

# The Great Parinirvāṇa Sūtra

(T375.12.605a- 852b)

Redacted from the Chinese translation by Dharmakṣema  
by Hui-yen, Hui-kuan, and Hsieh Ling-yun

Translated into English by Charles D. Patton, II

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## Translator's Preface

The *Great Parinirvāḥa Sātra* was one of the most influential Sūtras in the development of East Asian Buddhism. It has gone largely unknown in most Western Buddhist circles. However, while this Sūtra is not well known to the Western Buddhist, the concepts that it contains are probably quite familiar to him, for they have become part of the core vernacular of East Asian Buddhist discourse. Of course, the most prominent of these concepts is that of "Buddha's nature" (C. *fo-hsing*), which even has the distinction of being treated in a famous Ch'an *kung-an* (J. *koan*), the punch line of which goes "Does a dog have the Buddha's nature?" and "No!". This *kung-an*, in typical Ch'an fashion, makes reference to that common line that occurs throughout the *Nirvāḥa Sātra*, "All sentient beings have the Buddha's nature", and creates a conceptual dissonance in the meditator by contradicting it.

In the course of translating and studying this Sūtra, it has become apparent that there is a need for a re-construction of the context and history of this Sūtra that the Western reader can digest. In so doing, he will hopefully be able to re-orient himself and understand with more detail how East Asian Buddhist streams of thought have come down to him. A good deal of this work has already been done by the scholar Ming-Wood Liu, who has written articles detailing the general history and content of this Sūtra. We are all indebted to his efforts in this regard, for this Sūtra has gone ignored for far too long in the West.

Reading this Sūtra, however, may at first be difficult for the Western Buddhist who has been steeped in notions of emptiness and doctrines that attack ideas of transcendence. Thus, when the Sūtra asserts, for example, that the Tathāgata is eternal and his essential body transcendent of the material body, the Westerner may have adverse reactions. However heretical these ideas may appear on the surface, they are -- when carefully examined -- quite in line with Mahāyāna Buddhist thought. Indeed, the notion just given as an example first occurs in the pre-Mahāyāna texts, represented in the modern day by the Pāli canon used by the Theravādins and the Chinese Āgamas that were translations of the now defunct Sarvāstivādins' canon.

There were three translations of this Sūtra into Chinese. The first was incomplete, the second complete, and the third a stylized edition of the second. There is also a Tibetan translation of the Chinese extant in the Tibetan texts and fragments of the Sūtra extant in Sanskrit. There was one attempt at translating the Chinese version of the Sūtra into English by Yamamoto.

The first Chinese translation (T376) was made by Fa-hsien (ca. 340-420) and Buddhahadra (359-429), which was completed in 418. This translation is ten fascicles in length and contains only the first third of the longer versions of this Sūtra (chapters 1-17 of the Southern version and chapters 1-5 of the Northern version). It is possible that the translators were not aware of any truncation, as it was recorded that the second translator of the *Nirvāḥa Sātra* — Dharmakṣema — was forced to make long journeys outside of China to collect the latter portions of the Sūtra. This Sūtra's composition date in India was late (as evidenced by its references to the *Lotus* and *oāraūgama Sātras*) and it is possible that it had recently been expanded when the Chinese translation efforts commenced.

The second Chinese translation (T374) was made by Dharmakṣema (385-431), which was completed in 421. Dharmakṣema's translation was a complete translation in forty fascicles and included the expanded chapters that the Fa-hsien / Buddhahadra version did not contain. His version came to be known as the "Northern version" because the translation was performed in the Northern kingdom of Pei Liang.

The Northern version became quite popular in Chinese Buddhist circles, so much so that a stylized version was produced by a team consisting of Hui-yen (363-443), Hui-kuan (?-453), and the poet Hsieh Ling-yun (385-433). This revision (T375) of the Northern version was primarily a repartitioning of the chapters (creating a text with twenty-five chapters rather than thirteen) and a

rendering of the Chinese into a more literary form. As a result, the text was more acceptable in style to the educated Chinese reader of the era. This version appeared in 436 in the Southern kingdoms, and so came to be known as the "Southern version" to distinguish it from the Dharmakṣema translation.

The present English translation is based upon the Southern version.

There are several topics that this Sūtra discusses repeatedly throughout its text, and I would like to take some space here to consider them. These topics include: (a) The Tathāgata's "essential body", (b) the sentient being's possession of the "Buddha's nature", (c) Nirvāṇa's character as being "eternal, happy, self, and pure", (d) that emptiness does not apply to the transcendent, and (e) numerous ethical questions dealing with corruption within the Saṅgha.

I shall expand on these topics at a later date as the present English translation matures and is more complete.

Charles Patton  
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Madelia, Minnesota

## Chapter 1: Introduction

[605a] Thus have I heard. One time the Buddha was staying at the city of Kuśinagara, the birthplace of great scholars, on the shore of the Ajiravatī River between a pair of *sāla* trees. At that time, the World Honored One was accompanied by a great congregation of monks (*bhikkhus*) numbering eight hundred million one hundred thousand people who encircled him front and back. It was the fifteenth day of the second month that the time of his entry into Nirvāṇa was imminent. Using the Buddha's spiritual power, he issued a great voice that filled the minds of beings everywhere. Conforming to each species, this voice addressed all the sentient beings, saying, "Today the Tathāgata, the Worthy (*Arhat*), the Completely Enlightened One, feels compassion for sentient beings, protectively shelters sentient beings, and equally regards sentient beings as he would Rāhula. For the sake of those who have taken refuge and those who are worldly householders, the greatly awakened World Honored One now wishes to enter Nirvāṇa. If any sentient being has uncertainties, they can now submit the very last questions."

At that time, in the early morning, the World Honored One emitted from his facial orifices a variety of lights that were brilliant and consisted of a variety of colors. They were blue, yellow, red, white, crystal (*sphaṇṇika*), and agate. These lights illuminated the trichiliocosm of the Buddha world entirely, extending out into all ten directions as well. The sentient beings of the six destinies within those worlds who encountered these lights had all of their misdeeds, defilements, and afflictions (*kleśas*) nullified. The minds of the sentient beings who witnessed these events, were greatly distressed and at the same time uplifted by that empathic voice, which was called the "sympathetic cry". Its lament was that of a sympathetic parent, who cries, "O, the suffering! The distress!" They lifted their hands to their heads, beat their chests, and cried out loudly. Those beings who had bodily form were terrified. They wept and sobbed.

At that time, the Earth, mountains, and oceans shook. Then the sentient beings said to each other, "We now resolve to discipline ourselves so that none are subject to great anxiety or distress. Let us go now with haste to Kuśinagara, the birthplace of great scholars. And when we arrive we will salute the Tathāgata, pay our respects, and beseech him to forgo entry into *parinirvāḍa* and to remain in the world for another aeon (*kalpa*) or less than an aeon."

They held each other's hands and again said, "The world is empty and the merits of the sentient beings are exhausted. Unwholesome deeds have been developed and produced in the world. Now the Sage shall soon leave us! He shall soon leave us! It is not long now before the Tathāgata must enter Nirvāṇa."

And again they said, "The world is empty! The world is empty! From this day forward we will be without aid [605b] or protection. Having no tradition to which to look, we will be left impoverished and isolated from the nectar. In one morning, we shall be left behind by the unsurpassed World Honored One. Who shall we go to with our questions should we have doubts or confusions?"

And then there was a measureless number of great disciples present. The venerable Mahākātyāyana, the venerable Vakula, and the venerable Upananda were among those of the great monks who encountered the Buddha's light and, being unable to maintain themselves, were tossed about when the ground shook. Their minds were muddled, perplexed, and anguished, and they cried out. There thus arose in them such a variety of afflictions.

And at that time, there were eight million monks who were Worthies. They had attained mastery of their minds. Having done what needed to be done, they were free of the afflictions and had pacified their faculties. They were like great *nāga* kings possessing a great majestic virtue.

Having consummated the wisdom of emptiness and seized their own reward, they were like a sandalwood forest with sandalwood trees all around, or like the lions who surround a lion king. Having consummated such measureless virtues, they were all true disciples of the Buddha.

In the early morning at sunrise, when each of them arose from their quarters and went to clean their teeth, they encountered the Buddha's light and said to one another, "Sage, you must brush your teeth and bath with haste!" This being said, they arose, body and then hands. When they stood, the side of their bodies upon which they had lain was red like the *palāṅga* flower. Tears filled their eyes, and there arose in them a great anguish. Hoping that sentient beings might receive the blessing of peaceful happiness, they had consummated the Mahāyāna's supreme practice of emptiness. They had set forth the expedients of the Tathāgata's esoteric teachings in order to prevent the disappearance of the various spoken Dharmas and bring about the circumstances leading to the pacification of sentient beings. They made haste to the Buddha, prostrated themselves at his feet, and circled him one hundred thousand times. With their palms together in reverence, they withdrew to sit at one side.

And at that time, the women of Kuśinagara were present. The nun (*bhikṣuṣā*) Good Worthy, the nun Upananda, and the nun Oceanic Mind were accompanied by six hundred million nuns who were all also great Worthies. Their outflows were ended. They had attained mastery of their minds, having done what needed to be done. They were free of the afflictions and had pacified their faculties. They were like great *nāgas* possessing a great majestic virtue. They had consummated the wisdom of emptiness.

In the early morning at sunrise, they also arose, body and then hands. When they stood, the side of their bodies upon which they had lain was red like the *palāṅga* flower. Tears filled their eyes, and there arose in them a great anguish. They, too, hoping that sentient beings might receive the blessing of peaceful happiness, had consummated the Mahāyāna's supreme practice of emptiness. They had set forth the expedients of the Tathāgata's esoteric teachings in order to prevent the disappearance of the various spoken Dharmas and bring about the circumstances leading to the pacification of sentient beings. They made haste to the Buddha, prostrated themselves at his feet, and circled him one hundred thousand times. With their palms together in reverence, they withdrew to sit at one side.

And among the nuns, there were further nuns who were like *nāgas* among the *bodhisattvas* [605c]. They were seated and peacefully dwelt at the level of imperturbability among the ten *bodhisattva* stages. It was in order to transform sentient beings that they manifested female bodies and constantly practiced the four immeasurable minds. Having attained the power of self-mastery, they could have transformed themselves into Buddhas.

At that time, there were *bodhisattva-mahāsattvas* present whose number was equal to that of the sands of one Ganges river. They were *nāgas* among men who were seated and peacefully dwelt at the level of imperturbability among the ten *bodhisattva* stages. They could expediently manifest their bodies. The names of the foremost leaders among the *bodhisattva-mahāsattvas* were Bodhisattva Oceanic Virtue and Bodhisattva Inexhaustible Mind. Their thoughts were reverent of the Mahāyāna, peacefully dwelt in the Mahāyāna, deeply understood the Mahāyāna, delighted in the Mahāyāna, and protected the Mahāyāna. They could skillfully conform themselves to all worldly beings and make the vow, "I shall lead those who have not yet been liberated to the attainment of liberation." They had in the distant past of countless aeons cultivated and purely kept the precepts, skillfully maintained the practice of understanding what is not yet understood, and assisted the three jewels to be certain that they did not perish. And in future lives they would turn the Dharma wheel and adorn themselves with the great armor. Consummating such measureless virtues as these, they regarded sentient beings equally, as they would an only child.

In the early morning at sunrise, they also encountered the Buddha's light and arose, body and then hands. When they stood, the side of their bodies upon which they had lain was red like the *palāṅga* flower. Tears filled their eyes, and there arose in them a great anguish. They, too, hoping that sentient beings might receive the blessing of peaceful happiness, had consummated the Mahāyāna's supreme practice of emptiness. They had set forth the expedients of the Tathāgata's esoteric teachings in order to prevent the disappearance of the various spoken Dharmas and bring about the circumstances leading to the pacification of sentient beings. They made haste to the

Buddha, prostrated themselves at his feet, and circled him one hundred thousand times. With their palms together in reverence, they withdrew to sit at one side.

And at that time, there were laymen (*upāsakas*) present whose number was the equal of that of the sands of two Ganges rivers. They had taken and kept the precepts and perfected their majestic deportment. The foremost leaders were the laymen King Majestic Virtue of Undefined Speech and the layman Good Virtue. They deeply delighted in the contemplation of the ways of correcting oneself. The subjects of their contemplation were distress and happiness, permanence and impermanence, purity and impurity, self and non-self, the real and the unreal, refuge and having no refuge, sentient beings and what are not sentient beings, the continuous and what is not continuous, peace and what is not peace, the conditioned and the unconditioned, the ending and the unending, Nirvāṇa and what is not Nirvāṇa, as well as advancement and what is not advancement. They always delighted in the contemplation of the ways of correcting themselves. They, too, longed and delighted to listen to the unsurpassed Mahāyāna. And having heard it, they could explain it to others. They were skilled in purely keeping the precepts. They quenched their thirst for the Mahāyāna and when they were completely satisfied, they could, again, drink up what remained. They were skillfully able to accumulate the unsurpassed wisdom. They delighted in the Mahāyāna and defended the Mahāyāna. They were skillfully able to conform themselves to [606a] all worldly beings, liberating those who were not yet liberated and understanding what was not yet understood. They assisted the three jewels to be certain that they did not perish. And in future lives they would turn the Dharma wheel and adorn themselves with the great armor. Their minds were constantly steeped in the flavor of the pure practice of the precepts. They were able to consummate such virtues as these, and there arose in them the great thought of compassion when they regarded sentient beings. They saw them with equanimity and without duality, as they would an only child.

In the early morning at sunrise, because they wished to be present for the cremation the Tathāgata's body, they each took up ten thousand bundles of fragrant woods. These included sandalwood, *aguru*, ox's head sandalwood, and the fragrant wood of the heavens. The lines on the grain of each of these woods were quite compact. They had embedded into them the seven treasures, which glowed with a marvelous light. It was as though they were painted decoratively with various colors. Because the Buddha's power, there were wondrous hues of blue, yellow, red, and white that sentient beings were delighted to see. These woods had been treated with a variety of perfumes, including saffron, *aguru*, and ambar. They were sprinkled with flowers that were blue lotuses (*utpala*), white lotuses (*kumuda*), red lotuses (*padma*), and silver lotuses (*puṅḍarīka*). These fragrant woods were covered with pennants of all five colors. These pennants were soft, pliant, and marvelous, like heavenly cloth, silk cloth (*kauṣeya*), linen (*kūauma*), or silk embroidery.

They carried these fragrant woods with jewel-inlaid carts. These jewel-inlaid carts produced a variety of lights that were blue, yellow, red, and white. Their axles and spokes were filled with a mixture of the seven treasures. Each of the carts was yoked with a team of four horses, and each of the horses was as swift as the wind. Each of the carts had standing at its fore fifty-seven marvelous and precious pennants and was covered by a netting woven from real gold. Each of the jewel-inlaid carts again had fifty wondrous and precious canopies. Above each of the carts there were draped flowering vines on which there grew blue lotuses, white lotuses, red lotuses, and silver lotuses. There were flowers that were made of pure gold, had leaves of diamond, and were set on terraces. In those flower terraces there were numerous bees that buzzed in them happily and enjoyed themselves. Also, there were wondrous voices that spoke of impermanence, distress, emptiness, and selflessness. And among these voices some again spoke of the root of practicing the *bodhisattva* path. There were, as well, a variety of singers and musicians who played bamboo lutes, harps, flutes, and drums. To this delightful music was a voice singing, "O, the distress! The distress that is in this empty world!"

Before each of these carts there were four jewel-inlaid stands carried by laymen. And upon these stands were piled a variety of flowers. These included blue lotuses, white lotuses, red lotuses, and silver lotuses. There were also saffron fragrances and other perfuming fragrances that were wondrous and supreme. The laymen furnished a variety of meals and supplies for the Buddha and the *saṅgha*. These included fragrant firewood made of sandalwood and *aguru*. The food was

sweet and exquisitely cooked in the eight virtuous waters, [606b] and had six flavors. These flavors were bitter, sour, sweet, acrid, salty, and insipid. The food also had three virtues. These virtues were light and soft, pure and clean, and like the Dharma. Assembling such a variety of adornments, they went to the birthplace of great scholars, where the Buddha rested between a pair of *sāla* trees.

Once there, they spread gold dust all over the area. They covered the dust with *kalaviōka* clothing, *kambala* clothing, and embroidered silk clothing, creating a pile all around twelve *yojanas* high. They prepared for the Buddha and the *saṅgha* lion thrones inlaid with the seven treasures. These thrones were as tall as Mount Sumeru. And above the thrones were precious curtains from which were hung jewel necklaces. From the *sāla* trees were hung a variety of marvelous pennants and canopies. The trees were treated with a variety of excellent perfumes. Flowers of various names were scattered among the trees.

The laymen each then had this thought, "If any sentient beings are lacking in their possessions of drink, food, clothing, medicine, head, eyes, limbs, or body; then they can make use of these offerings we have furnished." When they gave this gift, the laymen were free of desire, enmity, anger, defilement, discord, or otherwise injurious thoughts. Being devoid of any remainder of these thoughts, they made the vow to seek the life of merit and happiness. Their only ambition was the unsurpassed and pure *bodhi*. These laymen peacefully dwelt in the *bodhisattva* path.

And then they had this thought, "The Tathāgata has today received our food and shall enter into Nirvāṇa." Having had that thought, they arose, body and then hands. When they stood the side of their bodies upon which they had lain was red like the *palāṣa* flower. Tears filled their eyes, and there arose in them a great anguish. Each of them took up and carried the gift of supplies that were piled into their jewel-inlaid carts. These gifts included fragrant woods, pennants, flags, precious canopies, beverages, and food. They went to the Buddha with haste and prostrated themselves at his feet. They made offerings with what they had carried with them with the wish to support the Tathāgata. They then circled him one hundred thousand times, lifted their voices that were called "tearful grief", and their voices were such that they shook both Heaven and Earth. They beat their chests and let out a great cry. Tears fell from Heaven like rain. And they said to one another, "O, Sage, distressing is this empty world! How empty is this world!"

Thereupon, they lifted their bodies and hurled themselves before the Tathāgata. They said to the Buddha, "Our only wish is for the Tathāgata to mercifully accept our very last offerings." The World Honored One remained silent when he saw this and did not accept the offerings. And after three such attempts, he still did not take them. The laymen's wish having no effect, their minds were sorrowful and anguished as they silently waited. It was like the extreme grief and anguish of a loving father who was forced to send back home for a funeral the body of his only son, who had suddenly taken ill and died. The compassionate tears and anguish of these laymen was also so. With their gifts and supplies, they calmly arranged a place and withdrew to sit quietly at one side.

And at that time, there were laywomen (*upāsikās*) present whose number was equal to that of the sands of three Ganges rivers. They had taken and kept the five precepts and perfected their majestic [606c] deportment. The names of the foremost leaders among the myriad number of laywomen were the laywoman Life of Virtue, the laywoman Virtuous Hairpin, and the laywoman Vaiśākha. They had the capacity to protect and uphold the true Dharma. In order to liberate the measureless hundreds of thousands of sentient beings, they manifested female bodies and enforce the household Dharma.

They regarded their own bodies to be like the four venomous snakes, like bodies that are always food for an infinite number of insects, and like bodies that were foul smelling, defiled, lustful, and a prison of bondages. They considered their bodies to be [like] a detestable corpse. They regarded their bodies to be always leaking from the nine impure orifices and like a fortress constructed with blood, flesh, sinew, and bone wrapped in skin. The hands and feet being used for repelling enemies, they were like the tower and shield. The eye was the window. The head was the ceremonial hall. And the heart was the king's quarters. The Buddhas, the World Honored Ones, discard this bodily fortress. In contrast, the ordinary confused person is always partaking of attachments. Covetousness, lust, anger, hate, and delusions establish the demons (*rākūsa*) that inhabit him.

They regarded the body to be infirm like rushes, reeds, the *airāvaōa* tree, water bubbles, and plantain trees. They regarded the body to be impermanent and that thoughts abided nowhere in it; that it was just like a lightning flash, rushing water, or the shadows cast by a fire; or that it was like a line drawn in water that is swallowed up just as it is drawn. They regarded the body to be variable and destructible, like a great tree growing on a river shore or near a sheer cliff. They regarded the body to not be long-lasting, that it shall be food for foxes, wolves, kites, owls, buzzards, eagles, ravens, crows, and starving dogs. Who that is wise would delight in this body? How can an ox's footprint hold an ocean's water? It is impossible to say that it can. They regarded the body to be impermanent, impure, foul smelling, and defiled. How can the round Earth be compared to a date? Its gradual turning is so slight, like seeds being ground into dust grains, so it is impossible to say that it can be. The body is given to faults and anxiety. This is why it must be abandoned, like casting aside tears and criticism.

