



Life of the Buddha (Clay Sanskrit Library)

Ashvaghosha

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The Buddhist monk Ashva·ghosha composed **Life of the Buddha** in the first or second century CE probably in Ayódhya. This is the earliest surviving text of the Sanskrit literary genre called kavya and probably provided models for Kali·dasa's more famous works. The most poignant scenes on the path to his Awakening are when the young prince Siddhártha, the future Buddha, is confronted by the reality of sickness, old age, and death, while seduced by the charms of the women employed to keep him at home. A poet of the highest order, Ashva·ghosha's aim is not entertainment but instruction, presenting the Buddha's teaching as the culmination of the Brahmanical tradition. His wonderful descriptions of the bodies of courtesans are ultimately meant to show the transience of beauty.

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