births and deaths, this smile of Siddhartha's was exactly the same, was exactly the same quiet, delicate, impenetrable, perhaps kind, perhaps mocking, wise, thousandfold smile of Gotama, the Buddha, as he himself had seen it a hundred times with reverence. So, Govinda knew, the Perfected Ones smile.

No longer knowing whether there was time, whether this vision had lasted a second or a hundred years, no longer knowing whether there was a Siddhartha, whether there was a Gotama,

whether there was I and you, wounded in his innermost as if by a divine arrow whose wound tastes sweet, enchanted and dissolved in his innermost, Govinda stood a little while longer, bent over Siddhartha's quiet face, which he had just kissed, which had just been the stage of all forms, all becoming, all being. The face was unchanged, after the depths of the thousandfold had closed again beneath its surface; he smiled quietly, smiled softly and gently, perhaps very kindly, perhaps very mockingly, exactly as he had smiled, the Exalted One.

Govinda bowed deeply; tears he knew nothing of ran down his old face; like a fire the feeling of the most heartfelt love, of the humblest reverence, burned in his heart. Deeply he bowed, down to the ground, before the one sitting motionless, whose smile reminded him of everything he had ever loved in his life, of everything that had ever been precious and holy to him in his life.

Colophon

Siddhartha

An Indian Poem

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