

CHAPTER NINE

THE BUDDHA AND HIS RELATIVES (Part 1)

“*Service to relatives is a blessing.*”

~ Mangala Sutta

9.1 **KING SUDDHODANA DESIRES TO SEE THE BUDDHA**

- 9.1.1 News that the Buddha was residing at Rajagaha and was preaching His *Dhamma* reached the ears of the aged King Suddhodana, and his anxiety to see his enlightened son grew stronger and stronger. On nine successive occasions he sent nine courtiers, each with a large following, to invite the Buddha to Kapilavatthu. Contrary to his expectations, they all heard the *Dhamma* and, attaining *Arahantship*, entered the Order. Since *Arahants* were indifferent to worldly things they did not convey the message to the Buddha.
- 9.1.2 The disappointed King finally dispatched another faithful courtier, Kaludayi, who was a playmate of the Buddha. He agreed to go as he was granted permission to enter the Order.
- 9.1.3 Like the rest he also had the fortune to attain *Arahantship* and join the Order. But, unlike the others, he conveyed the message to the Buddha, and persuaded Him to visit His aged royal father. As the season was most suitable for travelling, the Buddha, attended by a large retinue of His disciples, journeyed the whole distance by slow stages preaching the *Dhamma* on the way, and in due course arrived at Kapilavatthu in two months.

9.1.4 Arrangements were made for Him to reside at the park of Nigrodha, a Sakya. The conceited elderly Sakyas, thinking within themselves, “He is our younger brother, our nephew, our grandson,” said to the young princes “You do him obeisance; we will sit behind you.” As they sat without paying Him due reverence, He subdued their pride by rising into the air and exhibiting the “Twin Wonder.”¹ The King, seeing this wonderful phenomenon, saluted Him immediately, saying that it was his third salutation.² All Sakyas were then compelled to pay Him due reverence. Thereupon the Buddha came down from the sky and sat on the seat prepared for Him. The humbled relatives took their seats eager to listen to His Teaching.

9.1.5 At this moment an unexpected shower of rain fell upon the Sakya kinsfolk. The occurrence of this strange phenomenon resulted in a discussion amongst themselves. Then the Buddha preached the Vessantara Jataka³ to show that a similar incident took place in the presence of His relatives in a previous birth.

9.1.6 The Sakyas were delighted with the discourse, and they departed, not knowing that it was their duty to invite the Buddha and His disciples for the noon meal. It did not occur to the King too to invite the Buddha, although he thought to himself, “If my son does not come to my house, where will he go?” Reaching home, he, however, made ready several kinds of food expecting their arrival in the palace.

9.2 THE BUDDHA GOES FOR ALMS KING SUDDHODANA’S CONVERSION

9.2.1 As there was no special invitation for the noon meal on the following day, the Buddha and His disciples got ready to

seek alms from the houses of the citizens of Kapilavatthu. Before proceeding He considered within Himself — “Did the Buddhas of the past, upon entering the city of their kinsfolk, straightway enter the houses of the relatives, or did they go from house to house in regular order receiving alms?” Perceiving that they did so from house to house, the Buddha went in the streets of Kapilavatthu seeking alms.

- 9.2.2 On hearing of this seemingly disgraceful conduct of the Buddha from his daughter-in-law, Yasodhara, the king, greatly perturbed in mind, hurried to the scene, and saluting Him, said: “Son, why do you ruin me? I am overwhelmed with shame to see you begging alms. Is it proper for you, who used to travel in a golden palanquin, to seek alms in this very city? Why do you put me to shame?”
- 9.2.3 “I am not putting you to shame, O great King! I am following the custom of my lineage,” replied the Buddha, to the King’s astonishment.
- 9.2.4 “But, dear son, is it the custom of my lineage to gain a livelihood by seeking alms? Surely, Lord, ours is the warrior lineage of Mahasammata, and not a single warrior has gone seeking alms.”
- 9.2.5 “O great King, that is not the custom of your royal lineage. But it is the custom of my Buddha lineage. Several thousands of Buddhas have lived by seeking alms.”
- 9.2.6 Standing on the street, the Buddha then advised the King thus:
“Be not heedless in standing (at doors for alms). Lead a righteous life. The righteous live happily both in this world and in the next⁴.”

9.2.7 Hearing it, the King realized the Truth and attained the first stage of Sainthood. Immediately after, he took the Buddha's bowl and, conducting Him and His disciples to the palace, served them with choice food. At the close of the meal the Buddha again exhorted him thus:

“Lead a righteous life, and not one that is corrupt. The righteous live happily both in this world and in the next⁵.”

