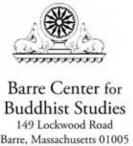


PAID Permit No. 653

Providence, RI



PALI POETRY

## Crossing the Rohini

Kāludāyin Thera

Therāgāthā 527-9

angārino dāni dumā bhadante phalesino chadanam vippahāya te accimanto va pabhāsayanti, samayo mahāvīra bhagī rasānam.

dumāni phullāni manoramāni samantato sabbadisā pavanti pattam pahāya phalam āsasānā; kālo ito pakkamanāya vīra.

n' evatisitam na panatiunham sukhā utu addhaniyā bhadante; passantu tam Sākiyā Koļiyā ca pacchāmukham Rohiniyam tarantam.

Crimson now, Sir, are the trees of the forest, Having shed their foliage, they're eager to fruit, (Their flowers are) blazing forth like brilliant flames, —It is a luscious time of year, Great Hero.

The blossoming trees, so pleasing to the mind, Spread their fragrance in every direction, Surrendering their leaves and longing for fruit; —The time has come to depart from here, Hero.

It is neither too cold, nor again too hot, The season is pleasant, suited for travel. My Lord, let the Sākyas and Koļiyas see you —Facing westward and crossing the Rohini.

These verses are said to have been uttered by Udāyin (nick-named Kāla Udāyin or "Dark Udāyin"). He was the son of king Suddhodhana' chief minister, and is said to have been the childood companion of prince Siddhartha. Soon after Gotama's awakening, the king sent several messengers to ask his son to return home. Each one, upon hearing the Buddha's teaching, apparently joined his movement and gave up the king's mission. Finally Suddhodhana sends Kaludayin, who agrees on condition that he can become a follower of the Buddha upon getting him to return home for a visit.

The Rohini river runs through the heart of the Buddha's homeland, marking the border between the lands of the Sākyas and the Koliyas (his father's and mother's families, respectively). Since the verses are uttered in Răjagaha, well to the southeast, a returning journey would face the traveller westward. One commentary says that Kaludayin went on for sixty stanzas of this beautiful nature poetry before asking the Buddha to return, but we only have the first few of these. The language is rich and evocative of spring sights and smells. It is composed in a meter of eleven syllables per line.

The Buddha does indeed go home soon after his awakening, where he picks up a number of family members to join his order. These include his half brother (Nanda), several cousins (Ananda, Anuruddha, and Devadatta), and his son (Rāhula). Eventually his wife (Yosodharā), step-mother (Mahāpajāpatī) and many other Sākyas will also become nuns and monks.