Under these circumstances the laywomen, constantly cultivated their minds with the Dharmas of emptiness, marklessness, and wishlessness. They deeply delighted in asking to receive the Mahāyāna Sūtras. And having heard them, they could explain them to others. They protected and upheld their personal vows, even while their female bodies were slandered. They could deeply cause the nature of distress and anxiety to not be strong. They always cultivated their minds, gathered thus the correct contemplation, and destroyed the endlessly turning wheel of birth and death (*saṢsāra*). Once they had quenched their thirst for the Mahāyāna and were completely satisfied, they could, again, drink up what remained. They deeply delighted in the Mahāyāna and defended it. And although they manifested female bodies, they were really *bodhisattvas*. They were skillfully able to conform themselves to all worldly beings, liberating those not yet liberated and understanding what has not yet been understood. They assisted the three jewels, being certain that they did not perish. And in future lives they would turn the Dharma wheel, adorning themselves with the great armor. They firmly kept the precepts. Consummating thus such virtues, there arose in them the great thought of compassion when they regarded sentient beings, seeing them with equanimity and without duality, as they would an only child.

[607a] In the early morning at sunrise, they said to one another, "Today we ought to go to that pair of *sāla* trees." The laywomen gathered together supplies twice as great as those before. They took these offerings, went to the Buddha, prostrated themselves at his feet, and circled him one hundred thousand times. They said to the Buddha, "World Honored One, we now have provided these offerings of supplies for the Buddha and the *saṢgha*. Our only wish is for the Tathāgata to mercifully accept our very last offerings." The Tathāgata remained silent and did not accept their offerings. The laywomen's wish having no effect, their minds were sorrowful and anguished as they withdrew to sit at one side.

And at that time, carts carrying the men, women, wives, children, and attendants from the city of Vaiśālī were present whose number was equal to that of the sands of four Ganges rivers. And with them also was the King of Jambudvīpa and his attendants, who came seeking the Dharma. They were skilled in cultivating of the practice of the precepts and had perfected was their majestic deportment. Defeating the heretics who harm the true Dharma, they always said to one another, "We shall use gold, silver, and grain to bring about the sweet dew of the inexhaustible and true Dharma so that the germ at its very core will abide for a long time in the world. This wish leads us to always cultivate our studies. If there is someone who slanders the Buddha's true Dharma, we shall cut out their tongue."

And, again, they made the vow, "If there is someone who leaves the household life and then breaks the precepts, I shall stop him and send him back to the lay life to work as a scribe. If they can take deep delight in protecting and keeping the true Dharma, I shall respect and honor them as I would my own father and mother. If there is a *saṢgha* that can cultivate the true Dharma, I shall follow them gladly and give them vitality and strength."

They always wished to gladly listen to the Mahāyāna Sūtras and having heard them, they could explain them to others. They had completely consummated such virtues.

Their names were the Licchavi Pure and Undefined Seed, the Licchavi Pure Restraint, and the Licchavi Eternal Waters of Undefined and Pure Virtue. They said to one another, "Sage, now let us make haste to the Buddha with offerings of a variety of excellent supplies." Each of these

Licchavis were adorned with eighty-four thousand great elephants, eighty-four thousand great four-horse jewel-inlaid carts, and eighty-four thousand moonlight pearls. They took with them a variety of eighty-four thousand kinds of bundles of heavenly wood, sandalwood, *aguru*, and *airāvaōa* firewood. Each of the elephants bore precious pennants, flags, and canopies. The smaller canopies that were wrapped around them loosely filled the area of a *yojana*. The very shortest of the flags measured thirty-two *yojanas* long. The shortest of the pennants were one hundred *yojanas* tall. Carrying such offerings, they went to the Buddha, prostrated themselves at his feet, and circled him one hundred thousand times. They said to the Buddha, "World Honored One, we now have provided these offerings of supplies for the Buddha and the *saṢgha*. Our only wish is for the Tathāgata to mercifully accept our offerings." The Tathāgata remained silent and did not accept their offerings. The Licchavis' wish having no effect, their minds were sorrowful and grieved. By the Buddha's spiritual power, they were moved to a stand [607b] of seven *tāla* trees, and there they silently waited.

And at that time, there was a group of great ministers and elders present whose number was equal to that of the sands of five Ganges rivers. They respected the Mahāyāna. If there were heretics slandered the true Dharma, these men had the ability to defeat them, just as hail and rain breaks and bends the grasses and trees. The names of the foremost leaders were the Elder Sunlight, the Elder Defender of the World, and the Elder Defender of the Dharma. They gathered together supplies five times as great as those before and together took their offerings to that pair of *sāla* trees. They prostrated themselves at the Buddha's feet and circled him one hundred thousand times. Then they said to the Buddha, "World Honored One, we now have provided these offerings of supplies for the Buddha and the *saṢgha*. Our only wish is for the Tathāgata to mercifully accept our offerings." The Tathāgata remained silent and did not accept them. The elders' wish having no effect, their minds were sorrowful and anguished. By the Buddha's spiritual power, they were moved to a stand of seven *tāla* trees and there they silently waited.

And at that time, the King of Vaiśālī, his wife, and his palace retinue were present. From within Jambudvīpa came the kings who had removed the King Ajātaśatru from power. They came together with the common people from the villages, towns, and cities of their kingdoms. Among them was one king named Moon Without Defilement. Each wearing four weapons, they wished to go to the Buddha. Each of these kings had a retinue of one hundred and eighty trillion common people. Their carts were war chariots pulled by elephants and horses. The elephants had six tusks and the horses were as swift as the wind. The carts were laden with supplies six times as great as those before. The very smallest of the precious canopies had a circumference that easily filled an area of eight *yojanas*. The very shortest of the flags was sixteen *yojanas* long. And the lowest of the precious pennants was thirty-six *yojanas* tall. These kings peacefully dwelt in the true Dharma and detested scornfully the mistaken Dharmas. They respected the Mahāyāna and deeply delighted in the Mahāyāna. They felt compassion for sentient beings, as they would an only child. They carried beverages and food, the aroma of which perfumed the air throughout an area of four *yojanas*.

In the early morning at sunrise, they too took up a variety of superior and wondrous sweet delicacies and went to the Tathāgata between the pair of *sāla* trees. They said to the Buddha, "World Honored One, we now have provided these offerings of supplies for the Buddha and the *saṢgha*. Our only wish is for the Tathāgata to mercifully accept our very last offerings." The Tathāgata remained silent when he saw this and did not accept their offerings. The kings' wish having no effect, their minds were sorrowful and anguished as they withdrew to sit at one side.

And at that time, the wives of the kings were present, whose number was equal to that of the sands of seven Ganges rivers. They were only those who had removed the wife of King Ajātaśatru from power. In order to liberate sentient beings, they manifested themselves with female bodies. They constantly contemplated their bodily conduct. [607c] They perfumed and cultivated their minds with the Dharmas of emptiness, marklessness, and wishlessness. Among the kings' wives were the wife Wonder of the Three Realms and the wife Commiserate Virtue. They peacefully dwelt in the true Dharma, cultivated their practice of the precepts, and perfected their majestic deportment. They felt compassion for sentient beings, as they would an only child.

They said to one another, "We should now make haste to the World Honored One." The kings' wives gathered offerings seven times as great as those before. They took up aromatic flowers, precious pennants, embroidered silk, flags, canopies, and superior and wondrous beverages and food. The smallest of the precious canopies easily filled an area of sixteen *yojanas*. The very shortest of the flags was thirty-six *yojanas* in long. The lowest of the precious pennants was sixty-eight *yojanas* tall. The aroma of the beverages and foods perfumed the air throughout an area of eight *yojanas*. Carrying these offerings of supplies, they went to the Tathāgata, prostrated themselves at his feet, and then circled him one hundred thousand times. They said to the Buddha, "World Honored One, we have provided these offerings of supplies for the Buddha and the *saṢgha*. Our only wish is for the Tathāgata to mercifully accept our very last offerings." The Tathāgata remained silent when he saw this and did not accept their offerings. Then, the wives' wish having no effect, their minds were sorrowful and anguished. They pulled hair out of their heads, beat their chests, and let out a great cry, like compassionate mothers who had recently attended the funeral of a beloved child. They withdrew to sit quietly to one side.

And at that time, there was a group of goddesses present whose number was equal to that of the sands of eight Ganges rivers. The foremost leader among them was the Goddess Extensive Eye. She made the statement, "O, sisters! Look closely, look closely! These various assemblies have gathered together a variety of superior and wondrous offerings of supplies with the wish to offer them to the Tathāgata and the *bhikūu saṢgha*. We should also gather together such marvelous offerings of supplies to give to the Tathāgata. Once the Tathāgata has accepted them, he will then enter Nirvāṇa. Sisters, the appearance of the Buddhas, the Tathāgatas, in the world is most rare. To make the very last offerings they accept is twice as rare as that. If the Buddha enters Nirvāṇa, the world will be empty."

The goddesses delighted in the Mahāyāna and wished to listen to the Mahāyāna. Having heard it, they could also explain it to others. When their thirst was quenched for the Mahāyāna and they were completely satisfied, they could, again, drink up what remained. They were defenders of the Mahāyāna. If there was someone from another tradition who was envious of the Mahāyāna, the goddesses were strong enough to knock down their arguments, like a storm knocking down grass. They protected and kept the practice of the precepts and perfected their majestic deportment. They were skillfully able to conform themselves to all worldly beings, liberating those not yet liberated and saving those not yet saved. And in future lives they would turn the Dharma wheel, assist the three jewels, being certain that they did not perish, cultivate the study of the Mahāyāna, and adorn themselves with the great armor. Having consummated such measureless virtues, they felt compassion for sentient beings, as they would [608a] an only child.

In the early morning at sunrise, they each took up a variety of heavenly wood and fragrances, twice that possessed by the human assemblies. The scent of their wood that perfumed the air suppressed the variety of foul odors that were among the humans. They had white carts with white canopies drawn by teams of white horses. Atop each cart was spread a white sheet. From all four sides of the sheets dangled gold, silver, a variety of fragrant flowers, precious pennants, flags, and canopies. Atop them were piled wondrously sweet delicacies and there was a variety of delightful dancers. The goddesses prepared lion thrones, and the four feet of those thrones were made of pure blue agate. On the backside of these thrones the seven treasures were sown into the back and floor. On the front side of each throne was also a golden desk. Again, there were tree lamps made of the seven treasures and a variety of pearls were used to light lamps. Marvelous were the heavenly flowers scattered on the ground everywhere. Once the goddesses had gathered these gifts, their minds became sorrowful, their tears flowed freely, and there arose in them a great anguish. Also, in order to bless sentient beings with peaceful happiness, they had consummated the Mahāyāna's supreme practice of emptiness, and set forth the expedients of the Tathāgata's esoteric teachings. And to prevent the disappearance of the various spoken Dharmas, they went to the Buddha, prostrated themselves at his feet, and circled him one hundred thousand times. Then they said to the Buddha, "World Honored One, our only wish is for the Tathāgata to mercifully accept our very last offerings." The Tathāgata remained silent when he saw this and did not accept their offerings. The goddesses' wish having no effect, their minds were grieved and anguished. They withdrew to one side quietly and seated themselves.

And at that time, there were the *nāga* kings who resided in the four directions present whose number was equal to that of the sands of nine Ganges rivers. The foremost leaders were the *nāga* King Peaceful Cultivation of Fortune, the *nāga* King Nanda, and the *nāga* King Bhananda.

In the early morning at sunrise, these *nāga* kings gathered offerings of supplies twice as great as that of the men and gods. They brought them to the Buddha, prostrated themselves at his feet, and circled him one hundred thousand times. Then they said to the Buddha, "Our only wish is for the Tathāgata to mercifully accept our very last offerings." The Tathāgata remained silent when he saw this and did not accept their offerings. The *nāga* kings' wish having no effect, their minds were grieved and anguished as they withdrew to sit to one side.

And at that time, there were *preta* kings present whose number was equal to that of the sands of ten Ganges rivers. The foremost leader was the king Vaiśravaṇa. They said to one another, "The Sages are now making haste to the Buddha!" They gathered offerings of supplies twice that of the *nāgas*. They brought them to the Buddha, prostrated themselves at his feet, and circled him one hundred thousand times. Then they said to the Buddha, "Our only wish is for the Tathāgata to mercifully accept our very last offerings." The Tathāgata remained silent when he saw this and did not accept their offerings. The *preta* kings' wish having no effect, their minds were grieved and anguished as they withdrew to sit to one side.

At that time, there again were gold-winged bird kings (*garuḍas*) present whose number was equal to that of the sands of twenty Ganges rivers. The foremost among them was [608b] bird king Subjugator of Hatred. Again, there were *gandharva* kings present whose number was equal to that of the sands of thirty Ganges rivers. The foremost among them was King Nālandā. Again, there were *kinnara* kings present whose number was equal to that of the sands of forty Ganges rivers. The foremost among them was King Good Sight. Again, there were *mahoraga* kings present whose number was equal to that of fifty Ganges rivers. The foremost among them was King Great Good Sight. Again, there were *asura* kings present whose number was equal to that of the sands of sixty Ganges rivers. The foremost among them was King Śavaliśa. Again, there were *dānavat* kings present whose number was equal to that of the sands of seventy Ganges rivers. The foremost among them was King Undefined River Waters and King Bhadradata. Again, there were *rākūasa* kings present whose number was equal to that of the sands of eighty Ganges rivers. The foremost among them was King Terrible. They abandoned their evil thoughts and moreover desisted from eating people. From their hate there arose compassionate thoughts. Their ugly and mean countenances were made straight and correct by the Buddha's power. Again, there were tree and wood spirit kings present whose number was equal to that of the sands of ninety Ganges rivers. The foremost among them was King Pleasant Perfume. Again, there were *dhāraṇī* keeper kings present whose number was equal to that of the sands of one thousand Ganges rivers. The foremost among them was King Great Dhāraṇī Keeper. Again, there were form-craving ghosts present whose number was equal to that of the sands of ten million Ganges rivers. The foremost among them was King Good Sight. Again, there were beautiful *deva* maidens present whose number was equal to that of the sands of a billion Ganges rivers. The foremost among them was Lamba, Ubha, Tilochan, and Viśaka. Again, there were spirit kings present whose number was equal to that of the sands of ten billion Ganges rivers. The foremost among them was the King White Fluid. Again there were gods, the four god-kings, and other god-kings present whose number was equal to that of the sands of one hundred billion Ganges rivers.

Again, there were spirits from the four winds present whose number was equal to that of the sands of one hundred billion Ganges rivers. When they wailed above the trees, the flowers did not then scatter among the two *sāla* trees.

Again, there were spirits who were the lords of the rain clouds present whose number was equal to that of the sands of one hundred billion Ganges rivers. They thought, "When the Tathāgata enters Nirvāṇa and his body is cremated, I will pour the rains down to put out the fire. And among the congregation, the fever of anguish then will be cooled."

Again, there were fragrant elephant kings present whose number was equal to that of the sands of two hundred billion Ganges rivers. The foremost among them were King Rāhu, King Golden, King Sweet Flavor, King Purple Eye, and King Desire's Fragrance. They respected the Mahāyāna and delighted in the Mahāyāna. Knowing that it was not long before the Buddha would

enter *parinirvāḥa*, each of them picked and brought a measureless and boundless number of wondrous lotus flowers, went to the Buddha, bowed their heads at his feet, and then withdrew to sit at one side.

Again, there were lions, kings of beasts, present whose number was equal to that of the sands of two hundred billion Ganges rivers. The foremost among them was King Lion's Roar. They gave fearlessness to all the sentient beings, brought flowers and fruit to the Buddha, bowed their heads at the Buddha's feet, and withdrew to sit to one side.

Again, there were flying bird kings present whose number was equal to that of the sands of two hundred billion Ganges rivers. They included ducks, geese, swans, peacocks, sparrows, [608c] *gandharva* birds, *karaḥā* birds, ..., *kokila* birds, ..., *kalavīka* birds, and partridges. These birds brought flowers and fruits to the Buddha, bowed their heads at his feet, and then withdrew to sit a one side.

Again, there were water buffalo, cattle, and sheep present whose number was equal to that of the sands of twenty Ganges rivers. They went to the Buddha and gave a wondrously scented milk and that milk flowed all the way to the city of Kuśinagara. The sewers and pits there took on the color, fragrance, and flavor of it, all of them being perfected. Once these things were done, the animals withdrew to sit to one side.

Again, there were the spirits and sages from the four heavens present whose number was equal to that of the sands of twenty Ganges rivers. The foremost among them was the Sage named Tolerance. They brought fragrant flowers and sweet fruits to the Buddha, bowed their heads at his feet, and circled him three times. They said to the Buddha, "Our only wish is for the World Honored One to accept our very last offerings." The Tathagata remained silent when he saw this and did not accept them. When the sage's wishes went without effect, their minds were anguished as they withdrew to sit at one side.

There was also present all the bees in Jambudvīpa. The foremost among them was King Wondrous Voice. They brought a variety of flowers to the Buddha, bowed to this feet, circled him once, and then withdrew to one side.

At that time, the monks and nuns in Jambudvīpa all gathered together. The only ones missing were the two congregations of Venerable Mahākāśyapa and Venerable Ānanda. Again, there were the mountains of Jambudvīpa in worlds whose number was equal to that of the sands of a measureless *asaikhya* of Ganges rivers, the foremost of which was Mount Sumeru. Together the mountains were adorned with densely growing trees and vegetation. The branches and leaves were lush and full, covering and obscuring the light of the sun. They were decorated with a variety of wondrous flowers everywhere. From *nāga*-springs flowed waters that were pure, fragrant, and clean. The gods, *nāgas*, spirits, *gandharvas*, *asuras*, *garuḥas*, *kinnaras*, *mahoragas*, and spirit sages intoned magical incantations, sang, and played musical instruments. Thus were the Mount Sumerus filled. The mountain spirits also went to the Buddha, bowed their heads to his feet, and withdrew to one side.

Again there were the spirits of the four oceans and the rivers present whose number was equal to that of the sands of an *asaikhya* of Ganges rivers. They possessed great majestic virtue and spiritual abilities. They provided twice the supplies of those before them, their spirit bodies glowing and they played instruments while carrying lamp lights. All this obscured the sun and the moon, causing them not to appear. They scattered divining flowers in lines across the rivers. They went to the Buddha, bowed their heads at his feet, and then withdrew to sit at one side.

At that time, the trees of the *sāla* tree forrest near the city of Kuśinagara turned white like the white stork. And in the sky there spontaneously appeared a reception hall and tower made of the seven treasures. It was engraved, [609a] carved, and inlaid ornamentally with brilliance. It was surrounded by a railing that was made of a mixture of myriad jewels. Beneath the hall were many springs that flowed into bathing pools. Atop the pools there were wondrous lotus flowers that covered their surface. Like the Uttara-kuru continent to the North and also like the delightful gardens of the Trayastrīmśās heaven, there was at that time a variety of adornments inbetween the *sāla* trees which were lovely and delightful in the same way. Everyone regarded this as an indication of the Tathāgata's Nirvāṇa. All felt sympathy, anxiety, grief, and unhappiness.

And at that time, there was Śakro Devānām Indraḥ and the four god kings present. They said to one another, "You should contemplate the great collections of offerings made by the gods, humans, and *asuras* and their wish to make the very last offerings to the Tathāgata. We, too, should make such offerings. If we were to make the very last offerings, the complete fulfillment of the perfection of giving (*dāna-pāramitā*) would not be difficult."

At that time, the four god kings gathered together offerings twice as great as those before. They brought *mandārava* flowers, great *mandārava* flowers, *maṅjūaka* flowers, great *maṅjūaka* flowers, *sandānikā* flowers, great *sandānikā* flowers, lovely flowers, great lovely flowers, flowers of universal virtue, great flowers of universal virtue, timely flowers, great timely flowers, city perfuming flowers, great city perfuming flowers, delightful flowers, great delightful flowers, flowers that stir up desire, great flowers that stir up desire, flowers of intoxicating fragrance, great flowers of intoxicating fragrance, flowers of pervasive fragrance, great flowers of pervasive fragrance, heavenly golden-pedaled flowers, *nāga* flowers, *pārijāta* tree flowers, and *kovidāra* tree flowers. And they brought a variety of superior and wondrous sweet delicacies. They went to the Buddha and prostrated themselves at his feet. These gods glowed with a brilliance that outshone the sun and moon. With these supplies, they wished to make offerings to the Buddha. The Tathāgata remained silent when he saw this and did not accept their offerings. At that time, the gods' wish having no effect, they were grieved and anguished as they withdrew to wait at one side.

And at that time, there was Śakro Devānām Indraḥ and the thirty-three gods of the Trayastrimśāḥ heaven. They gathered together offerings of supplies twice as great as those before. And they brought flowers as before, which perfumed the air in a marvelous and lovely way. They also brought excellent temples and small shrines with them. They went to the Buddha, prostrated themselves at his feet, and said to him, "World Honored One, we deeply delight in, cherish, and defend the Mahāyāna. Our only wish is for the Tathāgata to mercifully accept our offerings." The Tathāgata remained silent when he saw this and did not accept their offerings. And so, the *indra* gods' wish having no effect, their minds were grieved and anguished as they withdrew to sit at one side.

Up to the sixth heaven, the gods gathered together offerings, each greater than the last. They gathered precious pennants, flags, and canopies. The smallest of the [609b] canopies covered the four heavens. The shortest of the flags enwrapped the four oceans. The lowest of the pennants reached up to the Paranirmitavaśavartin heaven. And the pennants fluttering in the wind produced a wondrous sound. The gods also brought the sweetest delicacies. They went to the Buddha and prostrated themselves at his feet. They said to the Buddha, "World Honored One, our only wish is for the Tathāgata to mercifully accept our offerings." The Tathāgata remained silent when he saw this and did not accept their offerings. The gods' wish having no effect, their minds were grieved and anguished as they withdrew to sit at one side.