9.2.8 Thereupon the King attained the second stage of Sainthood (*Sakadagami*) and Pajapati Gotami attained the first stage of Sainthood (*Sotapatti*).

9.2.9 On a later occasion when it was related to the Buddha that the King refused to believe that his son had died owing to his severe austerities without achieving his goal, the Buddha preached the *Dhammapala Jataka*⁶ to show that in previous birth too he refused to believe that his son had died although he was shown a heap of bones. This time he attained the third stage of Sainthood (*Anagami*).

9.2.10 On his death-bed, the King heard the *Dhamma* from the Buddha for the last time and attained *Arahantship*. After experiencing the bliss of Emancipation for seven days, he passed away as a lay *Arahant* when the Buddha was about forty years old.

9.3 THE BUDDHA AND YASODHARA

9.3.1 Princess Yasodhara, also known as Rahulamata, Bimba and Bhaddakaccana, was the daughter of King Suppabuddha, who reigned over the Koliya race, and Pamita, sister of King Suddhodana. She was of the same age as Prince Siddhattha, whom she married at the age of sixteen. It was by exhibiting his military prowess that he won her hand. She led an extremely

happy and luxurious life. In her 29th year, on the very day she gave birth to her only son, Rahula, her wise and contemplative husband, whom she loved with all her heart, resolved to renounce the world to seek deliverance from the ills of life. Without even bidding farewell to his faithful and charming wife, he left the palace at night, leaving young Yasodhara to look after the child by herself. She awoke as usual to greet her beloved husband, but, to her surprise, she found him missing. When she realized that her ideal Prince had left her and the new-born babe, she was overcome with indescribable grief. Her dearest possession was lost for ever. The palace with all its allurements was now a dungeon to her. The whole world appeared to be blank. Her only consolation was her infant son.

- 9.3.2 Though several Kshatriya princes sought her hand, she rejected all those proposals, and lived ever faithful to her beloved husband. Hearing that her husband was leading a hermit's life, she removed all her jewellery and wore a plain yellow garb. Throughout the six years during which the ascetic Gotama struggled for Enlightenment Princess Yasodhara watched his actions closely and did likewise.
- 9.3.3 When the Buddha visited Kapilavatthu after His Enlightenment and was being entertained by the king in the palace on the following day all but the Princess Yasodhara came to pay their reverence to Him. She thought:
“Certainly if there is any virtue in me, the noble Lord Himself will come to my presence. Then will I reverence Him.”
- 9.3.4 After the meal was over the Buddha handed over the bowl to the King, and accompanied by His two chief disciples, entered the chamber of Yasodhara and sat on a seat prepared for Him, saying: “Let the King's daughter reverence me as she likes. Say nothing.”

- 9.3.5 Hearing of the Buddha's visit, she bade the ladies in the court wear yellow garments. When the Buddha took His seat, Yasodhara came swiftly to Him and clasping His ankles, placed her head on His feet and revered Him as she liked.
- 9.3.6 Demonstrating her affection and respect thus, she sat down with due reverence. Then the King praised her virtues and, commenting on her love and loyalty, said:
“Lord, when my daughter heard that you were wearing yellow robes, she also robed herself in yellow; when she heard that you were taking one meal a day, she also did the same; when she heard that you had given up lofty couches, she lay on a low couch; when she heard that you had given up garlands and scents, she also gave them up; when her relatives sent messages to say that they would maintain her, she did not even look at a single one. So virtuous was my daughter.”
- 9.3.7 “Not only in this last birth, O King, but in a previous birth, too, she protected me and was devoted and faithful to me,” remarked the Buddha and cited the Candakinnara Jataka⁷.
- 9.3.8 Recalling this past association with her, He consoled her and left the palace.
- 9.3.9 After the death of King Suddhodana, when Pajapati Gotami became a nun (*Bhikkhuni*) Yasodhara also entered the Order and attained *Arahantship*.
- 9.3.10 Amongst women disciples she was the chief of those who attained great supernatural powers (*Maha Abhinna*)⁸. At the age of 78 she passed away.
- 9.3.11 Her name does not appear in the Therigatha but her interesting verses are found in the *Apadana*⁹.

