

Sunita

Adapted from the Theragatha by Rev. Heng Sure

I was born poor, in a lowly family,
Father disappeared, there was little to eat.
My work was degrading,
I gathered withered flowers from shrines,
Sold what I could and threw the rest away.
People found me disgusting, and they despised me,
They just ignored me, or they looked away,
The pain of rejection, hurt as much as the hunger,
But I lowered my heart, and I bowed every day.

Then I saw the Great Hero, entering the city,
Great Awakened, with his monks in line,
The most supreme, of the Magadhans,
Walking like a lotus, pure and refined.
I lost all fear, set down my pole and baskets,
I drew near, and I wanted to bow.
And then he, the conqueror of Mara, stopped the line,
He stood still, out of kindness, just for me.

After showing reverence at the feet of the teacher,
I stood to one side, and I said these words,
O Great Sage, Supreme among all beings,
May I take refuge, and leave home with you?
The compassionate teacher, raised one hand in a blessing,
With a sound of kindness for all the world, said,
“Come, monk!” That was my ordination, I crossed over
My new life began.

Now I live alone, here in the mountains,
I never tire as I cultivate the Way,
Following my teacher's words, just as he taught me,
With one mind, by night and day.
As the sun went down, I entered samadhi,
I saw my past lives and got my heavenly eye,
Just before dawn, I broke through the mass of darkness,
To the state of the deathless, I did certify.

Oh the night was ending, and the sun was returning,
Indra and Brahma paid their respects to me,
With their palms together, shining light the way gods do,
With eloquence they said these words to me:
“Homage to you, O thoroughbred of humans,
Homage to you, O man supreme,
Your afflictions have ended, all your suffering is over,
You, dear sir, are worthy of offerings.”

Upon seeing me, venerated by the devas,
The teacher smiled and he proclaimed,
“Through austerity, celibacy, restraint and self-control,
That’s how one becomes a brahman,
He is a brahman supreme.”