Above them, the remaining *brahma* congregations all came and gathered together.

And at that time, there was Lord Brahma and the remaining congregations of *brahma* gods. Their bodies emitted a brilliance that pervaded everything under the four heavens, so much so that the light of the humans, gods, sun, and moon in the desire realm were all outshone. These *brahma* gods brought precious pennants, silk embroideries, flags, and canopies. The very shortest of the flags were hung from Brahma's palace and extended down to the *sāla* trees below. They went to the Buddha and prostrated themselves at his feet. They said to the Buddha, "World Honored One, our only wish is for the Tathāgata to mercifully accept our offerings." The Tathāgata remained silent when he saw this and did not accept the offerings. At that time, the *brahmas*' wish having no effect, their minds were grieved and anguished as they withdrew to sit at one side.

And at that time, there was the *asura* King Vimalacitra, who was accompanied by a great retinue of *asuras* of an infinite number. Their bodies emitted lights that surpassed that of the *brahma* gods. They brought precious pennants, silk embroideries, flags, and canopies. The smallest of their canopies could cover a chiliocosm. With the sweetest delicacies, they went to the Buddha and prostrated themselves at his feet. They said to the Buddha, "Our only wish is for the Tathāgata to mercifully accept our very last offerings." The Tathāgata remained silent when he saw this and did not accept their offerings. The *asuras*' wish having no effect, their minds were grieved and anguished as they withdrew to sit at one side.

And at that time, there was the *màra* king of the desire realm, Pāpīyān. He was accompanied by a congregation of measureless and boundless *asaṅkhyas* of gods and maidens. He opened the gates to Hell and poured in pure ice water. For this reason, he said, "Now, there is nothing that you can do but concentrate your thoughts to the Tathāgata, the Worthy, the Completely Enlightened One. Let us put together the very last offerings to bring him happiness. This will lead you ancient demons to find peace." Then the *màra* Pāpīyān went into the Hell where all were put to death with blades coated with an infinite variety of excruciating poisons. He poured into that Hell a rain that extinguished the raging flames there. And with the Buddha's spiritual power, he again engendered the *'citta*, leading those of his retinue to put down their blades, bows, crossbows, armor, halberds, spears, lances, long hooks, metal mallets, battle axes, hatchets, quarreling, arguing, entrapping, and hunting.

They gathered together offerings twice as great as that gathered by all of the gods and humans. The smallest of their canopies could cover a medium chiliocosm. They went to the Buddha and prostrated themselves at his feet. They said to the Buddha, "We now delight in the Mahāyāna and defend the Mahāyāna. World Honored One, suppose there are good sons [609c] and good daughters who in order to give offerings, because they are fearful, reside in Hell, are materially blessed, or to follow others, accept the Mahāyāna, either truly or falsely. We then at that time will eliminate that person's fears when they speak this *dhàraṅgī*:

*"Taki tatarataki rokarei makarokarei ara shara tara shaka.*

"This *dhàraṅgī* can keep those of mistaken thoughts, those who are afraid, and the Dharma preachers from cutting off the true Dharma. This is because when one enunciates this *dhàraṅgī*, it subjugates the heretical paths, protects one's own body, protects the true Dharma, and protects the Mahāyāna. If there is one who can maintain this *dhàraṅgī*, there are no evil apparitions that can frighten him. If he should go into desolate lands, empty wetlands, or onto mountain peaks, he will not be frightened. And there are no waters, fires, lions, tigers, wolves, bandits, rebels, or kings who will be difficulties.

"World Honored One, if one is able to maintain this *dhàraṅgī*, then he will be able to eliminate these sorts of fears. World Honored One, we shall be the protection of those who maintain this *dhàraṅgī*, like the six-piece shell of the tortoise. World Honored One, this is not vain talk, what we now say. We shall sincerely bless with our strength those who maintain this *dhàraṅgī*. Our only wish is for the Tathāgata to mercifully accept our very last offerings."

At that time, the Buddha addressed the *màra* Pāpīyān, "I will not accept your offerings of drink and food, but I have accepted your enunciation of this *dhàraṅgī* for the sake of the peace and happiness of all the sentient beings in the fourfold assemblies here." The Buddha having said this fell silent and did not accept their offerings. After three such attempts, he still did not accept them. And so, the *màra* Pāpīyān's wish having no effect, his mind was grieved and anguished as he withdrew to sit at one side.

And at that time, there was Maheśvara, the king of the Paranirmitavaśavartin heaven, accompanied by his retinue of a measureless and limitless number of gods. They gathered together offerings of supplies such that buried the offerings gathered by all of the *brahmas*, *indras*, the four heavenly protectors, humans, and gods of the eight-fold assemblies, as well as the non-humans. The offerings gathered by the *brahmas* and *indras* were like a heap of charcoal where white agate and seashells once shined. The smallest of their precious canopies could cover an entire trichiliocosm. They took such offerings of supplies and went to Buddha, prostrated themselves at his feet, and circled him a countless number of times. They said to the Buddha, "World Honored One, we are here to hand over our very last offerings of supplies, which are like that of a mosquito or a gnat. Our gift of offerings is like a person who throws a handful of water into the ocean, adds a single small lamp to one hundred thousand suns, adds a single flower to all the myriad flowers that grow and bloom in the Spring and Summer months, or adds a single atom to Mount Sumeru. How can such a person add to the [610a] ocean, the sunlight, myriad flowers, or Mount Sumeru? World Honored One, our handing over these final offerings of supplies is also like this. If the trichiliocosm were filled with fragrant flowers, dancers, flags, and canopies, it could not

be said that it is sufficient enough an offering to honor the Tathāgata. And why? The Tathāgata acts on behalf of the sentient beings who are constantly undergoing afflictions in the unpleasant destinies of the hells, hungry ghosts, and animals. This is why, World Honored One, that you should look upon us mercifully and accept our offerings."

At that time, there was a Buddha land to the East, beyond worlds whose number was equal to that of the measureless and countless sand grains of an *asaikhya* of Ganges rivers. That Buddha land was called the Beautiful Voice with the Intent of Happiness and its Buddha was called Space, a Tathāgata, a Worthy, a Completely Enlightened One, who is perfect in wisdom and conduct, well gone, a knower of the world, unsurpassed, a tamer of men, a teacher of men and gods, and a World Honored One.

At that time, that Buddha addressed the best of his great disciples, saying, "Good son, you should now go to the Sahā world to the West. In that land there is a Buddha called Śākyamuni, a Tathāgata, a Worthy, a Completely Enlightened One, who is perfect in wisdom and conduct, well gone, a knower of the world, unsurpassed, a tamer of men, a teacher of men and gods, and a World Honored One. It is not long now that that Buddha shall enter *parinirvāḥa*. Good son, you can take the fragrant food of this world with you. That food is a fragrant and beautiful meal of contentment. You may take and present it to that Buddha, that World Honored One. Once that World Honored One has eaten it, he will enter *parinirvāḥa*. Good son, you can pay your respects to him and ask to have your doubts put to rest."

At that time, the Bodhisattva-mahāsattva Limitless Body accepted that Buddha's instruction and rose from his seat. He prostrated himself at the Buddha's feet, circled him clockwise three times, and left his land and came to this Sahā world with an assembly of infinite *asaikhyas* of *bodhisattvas*.

In response, the ground throughout this trichilocosm shook in six ways. The ground beneath the great assemblies of the *brahmas*, *indras*, four god kings, *māra* king Pāpīyān, and Maheśvara also shook. The hair on their bodies stood on end and their throats and tongues became parched. They were frightened and outraged. They wished to scatter to the four directions. They saw that their bodies no longer glowed and that their majestic virtue was completely eliminated, without exception.

At that moment, the Dharma prince Mañjuśrī got up from his seat and called out to the great assemblies, saying, "Good sons! Do not be frightened! Why should you not be frightened? To the East, beyond worlds whose number is equal to that of the measureless and countless sands of an *asaikhya* of Ganges rivers, there is a Buddha land that is called the Beautiful Voice with the Intent of Happiness. Its Buddha is called Space, a Tathāgata, a Worthy, a Completely Enlightened One. He has fulfilled all ten of the epithets of a Buddha. And in that land there is a *bodhisattva* whose name is Limitless Body [610b] who is accompanied by a measureless number of *bodhisattvas* who wish to come and make offerings to the Tathāgata. It is the power of the majestic virtue of those *bodhisattvas* that has caused the glow of your bodies to completely cease. This is why you should be elated and not alarmed or frightened."

At that time, those in the great assembly all saw the other Buddha's great congregation, as though they were looking into a bright mirror and seeing themselves.

Then Mañjuśrī again addressed the great assembly, "You are now seeing that other Buddha's great assembly, which is like seeing this Buddha. With the Buddha's spiritual power, you again shall see the measureless Buddhas in the other nine directions."

At that time, those in the great assembly said to one another, "The distress, the distress! The world is empty! It will not be long now that the Tathāgata will enter *parinirvāḥa*."

Then the great assembly all saw Bodhisattva Limitless Body and his retinue. From each hair on the *bodhisattva's* body was produced a great lotus flower. Each one of these lotus flowers had seventy-eight thousand cities on them that sprawled out like the city of Vaiśālī. The walls and moats of the cities were embedded and filled with a variety of mixtures of the seven treasures. There were jeweled *tāla* trees and seven kinds of path railings. The common people were prosperous, peaceful, wealthy, and happy. The Jambu river, whose sands were gold, had tributaries, each of which had forests of seven-treasured trees on their banks. These trees

flowered and bore fruit abundantly. A fine wind whistled and moved through the trees, producing a marvelous sound. The sound was harmonious and graceful like heavenly music.

Inside the cities, the people heard this music and, when they did, partook of a most wondrously resolute happiness. There were depressions in the land filled with wondrous waters that were pure and clean smelling, like true agate. In these waters there were boats made of the seven treasures that carried people who played at sports and bathed on the decks. They enjoyed each other's company and theirs was a firm and unchanging happiness without surpass. And there was an infinite number of variously colored lotus flowers. There were blue lotuses, white lotuses, red lotuses, and silver lotuses. These flowers had diameters measuring like cartwheels.

And on the outside of the cities' moats there were numerous forested parks. In each of these parks there was five springs and lakes. And in these lakes there again were lotuses. There were blue lotuses, white lotuses, red lotuses, and silver lotuses. These lotus flowers had a diameter that were also like cartwheels. They perfumed the air with luxuriant fragrances that were most lovely. The waters of the lakes were pure, soft, pliable, and supreme. There were drakes, geese, ducks, and other waterfowl that frolicked in the lakes.

Those parks contained palaces and households. Each of these palaces and households had a diameter and height filling four *yojanas*. They possessed property walls made completely of four precious materials. Those materials were gold, silver, agate, and rock crystal. Windows of real gold were set in the encircling wall. The floors were made of ruby and coated with gold dust. Inside of the palaces and households were bathing pools made of the seven treasures. There were eighteen golden staircases and ladders around the border of each of these bathing pools. And on the shores of the golden Jambu rivers were [610c] plantain trees. The joy found in these parks were comparable to that of the Trayastrimśāḥ heaven.

Each of these cities had eighty-four thousand human kings. Each of these kings had a measureless number of wives and concubines. They enjoyed one another's company, happily frolicking. The remaining people of the cities were also so. In each home they happily frolicked. In these places sentient beings did not hear the names of the heretics. Purely, they heard the voice of the unsurpassed Mahāyāna.

In each of those flowers, there was a lion's throne. The four feet of those thrones were all made of a deep blue agate. A soft and pliable cloth covered the tops of the thrones. That cloth was marvelous and made beyond the three realms. Atop each of those thrones a king sat who transformed sentient beings with the Dharma teachings of the Mahāyāna. On some on the thrones there were sentient beings who copied, kept, read, recited, as they were taught, and cultivated the Mahāyāna Sūtras, thus propagating them.

At that time, Bodhisattva Limitless Body stood still and this caused the infinite sentient beings on his body to abandon their worldly pleasures. They all said, "The distress, the distress! The world is empty! It will not be long now before the Tathāgata shall enter *parinirvāṇa*."

At that time, the Bodhisattva Limitless Body, encircled by the assembly of measureless *bodhisattvas*, demonstrated in this way his spiritual power. He brought the variety of measureless offerings of supplies and the most wondrous, fragrant, and beautiful food and drink. Those who happened to smell the food's aroma had their afflictions and defilements completely nullified. Because of that *bodhisattva's* spiritual powers, all in the great assembly saw the transformation of Bodhisattva Limitless Body's body into a great limitless expanse of space. Only those governed by the other Buddhas were unable to see the *bodhisattva's* body in its ultimate dimensions.

At that time, Bodhisattva Limitless Body and his retinue gathered together offerings twice as great as those before and went to the Buddha. They prostrated themselves at his feet and with their palms together reverently said to him, "World Honored One, our only wish is for you to mercifully accept our food." The Tathāgata remained silent when he saw this and did not accept their offerings. After three such attempts, he still did not accept them. At that time, Bodhisattva Limitless Body and his retinue withdrew to sit at one side.

And in the Buddha worlds to the South, West, and North, there were also an infinite number of *bodhisattvas* with limitless bodies who gathered offerings twice as great as those before, went to the Buddha, and eventually withdrew to sit at one side. They were also so.

At that time, the grounds around the pair of *sāla* trees were most auspicious. A great assembly filled an area with a diameter of thirty-two *yojanas*, leaving no space therein unoccupied. At that time, in all four directions, there sat the Bodhisattva Limitless Body and his retinue, some of them so small as to fit on the head of a drill or the point of a needle, like atoms. From the Buddha worlds of the ten directions that numbered like atoms, great *bodhisattvas* came and gathered together. [611a] And all of the great assemblies from Jambudvīpa also came and gathered. It was only the two assemblies of Venerable Mahākāśyapa and Venerable Ānanda that were missing. King Ajātaśatru and his retinue, venomous snakes that were capable of killing people, crickets, vipers, lizards, and the other beings of sixteen ways of evil actions all gathered together. Dānavat, spirits, and *asuras* all abandoned their evil thoughts and there arose in them the compassionate mind, like that of a father, mother, elder sister, or a younger sister. Throughout the trichiliocosm, there arose in sentient beings a compassion for one another. They were also so. The only exceptions were the *icchantikas*.

At that time, because of the Buddha's spiritual power, the grounds throughout the trichiliocosm became soft and pliant so that there were no more hilly lands, sands, pebbles, rocks, thorns, brambles, or poisonous plants. Myriad treasures adorned the lands just as in the Buddha Infinite Life Span's (Amitāyus) world of Utmost Bliss (Sukhāvatī) to the West. And then all those in this great assembly saw into the Buddha worlds of the ten directions, which numbered like atoms, and it was as though looking into a bright mirror and seeing themselves. They were seeing scenes in those Buddha lands that were also so.

At that time, the Tathāgata emitted from his facial orifices a light of five colors and that light lit brilliantly the entire assembly. It outshone the bodily glow of those in the great assembly. It then returned again and entered his mouth. At that moment, the gods and their assemblies, the *asuras*, et al. who saw the Buddha's brilliant light enter his mouth were all greatly alarmed and the hair on their bodies stood on end. And then they said, "This light that has left the Tathāgata and returned again to him is not without causes and conditions. It must be a portent to all in the ten directions that his *parinirvāṇa* is at hand. How he suffers! How he suffers! And what about the World Honored One on this morning leaving aside the four immeasurable minds and refusing to accept the offerings brought to him by men and gods? The sunlight of noble wisdom shall be extinguished from now to eternity. The unsurpassed ship of the Dharma shall sink and be destroyed. Alas, the affliction! This world's great suffering!" They lifted their hands to their heads, beat their chests, and gave a great cry. Their behavior was outrageous, for they were unable to maintain their composure. From the pores of their bodies blood flowed and bathed the Earth.

*Here ends fascicle one of the Great Parinirvāṇa Sātra*

## Chapter 2: Cunda

[611b] At that time there was in the assembly a layman worker from Kuśinagara whose name was Cunda. He was accompanied by fifteen other such workers. In order to cause a good effect for the world, they discarded their majestic deportment, rose from their seats, adjusted their robes, and kneeled upon their right knees. With their palms pressed together, they felt empathy for the Buddha. With tears flowing, they prostrated themselves at his feet and said, "Our only wish is for the World Honored One and the Saṅgha of monks to mercifully accept our very last offerings in order to save the measureless sentient beings. World Honored One, from this day forward we shall be without a master, without a companion, without aid, without protection, without refuge, and without advancement. Poor, impoverished, hungry, and distressed shall we be. We hope that the Tathāgata will seek another meal. Our only wish is for him to mercifully accept our fine gifts before his Nirvāṇa.

"World Honored One, it is just as when those of the warrior (*kūatriya*), priestly (*brāhmaṇa*), merchant (*vaiśya*), and the worker (*śūdra*) castes are impoverished and go to other countries to become laborers and farmers. They obtain well tamed oxen and some excellent farmland that is flat and devoid of sand, salt, weeds, or rubbish. Their only concern is for the rains from heaven. The aforementioned tame ox is a metaphor for the seven [good deeds] that are bodily and verbal. The excellent farmland that is flat is a metaphor for wisdom. And the absence of sand, salt, weeds, and rubbish is a metaphor for the removal of the afflictions.

"World Honored One, I myself now have a tame ox, excellent farmland, and have weeded out the myriad defilements. My only concern is whether the Tathāgata will rain down the sweet Dharma dew. Poor are those of the four castes, and so am I. Poor are they in the wealth of the unsurpassed Dharma. My only wish is for you to have mercy and root out our poverty, troubles, and distress. Remove, also, the measureless sufferings of the sentient beings. I now make these offerings. Although they are small and meager, I wish that they could fill up the Tathāgata's great congregation [grounds]. I am now without a master, without companion, and without refuge. My hope is that you will confer upon us your compassion, as you would on Rāhula."

At that time, the World Honored One with the knowledge of all modes, the unsurpassed tamer, addressed Cunda, "Excellent, excellent! I will now root out this poverty for you, rain down the unsurpassed Dharma rain upon your fields, and cause the Dharma to sprout and grow there. You now wish to seek my life span, form, powers, peace, joy, lack of obstruction, and talent in discourse. I shall give you that eternal life span, form, powers, peace, lack of obstruction, and ability of discourse. And why? Cunda, the giving of alms has two rewards [611c], which are not distinguished. What are the two? The first is accepted before the supremely unexcelled *bodhi* (*anuttara-samyak-saśbodhi*) is attained. The second is accepted before entering into Nirvāṇa. I now accept your very last offerings in order to cause you to consummate the perfection of giving."

At that time, Cunda said to the Buddha, "The Buddha has said that these two rewards of giving are undistinguished. The meaning of this is not so. Why? Prior to accepting the gift, the afflictions have not yet ended, the knowledge of all modes has not yet been brought to fruition, and one is not yet able to lead sentient beings to consummate the perfection of giving. After accepting the gift, the afflictions are then ended, the knowledge of all modes is brought to fruition, and one is able to lead sentient beings to consummate the perfection of giving. Prior to the accepting the gift, one is like a sentient being; while after accepting the gift, one is a god among gods. Prior to accepting the gift, the body is a body of component parts, a body of afflictions, a body with boundaries, and an impermanent body. Yet, after accepting the gift, the body is devoid of

affliction, a body of adamantine (*vajra-kāya*), the essential body (*dharma-kāya*), the eternal body, and a limitless body. Why do you say that the two rewards of charity are undistinguished?

"Prior to accepting the gift, one is not yet able to consummate the perfection of giving through to the perfection of wisdom (*prajñā-pāramitā*). Merely having the eye of flesh, one has not yet attained the Buddha-eye through to the wisdom-eye. Yet, after accepting the gift, one has attained the consummation of the perfection of giving through to the perfection of wisdom. And one then consummates the Buddha-eye through to the wisdom-eye. Why do you say that the two rewards of charity are undistinguished?"

"World Honored One, prior to accepting the gift, once the alms are accepted, they enter the stomach and are digested. And then one acquires the life span, acquires the form, acquires the power, acquires the peace, and acquires the unobstructed discourse [of the Buddhas]. After accepting the gift, the meal is not taken, not digested, and there is none of these five rewards. Why do you say that the two rewards of charity are undistinguished?"

The Buddha replied, "Good son, for measureless and boundless *asaikhyas* of aeons the Tathāgata has not had a food body or a body of afflictions. His body is limitless, an eternal body, the essential body, and a body of adamantine. Good son, one who has not yet seen the Buddha's nature is said to have an afflicted body or a body of component parts. This is a *bodhisattva* with a limited body. At the time that this food and drink has been accepted, he then enters the adamantine *samādhi* (*vajropamasamādhi*). Once the meal is digested, he sees the Buddha's nature and attains the supremely unexcelled *bodhi*. This is why I have said that the two rewards of giving are undistinguished. The *bodhisattva* at that time obliterates the four *māras*. And upon entering Nirvāṇa, he then also defeats the four *māras*. This is why I have said that the two rewards of giving are undistinguished. The *bodhisattva* at that time, although he could not thoroughly explain the twelve divisions of the Sūtras, he penetrated through them beforehand. Once that he has entered Nirvāṇa, [612a] he can discern and thoroughly explain it for the expanse of sentient beings. This is why I have said that the two rewards of giving are undistinguished.