9.4 THE BUDDHA AND RAHULA

- 9.4.1 Rahula was the only son of Prince Siddhattha and Princess Yasodhara. He was born on the day when Prince Siddhattha decided to renounce the world. The happy news of the birth of his infant son was conveyed to him when he was in the park in a contemplative mood. Contrary to ordinary expectations, instead of rejoicing over the news, he exclaimed: “*Rahu jato, bandhanam jatam* — A *Rahu* is born, a fetter has arisen!” Accordingly the child was named Rahula¹⁰ by King Suddhodana, his grandfather.
- 9.4.2 Rahula was brought up as a fatherless child by his mother and grandfather. When he was seven years old, the Buddha visited Kapilavatthu for the first time after His Enlightenment. On the seventh day after His arrival Princess Yasodhara gaily dressed up young Rahula and pointing to the Buddha, said: “Behold, son, that golden coloured ascetic, looking like Brahma, surrounded by twenty thousand ascetics! He is your father, and He had great treasures. Since His renunciation we do not see them. Go up to him and ask for your inheritance, and say: “Father, I am the prince. After my consecration I will be a universal monarch. I am in need of wealth. Please give me wealth, for the son is the owner of what belongs to the father.”
- 9.4.3 Innocent Rahula came to the Buddha’s presence, and asking for his inheritance, as advised by his mother, very affectionately said: “O ascetic, even your shadow is pleasing to me.”¹¹
- 9.4.4 After the meal the Buddha left the palace and Rahula followed Him, saying: “Give me my inheritance” and uttering much else that was becoming. Nobody attempted to stop him. Nor did the Buddha prevent him from following him. Reaching the park the Buddha thought: “He desires his

father's wealth, but it goes with the world and is full of trouble. I shall give him the sevenfold noble wealth which I received at the foot of the Bodhi tree, and make him an owner of a transcendental inheritance. He called Venerable Sariputta and asked him to ordain little Rahula.

- 9.4.5 Rahula, who was then only seven years of age, was admitted into the Noble Order.
- 9.4.6 King Suddhodana was deeply grieved to hear of the unexpected ordination of his beloved grandson. He approached the Buddha and, in humbly requesting Him not to ordain any one without the prior consent of the parents, said: "When the Lord renounced the world it was a cause of great pain to me. It was so when Nanda renounced and especially so in the case of Rahula. The love of a father towards a son cuts through the skin, (the hide), the flesh, the sinew, the bone and the marrow. Grant, Lord, the request that the Noble Ones may not confer ordination on a son without the permission of his parents¹²."
- 9.4.7 The Buddha readily granted the request, and made it a *Vinaya* rule.
- 9.4.8 How a young boy of seven years could lead the Holy Life is al-most inconceivable. But *Samanera* (Novice) Ràhula, cultured, exceptionally obedient and well-disciplined as he was, was very eager to accept instruction from his superiors. It is stated that he would rise early in the morning and take a handful of sand throw it up, saying: "Today may I receive from my instructors as much counsel as these grains of sand."
- 9.4.9 One of the earliest discourses preached to him, immediately after his ordination, was the *Ambalattika-rahulovada Sutta* in which He emphasized the importance of Truthfulness.

- 9.4.10 One day the Buddha visited the Venerable Rahula who, seeing Him coming from afar, arranged a seat and supplied water for washing the feet. The Buddha washed His feet and leaving a small quantity of water in the vessel, said: “Do you see, Rahula, this small quantity of water left in the vessel?”
- 9.4.11 “Yes, Lord.”
- 9.4.12 “Similarly, Rahula, insignificant, indeed, is the *Samanaship* (monkhood) of those who are not ashamed of uttering deliberate lies.”
- 9.4.13 Then the Buddha threw away that small quantity of water, and said: “Discarded, indeed, is the *Samanaship* of those who are not ashamed of deliberate lying.”
- 9.4.14 The Buddha turned the vessel upside down, and said “Overturned, indeed, is the *Samanaship* of those who are not ashamed of uttering deliberate lies.”
- 9.4.15 Finally the Buddha set the vessel upright and said: “Empty and void, indeed, is the *Samanaship* of those who are not ashamed of deliberate lying.”
- 9.4.16 “I say of anyone who is not ashamed of uttering deliberate lies, that there is no evil that could not be done by him. Accordingly, Rahula, thus should you train yourself.” — Not even in play will I tell a lie.”
- 9.4.17 Emphasizing the importance of truthfulness with such homely illustrations, the Buddha explained to him the value of reflection and the criterion of morality in such a way as a child could understand.
- 9.4.18 “Rahula, for what purpose is a mirror?” questioned the Buddha.

