

The boyhood of Siddhartha



PUPIL INFORMATION SHEET

Siddhartha Gautama was born into a royal family two and a half thousand years ago in northern India (now Nepal).

Asita, a holy man, foretold that the baby would either be a great king or a great holy man. Siddhartha's father wanted his son to follow in his footsteps and become king. He took care to shield his son from anything that might upset him. He wanted to prevent him from leaving home to live a religious life.

Siddhartha grew up in the palace surrounded by luxuries. When he was still a young man, he was married to the beautiful Princess Yashodara and they had a baby son.

One day, despite his father's orders, he decided to leave the palace grounds and go into the nearby city with Chanda, his chariot driver. They hadn't gone far when they came across a frail old man. Siddhartha was so shocked at his first real experience of **old age** that he asked Chanda to take him back to the palace at once.

However, he returned to the city the next day, where he saw someone lying in agony at the roadside. This second sight, too, disturbed the prince. He had never before seen **sickness**. He returned to the palace straight away.

On his next visit to the city, Siddhartha saw a dead man being carried through the streets in a funeral procession. This third sight struck him even more deeply; this was the first time that he had seen **death**. He returned to the palace stunned.

However, he still visited the city again the next day. This time he saw something very different. There, walking calmly through the

crowd, was a man dressed in rags, carrying a begging bowl. The peaceful expression of the wandering **holy man** impressed Siddhartha. He felt inspired to become a wandering truth-seeker, to find an answer to the problem of suffering in the world.

Finding an answer to this question became the most important thing in Siddhartha's life.

He wanted to be able to give it all his attention. He knew that if he stayed in the palace he would easily be distracted. He decided to leave home to seek the answers to his questions.