"Good son, for measureless *asaikhyas* of aeons, the body of the Tathāgata has not accepted any drink or food. It is for voice-hearers (*-rāvaka*) that it is said that he first accepted from Nanda and Nandapara a pasture with two cows that gave him milk and gruel, and then afterwards he attained the supremely unexcelled *bodhi*. In reality, I did not eat them. I now shall demonstrate it to all of the great assembly of congregations. This is why I have accepted your very last offerings. In reality, I will not eat them."

At that time, upon hearing that the Buddha, the World Honored One, would mercifully accept Cunda's very last offerings for the sake of the great assembly, the congregation was elated and danced joyfully. They sang praises in unison, saying, "Excellent, excellent is this most extraordinary Cunda! Your name shall be established to be a non-empty utterance. 'Cunda' is a name that means 'Free and Marvelous'. You are now the basis for such a great meaning. This is why it is in accord with reality that your name is established from this meaning. Therefore, you are named Cunda. In this present life, you have attained this great name, your blessed virtue and vows are fulfilled. Most exceptional is Cunda who has been born human and attained this difficult blessing that is unsurpassed.

"Excellent is this Cunda! He is a rarity in the world like the *udumbara* flower. The appearance of the Buddha in the world is also very rare. To meet with the birth of a Buddha and have faith in the Dharma one hears is again difficult. Being able to provide the very last offerings when the Buddha nears *parinirvāṇa* is also the rarest of events. Namaḥ Cunda, Namaḥ Cunda! You have now fulfilled the perfection of giving. Just as the Autumn moon is pure for a period of fifteen days and nights and is completely full without any clouds to obstruct its view, which none of the sentient beings can avoid looking at with reverence, you are also so. And we do look reverently upon the Buddha who has accepted your very last offerings and led you to consummate the perfection of giving. Namaḥ Cunda! This is why we say that you are like the moon at its peak fullness, which none of the sentient beings can avoid looking at with reverence. Namaḥ Cunda! Although you have received a human body, your mind is like the Buddha's mind. You, Cunda, are truly a Buddhist disciple, no different than Rāhula."

At that time, the great congregation proclaimed verses (*gāthās*), saying,

"Although you were born into the path of humans  
 You have transcended even the sixth heaven.  
 Because of this, we and all of the sentient beings  
 Now prostrate ourselves and beseech you.

The most supremely honored among humans  
 Now shall soon enter Nirvāṇa.  
 You should commiserate with us.  
 Our only wish is to make haste and beseech the Buddha

To remain in the world for a long time  
 And bless the measureless multitudes  
 With the thorough discourses of wisdom and praise  
 Of the unsurpassed sweet Dharma dew.

[612b] If you do not beseech the Buddha,  
 Our lives will not be complete.  
 This is why it should be observed that  
 We prostrate ourselves to the Lion Tamer."

At that time, Cunda was elated and danced joyfully. He was like someone whose father and mother's dead corpses had suddenly returned to life. Cunda's elation was also so. He again rose to pay his respects to the Buddha and proclaimed verses, saying,

"How delightful it is to obtain one's own reward!  
 Skillfully attaining it in a human body  
 By abolishing greed and anger,  
 One forever parts with the three unpleasant paths.

How delightful it is to obtain one's own reward!  
 Coming to attain piles of gold and gems  
 And encountering the Lion Tamer,  
 One does not fear falling in with animals.

The Buddha is like the *udumbara* flower.  
 Encountering his birth faithfully is difficult.  
 Having encountered him, one sows the good roots,  
 Forever extinguishing the distress of the hungry ghosts.

And, again, one is able to censure and reduce  
 The species of *asuras*.  
 Like mustard seeds landing on a needle point,  
 The Buddha's appearance is as rare as this.

By perfecting charity,  
 I shall liberate both men and gods from birth and death.  
 The Buddha is not defiled by worldly things (*dharmas*)  
 Like the lotus flower in a pond

That skillfully breaks the water's surface. The top of its shoot is  
 Forever is liberated from the currents of birth and death.  
 Birth in the world as a human is difficult.  
 And meeting the Buddha in the world is also difficult

Like a blind turtle in the great ocean  
 Meeting a floating log with an opening in it,  
 I now will hand over these alms,  
 Vowing to attain the unsurpassed reward.

All of the bonds of afflictions  
 Are destroyed, broken, without solidity.  
 I, here and now,  
 No longer seek the body of a god or human.

For the minds of those who attempt to obtain that  
 Will not be sweetly delighted.  
 Now that the Tathāgata has accepted my offerings  
 There is no measure for my elation.

It is like the *airāvaōa* flower  
 That produces the fragrance of sandalwood.  
 My body is like that *airāvaōa* flower,  
 Now that the Tathāgata has accepted my offerings

It is as if it produces that fragrance of sandalwood.  
 This is why I am elated.  
 Now I have attained the manifest reward  
 Of this most excellent and marvelous place

Where the *indra* and *brahma* gods are present,  
 All of whom have come bearing offerings. In myself  
 And all those of the world  
 There has arisen a great anguish

[612c] Because they know that the Buddha, the World Honored One,  
 Now wishes to enter Nirvāṇa.  
 In a high pitch they cry out, saying,  
 'The world will be devoid of the [Lion] Tamer!'

You should not abandon the sentient beings.  
 You should instead regard each of them like an only child.  
 Tathāgata, remain here with the *saṅgha*  
 And thoroughly expound the unsurpassed Dharma!

Like the jewel mountain of Sumeru  
 Or a peaceful spot on the ocean,  
 Is the Buddha's knowledge that is able to skillfully end  
 The darkness of our ignorance.

Just as the clouds that arise in the empty sky  
 Can be a cool refreshment,  
 The Tathāgata is able to skillfully remove  
 All of the afflictions.

It is as when the sun rises  
 And removes the clouds. Its light then illuminates everything.  
 The sentient beings'

Passionate yearning increases and they wail compassionately.

They all are subject to birth and death,  
Drifting on its waters of distress.  
This is why, World Honored One,  
For the ancient sentient beings' faith, you should

End the distress of their birth and death.  
Remain in the world for a long time!"

The Buddha addressed Cunda, "So it is, so it is. As you have said, the Buddha's appearance in the world is rare like that of the *udumbara* flower. Meeting the Buddha and giving rise to faith is also very rare. Giving the very last offerings as the Buddha's Nirvāṇa nears and so being able to consummate the perfection of giving is, again, very rare. Now, Cunda, you should not be greatly anguished or distressed. You should instead be elated by your profound fortune to have the opportunity to give the very last offerings to the Tathāgata and bringing to fruition the consummate perfection of giving. You should not ask the Buddha to remain in the world for a long time. Instead, you should consider the objective element of the Buddha to be impermanent. The nature of his actions and aspects are also so." Then the Buddha proclaimed verses for Cunda, saying,

"All that is born in the world  
Will return to death.  
While their life spans may be measureless  
It is necessary that they have an end.

The prosperous man, too, must have his waning.  
What comes together and assembles must break apart  
And so it is not long before healthy years come to an end.  
The prosperous form is transgressed by disease

And life is swallowed up by death.  
There is nothing that lasts forever.  
The kings who have attained sovereignty,  
Whose power has no comparison,

All pass on and perish.  
This life span is also so.  
The wheel of myriad sufferings endlessly  
Goes round without pause.

[613a] The three realms are all impermanent  
And all existences are unhappy.  
That which has paths, roots, natures, and aspects  
All these are empty and non-existent.

Such destructible things cycle around  
Always having sorrow, anxiety,  
Fear, and advancing evils.  
Old age, disease, and death are the decline into vexation.

They have no boundaries  
And are transgressed by change, destruction, and bitterness.  
The afflictions that bind them  
Are just like the silkworm's cocoon.

Why would anyone who is wise  
 Be happy in this place?  
 This body is a collection of sorrows  
 All of which are impure.

Stop the bonds and wounds,  
 The roots of which are without meaning of benefit.  
 Ascending to the *deva* body  
 Is also again so.

The desires are all impermanent  
 And that is why I do not covet attachments.  
 Departing from desires, skillfully contemplating,  
 And realizing the true Dharma;

One ultimately cuts off existence.  
 Today I shall enter Nirvāṇa,  
 Crossing over to that other shore  
 And leaving behind all of the distress.

This is why on this day  
 You should only feel a supreme and wondrous happiness."

At that time, Cunda said to the Buddha, "So it is, so it is. World Honored One, the sincere the Noble One (*ārya*) says, 'I am now in possession of the wisdom that is fine and straightforward.' Being like the mosquitoes, how can we conceive of the meaning of the Tathāgata's Nirvāṇa at its very core? World Honored One, I have now been with the great *nāgas* and elephants that are these *bodhisattva-mahāsattvas*, who have cut away the bonds of defilement, who are the likes of Mañjuśrī. World Honored One, I am like a youth who has just left the household, but who has not yet fulfilled the precepts and thereupon fails the *saṅgha* numerously. Because of the spiritual power of the Buddha and *bodhisattvas*, I have been present with such a number of great *bodhisattvas*, I now wish to cause the Tathāgata to remain in the world for a long time and not enter Nirvāṇa. Like a starved person who can no longer produce saliva, my only wish for the World Honored One is also so. Remain forever in the world and do not enter Nirvāṇa!"

At that time, the Dharma prince Mañjuśrī addressed Cunda, "Cunda, you should not now say that you wish the Tathāgata to remain in the world forever and not enter *parinirvāṇa*, or that you are like a starved person who can no longer produce saliva. You should now undertake the contemplation of the nature and aspects of his actions. Thus contemplating his actions, you will be endowed with the *samādhi* of emptiness. Wishing to seek the true Dharma, [613b] you should thus train yourself."

Cunda asked, "Mañjuśrī, the Tathāgata is the most honored and most supreme among the beings in the heavens above. How can such a Tathāgata be an action? If he is an performer of actions, that is something subject to birth and death. It is just like water bubbles, arising quickly and quickly perishing, coming and going, and spinning round like a cart wheel. All of his actions would also be so. I have heard that the life span of gods is extremely long. How could the life span of the World Honored One, who is a god among gods, be hurried and not even fill the span of a hundred years?"

"It is like a chief of a village whose power has reached sovereignty. And so with that sovereign power he is able to govern other people. After this person's merit is exhausted, he will become an impoverished person who is taken lightly by other leaders. And why is that? It is because he has lost his power. The World Honored One would also be so. The same it would be his actions and the same it would be with the one who performs actions. Therefore, he would not be praised as a god among gods. And why? It is because then his actions would be things

subject to birth and death. This is why, Mañjuśrī, that I do not contemplate the Tathāgata as equal to his actions.

"Furthermore, Mañjuśrī, by knowing and then speaking, or not knowing and then speaking [?], it is said that the Tathāgata is equal to his actions. If we suppose that the Tathāgata is equal to his actions, then he would not then be called the sovereign Dharma king, a god among the gods of the three realms. He would be like a human king who has great champions, whose power is a thousand-fold again [a single man's], and who none could defeat him. Therefore it is held that these champions cause a single person to be [equivalent] to a thousand. Thus, the king of the champions is fondly mindful of them. He is inclined to bestow noble titles and award fiefs to them, and so the champions themselves come to be held as the equals to a thousand. But because they have not yet needed the power to battle a thousand, they are only capable of a variety of physical arts. Though they could suppress a thousand others, they are said to be the equal of a thousand. The Tathāgata is also so. He has defeated the *māra* of afflictions, the *māra* of *skandhas*, the heavenly *māras*, and the *māra* of death. This is why the Tathāgata is called the Honored One of the three realms. Like that one warrior, who is equal to a thousand, he has become so through the causes and conditions of bringing to fruition the consummation of a variety of measureless and real virtues. Therefore, he is proclaimed the Tathāgata, the Worthy, the Completely Enlightened One.

"Mañjuśrī, you should not consider and discern the idea that the Tathāgata is equal to his actions. It is just as when a wealthy elder has a son and a fortuneteller divines that the child will have a short life. Upon hearing this the mother and father, knowing that he will be incapable of continuing the family line, do not again cherish or esteem him, regarding him as they would grass. Those of short life span do not become *-ramaōas* or *brāhmaōas* to whom men and women, young and old, are respectful. If it is the case that the Tathāgata is equal to his acts, then it also would be that he would not be respected by all the humans, gods, and sentient beings of the world. The Tathāgata has said that the Dharma of the unchanging and unvarying reality also is without a receiver. [613c] This is why, Mañjuśrī, you should not say that the Tathāgata is equal to all of his actions.

"Furthermore, Mañjuśrī, it is just like an impoverished woman who has no household in which to seek shelter for herself. She is subjected to repeated ailments, distress, hunger, and thirst. She goes about begging and stops at a guest house where she stays and gives birth to a child. The landlord of this guest house chases her out and, embracing the child, she decides to go to another country. On the way she encounters the distress of wickedness, winds, rains, and cold. Many were the hungry noises of the biting mosquitoes, horseflies, and venomous snakes. Passing through the Ganges river, she embraces her child and begins to ford it. Its waters are tumultuous and swift, but she does not let go. Both mother and child are drowned. Thus, having been compassionately mindful and virtuous, after the woman's death she is reborn in the *brahma* heavens.

"Mañjuśrī, if there is a good son who wishes to protect the true Dharma, he does not say that the Tathāgata is equal to his actions. He is not equal to his actions. It may only be so if he himself corrects me and says that I now am deluded and do not yet possess the wisdom-eye. The Tathāgata's true Dharma is inconceivable. This is why it should not be proclaimed that the Tathāgata is established to be conditioned, [but] that he is established to be unconditioned. Someone who has the correct view says that the Tathāgata is established to be unconditioned. And why? It is because he is able to give rise to the good Dharma for sentient beings, and because he gives rise to compassion, as that impoverished woman did in the Ganges river when she was willing to abandon her own life because of her loving mindfulness of her child. Good son, the *bodhisattva* who protects the Dharma also responds in this way. He would rather give up his life than say that the Tathāgata is equal to the conditioned. Instead, he will say that the Tathāgata is equal to the unconditioned. Because he says that the Tathāgata is unconditioned, he attains the supremely unexcelled *bodhi*, just as that woman attained rebirth in the *brahma* heaven. And why? It is because of his defense of the Dharma. How did he defend the Dharma? By that I mean his saying that the Tathāgata is equal to the unconditioned. Good son, such a person, while not seeking liberation, liberates himself, just as that impoverished woman did not seek rebirth in the *brahma* heavens but in fact was reborn there as a result.

"Mañjuśrī, it is like a person who travels a far distance on a road, grows tired, and needs to stop at another's house. There he lays down to sleep and then suddenly a large fire breaks out in the building. He awakens in a fright and thinking, 'I have no doubt that today I shall die.' Because he was full of remorse, he was ensnared by his clothing. Thereupon, his life ended and he was reborn into the Trayastrimśāḥ heaven. And from there, after fully eighty rebirths, he became a great *brahma* king. And after fully one hundred thousand rebirths, he was born among humans as a wheel turning king. This man was not reborn amidst the three unpleasant destinies, but was always born in consecutive places of peaceful happiness because of these conditions. Mañjuśrī, [614a] if a good son is remorseful, then he should not contemplate the Buddha as being equal to his actions.

"Mañjuśrī, those of the heretical paths with mistaken views may say that the Tathāgata is equal to the conditioned. But a precept-holding monk should not give rise to such conditioned thinking about the Tathāgata. If he were to say that the Tathāgata is something conditioned, then that is a deluded statement. It should be known that upon death this person will enter the hells as though they was his own home. Mañjuśrī, in reality the Tathāgata is an unconditioned thing and should not be said to be conditioned. From this day forward all in *saṣsāra* should abandon this lack of knowledge and seek the correct knowledge. They will know then that the Tathāgata is the unconditioned. If one can thus contemplate the Tathāgata, then on perfecting it, one will attain the thirty-two marks and swiftly realize the supremely unexcelled *bodhi*."

At that time, the Dharma prince Mañjuśrī praised Cunda, saying, "Excellent, good son, excellent! You have now created the causes and conditions for a long life span, for you are able to understand that the Tathāgata is eternally abiding, something unchanging and unconditioned. You have now well overturned the appearance of the Tathāgata being conditioned. You are like that person who was remorseful and because he was caught by his clothes was burned, who was born in the Trayastrimśāḥ heaven because of his good thought of repentance, and who further was born a *brahma* king and a wheel-turning king. He did not go to the unpleasant destinies and always experienced peaceful happiness. You are also so, since you have skillfully overturned the Tathāgata's appearance of being conditioned. In a future life, you surely will attain the thirty-two marks, the eighty excellencies, the eighteen special qualities, an infinite life span, not existing in *saṣsāra* and always experiencing peaceful happiness. It is not long now before you will become a Worthy, a Completely Enlightened One.

"Cunda, those who come after the Tathāgata's passing will widely say, 'Company of mine, together you must overturn the notion that the Tathāgata is conditioned, or conditioned by the unconditioned, and moreover all of you must stop having such views yourselves.' Following this day, you may make haste to give food and drink, for these gifts are the best among gifts. Whether it is monks, nuns, laymen, or laywomen, when they go on distant travels, grow weary, and need things, should they not bath the following day and be provided supplies? Thus, quickly giving it to them then is the consummation of the root seed of the perfection of charity. Cunda, so it is if someone makes the very last offerings to the Buddha and the *saṣgha*, whether the offerings are many or few, whether sufficient or insufficient, fitting and timely. The Tathāgata is truly so and shall enter *parinirvāḍa*."

Cunda replied, "Mañjuśrī, why do you now covet these alms and say 'many, few, sufficient, or insufficient' in order to lead me to give on this day. Mañjuśrī, the Tathāgata in the old days practiced asceticism for six years and honored only what his arms held. How could he on this day be in need for a moment? Mañjuśrī, do you really mean to say that the Tathāgata who is truly awakened has accepted these alms? Verily, I surely know that the body of the Tathāgata is the essential body and not an alms-eating body."

At that time, the Buddha addressed Mañjuśrī, saying, "It is so, it is so."

He likewise said to Cunda, "Excellent, Cunda! You have brought to fruition the marvelous and great knowledge and skillfully entered the most profound Mahāyāna scriptures."

Mañjuśrī said to Cunda, "You have stated that the Tathāgata is the unconditioned, that the body of the Tathāgata has a long life span. Have you come to the knowledge of the Buddha's bliss?"

Cunda replied, "The Tathāgata does not only bring bliss for me, but also for all sentient beings."

Mañjuśrī said, "The Tathāgata brings bliss for you and I as well as all other sentient beings?"

Cunda replied, "You should not say that the Tathāgata brings bliss. The blissful person is a mistaken idea. If there are mistaken ideas then there is birth and death. When there is birth and death, then there are conditioned things. This is why, Mañjuśrī, one does not say that the Tathāgata is conditioned. If we said that the Tathāgata is conditioned, I and the sages together would be practicing in delusion. Mañjuśrī, the Tathāgata does not have the idea of being compassionately mindful. One who is compassionately mindful is like the milk cow that is compassionately mindful of its calf. Although it may be hungry or thirsty, the cow goes in search of water and grass, whether it is sufficient or insufficient, and then immediately returns. The Buddhas, the World Honored Ones, have no such mindfulness, seeing all beings equally to be like Rāhula. Such mindfulness, then, is the perspective of the Buddhas' wisdom.

"Mañjuśrī, it is just like a country's king who tames a team of horses, wishing to have draft horses to draw his chariot where he orders but has no place for them. The sages and I are also so. We wish to go to the deep core of the Tathāgata's subtle secret, which has no location. Mañjuśrī, it is like a golden winged bird (*garuḍa*) that flies up into the sky and looks down at the ocean from measureless *yojanas* high. It sees the nature of the water and the species of fish, fresh-water turtles, sea turtles, and *nāgas*. And he sees his own shadow as though looking into a bright mirror and seeing a reflection. Ordinary men of little knowledge are unable to calculate such a perspective. The sages and I are also so, unable to calculate the wisdom of the Tathāgata."

Mañjuśrī said to Cunda, "So it is, so it is. It is as you have said. In this matter I also have not penetrated through to it. Instead, my desire is only to test you about matter of the *bodhisattva*."

At that time, the World Honored One emitted a variety of lights from his facial orifices. Those lights brilliantly lit Mañjuśrī's body. Encountering these lights, Mañjuśrī then knew of this event immediately and addressed Cunda, saying, "The Tathāgata now has manifested this auspicious sign. It will not be long before he must [614c] enter into Nirvāṇa. Now is the time to present the very last offerings you have prepared for the Buddha and the great congregation. Cunda, you should know, the Tathāgata's emission of this variety of lights is not without causes and conditions."

Cunda heard this and sadly moved away quietly.