- 9.4.19 “For the purpose of reflecting, Lord.”
- 9.4.20 “Similarly, Rahula, after reflecting and reflecting should bodily action be done; after reflecting should verbal action be done; after reflecting should mental action be done.
- 9.4.21 “Whatever action you desire to do with the body, of that particular bodily action you should reflect: ‘Now, this action that I desire to perform with the body — would this, my bodily action be conducive to my own harm, or to the harm of others, or to that of both myself and others?’ Then, unskillful is this bodily action, entailing suffering and producing pain.
- 9.4.22 “If, when reflecting, you should realize: ‘Now, this bodily action of mine that I am desirous of performing, would be conducive to my own harm or to the harm of others, or to that of both myself and others.’ Then unskillful is this bodily action, entailing suffering and producing pain. Such an action with the body, you must on no account perform.”
- 9.4.23 “If, on the other hand, when reflecting you realize: ‘Now, this bodily action that I am desirous of performing, would conduce neither to the harm of myself, nor to that of others, nor to that of both myself and others.’ Then skilful is this bodily action, entailing pleasure and producing happiness. Such bodily action you should perform.”
- 9.4.24 Exhorting the Samanera Rahula to use reflection during and after one’s actions, the Buddha said:
“While you are doing an action with the body, of that particular action should you reflect: ‘Now, is this action that I am doing with my body conducive to my own harm, or to the harm of others, and to that of both myself and others.’ Then unskillful is this bodily action, entailing suffering and producing pain.”

- 9.4.25 “If, when reflecting, you realize: ‘Now, this action that I am doing with my body is conducive to my own harm, to the harm of others, and to that of both myself and others.’ Then unskillful is this bodily action, entailing suffering and producing pain. From such a bodily action you must desist.”
- 9.4.26 “If when reflecting, you should realize: ‘Now, this action of mine that I am doing with the body is conducive neither to my own harm, nor to the harm of others, nor to that of both myself and others.’ Then skilful is this bodily action, entailing pleasure and happiness. Such a bodily action you should do again and again.”
- 9.4.27 The Buddha adds “If, when reflecting, you should realize: ‘Now, this action that I have done is unskillful.’ Such an action should be confessed, revealed, and made manifest to the Teacher, or to the learned, or to your brethren of the Holy Life. Having confessed, you should acquire restraint in the future.”
- 9.4.28 The admonition with regard to skilful and unskillful verbal and mental actions was treated in the same way.
- 9.4.29 Stating that constant reflection was essential for purification, the Buddha ended the discourse as follows:
“Thus must you train yourself — By constantly reflecting shall we purify our bodily actions, by constantly reflecting shall we purify our verbal actions, by constantly reflecting shall we purify our mental actions.”
- 9.4.30 In the Samyutta Nikaya there is a special chapter where the Buddha explains to Samanera Rahula the transitoriness of nature¹³.
- 9.4.31 As Venerable Rahula entered the Order in his boyhood the Buddha availed Himself of every opportunity to advise and

guide him on the right path. The Sutta Nipata¹⁴ states that the Buddha repeatedly admonished him with the following stanzas:

“Give up five-fold sensual pleasures — so sweet, so charming.

Going forth from home, with faith, be one who has put an end to suffering.

Seek a remote lodging, secluded and noiseless.

Be moderate in food.

Have no attachment to robes, alms, requisites and lodging.

Come not to this world again. Practise restraint with regard to the Fundamental Code and the five senses.

Cultivate mindfulness as regards the body and be full of dispassionateness.

Avoid alluring, lust-provoking objects (of sense).

Develop your one-pointed, composed mind towards loathsomeness.

Think not of the outward appearance of sense.

Give up latent pride. Thus eradicating pride, you shall fare on in perfect peace.”

- 9.4.32 In his eighteenth year the Buddha preached a profound discourse on mind-culture, the occasion for it being a sense-desire that arose in Venerable Rahula’s mind on account of his beautiful appearance. One day the Venerable Rahula was following the Buddha in quest of alms. As the Buddha went along, followed by Rahula, it seems that the pair was like an auspicious royal elephant and his noble offspring, a royal swan with its beauteous cygnet, a regal lion with its stately cub. Both were golden in complexion, almost equal in beauty; both were of the warrior caste; both had renounced a throne. Rahula, admiring the Teacher, thought: “I too am handsome like my parent the Exalted One. Beautiful is the Buddha’s form, and mine is similar.”¹⁵

