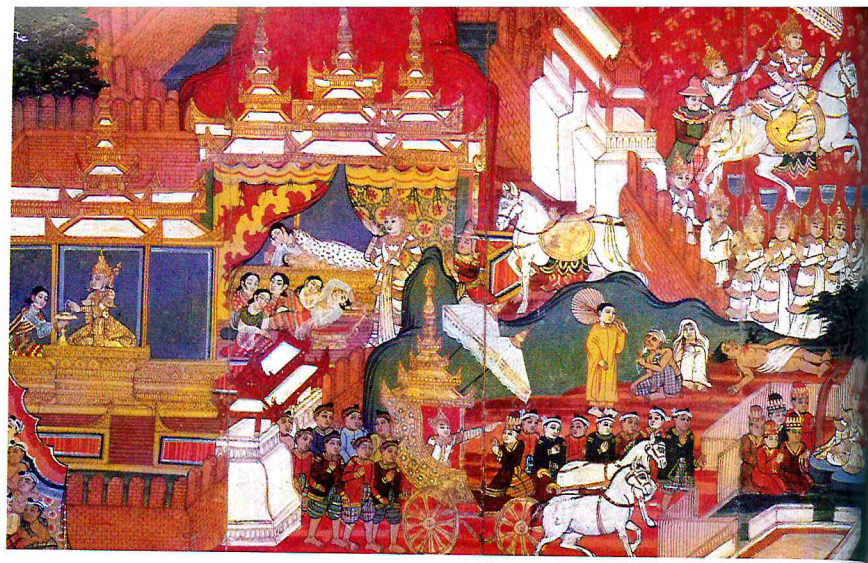


Outside the palace, Siddhartha learned about three forms of suffering: aging, sickness, and death.



16.4 The Prince Discovers Three Forms of Suffering

After Siddhartha became a father himself, the king gave him more freedom to travel outside the royal palaces. According to Buddhist tradition, during his journeys, the prince discovered three forms of suffering.

On his first trip, the prince and his chariot driver saw a thin man who walked with the aid of a stick. “Why does that man look so terrible?” the prince asked. His driver replied that the man was old. He told the prince that everyone’s body weakens as it ages.

On the second trip, the prince and his driver saw a man lying on the ground and crying out in pain. “What is the matter with that poor man?” the prince asked. The driver explained that the man was sick.

On the third trip, the prince saw a group of people walking slowly down the road. The group carried a figure wrapped in white cloth. “Death came for that man,” Siddhartha’s driver said quietly. “One day, it will come for you, too.”

The prince was deeply troubled by his discovery of aging, sickness, and death. Unable to sit at home with his thoughts, he set out a fourth time. This time, he met a man who glowed with inner peace and calm. The man was an **ascetic** (uh-SEH-tik). An ascetic is someone who gives up worldly pleasures such as possessions, fine clothes, money, and even shelter.

“How can you sit there so peacefully when there is so much suffering in the world around you?” the prince asked the man. The ascetic replied, “To be free of suffering, one must give up the desires, pleasures, and comforts of the world. I find peace by helping others find peace.”

ascetic a person who gives up worldly pleasures