The Buddha addressed Cunda, "Now is the proper time for you to present your gifts to the Buddha and the great congregation. It is true that the Tathāgata shall enter *parinirvāḍa*, and the second and third [statements] are also so."

At that time, having heard the Buddha say this, Cunda raised his voice in a cry of grief, saying, "The distress, the distress! The world is empty!" And to the great congregation he said, "We all now must throw our five members to the ground and with the same voice exhort the Buddha not to enter *parinirvāḍa*."

At that time, the World Honored One again addressed Cunda, "Do not cry out to them and confuse their minds! You should regard this body just like the banana plant when it is burned, frothing water, a conjured illusion, a *gandharva* city, a clay vessel, and like a lightning flash. It is also like a drawing made in water, a prisoner facing execution, burnt fruit, and like a lump of flesh. It is like the end of a woven thread and like a mallet going up and down. You should regard its actions to be like sundry poisonous foods. Its errors and anxieties are things that are conditioned."

From this, Cunda addressed the Buddha, "The Tathāgata does not wish to remain long in the world. How can I not cry aloud, 'The distress, the distress! The world is empty!?' My only wish is for the World Honored One to have mercy on us and the sentient beings. Remain long in the world and do not enter *parinirvāḍa*!"

The Buddha addressed Cunda, "You should not say now, 'Have mercy on me and remain long in the world.' I do have mercy for you and everyone. This is why today I wish to enter Nirvāṇa. And why? The Buddha's Dharma is so and the conditioned is also so. This is why the Buddhas proclaim this verse,

'Conditioned things  
 Are by nature impermanent.  
 Once born, they do not remain.  
 The quiescent extinction is happiness.'

"Cunda, you should regard all types of actions to be things that are selfless, impermanent, and that do not remain. These bodies are numerous and have measureless errors and anxieties. They are just like water bubbles. This is why you should not cry aloud."

At that time, Cunda said to the Buddha, "So it is, so it is. Sincere is this honored teaching. Although I know that the Tathāgata expediently manifests the entry into Nirvāṇa, still I am incapable of not being anguished about it. It upsets my concentration, but I will give rise again to consolation and happiness."

The Buddha praised Cunda, "It is excellent! It is excellent that you are able to understand that the Tathāgata manifests equally the expedient of Nirvāṇa for sentient beings. Now, Cunda, you should listen closely. Like the *sārasa* [615a] birds in the months of Spring, when they flock together at Lake Anavatapta, the Buddhas are also so. They all go to this dwelling place. Cunda, you now should not consider the Buddhas to have long life spans or short life spans. All things are like conjured appearances. While the Tathāgata is present, he uses the power of expedients nowhere in which is there attachments. And why? The Buddha's Dharma is so.

"Cunda, I will now accept your presentation of offerings in order to lead you to the liberation from the defilements of birth and death. If men and gods make the very last offerings to me, they all will attain the unmoving reward that is the constant experience of peaceful happiness. And why? It is because I am the sentient beings' excellent field of blessings. If you wish for the sentient beings to create a blessed field, then you should quickly prepare your gifts. It would not be proper to wait any longer."

In order for sentient beings to attain liberation, Cunda at that time bowed his head, choked on his tears, and said to the Buddha, "Excellent, World Honored One! If I had the capacity when working my field of blessings, I would be able to comprehend and know the Tathāgata's Nirvāṇa and non-Nirvāṇa. As it is now, our wisdom along with that of the voice hearers and *pratyekabuddhas* is like that of mosquitoes. We are, indeed, unable to fathom the Tathāgata's Nirvāṇa and non-Nirvāṇa."

At that time, Cunda and his retinue sorrowfully wept and encircled the Tathāgata, burning incense, scattering flowers, and with their last thought respectfully presenting offerings. And soon those with Mañjuśrī also rose from their seats and went to offer their alms and supplies.

## Chapter 3: Lamentations

[615a] For a moment not long after Cunda had gone, the ground then shook in six ways. And on up to the Brahma realms it was also again so. There were two earthquakes. One was an earthquake and the other was a great earthquake. The smaller quake was called an earthquake. The greater quake was called a great earthquake. There was a smaller sound called an earthquake and there was a greater sound called a great earthquake. Where only the ground shook, that was called the earthquake. Where the mountains, trees, rivers, and the seas all shook, that was called the great earthquake. Where it shook to one side, that was called an earthquake. Where it shook everywhere and all around, that was called a great earthquake. When it shook and could cause the minds of sentient beings to move, that was called a great earthquake. When the *bodhisattvas* from the Tuṣṭita heavens down to Jambudvīpa first took notice, it was called a great earthquake. And when the first born left their household life to achieve the supremely unexcelled *bodhi*, to turn the dharma-wheel, and to enter *parinirvāḍa*, it was called a great earthquake.

On that day, the Tathāgata was about to enter Nirvāḇa. It was for this reason that the ground thus shook greatly. At that moment, the Gods, *nāgas*, *gandharvas*, *asuras*, *garuōas*, *kinnaras*, and *mahoragas*, humans [615b], and non-humans, heard this stated, and the hairs of their bodies stood on end. With the same voice they wept aloud. Then they proclaimed verses, saying,

"Prostrating ourselves to the Tamer and Teacher,  
We now beseech him.  
Far removed from men and recluses  
And forever left without aid or protection,

We now shall see the Buddha's Nirvāḇa.  
We who are drowning in the ocean of distress  
Are now sorrowful and anguished  
Like a calf losing its mother.

We are poverty-stricken and without aid or protection,  
Just like a weary and ill person who,  
Having no doctor, follows his own mind  
And eats what he should not eat.

The sentient beings are afflicted and ailing.  
They constantly meet with injury.  
Far removed are they from the Dharma and medicine king,  
They imbibe and consume wrong and harmful medicines.

This is why the Buddha, the World Honored One,  
Should not look to leave us behind.  
Like a country without an honorable ruler,  
The people of which are stricken with famine:

We are also so,

Losing your help and the flavor of the Dharma.  
Hearing now of the Buddha's Nirvāṇa,  
Our minds are perplexed and confused,

Like that great earthquake.  
Perplexed and mistaken are we in the our ways.  
When the great Sage enters Nirvāṇa  
The Buddha-sun shall set upon the land.

The Dharma waters will all dry up  
And we shall surely die.  
The Tathāgata's *parinirvāṇa*  
Is to the sentient beings who are so anguished

Just like an elder's son  
Who recently attended his mother and father's funeral.  
How can we on this day  
Not be grieved about it?

The Tathāgata's looking to leave us  
Is just like casting aside tears.  
The Tathāgata entering Nirvāṇa  
Is like one who will not return again.

We and the sentient beings  
All will be without any aid or protection.  
With the Tathāgata entering Nirvāṇa,  
Even the animals

Are all anxious and fearful.  
Anguished are their minds.  
Just as when the sun first rises,  
It's light is a brilliant ray blazing;

And when it is about to set, its radiance  
Again dies and all is darkened.  
The Tathāgata's spiritual power  
Can remove our anguish.

In this place residing amidst the great congregation  
He is just like Mount Sumeru.

[615c] "World Honored One, it is just as a king who begot and raised his children with his countenance upright, his mind proper, and always lovingly mindful of them. His past instructions to them were talented in technique, which caused them all to be blessed. And afterwards he left them, handing over [his rule] to a murderer (*caṅḍāla*). World Honored One, on this day we are the Dharma king's children. Having received the Buddha's teachings and instruction, we are now endowed with the right view. We wish that he would not leave us behind, as his departure is, therefore, the same as that king leaving his children. We only wish that he would remain for a long time and not enter Nirvāṇa.

"World Honored One, it is just as when someone well studies and debates, and who again in these debates is anxious. The Tathāgata is also so. Passing through the Dharmas, he then among these Dharmas is anxious. If we can cause the Tathāgata to remain a long time in the

world and proclaim the flavor of sweet dew, it would fulfill everyone. Such sentient beings then will not again be anxious of falling into the Hells.

"World Honored One, it is just as when there is someone who is just beginning to study and make effort. And an official arrests him, putting him into a prison. And there is another person there who asks him, 'How do you feel?' And he replies, 'Now, I feel very sad.' If he is later released, then he would be made peaceful and happy. The World Honored One is also so. It is for our sake that he has cultivated the ascetic practices. We now are like that person who has yet to escape from the distress of birth and death. How can the Tathāgata feel peaceful and happy?"

"World Honored One, it is just like a healer king who skillfully understands the methods of medicine and imparts it to his children, by way of an esoteric means of teaching. He does not teach them any other outside fields of study. The Tathāgata is also so. He alone with a treasury of the profound secret taught Mañjuśrī. To leave us behind and not look back or care, the Tathāgata must not have any secret to give us, just like that medicine king who taught his children and did not teach any outside teachers who came to him. That healer could not teach everyone. Because he was overcome by sentiments, he was reluctant to impart his secret to them. But the mind of the Tathāgata is in the end never overcome. So why does he thus not look to impart his teachings and instruction to us? We only wish that he would remain a long time and not enter *parinirvāḍa*.

"World Honored One, it is just as when a person who is old, weak, and suffering illnesses sets off on a common dirt road, traveling a dangerous path. This dangerous path has many difficulties and he experiences myriad hardships. Moreover, there is another person who sees him and sympathizes with him. Thereupon that person shows him a flat, even, and excellent road. World Honored One, we are also so. The word 'weak' is a metaphor for the person who has yet to advance far enough to be a person of the essential body. The word 'old' is a metaphor for the grave afflictions. The words 'suffering illness' is a metaphor for having not yet been freed from birth and death. The words 'dangerous path' is a metaphor for the twenty-five existences. Our only wish is for the Tathāgata to direct us to the true path of sweet dew, to remain in the world a long time and not enter *Nirvāḅa*."

At that time, the World Honored One addressed the monks, "You monks, do not be like the ordinary gods and humans, lamenting and crying aloud. You should endeavor to make progress in restraining your minds with [616a] right mindfulness."

Then the gods, men, *asuras*, et al, hearing what the Buddha said, stood fast and did not cry aloud. They were like a person at the funeral of his beloved child after it was placed in a coffin and taken away, standing firm and not crying aloud.

At that time, the World Honored One proclaimed verses for the great assemblies, saying,

"You must open your thoughts  
And should not be greatly disturbed.  
The Dharma of the Buddhas are all so.  
This is why you must be silent.

Be happy, do not act rashly.  
Guard your minds with the right mindfulness  
And leave behind what is not the Dharma.  
Thus one is consoled, feeling elated and happy.

"Furthermore, monks, if you have doubts or confusions, you must ask about them now. Whether it is about the empty or what is not empty, the eternal or impermanent, distress or what is not distressing, dependent or independent, going or not going, returning or not returning, everlasting or not ever-lasting, temporary or permanent, sentient being or what is not sentient beings, existent or non-existent, substantial or insubstantial, true or untrue, extinct or not extinct, esoteric or not esoteric, dual or non-dual; you should now ask about these various topics about which there are doubts. I will accordingly put them to rest for you and I will also preach as before the sweet dew for you. Afterwards I will then enter into *Nirvāḅa*.

"Monks, the Buddha's appearance in the world is rare, the human form difficult to attain, and directly having faith in the Buddha's birth is something also difficult. Being capable of patience is difficult, and having patience is also, again, difficult. Consummating the discipline perfectly without transgression and attaining the Worthy's reward, this is also something difficult, like looking for gold dust or the *udumbara* flower. You, monks! Being removed from the eight difficulties and attaining the human body is rare! Your meeting me must not be in passed by in vain. In the past I went to do a variety of ascetic practices and now have thus obtained unsurpassed expedient means. It is for you that I throughout the measureless aeons have had my body, hands, feet, head, eyes, marrow, and brains separated. This is why you should not be rash.

"You, monks! How is the treasure city of the true Dharma adorned? Its precious jewels are the perfection of a variety of virtues. Discipline, concentration, and wisdom are its walls and moat. Now you have encountered this treasure city of the Buddha's Dharma. You should not grasp at the things that are vacant and mistaken. It is just like a merchant king who encounters a real treasure city, picks up tiles and stones, and goes back to his home. You are also so. Having directly encountered the treasure city, you are grasping at vacant and mistaken things.

"You, monks! Do not be content with a lower mind. Although you have now left the household life for the Mahāyāna, do not give rise to cravings and attachments. You, monks! Although your bodies are clothed with the *kaūāya*, the dyed robes, your minds should resemble the as yet unstained and pure Dharma of the Mahāyāna. You, monks! Although you go and beg for alms, passing successively through [616b] many places, you have yet for the first time sought the Dharma-alms of the Mahāyāna. You, monks! Although you have shaved off your hair, you have yet to cut the bonds with the true Dharma.

"You, monks! Now I shall truly teach and admonish you. With this present group of great assemblies I now am a Tathāgata whose essential nature (*dharmatā*) is true and not contrary. This is why you must progress, collect your minds, and courageously destroy the bonds using the ten powers. For once the wisdom sun has set, you will be veiled by ignorance.

"Monks, just as the Earth has hills, herbs, and grasses for sentient beings to use, my Dharma is also so. It produces the wondrously good flavor of the Dharma nectar and is the excellent medicine for the various afflictions and ailments of sentient beings. I now shall lead all the sentient beings and the fourfold assemblies of my disciples to peacefully abide within this esoteric treasury. And I also shall peacefully abide within this and enter into Nirvāṇa. What is called the treasury of the esoteric secret? It is just like the character *ī* of three parts. When they are united, it is not a complete character and when they are separated it is still not complete. As Maheśvara has three eyes above his face, therefore so is *ī* completed. But if the three parts are separated, it cannot be complete. I am also so. The Dharma of liberation is not Nirvāṇa. The body of the Tathāgata is not Nirvāṇa. And the great wisdom (*māhaprajñā*) is also not Nirvāṇa. These three things, each being different, are also not Nirvāṇa. Since I now peacefully abide thus in these three things for sentient beings, it is called entering Nirvāṇa, like that mundane character *ī*."

At that time, the monks hearing that the Buddha, the World Honored One, will certainly be entering Nirvāṇa, all of them were anguished and the hairs of their bodies stood on end. Weeping, with tears flowing. They prostrated themselves at the Buddha's feet and circled him an measureless number of times. They said to the Buddha, "World Honored One, pleasure is said to be impermanent, distressing, empty, and selfless. World Honored One, it is just as among the footprints of all the sentient beings, the elephant's footprints are the greatest. The idea of impermanence is also again so. Among ideas, it is the very best. If there is one who progressively cultivates it, he is able to remove all the desire realm's cravings for form and non-form, attachments, ignorance, pride, and impermanent ideas. World Honored One, if it were that the Tathāgata was free of the idea of impermanence, then he would not now be entering into Nirvāṇa. If he is not free of it, how can it be said that cultivating the idea of impermanence is to depart from the attachments, ignorance, pride, and impermanent ideas of the three realms?"

"World Honored One, it is just as when the farmer under the Autumn moon deeply tills his ground in order to remove the defiling weeds. The idea of impermanence is also again so. It is able to remove all the desire realm's cravings for form and non-form, attachments, ignorance, pride, and impermanent ideas.

"World Honored One, it is just as when tilling the fields in Autumn [616c], the tilling is the greatest; and also like how among footprints the elephants' footprints are the greatest. Among ideas, the idea of impermanence is supreme.

"World Honored One, it is just like the Emperor who is compassionate and forgiving of those in the world when he knows the time of his life's end is at hand. He sets free all the prisoners in the prisons who are chained and locked up. And then afterwards, he abandons his life. The Tathāgata now also should thus free the sentient beings who are all chained and locked up by the lack of knowledge and ignorance, and lead them to liberation after your Nirvāṇa. We now ourselves have yet to be freed. How can the Tathāgata so easily wish to leave us and enter into Nirvāṇa?

"World Honored One, it is just like someone who is possessed by a spirit and meets a skilled *dhāraṅgī* master, who thereupon uses the power of a *dhāraṅgī* to exorcise him. The Tathāgata is also so. He rids the voice hearers of the spirit of ignorance, causing them to peacefully abide in the Dharmas of great wisdom and liberation, like that conventional character *ā*.

"World Honored One, it is just like an elephant that has been tethered by someone and, while having an excellent trainer, cannot be restrained, governed, immediately brought to a halt, or chained. Not caring for this, it leaves. We have yet to thus be freed from the fifty-seven bonds of affliction. How can the Tathāgata so easily wish to leave us and enter into Nirvāṇa?

"World Honored One, it is like someone who is feverishly ill and encounters a skilled physician who can remove his suffering. We are also so. Many are our troubles, afflictions, wrong livelihoods, and feverish illnesses. While we have met the Tathāgata, our ailments have yet to be removed and cured. We have yet to attain the unsurpassed peace and eternal happiness. How can the Tathāgata so easily wish to leave us and enter into Nirvāṇa?

"World Honored One, it is just like a drunken person who is not himself enlightened, not friendly, and is estranged from his mother, daughter, elder and younger sisters. Confused, reckless, lustful, and disturbed, he speaks rashly and lies down in the impure. Then there is an excellent teacher who administers a medicine, directing him to drink it. Once he drinks it, he then spits it out and goes back to what is familiar to him. At heart he is ashamed deeply at his having defeated that correction. Wine is unwholesome, the root of many evils. If one is able to be rid of it, then one will be distanced from many evil deeds.

"World Honored One, we are also so. Having traveled from the distant past on the turning wheel of birth and death, and being drunken on feelings and forms, we have craved the five desires. We have no mother or concept of a mother, no elder sister or concept of a sister, no daughter or concept of a daughter, and no sentient beings or concept of sentient beings. This is why the wheel turns and we undergo the afflictions of birth and death, like that drunken person who lies within the impure. The Tathāgata now must give us the Dharma medicine and direct us to spit out the wine of affliction and evil. But we have not yet attained the mind that is awakened. How can the Tathāgata so easily wish to leave us to enter into Nirvāṇa?

"World Honored One, it is just like a person who admires the plantain tree with the solid trunk, but has not place for it. World Honored One, sentient beings are also so. If they admire us humans, the sentient beings' throughout their life spans nurture the perception of the doer, the receiver, and the real, but they also have no place for them. We thus cultivate the idea of selflessness.

[617a] "World Honored One, it is just like a thick mud that has no further function. This body is also so. It is selfless and without master. World Honored One this body is like a seven-petaled flower that lacks a perfume. It is selfless and without master. With this thought, we always cultivate this idea of selflessness. As the Buddha has said, 'All things are without self or constituents. You monks should practice thus, and having cultivated it then, you will remove any self-conceit. Having parted with self-conceit, thereupon you will enter into Nirvāṇa.'

"World Honored One, it is just as the traces of a bird in the sky seem not to occupy any space. One who is able to cultivate the idea of selflessness will have views that likewise occupy no space."

At that time, the World Honored One praised the monks, saying, "Excellent, excellent! You are well able to cultivate the idea of selflessness."

The monks thereupon said to the Buddha, "World Honored One, we not only cultivate the idea of selflessness, but we also readily practice the other ideas, such as the ideas of distress and impermanence.

"World Honored One, it is just like someone whose drunken mind is dizzy and confused, seeing hills, rivers, cities, large palace halls, the sun, moon, stars, and the North Star all turning and spinning. World Honored One, suppose someone does not cultivate the ideas of distress, impermanence, and selflessness. Such a person is not called a Noble One. The numerous rash deeds will cycle them through birth and death. World Honored One, it is because of these causes and conditions that we well cultivate thus these ideas."

At that time, the Buddha addressed the monks, saying, "Listen closely, listen closely! You have turned to introducing the metaphor of a drunken person, but you know only the words and have yet to penetrate into its meaning. And what is its meaning? It is like that drunken person who looks up at the sun and moon and, while really they are not turning and spinning, there arises in him a mental image of them turning and spinning. Sentient beings are also so. Being subject to the veil of afflictions and ignorance, there arises in them the deluded mind. The self reckoned to be selfless. The eternal reckoned to be impermanent. The pure is reckoned to be impure. Happiness is reckoned to be distressing. Because they are subject to this veil of afflictions, while they may give rise to these ideas, they do not penetrate their meaning, just as that drunken person who in a place that is not spinning gives rise to the perception of it being spun. The self, then, is the meaning of the Buddha. The eternal is the meaning of the essential body. Happiness is the meaning of Nirvāṇa. The pure is the meaning of the Dharma.

"You, monks! How, then, can it be said that having the idea of a self leads to pride and haughtiness, cycling through the round birth and death? If all of you speak of the self and also cultivate the ideas of impermanence, distress, and selflessness, then these three cultivations have no real meaning. I will now explain the overcoming of these three cultivated Dharmas. Distress is reckoned to be happiness and happiness is reckoned to be distress. This is an inverted Dharma. The impermanent is reckoned to be eternal and the eternal is reckoned to be impermanent. This is an inverted Dharma. The selfless is reckoned to be the self and the self is reckoned to be selfless. This is an inverted Dharma. The impure is reckoned to be pure and the pure is reckoned [617b] to be impure. This is an inverted Dharma. The person who thus possesses these four inverted Dharmas does not perceive the right cultivation of these things.