- 9.4.33 The Buddha instantly read his evil thought, and looking back addressed him thus:
“Whatsoever form there be should be regarded thus —
This is not mine (*N’ etam mama*); this am I not (*N’ eso’ ham’ asmi*); this is not my soul (*Na me so atta*).¹⁶”
- 9.4.34 Rahula submissively inquired of Him whether he should regard only form as such.
- 9.4.35 The Buddha replied that he should regard all the five aggregates (*Khandhas*)¹⁷ as such.
- 9.4.36 The Venerable Rahula, having been thus edified by the Buddha Himself, preferred not to enter the village for alms. He turned back and sat at the foot of a tree, with legs crossed, the body held erect, intent on mindfulness.
- 9.4.37 Venerable Sàriputta noting the suggestive posture of Rahula Samanera, advised him to concentrate on inhaling and exhaling, not knowing that he was practising another object of meditation on the instruction of the Buddha.
- 9.4.38 Venerable Rahula was perplexed because he was given two different objects of meditation — one by the Buddha and the other by his own teacher. In obedience to his teacher he concentrated on “breathing” and went to the Buddha to get His own instruction on the subject. As a wise physician would give the needed medicine, ignoring the patient’s desires, the Buddha first expanded His brief instruction on meditation on form and other aggregates and then briefly enumerated certain subjects of meditation with the specific evil conditions temporarily eliminated by each and then explained the meditation on “respiration” (*Anapana Sati*).

- 9.4.39 Acting according to the Buddha's instructions, he succeeded in his meditations, and, before long, hearing the Cula Rahulovada Sutta¹⁸, he attained *Arahantship*.
- 9.4.40 In the fourteenth year after the Enlightenment of the Buddha, Samanera Rahula received his Higher Ordination.
- 9.4.41 He predeceased the Buddha and Venerable Sariputta.
- 9.4.42 Venerable Rahula was distinguished for his high standard of discipline. The following four verses are attributed to him in the Theragatha:

“Being fortunate from both sides, they call me “Lucky Rahula”. I was the son of the Buddha and that of the Seer of Truths. Destroyed are all my Corruptions. There is no more rebirth to me. An Arahant am I, worthy of offering. Possessed of threefold knowledge and a seer of Deathless am I.”

“Blinded by sense-desires, spread over by a net, covered by a cloak of craving, bound by the ‘kinsman of heedlessness’ was I like a fish caught in the mouth of a funnel-net. That sense-desire have I burnt. The bond of Mara have I cut. Eradicating craving, from its root, cool am I, peaceful am I now.”¹⁹

9.5 NOTES ON CHAPTER NINE

1. *Yamaka Patihariya*, often translated as “The Twin Miracle” is a psychic phenomenon which only a Buddha could perform. By His psychic powers He makes fire and water issue from the pores of the body simultaneously. *Patisambhidamagga* commentary states that by fire and water are meant red and blue rays.

2. He saluted Him for the first time when he saw the infant prince's feet rest on the head of the Ascetic Asita whom he wanted the child to revere. His second salutation took place at the Ploughing Festival when he saw the infant prince seated cross-legged on the couch absorbed in meditation.
3. See Jataka Vol. vi, p. 479 – No. 547, Dhammapadatthakatha, vol. iii, pp. 163- 164. This interesting story, which is the longest in the Jataka commentary, illustrates his unrivalled generosity.
4. Dhammapada, v. 168.
5. Ibid v. 169.
6. No. 447
7. Jataka Translation Vol. IV, P. 179 (No. 485)
8. Anguttara Nikaya commentary states: "Of one Buddhafour disciples only have great supernormal powers: The rest can recall 100,000 *kalpas*, not beyond that; but those recall innumerable eras. Under our Teacher's Order the two great disciples and the elder Bakkula and Bhadda Kaccana, just these four, had this power." Gradual Saying, Vol. 1, p. 22.
9. PP. 584-599. Here she relates her association with the *Bodhisatta* when he met the Buddha Dipankara and resolved to become a Buddha.
10. Lit., bound or seized (*la*) by a fetter (*rahu*).
11. *Sukha vat ate chaya, samana*
12. See Buddhist Legends, Part 1, p. 219
13. Samyutta Nikaya ii, pp. 244-253; Kindred Sayings ii, pp. 164-168
14. Sutta Nipata, Rahula Sutta. Chalmers – Buddha's Teaching, p. 81; The Group of Discourses, Pali Text Society, p. 57
15. Majjhima Nikaya No. 62, See The Blessing, p.182
16. See Anattalakkhana Sutta, Chp. 7.
17. See Chp. 7, p. 105, Note 8.
18. Majjhima Nikaya No. 147.
19. VV. 297, 298. Psalms of the Brethren, p. 183.