"You, monks! From distressing things, there arises the perception of happiness; from the impermanent, there arises the perception of the eternal; from the selfless, there arises the perception of a self; and from the impure, there arises the perception of the pure. The worldly thus also have the eternal, happiness, self, and pure. The world-renouncer also has the eternal, happiness, self, and pure. The worldly Dharmas may have these words but not their meanings, while the world-renouncer has both the words and the meanings. And why? Because the Dharmas of the worldly have these four inversions, their meanings are not known. And why is that? They have ideas that are inverted, mentalities that are inverted, and views that are inverted. Because of these three inversions, the people of the world see in the happiness distress, see in the eternal impermanence, see in the self selflessness, and see in the pure impurity. This is called inversion. Because of these inversions, the worldly know the words but do not know their meanings. And what are the meanings? The selfless is *saṣsāra*. The self is the Tathāgata. The impermanent is the voice hearer and condition perceiver. The permanent is the essential body. The distressing is all the outside paths. Happiness is Nirvāṇa. The impure is the conditioned thing. The pure is the true Dharma possessed by the Buddha and *bodhisattvas*'. These are called the uninverted. Because of these are not inverted, one perceives both the words and their meanings. If one wishes to depart from the four inversions, he should know thus the eternal, happiness, self, and pure."

Then the monks said to the Buddha, "World Honored One, it is as the Buddha has said, that parting with the four inversions is the attainment of understanding and knowing the eternal, happy, self, and pure. The Tathāgata now is forever devoid of these four inversions. He, therefore, has understood and known the eternal, happy, self, and pure. If he has understood and known the eternal, happy, self, and pure, why does he not remain for an aeon or half of an aeon to teach and

direct us towards parting with the four inversions? Why does he leave us behind, wishing to enter Nirvāṇa? If the Tathāgata sees, looks after us mindfully, teaches, and admonishes us, we will receive and cultivate it to our utmost. If the Tathāgata will enter into Nirvāṇa, then how can we, with these poisoned bodies, together stand, abide, and cultivate the ascetic practice so that we also may follow the Buddha into Nirvāṇa?"

At that time, the Buddha addressed the monks, "You should not thus say that I now possess the unsurpassed and true Dharma. It has all been conferred onto Mahākāśyapa. This Kāśyapa shall be a great support for you all, just as the Tathāgata is for the sentient beings a place of support. Mahākāśyapa is also again so. He will be a place of support for you.

"It is just like when a great king goes out traveling with several of his generals [617c] and all of his governmental duties are handed over to his prime minister. The Tathāgata is also so. The possession of the true Dharma is also handed over to Mahākāśyapa. You should know that the earlier cultivation of the ideas of impermanence and distress are not genuine.

"It is just like a group of people who bath or ride about in boats at play on a great lake in the Spring, and an emerald jewel is lost, falling into the water's depths. Thereupon, the people dive into the water, looking and searching for the jewel. Frenzied, they pull up tiles, stones, weeds, sand, and pebbles, each of them claiming that they have found that emerald gem, elated at bringing it out, until they notice that it was not true. And so, the precious gem remained in the water. Because of the gem's power, the water was completely clarified. Those in the great crowd of people thereupon saw that the precious gem was resting beneath the waters. It was like looking up into the sky at the appearance of the moon. Then there was a wise person in the crowd who calmly went into the water and easily retrieved the gem with the power of his skillful means.

"You, monks! You should not thus cultivate those ideas of impermanence, distress, and selflessness, or the idea of impurity, by way of their real meanings. That is like those people who each took tiles, stones, weeds, sand, and pebbles to be the precious gem. You must well study the skillful means in every place, always cultivating the idea of self and the ideas of the eternal, happiness, and pure. Again, you must know that the earlier cultivation of the appearance of those four Dharma characteristics were inverted. One who wants to attain the genuine cultivation of these ideas is like that wise person who skillfully brought out the precious gem. That refers to the idea of the self, and the ideas of the eternal, happiness, and purity."

At that time, the monks said to the Buddha, "World Honored One, the Buddha has previously explained, 'You must cultivate and study the selflessness of things. Having cultivated and studied it, you then will depart from the idea of a self. Departing from an idea of a self, you then will depart from conceit. Departing from conceit, you will attain entry into Nirvāṇa.' What is the meaning of this?"

The Buddha addressed the monks, "Excellent, excellent! You now are skillful in inquiring into a doctrine in order to remove doubt.

"It is like a country's king whose wisdom was dim, dull, and little. He had a doctor whose nature was also foolish and boisterous. And so the king did not distinguish sincerity when bestowing such a salaried position. This doctor was dull about medicine when healing and curing the myriad illnesses and also again did not know the root sources from which the illnesses arose. While he knew the medicines, he was not skillful in understanding the breath, chills, and fevers of illness, and so all the illnesses were treated with [the same] dose of medicine. Yet, the king did not discern this doctor's knowledge of medicine as being excellent or detestable, good or bad. Now, there was also a bright doctor who understood the eight methods of medicine. He skillfully cured the myriad illnesses and knew the means of medicine. He came from a distant place. Thereupon the former doctor did not know to greet him. Instead, there arose in him thoughts of superiority and trifling conceitedness. The bright doctor thereupon sent a letter to him asking for a teacher to meet him and receive the Dharma that is the core of his method. He said to the former doctor, 'Sir, I now request that you instruct me [618a] in the rules of medicine. My only wish is for you to proclaim and lay it out for me, explaining it thoroughly.'

"The former doctor replied, 'Sir, if you now are able to support me for forty-eight years, then afterwards I will teach you the doctor's Dharma.'

"Then the bright doctor thereupon received his instruction and said, 'So I will, so I will! Accordingly I will provide what supplies I am able and run errands for you.'

"Thereupon, the former doctor then went with the visiting doctor to see the king. The visiting doctor discussed for the king a variety of medical methods and other such techniques, saying, 'Your Majesty, you should know, should well discern, that these Dharmas thus can be used to govern the kingdom. These Dharmas thus can be used to heal illness.'

"At that time, the country's king, having heard his words, came to know that the former doctor was deluded, dim, and unwise. Thereupon, he chased the former doctor out of the country and afterwards redoubled the respects paid to the visiting doctor.

"And then the visiting doctor thought to himself, 'If someone wished to instruct the king, now is the time to do so.' Thereupon, he said to the king, 'Your Majesty, in my genuine feeling and thought, I must seek a wish.'

"The king then replied, 'This right arm and the rest my body shall follow all in unison my will in seeking that.'

"That visiting doctor said, 'Although the king may pledge all of his body, surely I cannot presume to have so much to seek it. But, now, I do have this goal. It is my hope that the king would promulgate the order to all within the kingdom that from this day forwards they should not continue to take the medicines of that former doctor. And why is that? It is because those medicines are poisonous and harmful, causing many pains and injuries. If someone administers them, they should be beheaded. The drinking of those medicines is to stop. Never again should there be people who fall to such unnatural deaths. It is in order for them to constantly dwell in peaceful happiness that I seek this wish.'

"Then the king replied, 'That search of yours is, indeed, insufficiently voiced. I shall quickly promulgate the order to all within the kingdom that people with common illnesses shall not be treated with those medicines. If any use the medicines, they shall be beheaded.'

"At that time, the visiting doctor combined together many medicines, said to be acrid, bitter, salty, sweet, and sour in flavor, with which the myriad illnesses were to be cured, none failing to bring recovery. Not long after this, the king fell ill. He thereupon commanded the doctor, saying, 'I am now ill and suffering. What shall cure me?' The doctor divined what medicine should be used for the king's illness and immediately said to him, 'Regarding what is troubling the king, he must drink this elixir. When I had formerly ended others from drinking this elixir, I was not speaking truthfully. Now, if one drinks this, it verily can remove this illness. Being that the king is now troubled and feverish, it is correct that he should drink this elixir.'

"Thereupon, the king said to the doctor, 'Are you crazy? you now say for this feverish illness that drinking this elixir can remove it? Before, you said that it was poisonous. How can you now tell me to drink it? Are you trying to deceive me? You said that the medicine of that former doctor who had been praised was poisonous and caused me to chase him away. Now you say that it is excellent, verily able to [618b] remove this illness. Following your advice, I myself established you to be superior to the former doctor.'

"Then the visiting doctor again said to the king, 'The king should not say such things. It is just as an insect eats wood until it is completely nourished, but that insect does not know that it is nourished or not nourished. The wise sees it stop, but does not claim that the insect understands that it is nourished, nor is he surprised by it. Your Majesty, you should know that that former doctor was also so. He did not distinguish between illnesses and treated them all with this same medicinal elixir, just as that insect's path is by chance until it is completely nourished. The former doctor did not understand the medicinal elixirs that were excellent or detestable, good or bad.'

"The king then asked, 'What did he not understand?'

"The visiting doctor replied, 'The medicinal elixirs as well as the harmful poisons. And also the sweet nectar. How is the elixir also called a sweet nectar? If a mother cow does not eat wine dregs, loose grass, or barley, its calf will not tame well. In the place that it is set to pasture it will not stay above the springs and also not go down to the marsh to drink clear water. It will not be herded along and will not accompany the lead animal together with the same herd. Being domesticated in its eating and drinking, it goes on to travel and abide in the place it is given. Thus

is this elixir able to remove illnesses. Therefore, it is called the wondrous medicine of sweet nectar. Excepting this elixir, the rest are all called harmful poisons.'

"At that time, the great king, having heard this, gave praise, saying, 'Excellent, great doctor, excellent! From this day forwards, I have begun to know the medicinal elixirs that are good and bad, excellent and detestable.' Thereupon he drank it willingly and his illness was removed.

"Immediately, he promulgating the order that all in the country from that day forwards were to go back over to drinking the medicinal elixir. All of the country's people who heard this became embittered, all saying to one another, 'Has His Majesty now been possessed by a spirit and gone crazy, deceiving us again by ordering the drinking of this elixir?' All the people felt embittered and gathered together at the king's palace.

"The king told them, 'You should not feel bitterness towards me. Just as with the order not to drink that medicinal elixir, so it is with the order to drink it. All this is the doctor's instructions and not my fault.'

"At that time, the great king and the people danced joyfully and redoubled their respects paid to the doctor, for all those who were ill had drunk the medicinal elixir and their illnesses had been removed.

"You, monks! You should know that the Tathāgata, the Worthy, the Completely Enlightened One, perfect in wisdom and conduct, the Well Gone, the knower of the world, unsurpassed, the tamer of men, teacher of men and gods, and the World Honored One is also so. He is a great doctor who has appeared in the world, defeating all of the heretical doctors, who proclaims to those in the four assemblies, saying, 'I am the king of doctors!' Because he wishes to suppress the heretics he proclaims, 'There is no self, no person, sentient beings, soul, development, knowledge, perception, doer, or receiver.'

"Monks, you should know that the heretics have said that the self is like the insect who eats wood, mates, and makes offspring merely. This is why the Tathāgata proclaims that in the Buddha's Dharma there is no self. It is for the sake of taming sentient beings, knowing the occasion, and that such selflessness has its causes and conditions. He also says that there is a self. He is like that excellent doctor who well knew the elixirs that were medicinal and not medicinal. It is not like that self the ordinary man reckons to be his own or the ordinary confused person who reckons that he has a self. Some have said that it is as large as the thumb and finger, some that it is like the mustard seed, some that it is like an atom. The Tathāgata says that the self is not like any of these. This is why he says that things are selfless. Really it is not that there is no self. What is the self? If something is the true, real, eternal, the master, that rests upon the nature of being unchanging, this is called the self. Just as that great doctor well understood the medicinal elixir, the Tathāgata is also so. For the sake of sentient beings, he says there really is a self. You and the four assemblies must thus cultivate the Dharma."

*Here ends fascicle two of the Great Parinivāḍa Sātra*

## Chapter 4: Long Life Span

[618c] The Buddha again addressed the monks, "Those of you who have doubts about the precepts or *vinaya*, feel free to ask questions. I shall give explanations that will lead your minds to be eased. I have cultivated and studied all things that have the fundamental nature of empty stillness, comprehending them thoroughly. But, monks, do not say that the Tathāgata has only cultivated those things whose fundamental nature is empty stillness."

Again, he addressed the monks, "If there are any doubts about the precepts or *vinaya*, you may now feel free to ask about them."

Then the monks said to the Buddha, "World Honored One, we haven't the wisdom to question the Tathāgata, the Worthy, the Completely Enlightened One. Why is that? The Tathāgata's perspective is inconceivable. The concentrations that he possesses are inconceivable. The teachings and instructions he has expounded are inconceivable. This is why we haven't the wisdom to be able to question the Tathāgata."

"World Honored One, it is just as when an elder of a hundred and twenty years, whose body was engulfed by old age and ailments, lies down to sleep in bed and is unable to get up again from that position. The strength of his breath was empty and weak, so there was no telling what remained of his life span. Now, there was a wealthy person related to him by occupation who wished to travel to the other [619a] with a hundred *jin* of gold to give to that elderly person. And he said, 'I now will travel to the other with this treasure in hand to use for our mutual support, perhaps through the course of ten years, or twenty years. Then once the work is done, I will forthwith return to my home.' When the elderly and ill person thereupon received it, that elder had no heirs, and not long afterwards, his chronic illness ended his life. The possessions supporting him were scattered and lost. The wealthy lord went back seeking to recover his gold, but it was nowhere. Thus, this deluded person did not know whether calculating the value of their house was possible or not. This is why when he went back seeking to recover his gold, it was gone. Due to the circumstances of the death, he lost his treasure."

"World Honored One, we voice hearers are also again so. While we hear the Tathāgata's sincere endeavor to teach the precepts, we are unable to receive, maintain, and cause them to remain long. Like that elderly person who had received the other's investment, we now haven't the wisdom. What questions shall we ask about the precepts or *vinaya*?"

The Buddha addressed the monks, "If you put your questions to me now, then you will be able to bless all the sentient beings. This is why I am telling you, those who are entangled in doubts should feel free to put forward their questions."

Then the monks said to the Buddha, "World Honored One, it is like a person who is twenty-five years old and who is prosperous and upright. Much was his wealth in gold, silver, and emeralds. His father, mother, wife, children, family, clan, and friends were all living together. Thereupon, there was a person who came and entrusted his valuables to them, saying, 'I have to make a work-related trip to another place. Once the work is finished, I will return again to my home.' For that time, the prosperous man protected his things as though they were his own. When that man fell ill, he then commanded his family thus to keep the treasure that the other had entrusted to him in case the traveler came back seeking to retrieve it. The wise thus well know and consider that when they travel and then return to recover their possessions that they will retrieve them without loss."

"The World Honored One is also so. If he entrusts his Dharma treasure to Ānanda and the monks, it could not remain for long. And why? The voice hearers and the great Kāśyapa all shall

be impermanent, like that elderly person who received the other's entrusted things. This is why he should instead entrust the unsurpassed Buddha's Dharma to the *bodhisattvas*, with the *bodhisattvas* who are skillfully able at questions and answers. Thus, the Dharma treasure then would remain a long time. Immeasurable thousands of generations would be elevated and the sentient beings would be bountifully blessed with peace. They are like that prosperous person who received another's investment. What does this mean? The great *bodhisattvas* are the only ones up to asking questions, but no others. Our wisdom is like that of mosquitoes. How could we beseech the Tathāgata for the profound Dharma?" Then the voice hearers fell silent and waited.

At that time, the Buddha praises the monks, saying, "Excellent, excellent! You well have attained the mind of non-defilement, the Worthy's mind. I also have thought of these two conditions. [619b] It should be that the Mahāyāna is entrusted to the *bodhisattvas* if I am to cause the wondrous Dharma to remain long in the world."

At that time, the Buddha addressed all of the great assembly, "Good sons and good daughters, this life span of mine cannot be calculated and discussion of my pleasing discourses also cannot be exhausted. You, moreover, should ask questions as you wish, whether it is about the precepts or refuge. And so too is it with second and third."

At that time, there were in the assembly a child, a *bodhisattva-mahāsattva*. This pupil (*tara*) was from the town of the priestly clan of the great Kāśyapas. With the Buddha's spiritual power he then rose from his seat, arranged his robes, circled the Buddha one hundred thousand times, and knelt to one knee. With his palms together, he said to the Buddha, "World Honored One, on this day I wish to make a small request. If the Buddha will listen, I would venture to voice it."

The Buddha addressed Kāśyapa, "If you freely give your question, the Tathāgata, the Worthy, the Completely Enlightened One, will discuss it for you, end your doubts, and cause you to be elated."

At that time, the Bodhisattva Kāśyapa again said to the Buddha, "World Honored One, since the Tathāgata has mercifully offered to listen, I will now ask it. Verily, the wisdom I possess is very slight, like that of mosquitoes, while the Tathāgata's, the World Honored One's, enlightenment and virtue is very lofty. It is undiluted like the lion of a sandalwood forest that is difficult to defeat and cannot be destroyed by the multitude. And so it has a retinue. The body of the Tathāgata is like true adamant with a color like emerald. It is truly difficult to destroy.

"Again, it is for this ocean of great wisdom that he is encircled. Among the myriad assemblies, the great *bodhisattva-mahāsattvas* have all consummated measureless, boundless, deep, and wondrous merit. They are like great elephants. How could those at the fore of these great assemblies dare to ask questions now? They must receive the power of the Buddha's spirit and bring back the great assembly's good roots and majestic virtue. There are few questions to ask."

Thereupon, before the Buddha, he asked with verses,

"How does one attain a long life span?  
Or that indestructible body of adamant?  
Again, by what causes and conditions  
Does one attain the power of its great solidity?"

How is it that in this Sūtra  
There is the ultimate crossing over to the other shore?  
I hope the Buddha will reveal his subtle secret  
And widely proclaim it for sentient beings.

How does one attain the vastness  
That is the support of the multitudes?  
Who is really not a Worthy  
And who measures up to the Worthy?"

How does one recognize the heavenly *māras*

That create difficulties for the multitudes?  
 The Tathāgata speaks of Pāpīyān,  
 But how should he be discerned and recognized?

[619c] How are they tamed?  
 The mind is elated at the discussion of the real truth  
 And the right and good is fully consummated.  
 Extensively discuss for us the four inverted views.

How does one do good deeds (*karma*)  
 About which the great sage now speaks?  
 How are the *bodhisattvas*  
 Able to see the nature that is difficult to see?

How should we understand the meaning of the full words  
 And the half words?  
 What is their holy practice,  
 Their most honored (*satyadevatā*)?

What is like the sun and moon,  
 The extremely pure and defiled stars?  
 How is it that having yet to launch the 'citta  
 One can still be called a *bodhisattva*?

How is it that in the great assembly  
 They still can attain fearlessness  
 And be like the gold of the Jambu River,  
 That cannot to be said to be their better?

How is it that while dwelling in the era of decay  
 They are not stained, like the lotus flower?  
 How do they dwell in affliction  
 And affliction is unable to defile them,

Like a doctor who cures the myriad ailments  
 And is not effected by those ailments?  
 In the great ocean of birth and death  
 How do they do the work of ferrying?

How does one abandon birth and death  
 Like a snake shedding its skin?  
 How should one contemplate the three jewels  
 To be just like a heavenly wishing tree?

If the three vehicles have no nature  
 How then is it said that they are attained?  
 Just like a pleasure yet to arise  
 How is it called receiving happiness?

How do the *bodhisattvas*  
 Still attain non-harm of the multitude?  
 How do they for those born blind  
 Become the eyes to see and guide them?

How is it shown that these numerous heads  
 Only wish for the great sage's discourses?  
 How does the Dharma preacher  
 Develop like the new moon?

How again it is shown  
 That the absolute is in Nirvāṇa?  
 How does the bold advancer  
 Show men, gods, and *māras* the path?

How does one know the nature of things (*dharmatā*)  
 And receive happiness of the Dharma?  
 How do the *bodhisattvas*  
 Become free of all ailments?

How do they for sentient beings  
 Extensively propound the esoteric secret?  
 How do they express the absolute  
 And compare it to what is not absolute?

As they end the net of doubts  
 How does one speak to the unsure?  
 [620a] How then do they attain closeness  
 To the most supreme and unsurpassed path?

I now beseech the Tathāgata  
 On behalf of the *bodhisattvas*  
 Who hope that he will discuss these most profound,  
 Fine, and wondrous practices.

Amidst all phenomena  
 They all have the disposition of peaceful happiness.  
 My only wish is that the great sage, the Honored One,  
 Would for us give a discerning discourse.

The great support of sentient beings  
 Is these two feet of honor and wondrous happiness.  
 And now they wish to ask about the *skandhas*  
 Yet I have not the wisdom.

The diligent *bodhisattvas*  
 Also again are unable to know  
 Thus the most profound  
 Perspective of the Buddhas."

At that time, the Buddha praised Bodhisattva Kāśyapa, "Excellent, excellent! Good son, you now have yet to attain the knowledge of all modes (*sarvajñā*), whereas I have already attained it. Verily, you have asked me about the most profound esoteric doctrine. It is just as that of those who investigate the knowledge of everything. There is no difference. Good son, when I sat beneath the *bodhi*-tree at the site of my enlightenment and first achieved the true awakening, at that time there were Buddha worlds possessing *bodhisattvas* that numbered like the sands of measureless *asāi khyas* of Ganges Rivers. And then they also asked me about the most profound esoteric doctrine. Verily, their questions were phrased just as virtuously. They were thus, without

any difference. Such a questioner, therefore, is able to bestow blessings on the measureless sentient beings."

At that time, the Bodhisattva Kāśyapa again said to the Buddha, "World Honored One, I have not the power of wisdom to be able to ask the Tathāgata about such a profound doctrine. World Honored One, like the mosquito that is unable fly over a great ocean to the opposite shore through the sky, I am also so. I am unable to venture questions to the Tathāgata about such a great ocean of wisdom, the nature of things, and sky that is the most profound doctrine.

"World Honored One, it is just as when a king who has in his topknot a bright pearl and he gives it to his minister of etiquette [?]. Once that minister had it, he wore it on his head, respectfully receiving and protecting it. I am also so. I wear on my head, respectfully receive, and protect the Tathāgata's discourses on the means of the profound doctrine. And why? It is because they lead me to the extensive attainment of profound wisdom."

At that time, the Buddha addressed Bodhisattva Kāśyapa, "Good son, listen closely, listen closely! I shall discuss for you the deeds that attain the Tathāgata's long life span. The *bodhisattva* by these deeds will because of such causes and conditions then attain a long life span. This is why you must with the utmost mind listen and receive this. If these deeds are to be for a cause *bodhi*, one must with a sincere mind listen and receive this doctrine. Once they have listened to and received it, they then can return it by explaining it to others. Good son, it was because I cultivated constantly such deeds that I attained [620b] the supremely unexcelled *bodhi*. Now, again, I explain its meaning extensively for others.

"Good son, it is just as a prince who commits crimes and is bound in prison. Because he is very merciful for and affectionately mindful of his son, the king rides his steed around to the place of his son's is imprisoned. The *bodhisattva* is also so. Wishing to attain the long life span, he must be protectively mindful of all sentient beings, whom he views equally as his own children. There arises in him great compassion, great empathy, great joy, and great renunciation. He imparts the precept of not killing and teaches the cultivation of the good Dharma. He also grounds all sentient beings in the five precepts and ten good deeds.

"Further, he goes among the hells, hungry ghosts, animals, and *asuras*, into all the destinations. He carries out of these places the suffering sentient beings, freeing those yet to be freed and saving those yet to be saved, causing those that have yet to enter Nirvāṇa to attain Nirvāṇa, and pacifying and consoling all those who are fearful. Because of the causes and conditions of such deeds, the *bodhisattva* then attains the life span that is very long and in wisdom he becomes sovereign. As a consequence, when he life ends he will be born in the heavens above."

At that time, Bodhisattva Kāśyapa again said to the Buddha, "World Honored One, the *bodhisattva-mahāsattva* regards sentient beings equally as his own children. This is a doctrine that is profound and hidden, that I have yet to be able to understand. World Honored One, the Tathāgata should not say that the *bodhisattva* cultivates the mind of equanimity towards sentient beings, viewing them equally as his children. And why is that? In the Buddha's Dharma there are precept breakers, committers of the contrary misdeeds, and those who harm the true Dharma. How shall one view such people equally as one's children?"

The Buddha replied to Kāśyapa, "So it is, so it is. I really do view those sentient beings as children like Rāhula."

Bodhisattva Kāśyapa again said to the Buddha, "World Honored One, during a past *saṅgha pouadha* on the fifteenth day, there was in an assembly that was endowed with precepts purely, a youth who did not well cultivate his bodily, verbal, and mental deeds. He stayed in a dark and hidden corner where he stole away to listen to the pronouncement of the precepts. The warrior Vajrapāṇi received the Buddha's spiritual power and with an adamantite mallet smashed him to bits. World Honored One, this adamantite spirit is rough and wicked such that he was capable of ending this youth's life. How does the Tathāgata regard this sentient being equally, as a child like his son Rāhula?"

The Buddha replied to Kāśyapa, "You now should not say this. This youth then is a conjured person and unreal. It was only in order to drive away precept breakers and those who harm the Dharma, to cause them to leave that assembly, that Vajrapāṇi displayed this illusion, and that

alone. Kāśyapa, those who harm and slander the true Dharma and the *icchantika*, those who have killed beings up to those having wrong views and who therefore transgress the commandments; I have empathy for all of these equally. I view them equally as children like my son Rāhula.

"Good son, [620c] it is just as when a group of a king's ministers transgress the royal law and as a result of these crimes are condemned and punished, but still they do not cease or desist. The Tathāgata, the World Honored One, is not thus. Regarding those who harm the Dharma, he confers the act (*karma*) of driving it away, the act of rebuke, the act of desisting, the act of holding up the misdeed, the act of being unable to see any, the act of cessation, and the act of having yet to depart from evil views. Good son, when associating with those who slander the Dharma, the Tathāgata performs these that discipline that deed, because he wishes to show that the actions of wicked people do have consequences. Good son, you now should know that the Tathāgata thereupon gives this gift to the wicked sentient beings without anxiety. Whether emitting one light, two, or three, and someone meets them, they all become free of all their misdeeds. The Tathāgata today is endowed with such measureless vital strength. Good son, you are one who has yet to be able to see the Dharma that you wish to see. Now I will discuss its marks and appearance for you. After my Nirvāṇa, you should follow in its direction. There will be monks who uphold the precepts, their majestic deportment perfected, and who protect and uphold the true Dharma. Seeing those who harm the Dharma, then, they are able to drive them off, rebuke them, and subdue them. You should know that this person will attain merit that is measureless and indescribable.

"Good son, it is just as when a king turns to tyranny, who acts wickedly, and meets with a grave illness. And a neighboring king hears of his reputation, raises an army, and goes there with the wish to kill that king. And then the ill king, because he has no strength, corrects himself then out of fear and apprehension, rectifying his mind to cultivate the good. And so this neighboring king attains merit that is measureless. The monk who upholds the Dharma is also so. Driving away and rebuking those who harm the Dharma, he causes them to practice the good Dharma and attains merit that is measureless.

"Good son, it is just as when a poisonous tree grows in the yard of an elder's house. The elder having recognized it, he immediately cuts it down so that it will be gone forever. Further, it is just as when the small and large head grows white hair, it becomes embarrassing, and so it is trimmed back so that it does not grow too long. The monk who upholds the Dharma is also so. Seeing the precept breaker and the one who harms the Dharma, he then should drive them away, rebuking them, and holding them up for display. If a good monk sees one who harms the Dharma, and he hesitates, not driving him away, rebuking, and holding him up for display, you should know that this person has some resentment towards the Buddha's Dharma. If he is able to drive him away, rebuke him, and hold him up for display, this is a disciple of mine, a true voice hearer."

Bodhisattva Kāśyapa again said to the Buddha, "World Honored One, according to what the Buddha has said, he therefore does not regard all sentient beings equally, as children like Rāhula. World Honored One, if there is a person who uses a blade to injure the Buddha or there is a person who rubs sandalwood powder on the Buddha, the Buddha should give rise to the mind of equanimity regarding both of these people. How then do you say that one should subdue the breaking of commandments. If one subdues the breaking of the commandments, then this statement is mistaken."

[621a] The Buddha addressed Kāśyapa, "Good son, it is just as when a king's great minister is the head of a family and raises several sons. Their countenances are straight and proper, with sharp sight, and clever wisdom. If the second, third, and fourth care for and bestow adornments on their teacher, he then says, 'Sir, you may teach and instruct these sons for me in matters of majestic deportment, rites, music, gardening, writing, and cause them to consummate these skills. Now I give over my four sons to you, sir, to be your students.' Supposing that three of the sons were caned and die, the remaining son necessarily would grieve, be subdued, and made more mature. Although attending the funeral of the three sons, in the end he was not resentful. Kāśyapa, this father and teacher who killed them were wicked, no?"

"No, World Honored One. And why? Because they were affectionately mindful of them and wished to mature them, there was no wicked thought. Thus, their teaching and instruction attained merit that is measureless."

"Good son, the Tathāgata is also so. He regards the one who harms the Dharma as a child. The Tathāgata now confers the unsurpassed true Dharma to the kings, great ministers, monks, nuns, laymen, and laywomen. These kings and the fourfold assemblies should endeavor and apply themselves as students and attain development in the precepts, *samādhi*, and wisdom. If there are some who do not study this three-part Dharma and are lazy, then they will break the precepts and slander the true Dharma. The kings, ministers, and fourfold assemblies should then grieve and be subdued. Good son, the kings and fourfold assemblies will have been wicked, no?"

"No, World Honored One."

"Good son, the kings and fourfold assemblies still would not have done wrong. How could the Tathāgata? Good son, the Tathāgata skillfully cultivates thus equanimity towards sentient beings, equally viewing them as his children. One who thus cultivates this is called a *bodhisattva* cultivating the mind of equanimity towards sentient beings, equally viewing them as his children. Good son, the *bodhisattva* thus cultivating this deed swiftly will attain the long life span. And as well he may skillfully know the matters of the worldly household."

Bodhisattva Kāśyapa again said to the Buddha, "World Honored One, as the Buddha has said, if the *bodhisattva* has cultivated the mind of equanimity, regarding sentient beings equally as his children, he will swiftly attain the long life span. But the Tathāgata should not say this. And why? As I know the Dharma, a person is able to proclaim a variety of Dharmas of pious agreement. Returning to the household with tiles and stones, he throws them at his the mother and father. And the mother and father's excellent field of merit has many blessings that are difficult to meet and difficult to encounter. They should be excellently offered gifts rather than bear this anxiety and injury. The person who knows the Dharma says that actions and appearances are mistaken. The Tathāgata's statement is also again so. The *bodhisattva* who cultivates the mind of equanimity towards sentient beings, viewing them equally as his children, should attain the long life span, and well know the household life [621b]. He would eternally abide in the world without any change. Now the World Honored One by what causes and conditions has a life span that is very short, equal to that among humans? The Tathāgata will give rise to views of enmity and hate towards none of the sentient beings. World Honored One, in former times it was by doing what evil deed that has harmed the length of your life and brought about this short life span that does not measure even a hundred years?"

The Buddha addressed Kāśyapa, "Good son, what now are the conditions for you to now put such a coarse statement before the Tathāgata? The Tathāgata's is the longest life span among life spans. It is the supreme and greatest who has attained the eternal Dharma that among Dharmas is the very best."

Bodhisattva Kāśyapa again said to the Buddha, "World Honored One, how has the Tathāgata attained a life span that is measureless?"

The Buddha addressed Kāśyapa, "Good son, it is like the eight great rivers that are named 1) the Ganges, 2) the Yama, 3) the Sālva, 4) the Ajiravatī, 5) the Mahā, 6) the Indus, 7) the Vaṅṅṣu, and 8) the Śita. These eight great rivers and the lesser rivers all flow into the ocean. Kāśyapa, so it is with all among humans and in the heavens above the earth and sky. Their life spans are like the great rivers. They all flow into the ocean of the Tathāgata's life span. This is why the Tathāgata's life span is measureless.

"Furthermore, Kāśyapa, it is just as four great rivers issue from Lake Anavatapta. The Tathāgata is also so. He produces all lives. Kāśyapa, it is just like among all constant things space is the best. The Tathāgata is also so. Among the constants, he is the very best. Kāśyapa, it is just as among medicines ghee is the best. The Tathāgata is also so. Among all sentient beings, his life span is the best."

Bodhisattva Kāśyapa again said to the Buddha, "World Honored One, if the Tathāgata's life span is so, then he should remain for an aeon or less than an aeon, always promulgating the wondrous Dharma like a downpour, a great rain."

"Kāśyapa, you should not now give rise to the view that the Tathāgata is subject to birth and death. Kāśyapa, if there are monks, nuns, laymen, and laywomen, and even those of other paths and the sages of the five spiritual powers, any who have attained sovereignty, remaining for an aeon or less than an aeon, they will continuously practice emptiness while sitting or lying down,

with mastery. From their left side is produced fire and from their right side is produced water. And the body produces smoke and heat like a pile of hot coals. If they wish to extend their lives, they are able to attain that as they wish. In the span of their lives, they should cultivate the capacity of shortness. Thus those of the five powers still attain thus the spiritual power of following one's wishes. How much more so is the Tathāgata's attainment of mastery in all Dharmas? Still, he is unable to remain a life span of a half aeon or a full aeon, or a hundred aeons, or a hundred thousand [621c] aeons, or a measureless number of aeons. And what does this mean? It should be known that the Tathāgata's is an eternally abiding Dharma and an unchanging Dharma, and that this body of the Tathāgata is a transformational body and not a body of sundry foods. It is in order to save sentient beings that he appears the same as the poisonous tree. This is why he manifests his departure and enters into Nirvāṇa. Kāśyapa, you should know that the Buddha is an eternal thing and an unchanging thing. In the highest meaning, you should endeavor and advance single-mindedly in cultivating this and, once you have cultivated it, extensively explain it to others."

At that time, Bodhisattva Kāśyapa said to the Buddha, "World Honored One, the Dharma of renouncing the world and the worldly Dharma have what differences? As the Buddha has said, the Buddha is an eternally abiding thing and an unchanging thing. The worldly also say that Brahma is eternal, that Īśvara is eternal, that they are devoid of any change. The eternal nature of self and the eternal atoms are also eternal. If one says that the Tathāgata is an eternal thing, why does the Tathāgata appear to not be eternal? If he is not eternal in appearance, what difference then? And why? It is because Brahma up to the atoms and the nature of the world do not appear this way."

The Buddha addressed Kāśyapa, "It is just like an elder who had many oxen. While their colors were various, they belonged to a single herd. As they went out to graze, someone herded them towards the water and grass. They were only for making ghee, not to seek milk or cream. That herd of grazing oxen having been enticed, they ate their food. When the elder's life came to an end, the oxen he owned were stolen by a group of bandits. Once the bandits had the oxen, though, there were no wives among them. And so they themselves herded and gathered them together and then the oxen ate. At that time, the group of bandits each said to one another, 'That great elder who had kept and cared for these oxen, did not seek milk or cream from them, but only ghee. Now how shall we go about obtaining that as well? Ghee is called the best, most supreme flavor of the world. But we have no containers to go about obtaining the milk and have no place to store it.'

Again, they said to one another, 'If only there were a leather bag that could be filled with it. Although there may be a place to fill it, we do not know how to heat or stir it. Soup is so difficult to make, how much more would it be to make butter?' At that time, the bandits, in order to make ghee, added water to it. Because the water was too much, the milk and ghee was altogether ruined.

"Ordinary men are also so. Although there is the good Dharma, all overlook the Tathāgata's true Dharma. And why? After the Tathāgata, the World Honored One, enters Nirvāṇa, the Tathāgata's inheritance of the good Dharma is stolen by robbers. Be it the precepts, *samādhi*, or wisdom, it is just as it was with those bandits who plundered the herd of oxen. Although ordinary men attain the precepts, *samādhi*, and wisdom, they have not the skillful means and so are unable to gain liberation. And what is the meaning of this? They are unable to obtain liberation, the eternal precepts, the eternal *samādhi*, and the eternal wisdom, just as that group [622a] of bandits did not know the skillful mean and so ruined the ghee. They are further like that group of bandits who, in order to make the ghee, added water to it. Ordinary men are also so. In order to gain liberation, they say that my life span is that of sentient beings, that the sage, Brahma, Īśvara, atoms, the nature of the world, precepts, *samādhi*, wisdom, and the means of the liberation of the heaven with no thought nor non-thought are then this Nirvāṇa. But, really, those as well do not gain the liberation of Nirvāṇa, just as that group of bandits did not gain any ghee. The ordinary men who practice asceticism a little and give offerings to their parents by these causes and conditions attain birth in the heavens above, receiving a little happiness, just like that group of bandits who added water to the milk. And so the ordinary man really does not know the reason that cultivating a little of the ascetic practice and giving support to their parents attains that birth in the heavens above. Further they are unable to know the precepts, *samādhi*, wisdom, or refuge in the three jewels. Because they do not know them, they speak of the eternal, happy, self, and pure. While, again,

they speak of them, they really do not know them. This is why after the Tathāgata appears in the world, he discusses the eternal, happy, self, and pure for their sake, like the wheel-turning king when he appears in the world.

Because of the power of merit and virtue, that group of bandits went back and released the oxen without shortening their lives. Then a wheel-turning king gave the oxen to a custodian, one who had many techniques. This custodian's skillful means then gained him the ghee. Because of the ghee, all the sentient beings had no worry or distress. When the Dharma-wheel turning holy king appears in the world, ordinary men are unable to discuss the precepts, *samādhi*, or wisdom. And so they have discarded and forsaken them, just like the bandits who went back and turned lose the oxen. At that time, the Tathāgata skillfully proclaims the worldly Dharma and the world renouncing Dharma. For the sake of sentient beings, he causes *bodhisattvas* to accord with the right discourses. The *bodhisattva-mahāsattva*, once he has attained the ghee, again causes the measureless and boundless sentient beings to all attain the unsurpassed flavor of the sweet Dharma nectar, which is called the Tathāgata who is eternal, happy, self, and pure. What is the meaning of this?

"Good son, the Tathāgata's eternal and unchanging Dharma is not like that of the worldly ordinary men, the confused men, who claim that Brahma is the eternal Dharma. This eternal Dharma is proclaimed necessary to the Tathāgata and is not an excepted Dharma. Kāśyapa, you must thus know the Tathāgata's body. Kāśyapa, good sons and good daughters who constantly fix their mind and cultivate these words, 'the Buddha is eternally abiding'. Kāśyapa, if there are good sons and good daughters who cultivate these words, you should know that these people are in accord with my practice, going to me, going to my abode. Good son, if there is one who cultivates thus these words, they will eliminate the characteristics. You should know that the Tathāgata therefore to that person is *parinirvāḥa*. Good son, the meaning of Nirvāṇa then is the essential nature (*dharmatā*) of the Buddhas.

[622b] Bodhisattva Kāśyapa said to the Buddha, "World Honored One, what is the meaning of this essential nature of the Buddha? World Honored One, I now wish to know the meaning of this essential nature. My only desire is for the Tathāgata to be merciful and explain it. This essential nature then must discard the body. One who discards the body is said to exist nowhere. If one exists nowhere, how is the body present? If the body is present, how then is it called the body that has the essential nature? How is this body that has essential nature present? How now shall I know the meaning of this?"

The Buddha addressed Bodhisattva Kāśyapa, "Good son, you now should not thus state that cessation is the essential nature. The essential nature is without any cessation. Good son, it is just like the heaven without thought (*avṛcha-brahmaloka*) where the consummate form-*skandha* is without the notion of form. One should not ask those gods there, 'How then do you abide in joy, enjoying pleasant experiences? How do you think? How do you see and hear?' Good son, the perspective of the Tathāgata is not known by voice hearers or condition perceivers. Good son, one should not say that the Tathāgata's body is something that ceases. Good son, the Tathāgata's Dharma of cessation is the perspective of the Buddha, not fathomed by the voice hearers and condition perceivers. Good son, you now should not think, 'What is the Tathāgata's location? Where does he abide? Where does he go? Where does he look? Where is he happy?' Good son, the meaning of this is also not something you can know, for the Buddha's essential body and various skillful means are inconceivable.

"Furthermore, good son, you must cultivate the Buddha, Dharma, and Saṃgha and create this constant idea that these three things are without any difference, without impermanence, and without change. If regarding these three things, one cultivates other ideas, it should be know he is of the rank for whom the pure triple refuge therefore has no place of support. Those who possess the commandments and precepts, but who have not perfected them, in the end are unable to realize the fruit of awakening the *bodhi* of the voice hearers and condition perceivers. If one is able to cultivate the notion of constancy regarding the inconceivable, then there will a place of refuge for him.

"Good son, it is just like the reason that a tree therefore has a tree's shadow. The Tathāgata is also so. Because he has the eternal Dharma, there therefore is refuge in what is not impermanent.

If one says the Tathāgata is impermanent, the Tathāgata then would not be a place of refuge for the gods and worldly people."

Bodhisattva Kāśyapa said to the Buddha, "World Honored One, it is just as in darkness a tree has no shadow."

"Kāśyapa, you should not say that a tree has no shadow. It would be only that there is no eye to see it. Good son, the Tathāgata is also so. His nature is eternally abiding and unchanging. When there is no wisdom eye, one is unable to see it, just as in that darkness the tree's shadow is not seen. That after the Buddha's death ordinary men [622c] say that the Tathāgata is an impermanent thing is also again so. If they say that the Tathāgata is different from the Dharma and Saṃgha, then they are unable to achieve the place of the three refuges. Just as because your parents are each different, therefore their professions is impermanent."

Bodhisattva Kāśyapa again said to the Buddha, "World Honored One, I from this day forwards shall instruct and awaken my parents down to the seventh generation to the eternally abiding Buddha, Dharma, and Saṃgha and lead them to transmit it. It is extraordinary, World Honored One! I now shall study the Tathāgata, Dharma, and Saṃgha as being inconceivable. Once I am finished studying this, I will also widely explain this meaning to other people. If there are people who are unable to believe and accept it, it should be known that this class for a long time has cultivated impermanence. I will give Such people a cold rain shower."

At that time, the Buddha praised Bodhisattva Kāśyapa, "Excellent, excellent! You now are well able to protect the true Dharma. Such protection of the Dharma does not delude people. Because of this good deed of not deluding people, one will attain the long life span and well know the household life."

## Chapter 5: The Adamantine Body

[622c] At that time, the World Honored One again addressed Kāśyapa, "Good son, the Tathāgata's body is an eternally abiding body. It is an indestructible body, a body of adamantine. Not being a body of sundry foods, it is the essential body."

Bodhisattva Kāśyapa said to the Buddha, "World Honored One, I do not see at all such a body of which the Buddha has just spoken. I see only an impermanent, destructible body of sundry food and earth. And why? Because the Tathāgata is about to enter into *parinirvāḍa!*"

The Buddha addressed Kāśyapa, "You should not say that the body of the Tathāgata is infirm and destructible like a ordinary man's body. Good son, you now should know that the body of the Tathāgata over the course of measureless tens of millions of aeons is firm, steady, and difficult to destroy. It is not a human or deva body, not a fearful body, nor a body of sundry foods. The body of the Tathāgata is not a body. This body is does not arise or cease, not continuous, and not cultivated. Measureless and boundless, it leaves no footprints. It is imperceptible, without appearance, and absolutely pure. It has no motion, no sensation, and no activity. It neither abides nor is created; it has neither flavor or ingredients. Nor is it conditioned; neither by deeds nor their results. Not active, not ceasing, not mental, nor numerable, it is inconceivable and eternally not discussible. Lacking consciousness, it is free of mentality, and yet it does not part with mentality. Its mentality is equanimity, not existent and yet existent. There is nothing [in it] gone or coming, and yet it goes and comes. It is not broken or destroyed; not temporary or ending. It is not produced and it does not cease. It is not a master, and yet it is the master. It is neither existent or non-existent, neither sensible or observable. It is not a word, and yet is not wordless. It is neither established or not established. [623a] Invisible and entirely seen, it is without location and yet dwells. It is without an abode and yet it has an abode. Neither dark nor illuminated, it has no tranquillity, and yet it is tranquil. It exists nowhere, is neither received or given, and its purity is without defilement or purity, it is the end of purity. Abiding by not abiding anywhere, it neither is apprehended or lost. It is neither a thing or not a thing. It is neither a field of merit nor not a field of merit. Inexhaustible, it is not exhausted, parting with all exhaustion. Being empty, it parts with emptiness. Although it does not eternally abide, it does not cease from thought to thought, and has no sullyng defilements. Having no words, it parts with words. It is neither heard nor expressed, and also is not cultivated. Not appraised or measured, not same or different, it has no image and no appearance adorning characteristics. Neither courageous nor fearful, without peace or non-peace, without obsession or non-obsession, it cannot be looked upon since it lacks any appearance or countenance.

"The Tathāgata liberates all the sentient beings. Because none are liberated, he is able to free the sentient beings. Because there are none freed, he enlightens the sentient beings. Because there are none enlightened, he explains things as they really are. Because there is no duality, it cannot be measured and is unparalleled. Even like empty space, it has no image or countenance. Equally of an unborn nature, it is neither temporary or permanent. While always practicing the one vehicle, sentient beings see three. Not reversing or turning back, it ends all bondages. Not hostile or offensive, it is not of a nature nor abides in a nature. He is not unified or scattered, not long or short, not round or square. He is not the aggregates (*skandhas*), senses, or elements and yet is the aggregates, senses, and elements. It is not increasing or decreasing, won or lost. The body of the Tathāgata is thus the consummation of measureless virtue.

"Having no perceiver or non-perceiver, having no seer or non-seer, it is neither conditioned nor unconditioned. It is not worldly or unworldly, neither created nor not created, not dependent or independent. It is neither the four gross elements nor not the four gross elements. It is not caused nor uncaused, neither a sentient being nor not a sentient being, neither a *-ramaōa* or a *brāhmaōa*. The Lion, the Great Lion, is neither a body or not a body. It is inexpressible. Remove a single thing or characteristic and it is incalculable. And at the time of *parinirvāōa* it does not enter *parinirvāōa*. The Tathāgata's essential body is the complete consummation of all these immeasurable and minutely fine virtues.

"Kāśyapa, it is only the Tathāgata who arrives at the knowledge of its appearance. Neither voice hearers nor condition perceivers know of it. Kāśyapa, thus is the merit of achieving the body of the Tathāgata. It is not the body that has been long nourished with sundry foods. Kāśyapa, the merit of the Tathāgata's real body is so. How could it be subject to disease, anxiety, distress, fear, fragility, infirmity, or be like a clay vessel? Kāśyapa, the Tathāgata manifests illness and distress because he wishes to harmonize and discipline the sentient beings. Good son, you now should [623b] know that the body of the Tathāgata is an adamantine body. From this day forwards, you should concentrate your mind and consider, having no thought of it as a food body. And you should explain for others that the Tathāgata's body is the essential body."

Bodhisattva Kāśyapa said to the Buddha, "World Honored One, the Tathāgata having consummated these merits of his body, how is it that it shall be subject to illness, distress, impermanence, injury, or destruction? From this day forwards, I shall always consider the body of the Tathāgata as being the eternal essential body, the body of peaceful happiness. Also, I shall widely explain of it for others. Verily, World Honored One, the Tathāgata's essential body is adamantine and indestructible. However, I am still unable to know what its origin is."

The Buddha addressed Kāśyapa, "It is because of being able to protect and uphold the true Dharma's causes and conditions that one consummates the adamantine body. Kāśyapa, I in the remote past have protected the Dharma's causes and conditions, and so now I have consummated the adamantine body that is eternally abiding and indestructible. Good son, one who protects and maintains the true Dharma, who has not received the five precepts or cultivated the majestic deportment, should carry knife, sword, bow and arrow, spear, or lance, defending and upholding the precepts of the pure monk."

Bodhisattva Kāśyapa said to the Buddha, "World Honored One, suppose a monk leaves such protection to dwell alone in unoccupied and peaceful mountains and forests. Let us say that this person is a genuine monk. Suppose there is another who follows him and seeks to be the protector of this monk's practice. It should be known that this person is a comrade of that head-shaven worthy."

The Buddha addressed Kāśyapa, "You should not say this about that head-shaven worthy. Suppose this monk, whom the other person follows to his dwelling, reads and recites the Sūtras and considers them in seated meditation. If questions are put to him about the Dharma, then he gives thorough discourses on it. This is called the generous upholding of the precepts, the blessed virtue with little desire, and satisfaction. Although he is able to give various discourses on the Dharma, this is the very reason he is unable to perform the lion's roar. He is not acting as a lion who is encircled, and so he is unable to discipline evil people who are not of the Dharma. Thus, this monk is incapable of benefiting himself and sentient beings. You should know that this sort is negligent and lazy. Although he is able to uphold the precepts and protect the pure practice, you should know that he has no ability to do more.

"Now, suppose there is a monk who is provided with supplies and who is always comfortable. Again, he is able to protect and uphold the commandments and precepts he has received and is able to widely proclaim the lion's roar of the wondrous Dharma. This refers to the Sūtras, Geyas, predictions, verses, Udānas, Ityuktas, Jātakas, Vaipulyas, and Abhūta-dharmas. Using these nine divisions of the scriptural canon, he gives thorough explanations for others. Because he blesses sentient beings with peace and happiness, he calls out, 'In the Nirvāṇa Sūtra, the restrained monk should not be supported with things that are not of the Dharma such as servants, maids, [623c] oxen, and sheep.'

"Suppose there is a monk who is supported with such things of impurity and is nurtured by them. The Tathāgata has previously in other Sūtras said that when there are monks supported with such things not of the Dharma, they will drive out a kingdom's monarch who accords with the Dharma and is nourished by it, and that will lead to the reversion to baseness. Suppose there is that monk who then is able to perform thus the Lion's Roar. And there is one who breaks the precepts who, having heard his words, responds by becoming angry and offended and injures that Dharma teacher. This teacher of the Dharma continues to promote it until his life ends. Therefore, he is famed for upholding the precepts, benefiting himself, and benefiting others. Because of these conditions, we should listen closely to the kingdom's ruler, people, scholars, ministers, and laymen who are protectors of the Dharma. If someone wishes to be a defender of the true Dharma, then they should thus train themselves.

"Kāśyapa, one who thus breaks the precepts is not a protector of the Dharma. Such a head-shaven worthy is called 'One who does not uphold the precepts'. He obtains such a reputation. Good son, in the distant past beyond an measureless and boundless number of *asaikhya* aeons, in this city of Kuśinagara, there was a Buddha who appeared in the world with the name Joyful Increase of Blessings. He was a Tathāgata, Worthy, Completely Enlightened One, perfect in wisdom and conduct, well gone, a knower of the world, unsurpassed, a tamer of men, a teacher of men and gods, and a World Honored One. At that time, the world was widely adorned in purity, abundantly happy and peaceful, and the people flourished without any hunger or thirst. Those of that peaceful and happy land were like *bodhisattvas*. That Buddha, that World Honored One, stayed in the world and had transformed an measureless number of sentient beings. And so afterwards he entered *parinirvāṇa* beneath a pair of *sāla* trees. After that Buddha's Nirvāṇa, the neglected Dharma remained in the world for measureless tens of millions of years. For the last forty years before the Buddha Dharma perished, there was at that time a monk who upheld the precepts. His name was 'Awakened Virtue'. Many were the multitudes of disciples and their retinues who surrounded him. He was able to proclaim the lion's roar, promulgating widely and explaining the nine divisions of the scriptural canon. He restrained the monks so they would not be supported by servants, oxen, sheep, and things not of the Dharma.

"At that time, there were many of precept-breaking monks who, upon hearing that their activities had been proclaimed to be born of an evil mentality, took up blades and sticks and menaced that Dharma teacher. At this point, the nation's king was named 'Having Virtue'. Hearing of this happening, he then promptly went to the Dharma preachers' dwelling and did battle with the evil precept-breaking monks, in order to protect the Dharma and allowing the Dharma preacher to flee and escape from injury. At that point, the king had suffered wounds that he bore all over his body. At that time, Awakened Virtue immediately praised the king, saying, 'Excellent, excellent! This king now is a genuine defender of the true Dharma. In future lives this person shall be a measureless Dharma vessel.' When the king's mind heard the Dharma, he was greatly elated. Immediately, then, when his life ended, he was born into the land of the Buddha Akṣobhya. And he became that Buddha's best disciple. [624a] The king's general and the people who had fought under him according were joyful. All their minds being of the irreversible *bodhi*, at the end of their lives they were also born into the land of the Buddha Akṣobhya. That monk Awakened Virtue after his life ended also was reborn into the land of the Buddha Akṣobhya's and for that Buddha became the second disciple among his voice hearer congregation. When there is a desire for the true Dharma to be destroyed, it is then that it must be received, upheld, embraced, and protected.

"Kāśyapa, at that time, the king was myself and that Dharma-preaching monk the Buddha Kāśyapa. Kāśyapa, the defender of the true Dharma attains thus such a measureless reward. By means of such causes and conditions have I, on this day, attained the various marks adorning myself and brought to fruition the essential body, the indestructible body."

Bodhisattva Kāśyapa again said to the Buddha, "World Honored One, the Tathāgata's eternal body is just like a stone statue."

The Buddha replied to Kāśyapa, "Good son, because of these causes and conditions, the monks, nuns, laymen, and laywomen must aid, promote, protect, and uphold the true Dharma. The reward for protecting the Dharma is vast and measureless. Good son, this is why the Dharma-protecting laymen should take up blades and sticks to defend such a Dharma-keeping monk. If

there are those who take and uphold the five precepts, they are not called people of the Mahāyāna. Those who do not take the five precepts in order to defend the true Dharma, they are called Mahāyānist. The protectors of the true Dharma shall take up swords and weapons of war and act as guards for Dharma preachers."

Kāśyapa said to the Buddha, "World Honored One, what if monks and such laymen who take up swords become the companions for a teacher who has no teacher? Is this keeping the precepts or breaking the precepts?"

The Buddha replied to Kāśyapa, "They would not be the equal of a person who breaks the precepts. Good son, after my Nirvāṇa the world will go uncultivated and be confused, the lands turgid and corrupt. People will rob and cheat one another and they will go hungry and thirsty. At that time, because many will be hungry and thirsty, and it will occur to them to leave home. Such people will be known as shaven people. The shaven people as a group will protect and uphold the true Dharma upon seeing that there are monks who uphold the precepts with majestic comportment and perfected purity. They will chase away those who might kill or harm them."

Bodhisattva Kāśyapa again said to the Buddha, "World Honored One, the person who upholds the precepts is a defender of the true Dharma. How will they travel through the villages, towns, cities, and metropolises, teaching and transforming others?"

"Good son, this is why I now acknowledge that person who upholds the precepts and depends on the companionship of the white-robed swordsmen. If the rulers of countries, great ministers, elders, and laymen wield swords in order to protect the Dharma, [624b] I call this equal to upholding the precepts. Even though the swords they carry should not be used to end a life, if they are able to act thus, then this is called the supreme upholding of the precepts.

"Kāśyapa, being a 'Dharma protector' means having the right view and ability to widely promulgate and explain the Mahāyāna Sūtras. In the end, he does not seize upon the sovereign's precious canopies, oil flasks, rice, grain, and various other fruits and berries. It is not for benefit and support that he associates himself with kings, great ministers, and elders. His mind transcends their gifts and he does not curry favor or corruption. Perfecting the majestic deportment, he defeats the precept-breakers and corrupt people. This is called a teacher who upholds the precepts and protects the Dharma, who is able to be a true and good friend to sentient beings. His mind is broad and extensive, like the ocean.

"Kāśyapa, suppose there is a monk who explains the Dharma for others in order to be given benefits and support. And this person possesses a retinue of disciples who also exploit this teacher, coveting and seeking benefits and support. This person's flattering of himself thus destroys the congregation.

"Kāśyapa, there are three kinds of congregations: 1) the mixed Saṃgha of precept violators, 2) the ignorant and deluded Saṃgha, and 3) the pure Saṃgha. The mixed Saṃgha with precept violators can easily be destroyed, while the pure precept-upholding Saṃgha beneficially supports the causes and conditions of that which cannot be destroyed.

"What is a mixed saṃgha of precept violators? Suppose there is a monk who while upholding the commandments and precepts in order for benefits and support, associates himself with precept breakers, sitting, rising, walking, and returning with them, being a close companion, and equaling their deeds. This is called breaking the precepts and is also a mixed Saṃgha.

"What is an ignorant and deluded Saṃgha? Suppose there is a monk who stays in an Aranya dwelling. His faculties are not beneficial, dark, dull, of poor vision, and he has little desire to beg for food. From the day of reciting the precepts to the end of the retreat, he teaches the disciples who are pure and repentant. Seeing non-disciples who numerously violate the commandments and precepts, he is unable to teach and lead them to be pure and repentant when coming together to recite the precepts to the end of a retreat. This is called an ignorant and deluded Saṃgha.

"What is called a pure Saṃgha? Suppose there is a Saṃgha of monks who the hundreds of thousands of tens of millions of *māras* are unable to destroy. The nature of this *bodhisattva* congregation's myriad roots is pure. They are able to harmonize congregations like the two mentioned above and lead all to peacefully abide in a pure congregation. These is called the Dharma protecting, unsurpassed, great teachers; those who well uphold the *vinaya*. Because they wish to pacify and bless sentient beings, they know the precepts' marks, whether light or grave.

Those who are not of the *vinaya* therefore do not realize this knowledge. If one is of the *vinaya*, then he readily realizes it.

"What is the pacification of sentient beings? Suppose *bodhisattvas* are transformed into sentient beings, always entering hamlets and villages and not missing an occasion. Some go into the homes of widows and maidens and similarly remain to establish the Sūtras over the course of many years if the voice hearers do not do so. This is called [624c] the pacification and blessing of sentient beings.

"What is knowing the grave? Suppose one sees the Tathāgata's causes and events of the restraining precepts. You from this day forwards should be honest and not further transgress them, such as the four grave commandments that those who have left the household are not to do. So it is because of violating them, that they are not *ramaōas* nor the Śākya clan. This is called the grave.

"What is the light? If one transgresses in trifling matters, thus one performs the three admonishments. If one is able to forsake it, this is called the light.

One who does not follow the *vinaya* and does not realize it, he may praise impure things, saying they should be accepted and used. It is one who is of the *vinaya* and realizes it who well studies the *vinaya* and does not come near to breaking the precepts. Seeing that there are those who practice in conformance to the precepts and *vinaya*, one's mind becomes elated. Thus is one able to know the Buddha's Dharma, who performs the good and is able to understand the discourses. This is called a *vinaya* teacher. One who well understands each word and upholds the Sūtras is also so.

"So it is, good son. The Buddha's Dharma is measureless and inconceivable. The Tathāgata is also so. He is inconceivable."

Bodhisattva Kāśyapa said to the Buddha, "World Honored One, so it is, so it is. Sincere is the Noble One who says, 'The Buddha's Dharma is immeasurable and inconceivable. The Tathāgata is also so. He is inconceivable.' Therefore, knowing that the Tathāgata is eternally abiding, indestructible, and without any change, I now will well study it and also will promulgate this doctrine to others."

At that time, the Buddha praised Bodhisattva Kāśyapa, "Excellent, excellent! The Tathāgata's body then is adamant and an indestructible body. The *bodhisattva* must thus well train himself, rightly viewing and rightly knowing this. If he is able to clearly know and see, then this is seeing the Buddha's body of adamant, the indestructible body. It is like seeing forms and images in a mirror."

## Chapter 6: The Merit of the Title

[624c] At that time, the Tathāgata again addressed Kāśyapa, "Good son, you now should well uphold this Sūtra's contents, as they possess merit. If there are good sons and good daughters who hear this Sūtra's name, none of them will be born in any of the four destinies. And why? It is thus that this Sūtra leads them to the cultivation of the measureless and boundless Buddhas. I shall now discuss this attainment of merit."

Bodhisattva Kāśyapa said to the Buddha, "World Honored One, what shall be the name of this Sūtra? How should the *bodhisattva-mahāsattva* receive and uphold it?"

The Buddha told Kāśyapa, "This Sūtra's name is the Great Parinirvāṇa, which in the beginning is good, in the middle is good, and in the end is also good. Its meaning's flavor complies with the profound and its text is also good. It is pure, the complete perfection of the pure ascetic practice, and the adamantine treasure store filled up without anything lacking. If you well listen closely, I now shall discuss it.

"Good son, the word 'great' in the name is for its being eternal. [625a] Like the eight great rivers that all return to the ocean, this Sūtra thus subdues all the bonds of affliction and dispositions of *māra*. Afterwards, one necessarily discards the body for the entry into *parinirvāṇa*. This is why it is called the Great Parinirvāṇa.

"Furthermore, good son, it is like the physician who has a secret way of gathering together everything that has a medical use. Good son, the Tathāgata is also so. He has proclaimed a variety of wondrous Dharmas that are the gateway to the secret which is at the very core. They all lead into this Great Parinirvāṇa. This is why it is called the Great Parinirvāṇa.

"Good son, just as when the farmer in the Spring sowing months has constant expectations, it is once he has harvested his crop that truly his myriad expectations are all put to rest. Good son, all of the sentient beings are also so. They cultivate and train themselves with the other Sūtras, always expecting a rich flavor. If they hear this Great Parinirvāṇa, their expectations of the other Sūtras to have a rich flavor will be forever ended. This Great Parinirvāṇa is capable of leading sentient beings to be liberated from having defilements (outflows). Good son, just as among footprints the elephant's footprints are supreme, this Sūtra is thus among Sūtras a *samādhi* that is the very best.

"Good son, it is just as when tilling the fields, the Autumn tilling is best, this Sūtra is thus among Sūtras the best. Good son, just as among medicines ghee is the most skillful in healing fevers, worry, and confusion in the minds of sentient beings, the Great Parinirvāṇa is the very best. Good son, just as the sweet cheeses of the eight flavors are perfected, the Great Parinirvāṇa also is again so. It is the perfection of the eight flavors. And what are the eight? First, constancy; second, eternity; third, peace; fourth, pure refreshment; fifth, not aging; sixth, undying; seventh, undefiled; and eighth, contentment. Those are the eight flavors. Because of the perfection of these eight flavors, it is called the Great Parinirvāṇa. If *bodhisattva-mahāsattvas* rest in this, they again will be able to manifest Nirvāṇa everywhere. This is why it is called the Great Parinirvāṇa.

"Kāśyapa, if good sons and good daughters wish to rest in this Great Parinirvāṇa and then Nirvāṇa, they should thus study. The Tathāgata eternally abides, as do the Dharma and Saṃgha as well."

Bodhisattva Kāśyapa again said to the Buddha, "Most extraordinary, World Honored One, is the Tathāgata's merit that is so inconceivable! The Dharma and Saṃgha are also inconceivable. This

Great Parinirvāṇa is also inconceivable. If someone cultivates the study of this Sūtra, they will attain the true Dharma-eye and be able to act as a skilled physician. If someone has yet to study it, it should be known that this person will lack the wisdom eye, it being veiled by ignorance."

*Here ends fascicle three of the Great Parinirvāṇa Sātra*